

## Armenia-Azerbaijan Summit Described as 'Positive,' 'Constructive'

VIENNA (Combined Sources) — Armenia and Azerbaijan have described the latest meeting of their leaders as “positive” and “constructive,” saying they agreed to strengthen the cease-fire regime in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone and continue their dialogue.

“The meeting took place in a positive and constructive atmosphere and provided an opportunity for the two leaders to clarify their respective positions,” the foreign ministers of the two countries said in a joint statement on March 29, hours after Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Vienna.

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Azeri President Ilham Aliyev, left, and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Vienna

## Pashinyan Backs Defense Chief's Tough Talk On Karabakh

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Tuesday, April 2, threw his weight behind Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan, who has seemingly ruled out Armenian territorial concessions to Azerbaijan and promised a more offensive posture against the Azerbaijani army.

Visiting the United States at the weekend, Tonoyan dismissed the so-called “lands-for-peace formula” of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. “We are saying the opposite: a new war for new lands,” the Voice of America quoted him as telling members of the Armenian community in New York.

“Nothing will be conceded,” said Tonoyan. He added, though, that “compromises are possible.”



Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan (R) inspects Armenian army positions on the border with Azerbaijan, July 21, 2018.

“We will rid ourselves of the trench-based, constantly defensive posture and increase the number of those army units

that can shift hostilities into enemy territory,” warned Tonoyan.

The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry condemned the “provocative” statement, saying that it undermined international efforts to resolve the Karabakh conflict. It also challenged the Armenian government to clarify whether Tonoyan voiced his personal views or official Yerevan’s position.

“If Davit Tonoyan had made a different statement I would have dismissed him as defense minister,” Pashinyan said, commenting on the minister’s remarks. “What did the defense minister say? He said that if a war breaks out our objective will be to win that war.”

“This does not cast a shadow on the peace process,” he told reporters. “On the contrary, it underscores the importance of a peaceful settlement.”

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## First Senate Committee Unanimously Passes California/Armenia International Trade Office Bill

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — On March 25, SB 302 authored by state Sen. Anthony J. Portantino (D-La Cañada Flintridge), to reestablish a trade office between California and Armenia passed the State Senate Business and Professions Committee. The bill received bi-partisan support and garnered a unanimous vote. Armenian Consul General Armen Baibourtian flew to Sacramento to offer testimony in favor of the proposal.

“Armenia is an important trade partner with California with strong and longstanding relationships. SB 302 will formalize trade and economic ties. As the representative of the largest Armenian community in a legislative district in the country, I am very honored and glad that this bill is moving forward in the Senate. California is embracing the Armenian Community and all it has to offer our state and it’s exciting to be part of that excitement,” commented Senator Portantino.

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Fr. Daniel Findikyan blesses a child.

## Diocesan Primate Visits FAR Projects in Armenia

NEW YORK — “It was one of the most moving, powerful, and emotional days of my whole life. When I left, I felt love. I didn’t know whether to cry or dance,” said the Eastern Diocesan Primate, the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan, during an exclusive interview.

The Primate was referring to his three-hour visit to the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) Children’s Center in Yerevan, Armenia, which he undertook during his recent week-long visit to Armenia. It was one of three FAR-funded projects in Armenia that he visited.

Since 1988, the Children’s Center has been the apex in protecting, caring for, rehabilitating, and educating young abandoned, abused, sexually trafficked,

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By Florence Avakian

## Deputy Health Minister Arrested

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Deputy Minister of Healthcare Arsen Davtyan was detained on March 29 by the National Security Service, Minister of Healthcare Arsen Torosyan confirmed via Facebook.

“I am not in Armenia at the moment and I was just notified that the [national security service] has carried out tactical-intelligence actions and my deputy Arsen Davtyan has been detained. I don’t possess other details at the moment. I think the [National Security Service] will provide details later,” Torosyan wrote on Facebook.

According to unconfirmed reports, the deputy minister was arrested in suspicion of bribery.

## Premier Congratulates Assyrian Community On New Year

YEREVAN — On Monday, April 1, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s office issued a statement congratulating the country’s Assyrian minority on Hab-nsan, the Assyrian New Year.

“I cordially congratulate you on the occasion of the Assyrian New Year, Hab-nsan. The Armenian and Assyrian peoples with many centuries-old cultural ties have faced many trials, sharing one another’s grief and joy through historical fate.

