

## Anna Hakobyan Visits Boston

### City of Smile Banquet Is Great Success with Keynote Speaker Hakobyan

By **Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WALTHAM, Mass. – The greater Boston area Armenian community came together as one in support of the worthy cause of combatting childhood cancer in Armenia.

Close to thirty organizations and churches came together along with many donors to make the April 5 banquet at the Westin Hotel in Waltham a successful effort at raising awareness of the problems of childhood cancer patients in Armenia and fundraising for the City of Smile Charitable Foundation. The fact that Anna Hakobyan, honorary chair of the City of Smile Foundation and wife of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, headlined the program in her first visit to Boston added a definite frisson of excitement to the atmosphere that Friday night.

With at least 456 registered guests, the Westin's banquet hall was packed as Sheriff of Middlesex County Peter Koutoujian skillfully leavened the by nature often melancholy topics discussed with his customary humor as master of ceremonies. He informed the guests that cancer, the second leading cause of death in the entire world, does not discriminate by race, geography, or any other boundaries and has affected all of our lives directly or indirectly. Koutoujian pronounced that the night is about children, and the stark and upsetting challenges that they face in Armenia. He called upon all present to work together as Armenians to help beat cancer in Armenia.

Knarik Nerkararyan sang the Armenian and American national anthems and Fr. Vasken Kouzouian of Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston gave the invocation. Ani Arakelians Avakian spoke eloquent



Anna Hakobyan, third from left, with Ester Demirtshyan of City of Smile, accepts a gift from Michael Aram, right, at the gala banquet on Friday night.

words of welcome in Armenian.

The artistic element of the evening was provided by the Erebuni Dance School and

Ensemble, whose members danced in colorful Armenian costumes under the supervision see VISIT, page 6

### Hakobyan Meets with Students at MIT, St. Stephen's Elementary School

By **Alin K. Gregorian**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Anna Hakobyan, the wife of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, spent an hour on Friday, April 5, with Armenian students enrolled at Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), as well as staff from the two universities.

see HAKOBYAN, page 8



Anna Hakobyan at MIT (photo: Arkun)

### Pres. Sarkissian Visits Jordan

AMMAN, Jordan (Armenpress) – President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian arrived in Amman, on April 5. On April 6, the Armenian president will participate in the World Economic Forum meeting on the Middle East and North Africa.

Sarkissian was invited to the event as a keynote speaker.

Sarkissian visits banks of the Jordan River where he toured in the area and made a note in the Book of honorary guests.

He noted that the careful attitude of Jordan towards such a global sanctuary is see JORDAN, page 2



President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian and King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein



The VEM Ensemble in action at Holy Trinity Armenian Church (photo: Aram Arkun)

### VEM Ensemble Tour of Detroit, Montreal and Boston a Triumph

By **Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN – The VEM Ensemble of the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music inspired and moved large audiences in the hundreds in Detroit, Montreal and Boston as it completed the first part of its spring 2019 North American tour organized by the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA). Each stop included community outreach sessions at local Armenian schools as well as a primary performance. Each stop included a premiere of the *Tekeyan Triptych*, composed specially for VEM by Artashes Kartalyan as the result of a grant from the Tekeyan Cultural Association. see VEM, page 9

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Armenia, Russia, Iran And Georgia Consider Electricity Corridor

YEREVAN (Arka) – Power engineering experts from Armenia, Russia, Iran and Georgia are scheduled to convene in Tehran to discuss the creation of the North-South electricity corridor, Rima Yeganyan, a spokeswoman for Armenia's Ministry of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources, told ARKA news agency on April 9.

She said the gathering in Tehran is scheduled for April 15-17. It will bring together experts who will look into the technical aspects of the construction of the North-South electric corridor. The meeting of experts will be followed by a meeting of deputy energy ministers of the four countries, also scheduled to take place in Tehran on April 29 - May 1.

"The results of the meetings and discussions and the proposals will be presented during the ministerial meeting to be held in Tehran on June 16-18. After that the next steps and work on the project will be specified," said Yeganyan.

She said at the meetings the Armenian side will present developments, technical solutions and other infrastructure issues on regional integration and trade in the electricity sector, which are consonant with Armenia's policy.

### Turkey Police Arrest Smugglers with Armenian Tombstone

ISTANBUL (Daily Sabah) – Anti-smuggling police seized a 2,000-year-old tombstone belonging to an ancient Armenian king in Turkey's north-western Balıkesir province on Tuesday, April 2.

Acting upon a tip, security forces tracked two cars passing through the town of Edremit headed toward western Çanakkale province. After searching the cars, police found and confiscated a tombstone reading "the final resting place of the Commagene Kingdom's leader Antiacho" in Ancient Roman script. The smugglers were planning to sell the artifact for 2 million Turkish lira (\$281,000), reports said.

Four suspects were detained during the operation and police launched an extensive investigation into the incident.

Thousands of anti-smuggling operations are carried out across Turkey every year to halt the illegal sale of historical objects. The issue is crucial to a country that is home to about 3,000 ancient cities from 42 civilizations and whose tourism industry relies on its rich historical heritage to attract millions of foreign visitors each year. The Kingdom of Commagene, an Armenian Hellenistic era state located on southeastern part of Anatolia, existed from 163 B.C. to 72 A.D. The famous Mount Nemrut that contains Commagene Kings' statues is inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage.

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Concert Tribute to Aznavour to Take Place in May

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – A concert will be held at Karen Demirchyan Sport and Concert Complex on May 26 dedicated to the 95th birthday of the late Charles Aznavour.

During the concert, titled “For you, Armenia”, famous and beloved French singers, such as Patrick Fiori, Helen Segara, Lea Castel, Slimane, Kate Ryan, Raffi Arto and others will perform. The Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra, headed by Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Eduard Topchyan, will accompany the French artists.

The singers will perform not only Aznavour’s songs, but also their own.

## Time for Armenia to Become Part of New Silk Road

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian received on April 4 a delegation led by Shen Yueyue, Vice-Chairwoman of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee of China.

Greeting the guests Sarkissian noted that Armenia and China are ancient countries with centuries-old tradition of cooperation since the times of the existence of the Silk Road. The president highlighted the development of the cooperation already in the 21st century in the sidelines of the “One Belt One Road” program initiated by the leadership of China.

“It’s time for Armenia to become part of the new Silk Road,” President Armen Sarkissian said.

Speaking about the necessity to activate the existing cooperation, the Vice-Chairwoman of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee highlighted the friendly relations with Armenia.

The two sides underlined that there is huge potential for developing relations between the two states. They particularly highlighted the expansion of cooperation in the spheres of development of infrastructures, mining industry, protection of the environment, tourism, high technologies and artificial intelligence.

## Opposition Prosperous Armenia Introduces Bill Against Animal Cruelty

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The opposition Prosperous Armenia faction of the Armenian parliament has introduced a bill seeking to criminalize animal abuse.

“As we promised, minutes ago we introduced the bill to parliament on criminalizing cruelty against animals”, Member of Parliament Naira Zohrabyan said on Facebook on April 4.

The bill seeks fines or one-year imprisonment for torture, cruelty that has led to death or disfigurement of animals. The bill seeks up to two-years’ imprisonment if the act has been committed by a government official; with particular cruelty; at the presence of a minor, and several other cases.

## Pashinyan Visits Russian Military Base in Gyumri

GYUMRI (Armenpress) – Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan visited the military base of the Russian Southern Military District in the sidelines of his visit to Gyumri on April 5.

The delegation led by Pashinyan got acquainted with the daily life of the servicemen, visited the “Hill of honor” and “Military glory” monuments, the museum of the military base and the church of St. Alexandra the Martyr Queen.

The command staff of the Russian military base presented the history of the establishment of the base, its structure, modern military equipment to the delegation led by the prime minister.

At the end of the visit the members of Pashinyan’s delegation, as well as the members of the Russian embassy in Armenia laid flowers and wreath at the monuments of the Soviet servicemen and double hero of the USSR, General-Lieutenant Mikhail Kalashnikov.

# Ruling Bloc, Opposition Spar Over LGBT Rights in Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s alliance and the main opposition Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) on Tuesday, April 9, continued to blame each other for a transgender activist’s unprecedented speech in the Armenian parliament which caused a stir in the socially conservative country.

Pashinyan also hit out at former President Serzh Sargsyan’s Republican Party of Armenia (HHK), saying that some of its senior members are “gay activists.”

The scandal broke out during last week’s parliamentary hearings in Yerevan chaired by Naira Zohrabyan, the BHK-affiliated chairperson of a parliament committee on human rights. They were attended by lawmakers, government officials as well as representatives of local non-governmental organizations.

One of those groups, Right Side, champions LGBT rights. Its transgender leader, Lilit Martirosyan, also spoke at the hearings, complaining about widespread hostility and discrimination against sexual minorities in Armenia.

The presence of an LGBT activist on the Armenian parliament floor visibly surprised and angered Zohrabyan. She berated Martirosyan for bringing up issues which she said are not on the agenda of the hearings.

Zohrabyan claimed afterwards that the hitherto little-known activist was invited, without her knowledge, to the hearings by Maria Karapetyan, a parliament deputy from Pashinyan’s My Step alliance. Karapetyan and other pro-government lawmakers denied that, saying that all participants of the discussion received written invitations from Zohrabyan. The BHK parliamentarian rejected those claims as “blatant lies.”

The bitter recriminations came amid furious reactions to Martirosyan’s public appearance from nationalist and conservative groups hostile to the Armenian LGBT community. More than a hundred members and supporters of those groups rallied outside the parliament building on Monday. Riot police stopped them from entering the building and protesting inside it.

Pashinyan weighed in on the controversy, accusing Zohrabyan of staging a “political provocation” against the parliament majority loyal to him.

He said a security agency protecting the parliament building shared with him a list of individuals, including Lilit Martirosyan, invited to the hearings, which was signed by the Zohrabyan.

The prime minister went on to challenge the BHK to consider recalling Zohrabyan and naming another head of the parliament committee.

The BHK’s parliamentary faction, which is the second largest in the National Assembly, was quick to hold an emergency meeting and voice strong support with its embattled member.

“Our faction believes that Naira Zohrabyan did not violate any rules of ethical parliamentary conduct or provisions of the parliament statutes or any other legal norm,” said Gevorg Petrosian, another senior BHK parliamentarian known for his vocal opposition to LGBT rights.

The BHK’s top leader, Gagik Tsarukyan, threw his weight Zohrabyan on Monday. Tsarukyan described people’s non-traditional sexual orientation as a “vice” which must not be allowed to “spread” in Armenia.

Another BHK deputy, Vartan Ghukasyan, went farther, saying that all “perverts” must be expelled from the country. “Send them to Holland,” Ghukasyan told reporters. “We want ... females to be females and males to be males. You can’t mix female with male. It’s shameful.”

Pashinyan’s bloc was also attacked by Eduard Sharmazanov, the spokesman for the former ruling HHK. “Yes, something has changed in

our country. Under the HHK, a transgender person would not have delivered a speech in the National Assembly,” Sharmazanov said in a video statement posted on Facebook on Friday.

Pashinyan countered that Martirosyan had legally changed her previous, male first name, Vagharshak, during Sargsyan’s rule. He said that the transgender activist’s current passport issued in 2015 identifies her as a male. “Is it a common practice among the Republicans to have men named Lilit?” he scoffed.

“When I was telling them that ‘you are gay activists’ they did not believe me,” Pashinyan added mockingly. “They just can’t avoid that status and this is further proof [of that.]”

Meanwhile, the fallout from Martirosyan’s public statement prompted serious concern from the European Union. In an extraordinary joint statement issued on Tuesday, the EU Delegation in Armenian and the Yerevan-based embassies of EU member states condemned “hate speech, including death threats directed at Ms. Lilit Martirosyan, her colleagues and the LGBTI community as a whole.”

“The EU calls on all in Armenia who promote and believe in the universality of human rights to condemn hate speech and on law enforcement agencies to take urgent steps to guarantee the physical safety of Armenian citizens and to investigate allegations against those suspected of perpetrating hate crimes,” said the statement.

## Armenia Aid Reaches Iran

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenian humanitarian aid sent to flood-hit Iran has already reached the country.

Now, the humanitarian group will be escorted by the Iranian Red Crescent Society to Tabriz, the final destination.

Yuri Poleshchuk, the head of the Russian side of the Russian-Armenian Humanitarian Center, the organization that sent the aid, told reporters that the mission has crossed the border into Iran yesterday. He said the aid is already being escorted to Tabriz.

Pavel Gyozyan, head of the Armenian side of the Russian-Armenian Humanitarian Center, said the dispatched group stayed in Kapan, Syunik Province overnight for preparations. “They began heading at 8 in the morning today”, he said.

The Ministry of Emergency Situations of Armenia sent the humanitarian aid to Iran on April 8 to help in assisting the victims of floods.

Armenia has sent 4,000 blankets, 250 beds and 30 tents.

# Armenia President Visits Jordan

JORDAN, from page 1

an excellent demonstration of solidarity and dialogue of civilizations.

President Sarkissian also visited Armenian Church St. Karapet at the bank of the Jordan River and lit a candle.

Sarkissian met with the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein Al-Hashimi. The King of Jordan welcomed the President of Armenia, spoke with reverence about the Armenian people and noted that the two countries and friendly peoples have deep ties and the historically formed friendship. King Abdallah especially stressed the significant role of the Armenian community in the life

of Jordan.

Sarkissian expressed gratitude for the warm welcome. Underscoring King Abdullah’s as well as his father’s cordial and amicable attitude towards Armenians, Armen Sarkissian said that the best evidence of the Armenian-Jordanian friendship is the Armenian Church on the banks of Jordan river.

The President of Armenia and King of Jordan in a genial and friendly atmosphere spoke about the development of the bilateral relations and opportunities for the expansion of a mutually beneficial cooperation in different areas. According to President Sarkissian, the two countries have multiple similarities: Scarcely natural

resources make Armenia and Jordan highlight and appreciate human resources.

The President of Armenia and King of Jordan concurred that the bilateral relations possess a great potential for cooperation, and the two countries could successfully cooperate in the areas of technologies, education, science, and healthcare.

The King of Jordan said that he would soon send a delegation to Armenia to discuss on site the opportunities for cooperation.

Sarkissian invited the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein to visit Armenia.



## INTERNATIONAL

# Czech Defense Minister Visits Pashinyan

YEREVAN — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on April 9 received Minister of Defense and Armed Forces of the Czech Republic Lubomir Metnar.

Pashinyan noted that Armenia and the Czech Republic have effective cooperation in different spheres, including defense, and the two countries have great potential for development. Nikol Pashinyan stressed that the Czech Republic is an important partner of Armenia in the European Union, and high-level cooperation in both bilateral and multilateral formats promotes strengthening of relations.

Metnar thanked the prime minister for the reception, congratulated him on the anniversary of a velvet revolution and a



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan shakes the hand of Czech Defense Minister Lubomir Metnar.

## Artsakh, Azerbaijan Have Opposing Approaches to Refugees

STEPANAKERT (News.am) — The issue of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) is one of the key problems in the process of the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict settlement. It should be noted that this problem occurred as a consequence of the destructive policy of Azerbaijan aimed at the forceful suppression of the realization of the right to self-determination by the Armenian population of Artsakh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh Masis Mayilian noted in an interview with Azat Artsakh newspaper on April 5.

“This is very important in view of both the responsibility for the current situation and the methodology of resolving the issue of refugees and displaced persons. It is obvious that, first, it is necessary to eliminate the origin of the conflict and only after this to start eliminating its consequences,” Mayilian noted.

He stressed that the authorities of Artsakh and Azerbaijan have opposing approaches to the issue of refugees and displaced persons. While Baku considered the issue of refugees and IDPs mainly as a tool to get some political or propaganda dividends, Artsakh perceived the problem of refugees as humanitarian and tried to alleviate the situation of refugees and IDPs throughout the conflict.

“Unlike oil-rich Azerbaijan, Artsakh did not create tent camps for refugees and did not politicize this issue. To date, our state, without any international support, continues to build houses for the refugees and IDPs who have returned to their former places of residence liberated from occupation,” the minister noted.

Mayilian added that in particular, one of the priority issues in the program of the President of the Artsakh Republic Bako Sahakyan for 2017-2020 is resolving the social problems of the Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan who have found refuge in Artsakh.

“The issue of Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan is constantly in the focus of attention of the authorities of the Republic of Artsakh. Moreover, the protection of their rights and interests is enshrined in the annual programs of the Artsakh Republic Government as one of the important directions of the Republic’s foreign policy,” he added.

year of democratic changes in Armenia. He added that this year the Czech Republic will celebrate the 30th anniversary of its own velvet revolution.

Metnar noted that Armenia is an important partner of the Czech Republic in the South Caucasus and its country is interested in further development of bilateral relations, defense, trade and economic, high technologies and other areas of mutual interest.

The interlocutors discussed issues related to Armenian-Czech cooperation in defense sphere. In this context both sides emphasized the importance of

ensuring regional stability and security.

The sides exchanged views on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement. Nikol Pashinyan expressed gratitude for the balanced position of the Czech Republic in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement, underlining that Armenia sees the settlement of the conflict solely peacefully within the format of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

Metnar, in his turn, added that the Czech Republic supports the peaceful settlement of the conflict and efforts to ensure regional stability.

## Award-Winning Teen Pianist from Malta Performs in Armenia

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Maltese pianist Bernice Sammut Attard, 18, who was in Armenia for the first time within the framework of the project “Days of Maltese Music in Armenia,” stressed the importance of holding bilateral cultural events, on Tuesday, March 26. During her solo recital she performed works by Bach, Beethoven and Chopin, the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra’s press service told Panorama.am.

The pianist mentioned that she had performed the program with great pleasure, because each of the selected pieces was magnificent. She was glad that she had been given an exceptional opportunity to perform at Tchaikovsky Secondary Music School.

“Before coming to Armenia, I knew about renowned composer Aram Khachaturian. I like his music very much. I also saw the performance of Armenian cellist Narek Hakhnazaryan at the International Tchaikovsky competition, and I loved it. It’s a pity that I could not attend his concert in Malta,” said Attard.

The pianist is a participant in the 2018 Young Musicians Eurovision Contest. Her 18-minute recital was broadcast live to about 5 million people across Europe. Her performance was highly praised amongst many local and foreign musicians. She said that the competition was a great experience for her. “It differed from other competitions because it was broadcasted live for 5 million people. I was a bit nervous, but it was nice to see people from other countries gathered in one place,” said the pianist.

She stressed that the most exciting

part of her work is to visit different countries, to learn about their culture.

Before her Armenia concert, she had performed in many countries, including in England, Scotland, Wales, Poland, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Russia.



Bernice Sammut Attard

She noted that she liked the idea of holding “Days of Maltese Music in Armenia”. “It’s easy to learn about any country as the social media develops rapidly these days, but visits and exchange programs are more exciting,” she underlined.

Attard received the second prize at the International Music Competition in Malta in 2017, as well as the honorable prize as the best violinist, and the 3rd prize at the International Piano Competition in Malta as the best pianist. Bernice is now studying at the Royal Conservatory of Scotland with Prof. Fali Pavri. She also studies violin as a second profession with Andrea Gajic.

The aim of the project “Days of Maltese Music in Armenia” is to present Malta’s culture in the country by organizing various cultural events. The project is implemented at the initiative of the European Foundation for Support of Culture and the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra.

## International News

### Italy Parliament Debating Measure on Recognition of Armenian Genocide

ROME (Armenpress) — A motion to recognize the Armenian Genocide is being debated in the Italian Chamber of Deputies, according to which the country’s government will be obliged to officially recognize it and give an international assessment, repubblica.it reported on April 9.

According to the report, the measure has caused Massimo Gaiani, Ambassador of Italy to Ankara, to be summoned to the Turkish Foreign Ministry.

The heads of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy expressed hope that the adoption of the Armenian Genocide recognition initiative will lead to peace between the Armenian and Turkish peoples.

According to them, the purpose of the initiative is first of all to pay tribute to the victims of the crime.

The website notes that on April 8 Italy’s Deputy PM Matteo Salvini made clear assessments over Turkey. “Turkey is not and will never be Europe. The membership process must be halted, it must be stopped completely. As far as I know, Turkey will never ever enter the EU,” said Salvini.

### Erdogan Discusses Bilateral, International Issues with Putin

MOSCOW (news.am) — The presidents of Russia and Turkey, Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, respectively, discussed bilateral and international issues at a meeting in the Kremlin on April 8, TASS reported.

“We had the opportunity (earlier on Monday) to discuss bilateral issues, regional as well as international. At this time, our ministers were able to communicate with their colleagues. Now we have to do a general assessment together,” said Erdogan at a meeting of the Russian-Turkish High-Level Cooperation Council after a bilateral meeting with the Russian leader.

The Turkish president promised to do everything possible to achieve the goals of bilateral cooperation in various fields.

Erdogan noted that their main task is bringing the trade turnover of the Russian Federation and Turkey to the level of \$100 billion, noting that now this figure is \$26 billion.

Erdogan said the number of Russian tourists who visited Turkey last year reached a record 6 million.

### Foreign Minister Visits Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (Armenpress) — Foreign minister of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, during an official visit to Ethiopia, met with the representatives of the local Armenian community on April 4.

The minister thanked the community representatives for the reception and highlighted the community’s importance in Ethiopia’s public-political life and its bridging role in the relations of the two countries.

He praised the role of the community in preserving their national identity.

“During the whole period of the visit we felt the deep respect to Armenians here. We are a nation who always managed to stand firm, create wealth for itself and its communities. And you prove this. And the self-confidence we have towards our country comes from each Armenian who creates what is called a reputation of Armenian. I want to thank you for investing this self-confidence here, in this country. We are more than determined to bridge our countries. You are the first ambassadors of Armenia in Ethiopia. Once again I want to thank you,” Mnatsakanyan said.

The minister introduced the community on Armenia’s foreign policy priorities and government’s action plan which is directed for boosting the economy based on the development of innovation, high technologies and creative education. He also presented Armenia’s approaches and principled stance on the peaceful settlement process of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Before the meeting Mnatsakanyan visited the St. George Armenian Apostolic Church in Addis Ababa.

# Community News

## Man Accused in Toronto Van Attack Faces Mounting Lawsuits from Victims with Traumatic Injuries

By Liam Casey

TORONTO (Canadian Press) — Traumatic brain injuries, spinal fractures and internal bleeding are among the litany of ailments described in a mounting number of lawsuits against a man accused of killing 10 people and injuring 16 others in a van attack in Toronto last year.

Lawyers involved in the suits against Alek Minassian believe the cases, which the court is working to pull together in one large proceeding, will take years to come to a resolution.

On April 23, 2018, police allege Minassian drove a white Ryder rental van south along Yonge Street in the city's north end, hopped the curb and deliberately mowed people down.

While Minassian's criminal case slowly makes its way through the system — his trial on 10 first-degree murder charges and 16 attempted murder charges has been scheduled for February 2020 — the 26-year-old already faces four civil suits, with more expected.

The lawsuits, from the families of one person who died and three who were injured, are seeking millions of dollars from Minassian and Ryder Truck Rental Canada, alleging the devastating injuries and deaths on that day were due to an intentional act by Minassian and negligence on his and the rental company's part.

The unproven civil suits will be fought in the trenches of insurance law.

"This is going to drag on for a long, long time," said Gus Triantafillopoulos, who represents the family of Anne Marie D'Amico, a young woman who died that day and whose family filed a \$1-million suit in January against Minassian and Ryder.

Triantafillopoulos said if the family receives any money through the civil proceedings, it will all be donated to the Anne Marie D'Amico Foundation, which supports women who are victims of violence.

The first suit related to Minassian was filed in November 2018 by Amir Kiumarsi, a chemistry instructor at Ryerson University who is seeking \$6 million in damages.

He suffered a traumatic brain injury and several skull fractures, spinal fractures, traumatic internal injuries including a displaced kidney, and numerous other injuries throughout his entire body, the claim says.

"These injuries have been accompanied by severe physical pain, suffering and a loss of enjoyment of life," the claim alleges, noting that his future holds "numerous surgical and medical assessments, treatments and procedures."

Since Kiumarsi filed his suit, the court is in the process of getting all the cases on one track, documents show.

Another suit was filed in mid-January by Amaresh Tesfamariam and her family, who are seeking \$14 million. Tesfamariam has a complete spinal cord injury, multiple spinal fractures, rib fractures and a traumatic brain injury.

She cannot move her body below her neck, cannot breathe without a machine, suffers a total loss of independence and a "profound and permanent loss of her cognitive ability," according to the claim.

Tesfamariam also has short-term memory loss, depression, anxiety, a "drastic personality change," cannot communicate properly with others, and cannot return to her work as a nurse, the claim alleges.

The latest suit, filed last week by Catherine see MINASSIAN, page 5



Adam Krikorian

## With Another Gold, Adam Krikorian Keeps US Water Polo Team on Top

LOS ANGELES (Associated Press) — Adam Krikorian on April 1 celebrated his 10th anniversary as US women's water polo coach with another championship. A decade after Krikorian was hired, the US is the dominant force of the brutal sport.

By Jay Cohen

On Krikorian's first trip as coach of the US women's water polo team, he lost his players at the airport. Brenda Villa, Heather Petri and company disappeared right after they checked in.

Krikorian was looking around when he figured out what happened. His players had retreated to the lounges reserved for more experienced travelers.

"A couple of them came out and it was like, I felt like a rookie," Krikorian said. "I felt like I was at spring training as a baseball player as a rookie trying to just learn the little subtleties of being part of the team. So those little things are I think the things that I remember most."

Krikorian learned his way around pretty quickly. A few weeks later, he coached the US to the 2009 world title.

In some ways, the world is still trying to catch up.

Four days after his 10th anniversary as national team coach, Krikorian guided the US to gold at the FINA Intercontinental Tournament for the second straight year. Playing without Maggie Steffens after the captain got hurt in the semifinals, the US got two goals apiece from Stefania Haralabidis, Kiley Neushul and Kaleigh Gilchrist in a dramatic 14-12 shootout victory over rival Australia in Perth on Sunday.

Steffens, the MVP of the past two Olympics, was held out after Krikorian said she was "on the wrong end of a cheap shot" in Saturday's 14-7 victory over Canada — something he said has been happening more and more as the US piles up international titles.

"I think people look at it as an opportunity to try to intimidate or do anything they can to kind of get us off our game and obviously that hasn't happened," he said Monday in a phone interview.

"I mean we're looking at probably somewhere upward of 10, 11, 12 just direct shots out of the water to our kids."

Krikorian, 44, played at UCLA and coached the men's and women's teams for the Bruins before taking over the US women's program.

With Krikorian on the pool deck, the US has enjoyed an unprecedented run on top of the sport. It became the first country to win two straight Olympics titles when it rolled over the field in Rio in 2016.

It currently holds every major women's water polo championship and will be a heavy favorite to win a third straight world title in South Korea in July.

Krikorian has come a long way since that first trip.

"I think I'm calmer, No. 1, and I think that's largely because of the perspective I have," he said. "I don't think my competitiveness has died down, but I realize this is not the end all to life."

"I think maybe when I first began it was, you get so caught up in winning and losing and I've become much more process-oriented and I have a better perspective on things."

Tokyo will be Krikorian's third Olympics. He said he hasn't thought about his future beyond that point.

While he wants to make sure he is continually challenged, Krikorian also is appreciative of his current position.

"There is just nothing like being part of a team in sports," he said. "There's just nothing like it. There's the passion, the energy, the camaraderie, the connection and the relationships that you build. I have a hard time imagining that there's any profession in the world that is going to be as satisfying as what I do."

## NAASR's 65th Annual Assembly to Feature Progress on New Headquarters

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) invites the public to attend its 65th Annual Assembly of Members on Saturday, May 4, at First Armenian Church, Nahigian Hall, 380 Concord Ave., convening at noon, with luncheon beginning at 12:15 pm.

This event will feature the progress on NAASR's state-of-the-art headquarters, research center, and global hub for Armenian Studies through the proximity of First Armenian Church to the construction site across the street, as well as through a detailed presentation from NAASR's talented architectural, engineering, and design team of Symmes, Maini & McKee Associates (SMMA), whose president and CEO is Ara Krafian.

NAASR Board Chairman Yervant Chekijian of Watertown will give welcoming remarks and report on the progress of the Building on Our Legacy Campaign as well as other important NAASR initiatives and plans for the future. Following the luncheon, the SMMA team will highlight special design features and progress on NAASR's new headquarters, which will be named the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building in honor of the renowned academic, scholar, historian, and philanthropist.

The luncheon, featured presentation, and NAASR business sessions are open to the public, though only NAASR members with dues paid for the current year are eligible to vote.

Following the luncheon and presentation by the SMMA team, the business session of the Assembly will convene with presentations on NAASR's ongoing activities to advance Armenian Studies, research, and publication. Chekijian will chair the business session, and Stepan Piligian of Westford, Mass., will serve as secretary.

The assembly will also include reports on organizational, informational, academic, and financial matters as well as an election of Directors. In addition, the Assembly's special committees on Nominations, Constitution and Rules, New Business and Resolutions, and Auditing will present their reports.

## John M. Azarian Memorial Scholarship Fund Accepting Applications

MIDLAND PARK, N.J. — The John M. Azarian Memorial Armenian Youth Scholarship Fund announces that it is now accepting scholarship applications for the 2019-2020 academic year.

The John M. Azarian Memorial Armenian Youth Scholarship Fund was formed in 1976 following the untimely death of John M. Azarian, Sr., by his wife, Barbara. The purpose of the scholarship fund is to award scholarships to students of Armenian descent who are attending a college or university in the US in pursuit of an undergraduate degree and who can demonstrate compelling financial need, academic achievement and Armenian cultural and church related activities.

It is the goal of the Azarian Scholarship Fund to assist deserving students with the hope that they will one day return something beneficial to the Armenian community.

Last year, the John M. Azarian Memorial Armenian Youth Scholarship Fund received more than 40 qualified applications. Anyone interested in applying for the 2018-2019 academic year can download an application at [www.azariangroup.com/scholarship.html](http://www.azariangroup.com/scholarship.html) or contact Sephorah Usher at [susher@azarian-group.com](mailto:susher@azarian-group.com). Completed applications must be submitted by June 30.



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

## Armenian American Veterans of Greater Boston

Formerly

The Paul S. Marsoubian Amvets Post 41 of Watertown, MA, announces an academic scholarship program and Selection process for its past, present and deceased members in good standing, of Amvets Post 41.

Applicants must be members in good standing, for at Least three years, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, including those of deceased members Who were in good standing at the time of their demise.

To be eligible for consideration, applications must be Received by April 30 of any given year.

Requests for AAVGB scholarship applications should be directed to and requested of:

**Harold R. Partamian**  
Scholarship Committee Chairman  
6 Apache Trail  
Arlington, MA 02474  
781-641-0002  
Email: apache927@verizon.net

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## Zohrab Center Director Participates in Orthodoxy and Human Rights Seminar

NEW YORK – Dr. Christopher Sheklian, the director of the Eastern Diocese's Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, participated in the first meeting of the Seminar on Orthodoxy and Human Rights, at Fordham University on March 20-22. Convened by Fordham's Orthodox Christian Studies Center, the five-year project pairs scholars and journalists in a study of Orthodoxy and human rights around the world.