“Some of the Assyrians around the world have settled in Armenia for a long time, becoming an integral part of our society. It has had its constant and indispensable contribution to our country’s comprehensive development and progress.”

## Armenia to Produce Drugs for Hepatitis C

YEREVAN (Arka) — Armenia’s Ministry of Health and the Gilead Science Ireland UC have signed a memorandum of cooperation, the Armenian ministry said in a press release on April 2.

It said according to the memorandum, Gilead will provide Armenia with a license for the production, packaging and import of drugs for the treatment of hepatitis C.

The memorandum was signed by Health Minister Arsen Torosyan and Gilead representative Ben Kamark.

“Viral hepatitis is one of the most widespread health problems in the world. Currently, one of the urgent tasks of the health system in Armenia is to organize and conduct an effective fight against viral hepatitis,” said Torosyan.

He also added that the ministry’s specialists developed a national program for the prevention and control of viral hepatitis for 2019–2023. As part of it antiviral drug treatment will be provided to about 1000 patients.

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Vets Come Together to Help Yerevan Zoo Tiger

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Early last week one of the tigers of Yerevan Zoo showed signs of illness. The animal was looking weak and did not want to go out. After a visit by the zoo's chief vet and medical treatment, the tiger seemed to be recovering, Yerevan Zoo said in a press release.

Nevertheless last Friday the tiger's keepers noticed the animal was suffering from a nose bleed. A conference call was initiated immediately involving Moscow's, Tehran's and Amsterdam's chief veterinarians, and a joint decision was made to administer anesthesia to the animal in order to perform an ultrasound examination and take biological samples for diagnosis and further treatment course.

The ultrasound results showed renal insufficiency (kidney disease) in addition to blood sample results clearly indicating a blood disorder. Doctors are working over the plan of treatment (online), but soon they will arrive to Armenia to provide on ground professional assistance.

Bingo's age remains uncertain. The tiger was brought to the Zoo in 2010 with an amputated tail.

## Armenian Flying Ambulance to Arrive in April

YEREVAN (Arka) — According to Armenia's Health Minister Arsen Torosyan, the first medical helicopter acquired by Helicopters LLC from French Airbus will arrive in early April.

The helicopter will be operated by the Armenian Helicopters company, founded in June 2018. The company was awarded the permission by the Civil Aviation Administration

"We are approaching the finish line or, rather, the start of an important initiative. In case of favorable weather conditions, the first ever ambulance helicopter will be presented on April 6. The event will be attended by a representative from Airbus," Torosyan wrote on his Facebook page.

The helicopter arrived in Armenia at the end of February. It will be used to evacuate patients not only from remote and hard-to-reach regions, but also patients needing urgent surgeries.

## President Sarkissian Participates in Scientific Conference

YEREVAN — President Armen Sarkissian participated on March 29 at the Evolution and Artificial Intelligence International Conference in Yerevan.

Leading scientists and experts from different countries of the world arrived to participate in the conference and discuss issues related to evolution, world trends on scientific and technological discoveries, and challenges.

In his opening remarks, Sarkissian stressed the importance of holding an international conference dedicated to science and technologies in Armenia. "The future of our country has been and will be tied to the future of the world," Sarkissian said, "and the future of the world is moving more and more towards the use of innovation, science, and technological discoveries in our everyday life."

He said, "We have to work a lot and ensure that we are moving in step with the world from the viewpoint of science, technologies, and human behavior. Everything is becoming more and more integrated. To be efficient, any farmer in this world has to use artificial intelligence, new laser technologies. Any doctor should be aware of technologies since the efficiency of the healthcare ultimately depends on the same artificial intelligence, digital technologies, and new biological discoveries. Any scientist, who is conducting fundamental research today, ultimately wants to see his or her discovery be implemented not 100 years later but tomorrow. When Armenians were working in the area of quantum physics, they were certainly thinking of discoveries, of understanding the universe but at the same time not many of them could imagine the scope their discoveries might have. Today, everything is different. Today every scientist is thinking about the use of his or her discovery."

# Pashinyan Backs Defense Chief's Tough Talk on Karabakh

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Asked whether Tonoyan coordinated with him, Pashinyan replied: "The defense minister acts under the prime minister's leadership and is subordinate to him."