The seminar worked with in a broad understanding of Orthodox Christianity, that includes not only Eastern Orthodox but also Oriental Orthodox traditions such as the Armenian Church. For this first meeting, participants came from the United States, Greece, and Russia. While they represented a wide range of disciplines, Sheklian was the only scholar in the group working in the field of Armenian Apostolic Christianity.

The sessions included presentations on the Moscow Patriarchate's promotion of alternative ideas of human rights at the United Nations,

the status of the Coptic Church in Egypt and America, and a discussion with the noted legal historian Samuel Moyn.

Sheklian plans to use the support of the seminar to publish a book on the religious minori-



Diocesan Zohrab Center director Dr. Chris Sheklian with the directors of the Orthodox Christian Studies Center at Fordham University: Dr. George E. Demacopoulos (left) and Dr. Aristotle Papanikolaou (right).

ty rights of Armenians in Turkey, and an article on how the Armenian Church's Christological position might influence the idea of the human person integral to human rights.

The Seminar on Orthodoxy and Human Rights will meet again next year in March. The project is funded by the Henry Luce Foundation and the Leadership 100 Research Project.

## Man Accused in Toronto Van Attack Faces Mounting Lawsuits from Victims with Traumatic Injuries

MINASSIAN, from page 4

Riddell and her family, alleges the "sustained serious and permanent" injuries the woman suffered are the result of negligence on the part of Minassian and the rental company.

Riddell lost consciousness, suffered a brain injury, hurt her head, neck, shoulders, arms, back, legs and arms. She fractured her spine, ribs, pelvis, scapula, and suffered internal injuries including a collapsed lung, the \$3.55-million suit alleges.

She lives with headaches, memory loss, difficulty finding words, dizziness, back and neck pain, loss of mobility, nausea, anxiety, nervousness, insomnia and depression, her claim alleges, noting that she now faces a life of therapy, rehabilitation and medical treatment.

"Her enjoyment of life has been permanently lessened, and she has been forced to forgo numerous activities in which she formerly participated," the claim reads.

Minassian does not yet have legal representation in the civil matters and has not responded

to the claims, according to the documents. His criminal lawyer did not respond to a request for comment.

The lawyers for Ryder, who did not respond to multiple requests for comment, detailed the expected complexities in the litigation in an affidavit filed with the court.

It notes that notice has been given for 12 claims and more are expected. There will be numerous parties in the case, from families of the dead to the injured and the various defendants. There will be examinations for all plaintiffs, and testimony is expected from numerous medical experts.

"It would be safe to assume this matter will require a lengthy trial," said the affidavit.

Kiumarsi's lawyer, Darcy Merkur, said there will be a slew of arguments brought forward.

"One interesting question is this: Is every different person hurt considered a separate accident?" Merkur said. "It's a legal question, but also a philosophical one."

The answer to that question will be important for potential payments, he said.

## OBITUARY

### Edward Onanian

#### Worked for US Department of Labor

EAST GREENWICH, R.I. — Edward Onanian, 82, of East Greenwich, RI passed away surrounded by his family on April 1.

Born in Woonsocket, RI, he was the son of the late Takouhi Donabedian Kjekorian and John C. Onanian.

He leaves his wife of 57 years, Zvart Avedisian Onanian, his daughters Laurie and Deborah

Onanian, son-in-law Eric Stickler, and cherished grandsons, John Edward and Avedis George. He is also survived by his brother, Harry Kjekorian, Jr. In addition he is survived by two



brother and sister in-laws Edward and Pamela Avedisian and Paul and Esta Avedisian, and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his brother and

sister-in-law, Paramaz and Saranelle Avedisian.

Before his retirement, he had a lifelong career at the US Department of Labor in Washington, DC focusing on Labor Management Relations. Career highlights included initiating a program for global economic conferences in Paris, France; being part of an official delegation led by the US Secretary of Labor to Israel; and representing the United States in the Geneva economic conferences.

Onanian graduated from Classical High School (1954), Brown University (1958) summa cum laude, and earned his doctorate degree in Economics from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana.

He was a dedicated and active member of the Armenian church, serving in many capacities over the course of his life. He was known for his honesty and integrity, keen sense of humor and great wit.

The services were held on Saturday, April 6 at Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church, Providence, RI. Burial followed at North Burial Ground, Providence, RI.



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# City of Smile Banquet Is Great Success With Headliner Anna Hakobyan

VISIT, from page 1

of their artistic director Arman Mnatsakanyan. They also performed to a song written specifically for the City of Smile Foundation at the start of the evening while Anna Hakobyan entered the hall. Levon Hovsepien performed the moving Elegy by Arno Babajanian and later accompanied Nerkararyan when she sang Georgi Minasyan's "Siro Hasak."

Koutoujian introduced the cochair of the City of Smile Boston Friends Committee Cynthia Kazanjian and Armine Hovhannissian as two ordinary women, not powerbrokers or celebrities, who nonetheless through their extraordinary strength and willpower managed to bring together our whole community in the struggle against cancer in Armenia and convinced Anna Hakobyan to visit Boston.

Kazanjian explained how she got involved in this issue when a 2016 visit to the Muratsan Clinic revealed children so sick they could not raise their heads off their beds. Kazanjian's 10-



Event Co-Chair Cynthia Kazanjian

year-old grandson Vaughn Krikorian was with her and afterwards out of shock he asked what they could do about this. This moved Kazanjian to act, starting with the Dana-Farber Jimmy Walk for two years. She personally went again to help the Muratsan Clinic as a volunteer in 2017 and found that the needs were indeed enormous.

By coincidence, Fr. Mampre Kouzouian was visiting Armenia at that time and Kazanjian invited him to visit the clinic. A year later, on Fr. Mampre's 60th anniversary of ordination in 2018, he offered to share half of the gifts with the clinic. It turned out to be \$93,000 and Echmiadzin added some money to make it an even \$100,000. Another major donor turned out to be Armenia Fund USA, which donated \$65,000 in the fall of 2018. Its chairman Leon S. Ariyan was present in the audience at the banquet.

Kazanjian stated that her hope was that Armenia could emulate the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital model so that children could be treated whether or not their families can afford it.



Anna Hakobyan, wife of Premier Pashinyan



Anna Hakobyan, the wife of the premier, with members of the Erebuni Dance Ensemble

Vaughn and his younger brother Cole, who also visited the clinic later, were present at the banquet. Cole spoke briefly to the audience and captivantly asked it to support the City of Smile.

Armine Hovhannissian of New Path, partners with Kazanjian in supporting City of Smile, reflected on her search for meaning and pur-

so by a visit to the clinic in 2017, she and others from New Path helped make the banquet and fundraising campaign for Muratsan a success. She concluded praising the community's love and unity, coming together for a common purpose to give life to innocent children in Armenia.

Dr. Gevorg Tamamyan, hematologist and

Yerevan State Medical University, next gave a presentation about the work at Muratsan and the City of Smile Foundation, illustrated with projected images. Instead of relating a sad story, he spoke about success in saving a child who had a tumor in a challenging part of the brain case through a novel therapy. He pointed out that drugs are necessary to cure the children who can be saved and this requires financial support. To save more lives, or more smiles, as in the City of Smile, is saving a world.

Fr. Vasken Kouzouian presented a video from his father Fr. Mampre, who was in Florida and unable to be present in person. Fr. Mampre, he said, was changed by his visit to Muratsan Clinic in Yerevan, meeting the selfless doctors and nurses there led by Dr. Tamamyan. Afterwards, he worked to collect funds to put the hospital on a more solid footing.

Fr. Mampre in his video message said that he met the patients and their mothers and fathers at the Muratsan Clinic, and prayed for them all. After leaving the clinic, he said he wept like a little boy. Fr. Mampre called on the audience to reach out to achieve the goal of Anna Hakobyan's visit, to help the innocent and beautiful young children of Armenia suffering from cancer.

Ester Demirtshyan, executive director of the City of Smile Foundation, then thanked all those present and all donors to the foundation. She recognized the importance of Fr. Mampre's contribution and gave him (via Fr. Vasken) as a present a drawing from the talented Arkady, an 11-year-old beneficiary of the foundation. Diagnosed last December, he passed bravely through difficult times and is doing better, though there is more to come. Demirtshyan said that it should be understood that not only Arkady but every single child who comes to the foundation is talented and important.

Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesyan of Armenia had come from Washington with Hakobyan. He spoke about how the revolution in Armenia turned its image globally into a champion of democratic transformation and nonviolent change. Now, as Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had declared in the Armenian parliament, Nersesyan proclaimed that it is time for an economic revolution. But Nersesyan quickly returned to the theme of the evening, the inspiration of children who battle cancer. He stated that they are our heroes but they also need our support and help. He called for unity in this, just as unity was necessary in the revolution in Armenia.

Then Anna Hakobyan came to the podium to



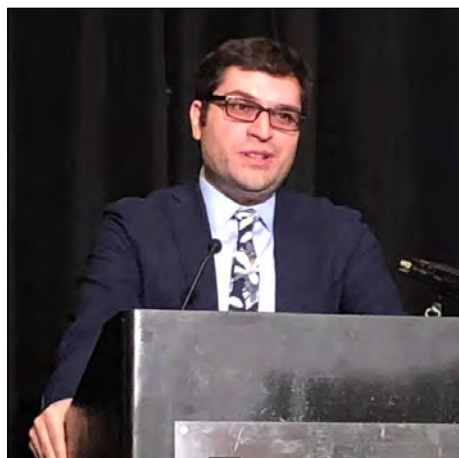
From left, Anna Hakobyan, Arakel Yacubian, Hovhannes Ghazaryan, Dr. Gevorg Tamamyan and Peter Koutoujian

pose in life. In addition to career and family, she found that extending her comfort zone to help others helps put into context personal petty problems. Touched by Cynthia's story and more

pediatric oncologist at the Pediatric Cancer and Blood Disorders Center of Armenia (created by a merger of two institutions this February) and Associate Professor at the Dept of Oncology at



Armine Hovhannissian



Dr. Gevorg Tamamyan





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Hakobyan Meets with Students at MIT, St. Stephen's Elementary School

HAKOBYAN, from page 1

Over an informal lunch on the MIT campus, Hakobyan sat around a large table with about two dozen students and listened to their concerns, comments and suggestions. Much of the discussion took place in Armenian, though some students switched to English.

After the students (many of whom were

of tuition is needed.

"We are taking into consideration the Luys experience. We are here to finance the program," he said.

Others around the table pointed out that the government of Turkey annually fully underwrites the education of about 30 students at top universities in the US, an for

Armenia.

Some of the students suggested more funds from the government, in return for a promise by the students to return to Armenia.

"Let them know how academia functions in America versus Armenia," one said.

One student suggested bringing students

sive way. Now, however, post-Velvet Revolution, "You see envy from leaders. There is a new attitude toward us," she said.

Among the faculty present were Prof. Lerna Ekmekcioglu and Robert Ajemian of MIT, and Lisa Gulesserian of Harvard. The students were led by President of the MIT Armenian Society Siranush Babakhanova and Cristopher Patvakanian, president of the Harvard Armenian Students' Association.

Ekmekcioglu, a historian of the modern Middle East and an affiliate of the Women and Gender Studies Program as well as the Center for International Studies at MIT, thanked Hakobyan for stopping at MIT, in light of her very tight schedule in Massachusetts.

"This is a particularly historic moment," she said, adding "how proud we are as Armenians" with the non-violent revolution.

## Visit to Armenian Elementary School

On the same day, Hakobyan visited St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School in Watertown, accompanied by the Ambassador of Armenia to the US Varuzhan Nersesyan, Ghazaryan and the director of City of Smile Foundation, Ester Demirtshyan.

Hakobyan received a warm welcome from the students, teachers, administration and the pastor of St. Stephen's Church, Rev.



MIT Students and staff with Anna Hakobyan



Anna Hakobyan mingles with SSAES Gr. 1 students.



Anna Hakobyan and Hovhannes Ghazaryan listen to students at MIT. (photo: Aram Arkun)

to the US for shorter periods of time, a year or a semester, thus letting them absorb and in turn disseminate the western educational system. That way, the process will be far less expensive for the government as well as the students.

Yet others suggested that the government share the email addresses of students studying abroad with newcomers so that they could readily find a community away from home.

Hakobyan noted that she could only spoke for herself, rather than her husband, but stressed that she wants Im Kayl (My Step) to continue. "I said from the first day that continuity is very important," she said. Even when her husband is not in power, she said, the organization should still be in place and be passed on to the spouse of the next premier.

In addition, Hakobyan expressed happily that before the Velvet Revolution, when Armenians traveled overseas, especially to the West, they would be treated in a dismissive

Antranig Baljian. Two students greeted Hakobyan with the traditional bread and salt, wearing Armenian national costumes. The rest of the students sang the Armenian National Anthem.

In her welcoming remarks Principal Houry Boyamian spoke about the school, explaining that in the Greater Boston area, where some of the best public and private schools in the US can be found, the school maintains high educational standards to encourage parents to send their children to an Armenian school. She noted that every year, in May, the school organizes a trip for students in grade 5 to Armenia.

The students presented a short program, then Hakobyan and her delegation visited the classrooms and interacted with the students who charmed them with their questions and poetry recitations.

from Armenia, Georgia or the Middle East) and faculty members introduced themselves, Hakobyan addressed them. "I am glad to meet all of you. When I look around I only feel pride" to see representatives of Armenia everywhere. "It shows the strength of our country," she said.

Much of the students' concerns revolved around the cost of education and the implosion of the Luys Foundation, a government-linked entity which raised fund in the private sector. Luys, which had provided funds to deserving Armenian students studying abroad for years, was shuttered after the collapse of the previous regime. She asked the students for their suggestions especially with regard to the My Step (or Im Kayl) Foundation she founded in June 2018, which seems poised to pick up where the disintegrated Luys Foundation left.

Hakobyan was accompanied by Hovhannes Ghazaryan, the executive director of My Step Foundation. Ghazaryan, himself a Luys scholarship recipient, agreed with the students that the need for easier terms for repayment



SSAES K-5 Teaching and Administrative Staff with L-R, Hovhannes Ghazaryan, Fr. Antranig Baljian, Mrs. Hakobyan, Boyamian and Ambassador Nersesyan



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# VEM Ensemble Tour of Detroit, Montreal And Boston Is a Triumph

VEM, from page 1

The Vem Ensemble, established in 2013 by violinist and UCLA Prof. Movses Pogossian, consists of the graduate student Vem Quartet, in residence at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, plus a talented and experienced mezzo-soprano. Vem means “rock” in Armenian, symbolizing the strength and power of this ensemble to bring to life music written by prominent and emerging Armenian composers.

The quartet is the cornerstone of the newly created Armenian Music Program at UCLA. UCLA lends instruments to several of the musicians. It is noteworthy that Ji Eun Hwang’s violin is the “Duke of Alcantara” Stradivarius, a 287-year-old instrument that at one point was owned by Napoleon Bonaparte!

In addition to Triptych, performances usually included pieces from Aram Khachaturian: Valse, from the “Masquerade Suite”; Dance of the Rose Maidens from the “Gayane” ballet; and Lezginka, from the same ballet. Gomidas (Komitas), born Soghomon Soghomonian, was represented by a number of favorites, arranged by Sergey Aslamazyan as Miniatures for String Quartet: *Al Ayloughs* (My Red Shawl), *Karun A* (It Is Spring), *Ambel A* (It Has Become Cloudy), *Chinar Es* (You Are A Poplar Tree), and *Gakavig* (Partridge). There were several melancholy pieces, including Geghuni Chitjian’s *Manushakin* (To the Violet), Edvard Mirzoyan’s *They Say*, and Tigran Mansurian’s *Testament*.



VEM Quartet performing Khachaturian’s Dance of the Rose Maidens at their first outreach concert for students at AGBU Manoogian School in Detroit, MI

Alan Hovhanness’s *Yar Nazani* (Dear Loved One) is a story of love. The work of one non-Armenian classical composer was included—Franz Schubert’s *Quartettsatz, D 703*.

## Detroit

In the Detroit suburb of Southfield, the TCA Greater Detroit Chapter together with St. John Armenian Church Music Guild hosted the VEM

performance on the evening of March 27 at the St. John Church Recreation Center (see accompanying article by Harry A. Kezelian III). This was the first performance of VEM in Michigan, which happens to be a place dear to Prof. Movses Pogossian, as he lived here formerly. Most significantly, this was the world premiere of the *Tekeyan Triptych*.

St. John pastor Fr. Aren Jebejian spoke words of welcome after which Pogossian presented the background of VEM Ensemble. He gratefully spoke about the assistance of TCA Central Board president Edmond Y. Azadian. He presented the varied backgrounds of the members of the ensemble, none of whom are Armenian.

Violinist Ji Eun Hwang is from Korea while second violinist Aiko Jimena Richter is from Baltimore. Violist Morgan O’Shaughnessy, who has his own website



“Having the opportunity to meet and speak with Nora brought deeper meaning to the texts of the Triptych for me. She was well known for her recitations of Tekeyan’s poetry, and hearing her recite the text of the first movement before I sang was an amazing experience.” —Danielle Segen

## VEM Ensemble Wows Detroit Armenian Community

By Harry A. Kezelian III

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

DETROIT — On Wednesday, March 27, a relatively small but enthusiastic crowd of Metro Detroit Armenians welcomed the VEM Ensemble of the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music to the Armenian-American Veterans Building in Southfield. Mostly composed of church choir singers, local musicians and music lovers, and members and friends of the Tekeyan Cultural Association, which co-sponsored the event with the St. John Armenian Church Music Guild, the attendees were on the edges of their seats wondering exactly what kind of program they were going to witness. They knew the group was affiliated with a major university, that the musicians were young and not necessarily of Armenian extraction, and that newly commissioned works involving the poetry of Vahan Tekeyan would be presented. These factors, unusual for a classical music concert sponsored by the Armenian community, contributed to an aura of interest and anticipation prior to the start of the performance.

And the performers did not disappoint. Danielle Segen, mezzo-soprano; Ji Eun Hwang, first violin; Aiko Richter, second violin; Morgan O’Shaughnessy, viola and Jason Pegis, cello, were all enthusiastic and lively performers. They performed the works of Armenian composers with the deep feeling and emotion that is characteristic of all Armenian music, both classical and folk.

Aram Khachaturian’s Dance of the Rose Maidens introduced the concert with sprightly, Russian-Gypsy feel that is often characteristic of the composer’s work. Gomidas’ arrangement of *Al Ayloughs* performed a little too technically here, gave way to a true Gomidasian interpretation of *Ampel A* with the profundity and mysticism his works are known for. At this point, vocalist Segen appeared on stage and began with a little-known work by Armenian female composer G. Chitjian, a folksong-like vocal piece called “Manushakin.” Her charming presentation of this song, we were told, had brought the composer to tears when the same singer performed it in Armenia. Eduard Mirzoyan’s *They Say...* in a very operatic style, was followed by another instrumental, Khachaturian’s Valse from the *Masquerade Suite*. This well-known piece was vigorously presented by the string quartet, led by the energetic violinists and I would assume that they, like myself, had been familiar with the melody from childhood due to its common use in film scores.

The second part of the program began with the quartet performing Gomidas’ *Chinar Es*, in which the cellist, Pegis, was given one of his rare moments to shine, and show great technical form. The children’s song *Kaqavik* followed, in a bright and cheery interpretation of this Gomidas composition, whose lilting strains took the writer immediately back to his time in the countryside of Armenia, where he first learned the song.

At this point, the much awaited Tekeyan songs followed, and we learned that we were to be treated to the world premiere of these

pieces, commissioned by the TCA in honor of longtime pillar of the organization, Nora Azadian, who was present in the seat of honor closest to the stage. Azadian knew the “Prince of Poets” personally during her childhood in Egypt, as he was a friend and political ally of her grandfather, notable freedom fighter Mihran Damadian, with whom he founded the ADL in Istanbul in 1921. Not only did she know Tekeyan, but Mrs. Azadian is an accomplished reciter of his poetry — a talent she learned from the man himself. In a truly historic moment, Edmond Azadian, well known leader in the ADL and TCA, led his wife to the stage to recite the first poem that would be sung. The room held its breath as she launched into her ardasanoutiun of “*Es Siretsi*,” bringing a swell of emotion to the crowd. Segen having returned to the stage, visibly moved by Mrs. Azadian’s emotional reaction, took a breath and began to sing the words that had just been read. The composition, by A. Kartalian, was truly incredible and matched Tekeyan’s poetry itself in depth and intensity. The melody and arrangement were contemporary, but managed to avoid the clichéd aspects of today’s film scores and other commonly heard contemporary classical music. One felt the words of Tekeyan floating in the atmosphere. The arrangement of “*Papaq*” was done well, but did not have the profundity of the first, and the final song, “*Hashvehardar*” though it had some drawbacks, was able to completely capture the conversational style of the poem upon which it was based. From the time Segen began with the first song, the writer stole glances at Mrs. Azadian for a reaction. The tears in her eyes, deeply moving, testified to the highest seal of approval possible today for this work, and added to the poignancy of the evening.

The evening’s entertainment closed with an American-Armenian production, the well known *Yar Nazani* of Alan Hovhannes, set to a folksy narrative poem by Hamasdegh, both based in Boston in the mid-20th century. Segen showed her understanding of the Armenian words she was singing in her vivacious and sly, winning presentation of this flirtatious love song.

The students are all part of UCLA’s Armenian Music Program, where in exchange for scholarships, they are required to participate in learning Armenian classical pieces under the tutelage of violin maestro Movses Pogossian, whose teaching skills were evident in the dynamic performance that was witnessed in Detroit, and who served as the charming MC of the evening. They are further required to tour to several destinations for these performances, including Armenia, in order to spread appreciation of the Armenian classical composers.

The evening ended with a buffet style reception in the adjoining room, where the local community members expressed their great appreciation and enjoyment to the artists, who came and mingled with the crowd. This writer was able to engage in conversation with the violist, O’Shaughnessy, who, as it turns out, is equally active in Celtic/Irish folk music. No doubt his folklore background added to his ability, along with the others, to add the appropriate emotion to the works of the Armenian composers.

As the crowd dispersed outside into the fresh air of a cool spring evening, a feeling of satisfaction was visible from all who attended. The art of music had truly done its job of soothing the soul for this group of discriminating Detroit music lovers.

(<https://www.moshalto.com/>), is from northern California but works as a professional musician in Los Angeles, and cellist Jason Pegis studied in Montreal’s McGill University before coming to UCLA for a doctoral program. Mezzo-soprano Danielle Segen (<http://segen-voice.com/danielle.html>), who travels the world from her base in Los Angeles, amazed the audience with her excellent Armenian pronunciation and expressive singing. (For brief biographies, see the March 2 edition of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.)

The excitement of the audience reached its peak when Pogossian invited Nora Azadian, honorary chairman of the TCA Greater Detroit Chapter, who personally knew Vahan Tekeyan, to the stage. She is well known for her recitations of Tekeyan’s poetry. Despite her advanced age, she recited *Yes siretsi* (I Loved) to great applause. The performance concluded with Edmond Azadian’s words of praise of the ensemble and expression of thanks to the two organizing committees.

The VEM Ensemble also presented a brief performance to students at the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School in Southfield, Michigan at noon of the same day.

*continued on next page*



VEM Ensemble with leaders of the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School and Tekeyan Cultural Association in Detroit after the outreach concert



COMMUNITY NEWS

# VEM Ensemble Dazzles Montreal Community

The VEM Ensemble arrived in Montreal on March 28 to be hosted by the TCA Montreal Chapter as part of the latter's fiftieth anniversary celebrations this year. The next morning the group visited the Armenian General Benevolent Union Alex Manoogian School and were received by Principal Chahé Tanachian. They offered a short but informative performance at the Arshavir and Nadya Gundjian Hall (where the eponymous Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, a member of the TCA Central Board, was present) with explanations provided by Pogossian. The AGBU Manoogian students surprised VEM with a performance of their own, led by Artur Margossian.

After a tour of snow-covered wintery led by TCA Central Board member Arto Berge Manoukian, the group gave their main performance in the Tekeyan Center's Haroutiun and Sima Arzoumanian Hall to an audience of several hundred.



Ensemble performs at Montreal's Tekeyan Center to a packed crowd (photo: Berj Merdjanian)



The VEM Ensemble performing at the Montreal Tekeyan Center (photo: Berj Merdjanian)



VEM playing selections from Gomidas's "Fourteen Songs" for students at the Armen-Quebec Alex Manoogian School in Montreal



Tekeyan Montreal event organizers with the VEM Ensemble (photo: Berj Merdjanian)



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**SUNDAY, APRIL 28 AT 2:00 P.M.**

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**FREE BUS TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM TIMES SQUARE**

Call: Jirair 978-376-8285, Pierre: 617-417-5303, or Greg: 617-519-6237 for reservations

**Complimentary Lunch and Refreshments - Reservation Required**

**SPONSORED BY: Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge # 1**

For more info: please visit [www.knightsofvartan.org](http://www.knightsofvartan.org)

Buses leave at: **9:30 AM** from Armenian Cultural & Education Center, 47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown  
**10:00 AM** from the Worcester location at Rt-146 & Mass Pike Park & Ride

SPONSOR	PARTICIPANTS	TUNE IN LIVE
Knights and Daughters of Vartan	Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Church Armenian Missionary Association of America Armenian Catholic Eparchy of US and Canada ACVOA, AGBU YPGNY, Armenian Network of Greater NY, AYF Chapters of NY & NJ, NY ASA, Homenetmen Scouts, Armenian Schools, Youth & Professional Organizations, University and College Clubs	WATCH: <a href="http://WWW.ARMEIANRADIONJ.NET">WWW.ARMEIANRADIONJ.NET</a> LISTEN: WSOU 89.5 FM <a href="http://WWW.KOFV.ORG/MAIN/APRIL282019">WWW.KOFV.ORG/MAIN/APRIL282019</a>



**WE REMEMBER  
AND DEMAND**

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO THE  
DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN)  
117<sup>TH</sup> DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

*Gala Banquet*

V. REV. FR. DANIEL FINDIKYAN, PRIMATE  
PRESIDING

HONORING DIOCESAN AWARD RECIPIENTS

*Armenians of the Year*

EDWARD<sup>†</sup> (OF BLESSED MEMORY)  
AND NANCY GULESERIAN,  
AND CHILDREN KRISTINE AND MICHAEL  
and  
*Friend of the Armenians*

DR. HELEN EVANS  
Curator for last year's ARMENIA! Exhibit at  
the Metropolitan Museum of Art

HOSTED BY  
ST. JAMES ARMENIAN CHURCH  
**FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2019**  
BOSTON MARRIOTT BURLINGTON

7 PM | COCKTAIL HOUR  
8 PM | DINNER & PROGRAM

\$125 per person.  
Advance reservations only by Monday, April 25th.  
Reservations may be made in the church office or  
online at [www.stjameswatertown.org](http://www.stjameswatertown.org).  
617.923.8860 | [assembly@stthago.com](mailto:assembly@stthago.com)





## COMMUNITY NEWS

armenian  
museum  
of americaart  
culture  
eternity

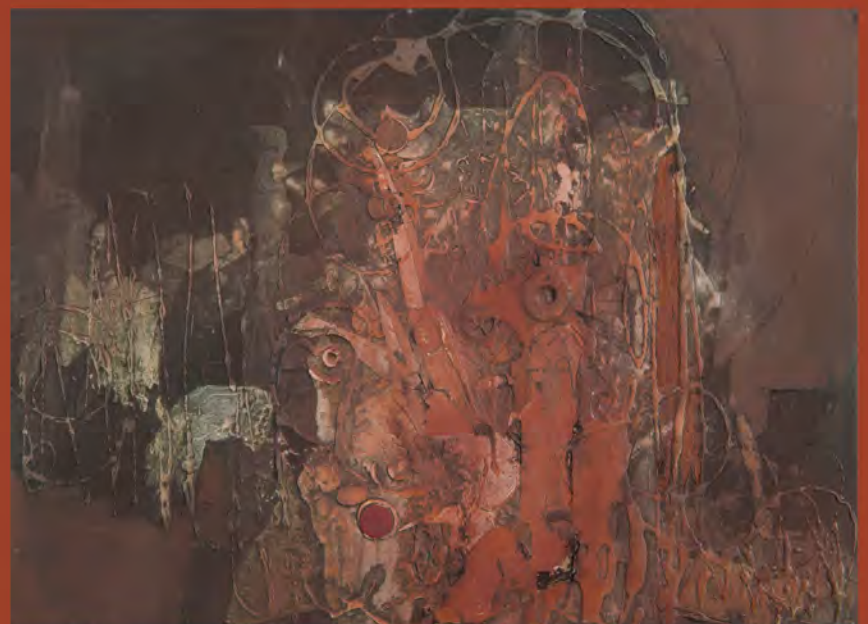
The Armenian Museum presents a new exhibition that explores the intertwined lives of diplomat Diana Apcar (1859–1937) and artist Berj Kailian (1914–2014).

## In the Shadow of Branches

Diana Apcar | Berj Kailian



Diana Apcar with husband Michael, 1890



Untitled, mixed media on masonite, about 1970, Berj Kailian



Untitled, mixed media on masonite, about 1970, Berj Kailian



Diana Apcar with family in her backyard in Yokohama, Japan, 1920

### AN UNTOLD STORY

Find out how a de facto Armenian diplomat living in Japan helped hundreds of Armenian refugees from the Genocide immigrate to the United States. See paintings from the Museum's collection by Berj Kailian, who was five years old when Diana reached out to unite her with her family in Massachusetts in 1919.

### OPENING RECEPTION & GALLERY TALK:

April 24, 2019, 6–8:30 pm

**6 pm:** Candlelight gallery viewing to observe Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, 1st floor

**7 pm:** Reception and gallery talk, Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor

JOIN US AS WE GROW... BECOME A MEMBER!



Armenian Museum of America • 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472  
617.926.2562 ext.4 [armenianmuseum.org](http://armenianmuseum.org)



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# VEM Ensemble Thrills Boston Audiences

In Boston, the VEM Ensemble gave a full performance on March 31 at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, which served as local cosponsor along with the newly reorganizing TCA Boston Chapter. TCA Central Board Executive Director Aram Arkun introduced Pogossian, who immediately established an intimate rapport with his audience. He explained the origins of the VEM Ensemble, introduced its members and provided the necessary context to understand the music being performed.

As at all the prior performances, the audience reaction was powerful and immediate. The beautiful and mystic atmosphere of the church combined with excellent acoustics amplified the effect of the music.

Cohost Fr. Vasken A. Kouzouian of Holy Trinity in his closing remarks marveled at the virtuosity of the performers and expressed pride in hearing Armenian music performed at such a high level by non-Armenian musicians. He exclaimed that if these were for the most part graduate students, he could not imagine how much greater they would be later on in their careers and invited them to come to Boston again. Impressed audience members repeatedly have been asking the organizers to bring the VEM Ensemble back soon.

VEM conducted a community outreach visit to St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School on April 1. Principal Houry Boyamian introduced the ensemble and Pogossian to the students. As they all understood Armenian, he switched quickly to this language and made the meeting a lively one, frequently asking the students questions and providing explanations. At the end the students got to be the ones asking him questions. Boyamian thanked VEM and TCA for the wonderful afternoon.