The prime minister spoke at the Yerablur military cemetery in Yerevan after leading an official ceremony to mark the third anniversary of fierce fighting around Karabakh which nearly degenerated into a full-scale Armenian-Azerbaijani war. At least 190 Azerbaijani and Armenian soldiers were killed during four-day hostilities halted by a Russian-brokered agreement. It was the worst escalation of the

Karabakh in over two decades.

Azerbaijan's President marked the anniversary with a visit to a military base used by Azerbaijani special forces, which played the key role in offensive operations launched by Baku on April 2, 2016. Meeting with military personnel serving there, Aliyev again ruled out any peace deal that would fall short of restoring Azerbaijani control over Karabakh.

"No country recognizes and, I'm sure, will recognize the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Republic," he said, according to the Turan news agency.

Aliyev also said that the new Armenian government has failed to

change the internationally accepted format of peace talks. He clearly referred to Pashinyan's regular calls for Karabakh's direct involvement in the talks.

Aliyev and Pashinyan met in Vienna as recently on Friday. In a joint statement with the U.S., Russian and French mediators, the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers described the three-hour meeting as "positive and constructive." The two leaders discussed "key issues of the settlement process and ideas of substance" and "recommitted to strengthening the ceasefire," according to the statement.

## Pashinyan Meets with Artists Protesting Sacking of Opera Chief

YEREVAN (RFE/RL, Opera Wire) — Amid continuing angry protests against the sacking of the acclaimed Armenian-American director of Armenia's national opera theater, the government pledged to at least delay the appointment of his successor on April 1.

Constantine Orbelian, a San Francisco-born conductor and pianist, was named as artistic director of the Alexander Spendiarian National Opera and Ballet Theater in Yerevan in 2016 and became its director general as well



Conductor Constantine Orbelian

a year later. He is widely credited with breathing a new life into one of the country's most important cultural institutions chronically underfunded by successive post-Soviet governments.

Acting Culture Minister Nazeni Gharibian dismissed Orbelian as chief executive on Thursday, March 28, saying that he is not legally allowed to combine the two leadership positions. She also argued that the 62-year-old US citizen is not fluent in Armenian.

Orbelian rejected the decision as illegal and said he will challenge it in court. Most actors and musicians of the state-run theater also condemned his dismissal, demanding that Gharibian be sacked instead.

In an unprecedented protest, many of them walked on stage just before a ballet performance on Sunday, March 31 to voice their indignation in front of hundreds of spectators. They threatened to go on strike if Orbelian is not reinstated. The audience responded with applause.

Scores of other artists, among them directors of other state-run theaters, voiced support for the protesting staff by signing an open letter to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Dozens of opera and ballet staffers rallied outside the main government building in Yerevan on Monday, leading Pashinyan to meet with their representatives.

Pashinyan defended the legality of Orbelian's dismissal at the meeting. He also pointed to the latter's frequent trips abroad and, citing the Armenian Finance Ministry, alleged financial irregularities committed by the theater administration in 2017.

Pashinyan at the same time made clear that he is open to hearing the artists' counterarguments. In that regard, he announced that the theater will be run by one of Orbelian's deputies for the time being.

"Keep working as usual," the premier told them. "I will wait for your arguments and we will jointly make decisions."

Gharibian said on Friday that she has already appointed a new opera director and will introduce him or her to the theater staff on April 1. The acting minister did not attend Pashinyan's meeting with the protesters' representatives even though she was seen entering the prime minister's office.

The protest leaders seemed satisfied with the meeting. One of them, conductor Harutun Arzumanyan, said they will study written justifications for Orbelian's sacking and respond to Pashinyan in writing.

"The prime minister said if it turns

out that even one of the submitted [government] arguments is false the official who submitted them will be immediately fired," Arzumanyan told reporters.

Orbelian, a three-time Grammy Award nominated conductor, is also a principal conductor of the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra in Lithuania.

This was not the first time that Orbelian had been singled out. In November of last year, Orbelian was targeted by then-Culture Minister Lilit Makunts who wrote a Facebook post accusing the executive personnel of the Yerevan Opera House of holding political-agitation meetings at the theater, and warned them that talking about or discussing politics of any kind is strictly forbidden by law.

Lithuanian/Armenian soprano Asmik Grigorian told *OperaWire*, "I can't believe it could happen. I know how much Constantine (Orbelian) did for the theatre, and it finally started to work and live the way it should. They never gave a chance to my father (Gegham Grigoryan) to bring his ideas to life there, but Constantine has got the ball rolling. And the biggest fear is that there's literally no one to replace him."