TCA members took the VEM members to see the Armenian Museum of America that same day, where they were given an impromptu tour by Director of Finance and Building Operations Berj Chekijian. Afterwards, they were taken to see Armenian Heritage Park, and ended their Boston trip at Faneuil Hall.

Considering the high quality and great impact of VEM and the immediate and powerful demand of the audiences for return performances, the Tekeyan Cultural Association announces that it will try to arrange another tour when feasible. In the meanwhile, there are still two more concerts sponsored by TCA in the Los Angeles region which can be enjoyed by West Coast audiences, at Abril Bookstore with the TCA Los Angeles Chapter on April 27 at 7:30 p.m. (for tickets, call 818 243-4112 or go to [itsmyseat.com/abrilbooks](https://itsmyseat.com/abrilbooks)) and at the TCA Beshgeturian Center (1901 N. Allen Ave., Altadena, Calif.) on May 19 at 6 p.m. (free admission).

VEM is also going to Armenia in June and recording the Tekeyan Triptych for a CD soon. Even more ambitiously, there is a movement to turn the UCLA Armenian Music Program into an endowed center promoting Armenian music in the United States and abroad on a much greater scale, and encompassing traditional folk music and other genres besides classical. Armenian community financial support for this would be most helpful.

For more video clips of VEM in performance, see the Armenian Mirror-Spectator's YouTube site (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFWDNjw6daUNMvX66D58tnA/videos>)



The VEM Ensemble at Holy Trinity Armenian Church, with Aram Arkun and Fr. Vasken Kouzouian at far right



Professor Movses Pogossian making a point to the children at St. Stephen's Armenian School in Watertown (photo: Aram Arkun)



The VEM Ensemble performing at St. Stephen's Armenian School with Professor Movses Pogossian in the background (photo: Aram Arkun)

## To the Editor

**BRAVO** to Ms. Rebecca Bakalian Hachikian for her Letter to the Editor of the *Mirror Spectator*.

Time has come for Mr. James Kalustian to resign.

Today, not in May.

**Hirant Gulian,  
Prominent Benefactors,  
Community Parish Members**

FRIENDS OF THE ARMENIAN CULTURE SOCIETY

## 68th Annual ARMENIAN NIGHT AT THE POPS

Featuring  
**LAURA NAVASARDIAN,  
CELLO**



and  
**BOSTON POPS ORCHESTRA**  
**JACOMO BAIROS,  
CONDUCTOR**

plus...  
**A SYMPHONIC JOURNEY**  
across Europe with  
*Rick Steves, America's  
leading authority on  
European travel.*

FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2019 at 8PM  
SYMPHONY HALL, BOSTON

TICKETS & INFORMATION:  
[WWW.FACSBOSTON.ORG](http://WWW.FACSBOSTON.ORG)



# Arts & Living

## An Evening of Laughter and Inner Satisfaction

By Cecile Keshishian

PASADENA — On Sunday, March 31, three guests and I attended Taleen Babayan's original, beautiful play "Where Is Your Groom?" at the Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Performing Arts Center.

The 600 seats were filled, something we had never encountered before at that venue. Many people had to return as the show was sold-out.

Not only did Taleen write the play, she also was the director and the producer. An American-born Armenian from the East Coast, she grew up in a very solid Armenian intellectual home and presented us with this jewel of a play that depicts the mentality of Armenian parents towards their children, as they are raised in a Diasporan community, desiring for their children to marry an Armenian so they can preserve their identity.

She shows in the play, through satire, how the in-laws interact with each other; how the wedding should be planned; how their future grandchildren will be raised. And each party insists it should be their way, ignoring completely the ideas or wishes of the most important person — the bride-to-be. Each side is pushing their own ideas, whether it is the dress the bride has to wear, the music that has to play at the wedding and everything in between.

In this world we don't only need doctors as the grooms for Armenian brides. In this world, we need it all: the doctors, the lawyers, the engineers, the politicians, and the artists. Because the artists are the ones who observe and serve these observations back to the community in order for it to evolve and enhance. In that way, we have to thank and congratulate Taleen, for bringing her part - through her talent and play to the Los Angeles Armenian community.

At times these important messages are delivered most directly and most easily through satire and comedy. This is what the writer Hagop Baronian did in 19th-century Constantinople when he highlighted the flaws of the city's society life and influential figures in Armenian social circles through his sense of humor.

It was a huge creative undertaking Babayan began six years ago when she gathered a group of young Armenians with diverse backgrounds at the Players Theatre in New York City's historic Greenwich Village to stage a theatrical story that conveyed the voice of their generation. What was meant to be a one-time production swelled to 15 performances across the country, where thousands enjoyed the humor and the message of the play. Responding to positive feedback, Taleen debuted Part II at Columbia University's Miller Theatre in 2017, where again the venue was filled to capacity.

In addition to the laughter during the play, there was a sense of meaning. The continuous uproars of laughter were unstoppable. Everyone, for sure, was enjoying the evening!

What has happened behind the curtains was equally important to the action that took place on the stage. Performers met, friendships formed and couples married. And the Diasporan Armenian theater life was rejuvenated, from New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles, Washington D.C. and all the way to Pasadena. I also was lucky to have met and married my husband at the AGBU Cultural Club in Beirut, Lebanon. Clubs, theatre groups, and all kinds of activities are great venues to meet and marry your future partner.

Growing up in Beirut, Lebanon, our parents always taught us the importance of service, particularly to the Armenian community. As orphans of the Armenian Genocide, they understood very well the significance of carrying on a rich and storied history that had come close

see LAUGHTER, page 16



Sheree Hovsepian

## Sheree Hovsepian and Paul Mpagi Sepuya Take Over Venice Beach

VENICE BEACH, Ca. (Garage.vice.com) — In Team Bungalow's backyard space in Venice Beach, a two-person exhibition of wall works by Sheree Hovsepian and Paul Mpagi Sepuya engage transcendent abstractions of the body. Stepping off the residential street, into the yard of a bungalow, I found a poignant show located between the ginkgo and pine trees.

By Haley Mellin

In a series of aptly sequenced wall works, both artists engage the photograph in a self-aware manner, using the camera as an apparatus of reflexivity. There's no hiding how the work was made. The show is exquisitely selected, as though these two artists had been in a long conversation while making the works. Mutual interests crop up throughout the exhibition as Hovsepian and Sepuya share the denial of the traditional photograph.

Both artists ground their photography in the studio. For Hovsepian, the studio locates a place for her to interact with the materiality of silver gelatin photographic paper, and to form photographic prints into a wall based montage. At times, she photographs her sister as a physical proxy for herself and the studio is the location for this experimentation and manipulation. In Sepuya's work, he uses the studio as a character of his narrative and invites people to interact with his physical self and his proxy, the camera.

Hovsepian's silver gelatin photographs and photograms, both analog methods of photography, are held in place by the tension of stretched nylon, culminating in bas relief curves. The layered material surfaces of the work parallel the very interfaces that constitute photography and corporeality. Hovsepian's prints are imbued with aspects of performance and drawing as the light-sensitive paper records her movements in the darkroom into the final photograph. Her body is mapped within the space of the darkroom when making the photographs, the images revealing a visually recorded performance. She positions the abstract photograms alongside black and white photos of portions of the body, and these are both obscured and revealed throughout the scrim of nylon and encased in a walnut frame.

Underlining his reflexive practice, Sepuya drapes a backdrop of traditional dark velvet to create the intimacy and atmosphere of the darkroom. In examining the historical tropes and ambiance of the studio portrait, Sepuya references the homoerotic photograph in his composition of cameras, mirrors, bodies, and fabric. The historical positions of the body in photography are looked at, swapped, and played with in a way that is both serious and coy. Framing the camera with a mirror, his compositions delineate a space of portraiture and the encounter between lens and subject. Like Hovsepian, his methods illustrate the photographic process and its byproducts.

Exposure occupies an assertive position, literally and figuratively, within both artists' practices. The works alternate between concealing and revealing aspects of their construction and locate vulnerability and empowerment in the layers of

see HOVSEPIAN, age 14

## Landmark Armenian History Volumes From the 1780s Donated to NAASR

BELMONT, Mass. — On March 12, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) received a rare first-edition set in excellent condition of the landmark work *Patmut'iwn Hayots'* (History of the Armenians) by Fr. Mikayel Chamchian (1738-1823), published in Venice in 1784-86, from donor Edward Simsarian of Worcester, whose family had protected these volumes for well over a century.

Father Chamchian was born in Constantinople in 1738, and became an Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist priest, educator, and writer, publishing this three-volume *History* in Venice in the 1780s.

"Not since Movses Khorenatsi was there such a comprehensive and systematic treatment of Armenian history in its entirety," noted Dr. Razmik Panossian in his book *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*, calling it "the definitive Armenian history text in this formative period of mass national identity" and remarking that "Chamchian's book remained the most authoritative source on the subject until the end of the nineteenth century."

How these volumes survived for over 230 years including the time of turbulence, destruction, and massacres in the late Ottoman Empire and made it to the United States is testament to the reverence and prescience of the Simsarian family for preserving Armenian history for generations to come. "We are truly honored to receive Chamchian's *History* and for NAASR to be the last stop on this book's very long journey," said NAASR's Director of Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian. "The story of the continued existence of these books is in many ways emblematic of Armenian survival and rebirth after the destruction of their ancestral homeland."

The books came into Edward Simsarian's hands from his father, the late Dicran Simsarian, who was born in Dikranagerd/Diarbekir in 1890. As a young boy at the age of six, Dicran saw his father hiding these precious volumes in tin boxes in their



Edward Simsarian

home in Dikranagerd to save them from impending destruction. As Dicran Simsarian wrote, in an account in his own words provided to NAASR:

About the year 1896 when I was living with my parents in Dikranagerd (Diarbekir, Turkey) ... because of a rumor that the Turks were searching all the homes for guns and literary material, [my father] physically burned a large amount of books in our court yard. He saved these three volumes and an atlas which he had in specially made tin boxes.

The second floor of our home was layered with dirt and covered with a beautiful oriental rug. The room must have been 20' x 30'. I remember one day he dug the dirt on the second floor, buried the three tin boxes of books in the floor and covered same with the oriental rug. A few years later after he died when we were preparing to immigrate to America I reminded my mother that father had buried

see NAASR, page 14



## Landmark Armenian History Volumes Donated to NAASR

NAASR, from page 13

three books in the floor. We dug up the boxes and entrusted them to Mardig Agigian and his wife Lucia who was my aunt’s daughter.



Cover of *Patmut'wn Hayots'*

We knew they were coming to the United States and we asked them to bring the books with them.

It must have been 1908 when a constitutional form of government was established in Turkey and the inhabitants were permitted to depart. I am

not sure of the date, but during that period the Agigians came to the United States and true to their promise brought the books and delivered them to us ... These books have been in our home ever since.

### Handed Down from Father to Son

Dicran Simarian went on to become a lawyer in New York City and was for decades very involved in Armenian affairs, particularly the AGBU and ADL/Ramgavar party. He died in New Jersey in 1978.

His son Edward Simsarian graduated from Princeton in 1945 and also became a lawyer and partner in the firm of Tashjian & Simsarian LLP in Worcester. Several years ago, he entrusted some of his father’s files and papers to the NAASR library and gave the atlas to Harvard University.

A strikingly vigorous nonagenarian, he welcomed Mamigonian at his office in Worcester on March 12 and handed over these precious volumes.

### Honoring a Remarkable Past

Many books in NAASR’s Mardigian Library tell amazing stories, not just in the contents in the books’ pages, but also the journeys of the books themselves – from publishers and printers in Constantinople, Tiflis (Tbilisi), Jerusalem, Venice and many other centers of Armenian culture in historic Armenia and the diaspora, over the course of hundreds of years, through booksellers in “the old world” and in America, to bookshelves in homes and in libraries, and finally to NAASR.

Although the vast majority of rare books in NAASR’s Mardigian Library are in safe archival storage while its new headquarters is under construction, NAASR continues to add to its holdings through donations from the community and acquisitions, all of which are processed, catalogued, and when necessary repaired by NAASR’s Library Curator Ani Babaian.

For more information about the Mardigian Library, visit [www.naasr.org](http://www.naasr.org).

## Sheree Hovsepien and Paul Mpagi Sepuya Take Over Venice Beach

HOVSEPIAN, from page ?

information. Hovsepien explained, “I’ve always been interested in finding myself within a space. I grew up as an immigrant in Ohio, I was always very aware of my body, myself and my person.” She said, “Sometimes I felt like I would try to minimize myself or I would try to hide. A lot of my practice is about regaining space and finding a space for myself and defining that.”

“Sheree Hovsepien and Paul Mpagi Sepuya” runs from March 17th through April 21st, 2019 at Team Bungalow, Venice, California. This is the first two-person show at the location. Hovsepien has an upcoming solo show at Higher Pictures, New York, in May. Paul Mpagi Sepuya is in the upcoming Whitney Biennial and has a current show at Team Gallery, New York, until April 13.

# Recipe Corner

Guest Recipe

by Christine Vartanian Datian

## Heart-Healthy Kufteh

Contributed by Robyn and Douglas Kalajian



### MEECHOOG (FILLING) INGREDIENTS

- Yield: About 10, depending on the size of your hands.  
2 large onions, finely chopped  
3 to 4 tablespoons olive oil  
1 bunch flat-leaf parsley, washed, stems removed, finely chopped  
Ground coriander, allspice, black pepper, salt, paprika, season to taste  
3/4 pound ground turkey breast (97% lean)  
(Note: Make this ahead of time and chill)

### MEECHOOG PREPARATION

1. Sauté onions in olive oil until soft.
2. Stir in the chopped parsley and seasonings.
3. In a separate skillet, spray vegetable spray. Brown the ground turkey breast until it is no longer pink.
4. Combine the cooked turkey with the onion mixture. Adjust seasonings, if necessary.
5. Place in large bowl, cover, and refrigerate until ready to use.

### SHELL INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 to 2 pounds ground turkey (93% lean)  
1 1/2 cups #1 (fine) bulgur  
1 egg, beaten  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
Ground coriander, to taste  
Salt, to taste  
Water (for mixing)  
Bowl of ice water (to keep hands cold)

### SHELL DIRECTIONS

1. Combine ground turkey, bulgur, egg, oil and seasonings. Mix thoroughly with your hands.
  2. To make the shell, take enough of the mixture to resemble the size of a large egg.
  3. Make an indentation with your thumb, pressing until the shell is as thin as you can make it without it falling apart.
  4. Place about one heaping tablespoon of the filling in the indentation.
  5. Dip hands in water.
  6. Continue to shape shell carefully, making sure shell holds together and the filling doesn’t come through.
  7. Continue the shaping process until all of the filling and shell mixtures are used up.
  8. Cover and chill shaped kuftehs until ready to cook.
- (NOTE: If you have leftover filling (meechoog), it can be incorporated into an omelet. Leftover shell ingredients can be rolled into balls and cooked along with the rest of the kufteh.)
- SPECIAL NOTE: For an extraordinary treat, you can make Armenian-style Meat 'Burritos' using phyllo dough and meechoog portion of the kufteh recipe.

### TO COOK:

1. Fill a large pot 2/3 full of water. Bring to a rolling boil and add 1 tablespoon of salt.
2. Carefully lower a few kuftehs at a time into the water and reduce heat to medium.
3. Do not crowd the pot. When kufteh rises to the top, allow them to cook a few minutes longer to make sure the shell is thoroughly cooked.
4. Remove with a slotted spoon to drain excess liquid.
5. Keep warm until all are cooked.

### TO SERVE:

Serve with plain yogurt, a chopped salad, assorted cheeses, chopped parsley and onions, and fresh pita bread or lavash.

### LEFTOVER, COOKED KUFTEH SUGGESTION:

Slice remaining cooked, chilled kufteh in half horizontally. Dip in the egg. Cook in a lightly greased skillet (PAM) until egg is set and kufteh is heated through. Serve with slice tomatoes, chopped parsley, red onions, cucumbers, red pepper or Aleppo pepper.



The Kalajians at [www.thearmeniankitchen.com](http://www.thearmeniankitchen.com) have been experimenting with some of their favorite traditional recipes to reduce fat and cholesterol. Here, they’ve taken the traditional recipe for kufteh – Armenian stuffed meatballs – and replaced the ground lamb and butter with ground turkey and olive oil. We think these results are very good as it introduces a healthy alternative to many people today. Try it soon. If you still prefer the old style, just substitute ground lamb or beef for turkey – but be sure the meat for the outer shell is very lean and ground three times. To see the Kalajians’ latest how-to-video for this recipe, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUZmKVCbcGU>

Go to: <https://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/2014/11/armenian-meat-burritos-or-whole-wheat.html>



ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

ARIZONA

**APRIL 15 — Genocide Awareness Program featuring presenters Prof. Taner Akçam and Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian.** Dr. Akçam will discuss the Armenian Genocide including his evidence of Turkish denials which he covers in his latest book, Killing Orders. Der Mugrdechian’s topic will be Genocide in the 21st Century: Turkey and Armenia. Monday, 1 p.m. Scottsdale Community College, 9000 E. Chaparral Road, Scottsdale. Admission is free and open to the public. Dr. Akçam will sign copies of Killing Orders following the program. Speakers are sponsored by St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church.

CALIFORNIA

**APRIL 7 — Heghnar Watenpaugh, “The Missing Pages: The Modern Life of a Medieval Manuscript from Genocide to Justice,”** Sunday, 4 p.m., at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum. Co-sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

**APRIL 22 — 7:30 p.m.: Hans-Lukas Kieser, “Talat Pasha: Father of Modern Turkey, Author of Genocide,”** at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, 15105 Mission Hills Road, Mission Hills, CA. Co-sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Nor Serount Cultural Association, Hamazkayin Educational and Cultural Society, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

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

**APRIL 28 — Christina Maranci, “The Art of Armenia: An introduction,”** at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum. Co-sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). 4 p.m.

**MAY 4 and MAY 5 — 2nd Feminist Armenian Studies Workshop: Gendering Resistance and Revolution,** at the University of California, Irvine. Co-sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR)/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Topics.

**MAY 5 — Mathew Karanian, “The Armenian Highland: Western Armenia and the First Armenian Republic of 1918,”** 4 p.m.at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, 15105 Mission Hills Road, Mission Hills, CA. Co-sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Kharpert Cultural Association, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

**MAY 19 — 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. 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. Tekeyan Cultural Association, Pasadena-Glendale Chapter, TCA Beshgeturian Center, 1901 North Allen Ave., Altadena. For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com.

CONNECTICUT

**APRIL 27 — Connecticut Commemoration of the 104th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.** Connecticut Hall of the House at the State Capitol, 210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford. 11 a.m. Speaker will be Salpi Ghazarian, director of the University of Southern California’s Institute of Armenian Studies. Her topic will

be Looking to the Future Without Forgetting the Past. Please arrive by 10:30 a.m. to clear security and be seated. Reception and refreshments to follow.

MASSACHUSETTS

**APRIL 20– Annual Procession and Raising of the Armenian Flag at Lowell City Hall in commemoration of the 104th** anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Procession to be led by the Lowell Armenian-American Veterans Honor Guard. Participants should meet at the corner of Merrimack and John Sts. in Lowell at 9:30 a.m. Sponsored by the Armenian National Committee, Merrimack Valley (ANCMV) with the participation of all area Armenian Churches and Organizations.

**APRIL 24 — Armenian Heritage Park Armenian Genocide** Commemoration, 7 to 9 p.m. Bus transportation available. Reserve by April 22. Bostonagcc@gmail.com

**APRIL 24 — Save the Date! “In the Shadow of Branches: Diana Apcar/Berjouhi Kailian.** The Armenian Museum. In recognition of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. 6–8.30 pm. The Armenian Museum presents a new exhibition in the Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries that explores the intertwined lives of diplomat Diana Agabeg Apcar (1859–1937) and artist Berjouhi Kailian (1914–2014). The Armenian Museum wishes to engage in meaningful dialogue around this solemn subject that permeates Armenian experience around the world. Candlelight viewing of the galleries followed by a discussion of the traumatic effects of the Genocide to remember the victims, survivors, and individuals who chose to intervene.

**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, or log onto [www.htaac.org/calendar/event/622/](http://www.htaac.org/calendar/event/622/).

**APRIL 30 — Panel, “Bucking the Trend? Why Is Armenia Moving Towards Democracy When Authoritarianism** is on the March Worldwide?” (provisional title), , 7:30 p.m.: featuring Anna Ohanyan (Stonehill College), Dmitri Sotiropoulos (Visiting Scholar, Center for European Studies, Harvard), and Valerie Sperling (Clark University), moderated by Lisa Guleserian. At Harvard University. Co-sponsored by the NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues, AGBU YP Boston, and the Harvard Armenian Students Association.

**MAY 2 — First Thursdays: Jazz at the Armenian Museum, Thursday, 8–10 p.m.** Armenian Museum of America, Watertown. Featuring the John Baboian Quartet. More details coming soon!

**MAY 3 — 117th Diocesan Assembly Gala Banquet. Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern).** V. Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, Primate, Presiding. Honoring Diocesan Award Recipients: Armenians of the Year - Edward (of blessed memory) and Nancy Guleserian, and children Kristine and Michael; Friend of the Armenians Dr. Helen Evans. 7pm Cocktail Hour, 8pm Dinner and Program. Boston Marriott Burlington. Hosted by St. James Armenian Church in Watertown. \$125 per person. Advance Reservations Required by April 25th. Purchase tickets online at [www.stjameswatertown.org](http://www.stjameswatertown.org) or by calling the church office at 617.923.8860. assembly@sthapog.com.

**MAY 3 — 117th Diocesan Assembly Gala Banquet. Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern).** V. Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, Primate, Presiding. Honoring Diocesan Award Recipients: Armenians of the Year - Edward (of blessed memory) and Nancy Guleserian, and children Kristine and Michael; Friend of the Armenians Dr. Helen Evans. 7 p.m. Cocktail Hour, 8 p.m. Dinner and Program. Boston Marriott Burlington. Hosted by St. James Armenian Church in Watertown. \$125 per person. Advance Reservations Required by April 25th. Purchase tickets online at [www.stjameswatertown.org](http://www.stjameswatertown.org) or by calling the church office at 617.923.8860. assembly@sthapog.com.

**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.

**MAY 4 — Celebrate Public Art two-part program during ARTWEEK BOSTON.** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. 1 p.m. World Labyrinth Day: Walk as One. Join people in cities and towns in 35 countries world-wide walking in peace and harmony including Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay and USA followed by reception to view the 2019 configuration of the abstract sculpture , hosted by Eastern Lamejun Bakers and MEM Tea Imports. RSVP appreciated [hello@armenianheritagepark.org](mailto:hello@armenianheritagepark.org).

**May 5 – Andre! You saw him last year perform on stage with Sirusho in Boston,** and now he’s back by popular demand! One of Armenia’s most popular stars, Andre will appear in a concert with Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston. Don’t miss out on this energetic evening of song and dance. Reserve your seats now! Shaw Auditorium, Watertown High School, 50 Columbia St., Watertown. Doors open at 4:30, concert begins at 5 p.m. Donation: \$45, \$60 and \$80. For tickets call Vrej - 339-222-3429, Meghri - 617-932-9237 or email [SNDC.ANDRE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:SNDC.ANDRE@GMAIL.COM) ! Tickets are also available online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/andre-in-boston-with-sayat-nova-dance-company-tickets-59460537067>.

**MAY 6 — 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.

**MAY 6 — Irina Ghaplanyan, “Post-Soviet Armenia: The New National Elite and the New National Narrative,”** at the AGBU Center, 247 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, 7:30 p.m. Sponsored by the NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues. Further details to follow.

**MAY 9 — The Armenian Museum of America and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research** (NAASR) present an illustrated talk by author Matthew Karanian, *The Armenian Highland: Western Armenia and the First Republic of 1918*. On Thursday, May 9, 2019, 7:30 pm at the Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main St., Watertown. Copies of *The Armenian Highland* will be available for purchase. Reception following program.

**MAY 10 — Lenny Clarke & Friends. Fundraiser to benefit the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe** Building Fund. 8 p.m. The Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Road, Bradford. Mezze/Appetizers are Included & Cash Bar. Call Dro Kanayan at 978 828 5755 or Stephanie Naroian at 978 835 1636 for tickets or tables and packages are available. Tickets will only be sold in advance, not at the door.

**MAY 15 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association and the Armenian General Benevolent Union** will present a literary evening with writer Aris Janigian, author of *Waiting for Lipchitz at Chateau Marmont*, *Bloodvine* and *Riverbig*, among others, with discussant author, poet and editor Susan Barba. 7.30 p.m., AGBU Building, 247 Mount Auburn Building. Free, reception to follow. Books will be on sale.

**MAY 19 — SAVE THE DATE! Concert at the Armenian Museum.** Concert to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Komitas Vardapet and poet Hovhaness Tumanyan. Sunday, 2-4 p.m.

**MAY 19 — “International Food Festival – A Taste of the World,” presented by the Women of Holy Trinity,** Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 12:30-2:30 p.m., Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Join us to sample authentic cuisine from 9 countries: Armenia, Iran/Persia, Lebanon, Greece, France, Russia, Brazil, China and Italy. Donation: \$15 adults; \$10 children 12 and under. Tickets on sale at the door. For further information, contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

**JUNE 1 — Armenian Food Festival, Saturday, 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.,** Armenian Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill. Chicken, Losh Kebab, Kheyma, and Dolma Dinners. Armenian Cuisine featuring Spinach Pie, Lahmajoon, Cheese Beoreg, and more. Pastries Paklava, Kadayif, Cheoreg and morePlus Activities for the Children, White Elephant Table, Gift Basket Raffles.

**JUNE 6 — First Thursdays: Jazz at the Armenian Museum, Thursday, 8–10 p.m.** Armenian Museum of America, Watertown. Featuring The Black Sea Salsa Band. More details coming soon!

**JUNE 12 — Tea and Tranquility. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston.** Wednesday from 4:30 p.m. -6 p.m. Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Enjoy refreshing Ice Teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports and dessert. Introduction to walking the labyrinth, mindful and meditative walking at 4:45pm. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

**JUNE 13 — SAVE THE DATE. Film Screening: “Motherland” At the Armenian Museum in Watertown.** Cosponsored by the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA). Thursday. More details coming soon!

**JUNE 17 - AUGUST 16 – Abaka Dance Academy, Summer Program for ages 5-12, with principal/director Apo Ashjian** at 101 Bigelow Ave., Watertown. Arts and Crafts, Indoor games, Sports, Music, Dance, Free T-shirts, Friday pizza and much more. Weekly sessions at \$250/week, begin June 17 - August 16, 8 am - 3 pm. Late stay available upon request. Please register at www.abakadanceacademy.com. For more information or questions, email abakadanceacademy@gmail.com or call 617-283-2010.

**JUNE 27 — Under a Strawberry Moon. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston.** Thursday at 8:30 p.m. Meet & Greet. Moonlit Labyrinth Walk. Luscious Chocolate Dipped Strawberries, hosted by vicki lee’s and refreshing Ice Teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports and the fabulous Berklee Jazz Trio. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

**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.

**JULY 17 — Tea and Tranquility. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston.** Wednesday from 4:30-6 p.m. Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Enjoy refreshing ice teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports and dessert. Introduction to walking the labyrinth, mindful and meditative walking at 4:45pm. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

**AUGUST 14 — Tea and Tranquility. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston.** Wednesday from 4:30-6 p.m. Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Enjoy refreshing Ice Teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports and dessert. Introduction to walking the labyrinth, mindful and meditative walking at 4:45pm. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

**AUGUST 22 — Under the August Moon. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston.** Thursday from 7:30– 9 p.m. Delightful evening for supporters, partners & friends featuring fabulous signature dishes, hosted by anoush’ella and the Berklee Jazz Trio. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

**SEPTEMBER 16 — Registration is now open for the 2019-2020 sessions of the Abaka Dance Academy,** 101 Bigelow Ave., Watertown, MA. Principal/director Apo Ashjian. Classes begin September 16 for grades

Nursery II - Grade 10 students. Check the schedule and enroll today at www.abakadanceacademy.com. For more info, email abakadanceacademy@gmail.com or call 617-283-2010.

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

**SEPTEMBER 22 — Sunday Afternoon for Families and Friends.** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. 2:00pm-4:00pm. Wonderful afternoon with The Hye Guys Ensemble featuring Ron Sahatjian and Joe Kouyoumjian. Hoodies, Face Painting and more RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

**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.Armenia-FriendsofAmerica.org

**NOVEMBER 1,2 — NAASR Grand Opening and Gala. Friday, Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting,** NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, at NAASR’s new world headquarters, 395 Concord Avenue, Belmont, MA. Saturday, NAASR 65th Anniversary Gala, at the Royal Sonesta Hotel, Cambridge. 6 pm Reception, 7 pm Dinner and Program. Honoree Dr. Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York; Master of Ceremonies David Ignatius, columnist for the Washington Post and novelist; Featuring renowned soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian, accompanied by the Borromeo String Quartet, performing a program of songs by Komitas. Further details to follow.

**NOVEMBER 16 — St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School 35th Anniversary Celebration.** 6:30 PM Cocktail Reception, 7:30 PM Dinner and Program. The Westin Waltham - Boston, MA \$150 per person.

NEW JERSEY

**MAY 18 — St. Nersess Armenian Seminary invites you to Hope & Gratitude, a celebration honoring Archbishop Khajag Barsamian** and Bishop-elect V. Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan. 6:30pm. Old Tappan Manor, Old Tappan, NJ. \$150pp. For reservations and booklet donations, please contact Mrs. Lynn Beylerian, event co-chair, at 201-914-0354 orlynnbeylerian@gmail.com. More info at www.stnersess.edu.

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

NEW YORK

**APRIL 18 — Sato Moughalian, “Feast of Ashes: The Life and Art of David Ohannessian,”** at Columbia University. Co-sponsored by the Columbia Armenian Center, Research Institute on Turkey, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). 7 p.m.

**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

OHIO

**APRIL 28 — Book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian, editor of her father’s memoir, Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army,** Sunday 2 p.m. Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage. In co-sponsorship with St. Gregory of Narek Church and Armenian Cultural Group, 2929 Richmond Road Beachwood, Ohio 74122 RSVP info@mmjh.org or (216) 593-0575. Book sale/signing during reception following the presentation – proceeds will be donated

PENNSYLVANIA

**MAY 4 — Save The Meher Statue Dance/Fundraiser - Saturday, 8 p.m. Sponsored** by the Philadelphia Chapter of the Knights & Daughters of Vartan. Santerian Hall - 101 Ashmead Rd, Cheltenham. Live entertainment with Anto Vartanian and the Artsakh Band, Full Mezza, Dessert Table, Cash Bar; For tickets, visit phillykov.com or call 610-389-4633

RHODE ISLAND

**APRIL 28 — Armenian Martyrs’ Memorial Committee of Rhode Island will commemorating the 104th Anniversary** of the Armenian Genocide on Sunday, starting at 12:45 p.m. at the Martyrs Monument in North Burial Ground, Branch Avenue, Providence. The three Armenian Churches and clergy along with their deacons and choir will participate in the memorial services. Local federal and state officials are invited to speak or attend as well as the local Armenian organizations. Keynote speaker Stephen Kurkjian who spent nearly 40 years as an editor and reporter for The Boston Globe. For further information, email joycey41@cox.net

**MAY 5 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church will present the first in a series of talks,** “Meet with Armenian Doctors,” on Sunday, at 1 pm., in Hanoian Hall of the church complex. ( 70 Jefferson St., Providence, RI ). Dr. Sevak Stepanian, anesthesiologist will speak and take questions. Admission is free and open to the public.