## Prime Minister Meets with Diasporan Investors

YEREVAN — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Monday, April 1, received a group of Diaspora Armenian investors headed by Gagik Makaryan, President of the Republican Union of Employers of Armenia.

Pashinyan stressed the importance of meetings with investors and business environment improvement, discussions on various investment projects. The Prime Minister noted that they give a good opportunity to the members of the government to listen to the questions raised by the businessmen, issues and suggestions.

Gagik Makaryan informed that with the events taking place in Armenia exciting, new groups of investors are coming to Armenia in the near future, which are interested in the implementation of investment programs in different spheres in our country in the conditions of improving the business environment. According to him, the position of Armenia is growing stronger

among investors and it is a good opportunity to attract new investments.

Then the investors presented to the Prime Minister the investment projects envisaged in the spheres of energy, construction and new technologies, and a discussion was held around it.

Nikol Pashinyan noted that the Armenian government welcomes the initiatives of the businessmen and is ready to assist in the implementation of investment programs within its tools. The Prime Minister also suggested, in particular, the energy sector, to get acquainted with the government's investment packages and, if possible, to participate in their competitions.

Investors noted that they welcomed the policies of the government and the steps taken to improve the business environment and expressed confidence that they would not only attract foreign investors, but also consolidate the potential of Diaspora Armenian entrepreneurs in the homeland.



## INTERNATIONAL

# Cilician Catholicos Aram I Consecrates Forty Martyrs Cathedral in Aleppo

ALEPPO, Syria (AFP) — Armenians in Syria's war-torn Aleppo packed their Forty Martyrs Cathedral Saturday, March 30, for the first mass in the centuries-old church since its restoration began more than a year ago.

Established in the 14th century, it is among the oldest active Armenian churches in Aleppo, a northern Syrian city battered by four years of fighting between rebels and government forces.

After rebels first overran the city in mid-2012, its Christian quarter, housing the church, became one of the city's most notorious front lines.

In April 2015, parts of the church's

cathedral, flanked on both sides by crowds of worshippers.

People pressed up against the walls of the church and filled its wooden benches, their heads turned towards the altar.

Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Aram I reconsecrated the church and delivered a sermon in Armenian.

After mass, he told reporters that Saturday's ceremony sent a strong message.

It was a sign "that the Armenian community will continue to reconstruct Syria," he said.

Syrian Armenian religious leader Harutyun Selimian said the ceremony sparked hopes for a better future for Syria's Armenian community.

"Our future is bright and in this future we will rebuild a new Syria," he told AFP.

Jirair Reisian, an Armenian member of the Syrian parliament, said it was a sign that Syria's Armenian community "is here to stay."

Christians made up 10 percent of

Aleppo's pre-war population.

Out of the 250,000 that lived in the city before the war, thousands have fled the city since the onset of the conflict in 2011.

Many of the Armenians among them fled to Armenia itself, while others headed to Lebanon.

Few have returned, according to demographic expert Fabrice Balanche.

The old quarter of Aleppo is home to several other churches, including those of the Melkite and Maronite sects.

They too were damaged by the four years of fighting in the former rebel stronghold.

Tens of thousands of Armenians fled to Syria and neighboring Lebanon in the early 20th century after hundreds of thousands of their kin were massacred by Ottoman forces in 1915.

The war in Syria has killed more than 370,000 people since it started in 2011.

Later, Aram I met with members of the Armenian humanitarian mission in Aleppo.



Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia outside the Forty Martyrs Cathedral



The church after its destruction in 2015

walls, its courtyards, and its entrance were damaged during shelling.

However, it has been gradually restored since Damascus reasserted its control over Syria's second city in 2016.

State news agency SANA says the main entrance, the facade of the church, its bell tower and its courtyards have been renovated over the past year.

By Saturday, the church's interior left no trace of the war.

Large chandeliers glittered under the arched stone ceiling as a procession of priests carried incense burners into the

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"They exchanged views about several key issues of the settlement process and ideas of substance," said the statement, which was also signed by the US, Russian, and French mediators co-heading the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

"The two leaders underlined the importance of building up an environment conducive to peace and taking further concrete and tangible steps in the negotiation process to find a peaceful solution to the conflict."

The statement said Aliyev and Pashinyan "recommitted to strengthening the cease-fire."

"They also agreed to develop a number of measures in the humanitarian field" and to "continue their direct dialogue."