TEXAS

**APRIL 26 — The Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church Armenian Martyrs’ Memorial Committee** of Rhode Island Presents a Memorial Concert dedicated to victors and Saints of the Armenian Genocide,7 p.m., 150th Anniversary of Gomidas Vardabed, 150th Anniversary of Hovhannes Toumanyanyan. Performed by the Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island, Junior Choir, Soloists Under the Direction of Maestro Konstantin Petrossian. Program: Patriotic Songs, Songs by Gomidas, and from Anoush Opera, Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church Sanctuary, 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Donations gratefully accepted. Refreshments.

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

An Evening of Laughter And Inner Satisfaction

LAUGHTER, from page 13  
to extinction one too many times. My siblings and I, in our own individual ways, supported projects that had a profound impact on our community, from the Diaspora all the way to Armenia. What I experienced at the play performance last Sunday gave me hope for the next generation. That someone of Babayan’s caliber, who graduated from the finest universities (Tufts University and Columbia University) and whose family has left an indelible mark on

the community, has chosen to dedicate her time to the Armenian cultural life in the most productive manner.  
Taleen made a conscious effort to entertain and educate while upholding a production level not of Armenian standards but on par with American theater life. And it paid off. From the very first line of dialogue, she and her cast and crew of 20 hooked the audience and took all of us on a two-hour journey that brimmed with laughter, well-developed characters and a story that gives us optimism about our Diaspora, our homeland and ultimately, our people. I say this as someone who is savvy about theater and who has seen countless Broadway shows when

we would visit our daughter, Aleen Keshishian, in New York City, who lived there at the time.  
Taleen has marinated in her Armenian upbringing since birth. Who does not know her educator grandfather Yervant Babayan? Born and raised on the East Coast, Taleen speaks the language fluently (I always see her writing in Armenian during her coverage of events at the Western Diocese), understands the nuances of the history, the culture and the climate of the various communities – constantly with her finger on the pulse of Armenian happenings. Her perseverance is unmatched, as is her discipline and work-ethic, her passion for her writing, and the energy and effort she puts forth to stage

meaningful work for the Armenian community, from “Where Is Your Groom?” to the documentary she shot on location in Artsakh last summer.  
We are all descendants of a certain person, of a certain place and of a certain time. My parents escaped the massacres and overcame many obstacles and hardships to form a new Armenian family, perhaps the strongest answer to attempted annihilation. Taleen, too, comes from a lineage of genocide survivors and keeps her family’s legacy of public service alive for the benefit of our Armenian Diaspora.  
  
(Cecile Keshishian is a resident of Los Angeles.)



## COMMENTARY

## COMMENTARY

# Armenia's Global Outreach

By Edmond Y. Azadian

War, earthquake and the collapse of the Soviet Union have taken heavy tolls on Armenia and the country, with all its intellectual resources, has not been able to recover fully within the last quarter century, because its neighbors have blockaded its borders and left the fear of hostilities simmering all the time.

Such strategies used by Azerbaijan and Turkey intend to destroy Armenia either through violence or through attrition.

And our only Christian neighbor, Georgia, has cooperated with Armenia's foes, helping them to choke the country out of existence. Tbilisi has cooperated and continues to cooperate with Turkey and Azerbaijan in building energy and road systems in the region, bypassing Armenia.

As if the implementation of that unfriendly policy was not enough, Georgia's new president, Salome Zourabichvili, allowed herself to behave in an ungracious and rude manner during her first official visit to Armenia. She criticized the Artsakh legislature for cooperating with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, both breakaway regions of Georgia, and she characterized the self-defense activities of the Armenian community of Abkhazia, during 2008 as "a massacre of Georgians" in that enclave.

Despite her arrogance, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan showed tremendously courteous manners with the prime minister of that country, Mamuka Bakhtadze, when he met with him unofficially on the mountainous border of the two countries.

The current government of Armenia is looking beyond the region for international relations to break the chokehold of its neighbors. Contrary to apprehensions that the youthful government established after the Velvet Revolution may falter as a result of its inexperience, the leaders are proving in all their endeavors that they have a good handle on the situation.

First and foremost, the uneasy balance between Russia and the US has been weathered with reasonable success; Moscow's jealous behavior with regard to Armenia's relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) policies has been addressed tactfully, if not to the Kremlin's full satisfaction. Also, John Bolton's bold warnings have not scared Armenia's leadership, which are continuing constructive relations with Iran and Syria. Pashinyan's visit in February to Iran was a high mark of Armenia's foreign relations; that is being continued through relief efforts which are contributing to Iran's flood-hit areas. Iran has emerged as a proponent of including Armenia in the north-south regional corridor for developments in the Caucasus. Despite Iran's benign and neutral policy with regard to Armenian-Azeri relations, Tehran has more to gain with the territorial integrity of Artsakh than one would surmise. Also, its fundamental territorial and policy differences with Baku are deeper than they appear.

Armenia also defied US warnings and sent a humanitarian mission to Syria, with Prime Minister Pashinyan stating that Armenia was returning a moral and historic debt which the Syrian people had shown to the survivors of the Armenian Genocide.

Azerbaijan and Turkey are extending their policies around the globe to generate political clout and economic development. Baku has been caught red-handed bribing Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban as well as members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Turkey, besides its military bases in Qatar and Djibouti, is actively developing its economic projects in Russia, Ukraine, the Balkans, and the African subcontinent, all the way to South America, where it is defending Nicolas Maduro's regime in Venezuela, in solidarity with Russia.

Turkey is not only reaping economic dividends, it also is fighting the genocide issue in any country where a legislature takes

a positive step toward recognition. Therefore, the challenge is great for Armenia, which is taking measures to not only counter Ankara's and Baku's reach, but also to develop its own economy and help expand its policies.

President Armen Sarkissian was recently in Jordan, not only visiting historic sites, but also promoting friendship with that country. Earlier, Armenia's Minister of Defense David Tonoyan was in New York for a United Nations meeting, where he issued his policy statement regarding the "new war-new territories." On March 28, the summit between Pashinyan and Aliyev was supposed to become a peace initiative but since that meeting, the bellicose tone of the rhetoric has intensified. This time around, however, it is the Armenian side that is being more aggressive in its demands, with Azerbaijan striking a more subdued, defensive tone.

Legitimacy is an intangible asset. Georgia and Armenia experienced popular revolutions and the ensuing governments enjoy overwhelming mandates to deal with the outside world. Azerbaijan is the only country which stands as an eyesore with its authoritarian rule in the Caucasus.

In addition, Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan is in Ethiopia to revive historic relations which Armenians have developed over centuries. On April 8, the president of Armenia's National Assembly Ararat Mirzoyan was in Qatar to address the 140th General Assembly of the Interparliamentary Union, where he extolled Armenia's huge intellectual potential. He also made an indirect reference to Armenia's relations with Azerbaijan, stating, "Peace does not mean the total absence of violence in all forms and the unfolding of conflict in a constructive way. .... History shows that hate speech can escalate to hate crimes and genocide."

Incidentally, Armenia is working with Rwanda to sensitize the world against the proliferation of genocide.

Armenia and China have been deepening their cooperation in scientific and educational fields. Armenia's Minister of Education and Science Arayik Harutyunyan met recently with the Chinese Ambassador to Armenia Tian Erlong and he noted that mutually beneficial and effective cooperation has developed between Yerevan and Beijing, which has the potential for expansion.

On April 4, Prime Minister Pashinyan received a parliamentary delegation headed by the vice chairwoman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee of China. Both parties have underlined the development of interparliamentary relations between

the two countries. The Chinese side has also evaluated Armenia's role as a bridge between Eurasian Economic Union and China.

China has contributed generously to Armenia by donating thousands of buses and ambulances in the past. Also, military assistance. Every official visit by an Armenian government dignitary to China has been received at the highest level of protocol.

Many observers wonder why a global power like China lavishes so much attention on tiny Armenia. Without any particular political pursuit from the Armenian side, the latter is the indirect beneficiary of antagonism between Ankara and Beijing for two major reasons: Turkey has been agitating and arming Uyghur militants in China's Xinjiang province and accusing Chinese authorities of genocide, because Beijing has been trying to observe peace in the province. The other reason is that Turkey has ambitions to unite ethnically, religiously and linguistically all central Asian Turkic nations, challenging China's influence in the same region. Active developments with China may yield further dividends for Armenia in the future.

Armenia faces tremendous global challenges and it has been addressing them through a coherent policy. No country can survive in this era of globalization and Armenia's foreign policy establishment is keenly aware of that fact.



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COMMENTARY

# It Is Time To Radically Re-Think Relations With Turkey

By David Phillips

TURKEY'S \$2.5-billion purchase of S-400 missiles from Russia violates the NATO principle of inter-operability, undermining the strategic partnership between Turkey and the United States. If Turkey takes delivery of the missiles in July - and there is every indication it will - Washington must reconsider the scope of security and economic cooperation with Ankara.

The U.S. government is employing a combination of carrots and sticks to dissuade Turkey from buying the S-400s. The Pentagon offered Patriot missiles, a better technology at a lower cost. However, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan missed the March 31 deadline to purchase the Patriots. In a further concession, the Trump administration has issued a waiver for Turkey to buy oil from Iran.

U.S. officials have had enough of Erdogan's antics and authoritarianism. The Pentagon just cancelled Turkey's participation in the F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter Program. The Pentagon will not allow its state-of-the-art stealth technology to fall into the hands of Russian military attachés working in Turkey alongside the S-400s.

Beyond suspending the transfer of F-35 fighter jets, the United States should consider other aspects of security cooperation. Incirlik Air Force in southern Turkey is the symbolic and logistical hub of U.S. military operations in Turkey. Since 1991, it has been critical for supplying mili-

tary missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But Incirlik comes with a political cost. Turkey uses Incirlik to coerce concessions. It regularly threatens to cancel the six-month lease agreement, while reserving the right to expel U.S. forces with 72-hours' notice. Turkey denied U.S. warplanes access to Incirlik for nearly a year when Incirlik was badly needed as a staging ground for fighting Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Incirlik is not indispensable. Alternative leasing arrangements are available in Jordan, Cyprus and Romania.

The Pentagon operates an International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program for Turkish officers at a cost of up to \$5 million each year. IMET for Turkey's Islamist military should be cancelled.

When Erdogan's security detail beat peaceful pro-democracy demonstrators in Washington's Sheridan Circle, Congress enacted legislation to deny arms sales to Erdogan's security officers. The United States should also request Interpol red bulletins for 19 people who were indicted by a Washington Grand Jury for their role in the incident.

Multilateral measures are also possible. The United States should encourage NATO allies, France and Italy, to suspend the transfer of a long-range air defense system being developed by a Franco-Italian consortium, Eurosam. Moreover, European countries should be outraged that Erdogan is regulating the flow of refugees to extort money from the European Union.

Radically re-thinking relations with Turkey could also encompass economic cooperation. The Turkish lira collapsed last summer. Last month, the lira dropped another 5 percent against the dollar on news that the Turkish Central Bank had used a third of its foreign currency reserves to prop up the lira during the first three weeks of March alone. Turkey's official unemployment rate is 13 percent, the highest it has been in a decade. Inflation hovers at about 20 percent. The purchasing power of consumers has dropped dramatically. Turkish businesses that owe debts denominated in foreign currencies are especially hard-hit.

Erdogan blames the United States and Jewish bankers for Turkey's economic collapse. However, he has no one to blame but himself and his son-in-law, Berat Albayrak, who serves as finance minister.

The United States has a 17.46-voting share in the International Monetary Fund (IMF). When Turkey applies for assistance to prop up the plunging value of the lira, the United States should condition assistance on human rights and political criteria, including respect for freedom of speech and the release of Kurdish parliamentarians wrongly accused of terrorism.

Until U.S. citizens and consular staff are released from detention in Turkey, Washington should also work with other countries to limit financing for Turkey from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Travel to the United States by Turkish officials

involved in their detention should be barred.

The United States imposed extraordinary steel tariffs on Turkey in response to its arrest of American pastor, Andrew Brunson. Brunson was released, but the tariffs should remain until other Americans are also freed.

The Trump administration recently found that Turkey is no longer a developing country, revoking preferential trade treatment for Turkish goods and services. The finding has a big impact on Turkish textiles exported to the United States. Though Erdogan strongly objected, Washington must not reinstate Turkey's designation as a developing country.

In addition to Russia, Turkey has also been influencing America's political system by paying huge sums to lobbyists and think tanks. The Justice Department should more stringently enforce the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), requiring disclosure of consultants writing editorials for Erdogan and lobbying on behalf of Turkey. Sums given to think tanks such as the Atlantic Council should be revealed.

Turkey learned impunity by getting away with genocide. The United States must stop turning a blind eye to what happened during the waning years of the Ottoman Empire. President Donald Trump should recognize the Armenian genocide on the day it is remembered - April 24. Congress should pass a companion resolution affirming the genocide of 1.5 million Armenians and reminding Turkey of its obligations as the successor state to compensate descendants of the victims.

The United States should also recognize the Pontic Greek genocide, the systematic killing of Christians, on its upcoming centenary - May 19, 2019.

Local elections on March 31 were a sham. Fifty-three people with the pro-Kurdish party were arrested on election eve. Opposition parties were harassed and received almost no coverage in government-controlled media.

Even with Erdogan's party stuffing ballots, it lost control of Turkey's major cities.

Turkey has gone rogue. Its human rights situation is appalling. Its strategic orientation and foreign policy are alarming. Turkey's dealings with Russia, cooperation with Iran, solidarity with Venezuela, readiness to improve relations with China, and threats against U.S. allies in Syria have rattled the U.S. foreign policy and defense establishment. Turkey's support for Islamism and close cooperation with Iran are further causes for concern.

More than a few people are claiming that Turkey is an uncertain ally. Now the general consensus is that Turkey is a strategic adversary and potentially dangerous. It deserves a sharp rebuke for thumbing its nose at NATO and the United States, by taking delivery of the S-400s.

(David L. Phillips is currently Director of the Program on Peace-building and Rights at Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights. This commentary originally appeared in Ahval on April 3.)

# Returning Karabakh to the Negotiation table: Why Pashinyan Insists on the Impossible

By Andranik Melik-Israelian  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Prime Minister Pashinyan has recently been firmly demanding the return of the democratically elected representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh to the negotiation table. Let's be honest, there is no way it is going to happen any time soon in the face of Azerbaijan's strong opposition. Then what's the meaning of pursuing the impossible?

The question has a number of answers. Let's first look at some relatively obvious ones:

Opportunity: Because Pashinyan came to power by overthrowing his predecessor, he has the leverage of challenging the undertakings of the previous government. This is a narrowing window of opportunity he has to change status quo. If he didn't voice the demands now, the window of opportunity would close after his March 29 meeting with Ilham Aliyev and he would no longer be unable to bring up the issue of Karabakh's direct involvement later.

Escalate to deescalate: This is a widely known and implemented negotiation tactics: Start negotiations by raising the stakes in order to end up with better outcomes. The more demands you put on the table, the more you can theoretically offer as a compromise. This is also President Trump's favorite tactics which he sometimes pushes to extremes. In our case the demands for Karabakh's participation have been put forward without undermining peace process, thus Pashinyan managed to raise our stakes in the negotiations without pushing to extremes or provoking a new war.

Azerbaijani Propaganda: The cornerstone of Azerbaijan's anti-Armenian propaganda is to distort the very essence of the

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by claiming that the conflict is all about Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijan's territories. The fact that Nagorno-Karabakh is no longer a party to the negotiations greatly supports Azerbaijani propaganda as an "evidence" supporting their claim that the only parties to the conflict are "the aggressor" Armenia and "the victim" Azerbaijan. Therefore Armenia's claims to restore the original format of trilateral negotiations under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairs helps counter this false propaganda.

Populism: Last, but not least, Pashinyan's actions found a wide support among the population. Many Armenians did not approve the previous government's super-cautious foreign policy in general and the exclusion of Nagorno-Karabakh from peace negotiations by Robert Kocharyan's administration in particular. Thus Pashinyan's move was inter alia a populist move as well.

These are all good points but they can all have only some limited effects. I would argue Pashinyan has larger goals on his mind with more promising results.

### Challenging the Strong Man

How did Pashinyan come to power? He called for peaceful demonstrations, paralyzed the streets, but, most importantly, he made the old strong man look not so strong. By challenging the current status quo of peace negotiations, Pashinyan is basically doing the same to Ilham Aliyev. He proved that Armenia can challenge Azerbaijan, put forward new demands and get away with the criticism of OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs in this regard. Moreover, during his US visit the Armenia's defense minister threatened Azerbaijan with new territorial losses in case of a new escalation and he got away with that. While Armenia is not restricting herself in her demands, Azerbaijan is seeking support from OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and trying

to come up with better legal arguments to justify Nagorno-Karabakh's absence from negotiation table. This is not the Azerbaijan we knew. As a classic authoritarian leader, Ilham Aliyev has built up his power due to an "external enemy" and constantly demonstrated his strength and uncompromising attitude. It was his signature behavior to challenge the peace and get away with that. However, Pashinyan seems to be flipping the tables now and making Azerbaijan go on the defensive. He has already managed over the last year to deescalate significantly the Line of Contact between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces.

This "weakness" undermines the very authority of Ilham Aliyev. He is already quite worried about the fact that Azerbaijan remains the only authoritarian country in South Caucasus right now. In the long run, the inability to uphold belligerent rhetoric and actions may attract more internal critics against Aliyev and may ultimately provoke a power struggle in Baku. But unlike Armenia, there is too much money, corruption and clan rivalry in Azerbaijan for any revolution to be "velvet" there. Therefore the loss of power by Ilham Aliyev will most probably cause major political instabilities in Azerbaijan rather than strengthening it.

And again, Armenia is able to conduct such a policy due to another widow of opportunity — Armenia's current international prestige is still too high for Azerbaijan to launch another war. Another April War is not an option now, thus Ilham Aliyev is also unable to refrain to force and this show his strength. He is currently doing right the opposite — releasing political prisoners, walking in the streets of Baku with his First Lady and First Vice President and promising major economic and social reforms. Perhaps Aliyev is hoping to hold on to power by improving his public approval. However, it is going to be very hard for him to switch from "harsh legitimacy" to earned legitimacy without risking to lose his power.



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Turkish Gravediggers Rummaging For Genocide Era Armenian Treasures

Haber Turk TV recently interviewed one of the thousands of Turkish gravediggers who try to recover Armenian treasures leftover from the genocide era of a century ago.

It is not enough that 1.5 million Armenians were killed and dispossessed of their properties and homeland, now some Turks are ‘proudly’ rummaging for precious metals by desecrating Armenian graves and other ancient Armenian sites such as churches and homes.

Here is the text of the interview on Haber Turk:

“How can Armenian Gold be Stolen?”

Host: Oylum Talu

Guest: Ugur Kulac

Guest: An infidel does not show the place of the treasure to a Turk because we are trying to find their money. We are looking for money of Armenians or Greeks.

Host: So you are a professional treasure hunter?

Guest: Yes, I am.

Host: You are a very interesting person. First of all, your books are amazing. I want to give these books to the people as a gift.

Guest: Thank you.

Host: Maps, explanation of maps. It is a very amazing book. What is a treasure hunter?

Guest: The treasure hunter is a gold digger. The only thing the treasure hunter thinks of is gold; nothing else. Of course,

they are destroying places where they dig carelessly. The treasure hunters know many secret places which are even unknown to archaeologists. That is a gold finder.

Host: Wow! So cool! Gold finder! How many treasure hunters are there in Turkey?

Guest: There are more than 500,000 treasure hunters who are registered with my company.

Host: Really?

Guest: Yes!

Host: 500,000 treasure hunters?

Guest: I am in this field for about 18 years. I have been producing these devices and selling them. Right now, I have sold them to 25,000 people. And now we are 130 companies in Turkey. We are serving in this field for the people. For example, if the state would ask treasure hunters to bring all historical materials, these materials would then be more than the materials in the museums.

Host: Wow!

Guest: The treasure works in Turkey are in three types. In tons, pots and kettles.

Host: What are you talking about? Pots, tons and kettles?

Guest: Yes.

Host: You mean, they put all the gold into the kettle, they covered the top because there were no banks at that time. They escaped...

Guest: Of course.

Guest: The history of this work is approximately 100 years. At the time of the deportation, some minorities were deported out of the country. They could not take their belongings with them. They buried them in different places, thinking that they would return. But most of them could not find any way to return. But their children, at a certain time of the year, are coming to Turkey where their ancestors lived. And then they dig and take the money where their ancestors buried. They have the maps. They stay as a guest of their ancestors’ neighbors. When the owner of the house falls asleep, they go out and dig the ground, take the money and leave. Treasure hunting is divided into two groups. The first group is near term – hunting of minorities’ belongings. The second group is composed of those who are looking for treasures of ancient civilizations. [The guest then demonstrates how he finds trea-

sures through his search device which unfortunately does not work!]. If you get caught the first time by the state, there is no penalty! The region of Izmit was the capital of the Roman Empire and there are very nice buried treasures in there. Of course, there are small buried treasures which belong to minorities of the near past. Magic must be done over there. The treasure is given to the genies for protection. We are looking for gold coins. Gold is very important for treasure hunters. For example, statues made of gold or anything else or gold coins. These are very valuable. They can be sold everywhere. They melt them and sell them or directly sell to smugglers or can be sold to the state. Let them give me permission, I will find the money to repay the Turkish government’s debt to the International Monetary Fund.

Host: Why is then this gold not coming out?

Guest: Because these countries do not want this gold to come out of Turkey! Treasure hunters are not interested in ancient cities or areas. The only interest for them is to find the grave, dig it, and take the valuable things and leave.

Host: Why don’t archaeologists like you?

Guest: Because we break the historical materials.

Host: So you say that “we are looking for the money of the deported minorities in the last 60 to 90 years?”

Guest: I have parliamentarians, doctors, businessmen, professors as customers. Now Spring is coming, the treasure hunters liven up. They have been patient for months. They will attack now. It is always like that every year. The materials found in the digs made this year will be sold abroad again. We are not materialistic. We believe in spirituality too. Muslims must be rich and powerful. Why should we be poor? We are a special country created by Allah!

Host: Thank you very much.

These thieves are not only stealing the treasures belonging to Armenians and other minorities, but are also breaking Turkish laws. It is incredible that such thieves are appearing on Turkish television and recounting their criminal activities with such brazen arrogance! Turkey has strict laws for treasure hunters whose permits are limited to 30 days and an area of 100 square meters. There is a long list of “cultural areas” such as religious sites and graves where even licensed treasure hunters are not allowed to dig.

An Open Letter to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

By Sona Hamalian

Mr. Prime Minister,

This is one letter I wish I never had to write. Yet now I know I must, because passive resignation and complacency should no longer be requirements for those of us who call Armenia home, and because I know, without an iota of doubt, that your political wisdom and sense of fairness remain beyond reproach.

As you know only too well, Yerevan in recent days experienced a minor convulsion, in the wake of acting Minister of Culture Nazeni Gharibyan’s peremptory dismissal of Constantine Orbelian from his position as General Director of the Yerevan Opera House. I suspect the core reason this development did not sit too well with the people of Yerevan was that the person who was being ordered to vacate his position was not some nasty oligarch, or a corrupt government official, or a longtime tax evader, but a man who has almost single-handedly brought about the revival of one of our most beloved national treasures, the Yerevan Opera House.

Already some months prior to Gharibyan’s Soviet-style stroke of the pen dismissing Orbelian, and in view of former Minister of Culture Lilit Makunts’ smear campaign unleashed against the Maestro, I had been having a sneaky suspicion that the effects of the marvelous jolt of last year’s Velvet Revolution had started to wear off, that the new Armenia which you, Mr. Prime Minister, had helped emerge, was perhaps just too good to be true.

I was wrong. I don’t think I’ve ever been happier for being wrong about something. When highly-intelligent, well-informed, and fair-minded people – first dozens, then hundreds of them – expressed outrage, hit the streets of Yerevan to make their protest heard, or signed the petition calling for an immediate reversal of Gharibyan’s action, my faith in the fundamental decency of the Armenian people was at once restored.

Yet I don’t have to tell you that popular protest is only half the story in the process of engendering meaningful and actual change. The historic events of April and May 2018 showed us, once more, that change germinates in the hearts and minds of a people, but must become systemic in order to be lasting.

Perhaps it bears repeating here that, in the short few years since his appointment, Constantine Orbelian has helped make the Armenian musical arts a dazzling presence on the global stage – by promoting the continued artistic excellence of the Yerevan Opera House, by mounting innovative new productions, and by taking the Opera overseas, to unprecedented popular and critical acclaim. I think it also bears repeating that Maestro Orbelian has achieved these strides by often personally financing the large-scale, and considerably costly, endeavors of a modern opera house.

Let me conclude by reprising the theme of change. Mr. Prime Minister, I think we must never cease to remind ourselves that even a single instance of nepotism is one too many; that even one instance of parochialism at the administrative level, even one instance of abuse of power or conspiracy, is enough to taint the otherwise spotless stature and reputation of a government dedicated to the cause of reform. We’re either the society that deserves to be the heir of Armenia’s Velvet Revolution or we’re not. We can’t be something in between.

Your Excellency, I call on you to reinstate Maestro Orbelian as Artistic and General Director of the Yerevan Opera House. In the wake of the events that have gripped Yerevan in recent days, I know you will do everything in your power to help safeguard the absolute highest standards of justice and fairness within our homeland. We are all counting on you to do the right thing.

(Sona Hamalian is an activist and an observer with a background in public relations. In Afghanistan in 2010, trained 22 NGOs in public relations and fundraising before going to Saudi Arabia to work as an Ethics and Compliance Officer for SAS Systems Engineering. Eventually she returned to Armenia to work public relations and fundraising for various organizations.)

Arts and Culture Causes Worth Fighting For

By Varoujan Avedikian

Last week Armenian social and other media outlets exploded with the news that acting minister of culture has fired world renowned conductor and a graduate of Juilliard School (how many do we have of those?) Constantin Orbelian from his position as director of Yerevan Opera Theater. The circulating explanations were vague and humorous to the edge of being silly. Grounds of Orbelian’s dismissal were justified by him allegedly not knowing Armenian (who knows these days?) and second, that according to the law he didn’t have the right to be both the executive and art director of the Opera (who comes up with such laws anyway and this is coming from a lawyer).

Many people are outraged with this decision, also thanks to the acting minister not being the most popular one among her peers. I am not going to zoom-in through to the widely discussed accusations and allegations of the person (who has to do everything she can to uphold Armenian culture) not being in the right place. No, I’m not going to do that. I am also not going to count more than a dozen ways in which she could have handled the matter in an appropriate way. Instead, I would like to focus on the role that government and its officials should play to cherish and advance Armenian culture.

Arts and culture are two spheres that do not create ROI - deliberately using the financial jargon for return on investment

I admit. My views are biased on the notion that arts and culture cannot develop without direct investments by the government. Investments, without any expectations of monetary return. No philanthropic or private money can bring groundbreaking advance in arts and culture. Those can certainly help, but never fundamentally. Arts and culture are two spheres that do not create ROI (deliberately using the financial jargon for return on investment). Rather, the returns that flow are indirect, as these two create positive spillover effect on human capital, education, tourism (just out of curiosity, if you open the Tourism Strategy 2020 of the city of Vienna, the first photo you see is a scene of the Vienna State Opera), ancillary businesses and even the city crime rate.

From archaic times Armenian arts and culture blossomed primarily due to investments by the state or the church (during times of loss of sovereignty and state the Armenian Church played a vital role as the guardian of Armenian culture, albeit a definite tendency (naturally) to religious forms of art (miniature art, frescos, tapestry, liturgic music, etc.). Naturally, we don’t have the great Armenian kings around these days, such as Tigran the Great or Artavazd II to ask personally, but our history proves that without the direct financial involvement of the state (or the church as mentioned), the advent of the Armenian alphabet or the music of Komitas or Saryan’s palate could have been under serious threat.

Each time I speak of this topic I cannot help but remember the famous words attributed to Winston Churchill: “If we don’t have arts, then what would we be fighting for?” So, each time the government drums the news that they should shut down a cultural program or fire an artist or merge a cultural center with the Force knows who, they should know that Armenian culture is the reason we deem worth fighting for.

Varoujan Avedikian is Managing Partner at TK & Partners and former Head of Legal Department of Armenia’s Central Bank.



## Cadence Ensemble to Perform at Fresno State

FRESNO – The acclaimed Cadence Ensemble will perform in concert on Friday, April 26, in the Concert Hall on the Fresno State campus at 8 p.m. The concert, part of the World Music Series of the Philip Lorenz International Keyboard Concert Series, is co-sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program of Fresno State, the Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation, the Armenian General Benevolent Union, Fresno chapter and the Orpheus Chamber Music Ensemble.

In 2004, five outstanding Armenian instrumentalists – Varazdat Khachumyan, violin; Hakob Jaghatspanyan, guitar; Meruzhan Yeganyan, accordion; Sofi Mikayelyan, piano; and Gurgen Amiryan, xontrabass – formed the Cadence Ensemble with the intention to promote the music of Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla. Following an enthusiastic response by the public and press, they continually expanded their repertoire and rapidly developed into what they are known for today: one of the world’s premier ensembles performing original works and arrangements by classical and contemporary European, Russian, Armenian, and American composers including world music and pop while maintaining an affinity for Piazzolla.

The ensemble has given acclaimed performances in numerous countries around the world in prestigious venues such as the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires and the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg.

General tickets for the Concert are available for \$25 per person, for seniors \$18 per person, and students \$5 per person. Ticket reservations for the Concert may be made by calling the Armenian Studies Program or visiting <http://www.keyboardconcerts.com/special-events.aspx>.



## President Sarkissian Visits Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon

LISBON, Portugal (Armenpress) – President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian, who is in Portugal on a working visit, visited Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on April 9.

Noting that he last visited that place 15 years ago, President Sarkissian said, “It’s always a pleasure and pride to return here. Calouste Gulbenkian’s heritage and charity activities

noting that since the Soviet years it has supported Matenadaran.

Armen Sarkissian proposed the leadership of Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to expand projects in Armenia.

Sarkissian also visited the Calouste Gulbenkian museum, which houses the rich collection of its namesake.



President Armen Sarkissian visits the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon.

have become exemplary”.


The president of the foundation, Isabel Mota, presented the charity and humanitarian activities of the Foundation, particularly focusing on the projects implemented in Armenia and the Diaspora.


Sarkissian praised the activities of Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and its great contribution to the preservation of the Armenian identity and development of Armenian studies.

The President of Armenia talked about the scientific-research activities of the Foundation,

Sarkissian also met with the representatives of the Armenian community at Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on April 9.

Addressing the Armenian community in Portugal, President Sarkissian said, “I am confident that each of you will finally return to Armenia. You will return, bringing with you your success in science, arts, culture and business. You will return to Armenia with your kids, you will bring them and return to the Motherland, because they are our future and the greatest value”.






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For more information, email [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com)