Pashinyan also called the summit "positive."

"I cannot say that there has been a breakthrough, revolution, or landmark event in the negotiating process," he later told members of the Armenian community of Austria. "But it is very important that a new process, which allows us to talk about our agendas, ideas and issues, has begun."

"Obviously each of us strongly believes in his own position, but can we start talking not just about our own

positions but also the other side's positions?" Pashinyan added.

"What is logical in the opposite side's position and what is not? I find the meeting positive in this sense."

Pashinyan did not say whether he and Aliyev narrowed their differences over a compromise solution to the Karabakh conflict that has long been advanced by the mediators.

Aliyev was quoted by Russian state-run TASS news agency as saying the talks "were conducted in a constructive atmosphere."

"The foreign ministers of the two countries have held several rounds of talks. The most important fact is that the current meeting gave another start to the negotiation process," the Azerbaijani leader said.

The Vienna summit was Pashinyan's and Aliyev's fourth face-to-face encounter in six months.

There has been a significant decrease in cease-fire violations around Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in recent months.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-chairs and the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers issued a joint statement on March 30 based on the results of the meeting.

"The President of the Republic of

Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan met today in Vienna for the first time under the auspices of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (Igor Popov of the Russian Federation, Stéphane Visconti of France, and Andrew Schofer of the United States of America). The meeting was also attended by Foreign Ministers Zohrab Mnatsakanyan and Elmar Mammadyarov. Andrzej Kasprzyk, the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, also participated in the meeting.

"The meeting took place in a positive and constructive atmosphere and provided an opportunity for the two leaders to clarify their respective positions. They exchanged views about several key issues of the settlement process and ideas of substance.

"The two leaders underlined the importance of building up an environment conducive to peace and taking further concrete and tangible steps in the negotiation process to find a peaceful solution to the conflict."

Pashinyan held a telephone conversation with President of Russia Vladimir Putin, after the meeting.

(Articles from Armenpress, RFE/RL and Tass were used to compile this report.)

## International News

### Karekin II Asks Patriarch Kirill to Intercede for Jailed Armenian in Azerbaijan

MOSCOW (Armenpress) — Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II on April 2 asked Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to mediate for the release of Karen Ghazaryan sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment in Azerbaijan.

"We want to bring your attention also on this incident. Karen Ghazaryan, a citizen of Armenia from Berdavan community of Tavush Province, who in unknown circumstances found himself in the territory of Azerbaijan and who has psychological problems was recently sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment," Karekin II said, according to Ria Novosti.

He noted that the verdict was reached in obvious violations of human rights.

"Given our previous experience as religious leaders I ask Your Holiness to mediate with the religious and secular authorities of Azerbaijan for the return of the young man to his family in line with international commitments," Catholicos Karekin II said.

The spiritual leader of Armenia also thanked Patriarch Kirill for organizing trilateral meetings between the spiritual leaders aimed at fostering the settlement of Karabakh conflict.

### New Egypt Ambassador Presents Credentials

CAIRO — On March 12, the Ambassador of Republic of Armenia to Egypt Karen Grigoryan presented his credentials to the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Abdel Fattah Al Sisi.

During the brief conversation, the Armenian Ambassador conveyed to President Al Sisi the warm greetings and wishes of President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian, as well as his readiness to host him in Armenia.

Congratulating the Armenian ambassador on assuming his functions, President Al Sisi highly appreciated the Armenian-Egyptian centuries long historic-friendly relations and wished success to Grigoryan in his mission.

In his turn, Grigoryan expressed his gratitude to the President Sisi for his keenness to further develop Armenian-Egyptian relations.

### Armenia to Send Rescue Team to Flood-Stricken Iran

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia's government said on Friday, March 29, that it will send rescue teams and equipment to neighboring Iran to help authorities there deal with the consequences of deadly flash floods which hit the country last week.

The floods caused by heavy rain have reportedly left at least 37 people dead and tens of thousands of others displaced. Thousands of Iranians are being housed in emergency shelters provided by the government, according to state media.

The semiofficial Tasnim news agency quoted Iranian President Hassan Rouhani as saying on Wednesday that the floods affected 25 of Iran's 31 provinces and that the scale of the disaster overwhelmed emergency services in some areas.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said he is "deeply shocked" by the loss of life. "At this difficult moment Armenia is ready to support the friendly people of Iran and provide necessary assistance to overcome the consequences of the disaster," Pashinyan tweeted in English and Farsi.

Armenia's Minister for Emergency Situations Felix Tsolakian reaffirmed the offer on Thursday at a meeting with the Iranian ambassador in Yerevan, Seyyed Kazem Sajjad.

"We want to send humanitarian assistance to Iran," Tsolakian told fellow members of the Armenian government the following day. "That will be organized through the Russian-Armenian humanitarian center."

"We will be sending technical equipment, machinery and rescuers," he said, according to the Armenpress news agency.



## INTERNATIONAL

# Diocesan Primate Visits FAR Projects in Armenia

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tortured children, and transforming and rehabilitating their lives so they can become safe and acclimated members of Armenia's society.

"My feelings were in a whirlwind as I realized the depth of horror that people can do to others, and the heights that people can also do to help, he stated."

Paying tribute to the staff, he commented, "they treat the children like their own. The visit was the highlight of my trip." As he walked into the Center, the director, Dr. Mira Antonyan greeted him, taking him on a tour of the several buildings.

"All of a sudden, a 13-year-old boy, Jirair Janer, short for his age, but with big, black Armenian eyes ran up to me," the Primate related. "He talked to me like a 25-year-old. He was articulate, clear, uninhibited. He communicated with me like an equal, taking me from room to room and explaining the function of each."

The director explained to the Primate that Jirair had a 17-year-old brother Hagop, and a 16-year-old sister, Sarin, at the Center, "but Jirair was the leader," she explained.

Jirair and his siblings were from Aleppo. His father had been an alcoholic who constantly beat his wife. Two years ago, the mother decided to take her three children to Armenia where she tragically died of cancer. The center took in the three children where they have been receiving professional psychological support, art and socialization therapy.

During his visit, the Primate also met Michael, a 15-year-old non-Armenian from Afghanistan. "He is now learning Armenian," Findikyan said proudly, and related that Michael's background included "running away

from his family, and walking through Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran."

When Michael finally ended up in Armenia, he was arrested because the authorities thought he had escaped from the army. It was found out that he had been a victim of brutal child-trafficking during his travels.

During Soviet times, there was no such school, the Primate revealed. "This building was a police station. FAR changed it to the Children's Center."

These children "from hell have been the victims of the worst of the worst. From day one the center provides them with a non-sugar-coated relationship with these professional staff members, and tailors an exit strategy so they can safely become part of the larger society," explained the Primate.

During this rehabilitation process the center has instituted foster parents for a period of time. Ninety families are being trained to be foster parents. "This is unprecedented," declared the Primate. "These are group homes for 17, 18-year-olds where they live alone with a family. This is their transition to complete independence."



Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan at the FAR Children's Center



Blessing a child at the soup kitchen

"We can't change the past, but we can change the future."

During his one-day visit to the FAR centers in Armenia, Findikyan also visited two other FAR projects.

The School for Disabled Children tends to 100 mostly mentally-disabled children from ages 7 to teens, who are cared for by a staff of 22.

As the Primate arrived, there were cameras and reporters everywhere. "I was being treated like a celebrity. It made me a little nervous," he confessed.

The school is being renovated to build a state of the art Vocational Training Center for children with disabilities, through a generous gift from the Batmasian family of Florida.

The new building will be equipped with rooms for different crafts - carpet weaving, sewing machines, cooking classes, tractors and autobody work, etc. for the training of these children.

While there, many children rushed up to the Primate, hugging him with warm and happy smiles. He was impressed with their clean, well-dressed appearances. In the kitchen, he asked, "What is this?" A child happily replied, "gaghamp (cabbage) salad."

Findikyan has an innate ability to relate to and communicate with children. "These children have no filter. They are honest, direct, genuine. They were happy to meet and accept me as an equal," he said emotionally.

After meeting the staff at the FAR headquar-

ters in Yerevan, the Primate traveled to the FAR Soup Kitchen in Nor Hadjin which during Soviet times was the diamond center with multiple factories (now defunct), employing thousands of workers, all of whom are now unemployed.

Many of the men have since gone to Russia to find work. The soup kitchen feeds 160 women and children and a few old men who are fed in two shifts.

The Primate sat at the head of the table after saying a prayer, and had a "delicious meal of soup, meat cutlet and a grain dish. The people were ecstatic, many saying that they were grateful for the bounty they were receiving."

The Primate met with a woman and her 4-year old son, Vartkes, who has never spoken in his life. As others saw him praying for the boy, several others surrounded Findikyan asking him to pray for their children.

Initially, he said, "I felt uncomfortable being with these needy people. Here I am, I don't have to worry about where my food comes from. I can buy shoes, clothing, take a vacation." But then, he confessed, "But, they didn't see me that way. They relaxed me. I loved being with them."

"I am so proud, as the Eastern Diocesan Primate that our Diocese is accomplishing these amazing results in Armenia through FAR, the Fund for Armenian Relief," Findikyan said in conclusion.

To learn more about the organization, visit [www.farusa.org](http://www.farusa.org)

## Erdogan's Party Loses Ankara in Turkish Local Elections Blow

By Bethan McKernan

ISTANBUL (*Guardian*) — Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has been dealt a major blow at the ballot box after his ruling Justice and Development party (AKP) lost control of Ankara, according to unofficial local election results.

In a further potential setback, the opposition was also leading in Istanbul, Turkey's largest city and commercial center.

The AKP's loss in Ankara to the secular Republican People's party (CHP) mayoral candidate, Mansur Yavas, ended 25 years of Islamist party dominance over the capital and sent shockwaves throughout the rest of the country. The AKP said it would appeal.

In Istanbul there was an anxious wait on Monday, April 1, as ballot counts were still under way. The main opposition bloc candidate, Ekrem mamoglu, was more than 25,000 votes ahead of his AKP opponent, former prime minister Binali Yildirim, as the last votes were being

counted, according to the country's electoral board and CHP data.

Yildirim accepted that his rival was ahead but suggested that there could be a recount of hundreds of thousands of votes in the city of 15 million, where the president's own ascent to power began in 1994. An AKP official said there were voting irregularities and insisted that Erdogan's party had won.

What should have been routine municipality elections morphed into a referendum on Erdogan's decade and a half in office as economic woes began to bite into his support.

Erdogan's leadership has been marked by consistently strong economic growth, but last year's currency crisis triggered an official recession last month. Inflation is hovering at about 20%, sending the cost of living soaring for working-class AKP voters.

Opposition hopes that dissatisfaction at inflation and rising unemployment would be enough to dissuade working-class AKP voters from turning up to vote appeared to be well-founded. "The people have voted in favor of democracy, they have chosen democracy,"

said opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.

Although the president was not on the ballot, he had campaigned tirelessly in an attempt to draw attention away from the economy. He framed the local elections as a matter of "national survival", accusing opposition parties of links to terrorism and blaming inflation on foreign powers seeking to undermine the country.

More than 57 million voters were eligible to take part in choosing the mayors of 30 major cities, 51 provincial capitals and 922 districts. In big cities, voters cast ballots for a metropolitan mayor, a district mayor, the municipal assembly and a neighbourhood administrator.

Despite the setbacks, Erdogan's ruling party and an allied nationalist party still won more than half of the votes across Turkey.

The pro-Kurdish People's Democratic party (HDP) regained several seats across the mainly Kurdish south-east, where the government has replaced elected mayors with government-appointed trustees in the past after alleging the ousted officials had links to the outlawed militant Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK).

Speaking from the balcony of party headquarters in Ankara early on Monday, where he has for years declared victory, Erdogan said he and his allies had come out first. He said the party would work to understand and fix where they failed.

The elections were marked by scattered episodes of violence. At least four people were killed in the country's south and east and dozens injured in election-related clashes in the Kurdish-majority city Diyarbakır.

In Istanbul, police said one person was stabbed in a 15-person brawl that broke out between candidates in Kadıköy district.

The elections were the first ballot-box test for Erdogan since he was re-elected last year under a new system of government that gave the presidency expanded powers.

Government critics have said the elections were not fought fairly, with several HDP leaders in the south-east arrested on terrorism charges in the run-up to voting day. Largely pro-government media coverage also put opposition parties at a campaigning disadvantage.

# Community News

## Members of Congress Substantially Increase Aid Mounts for Armenia, Artsakh

WASHINGTON – On March 27, Members of Congress sent a letter to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs that significantly increases prior aid requests to strengthen United States-Armenia relations and outlines key priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly). With sweeping cuts across the State Department's budget, the Administration proposed \$6.75 million for Armenia. A prior congressional effort requested \$70 million, but the action on March 27 increases the request to a total of \$100 million for Armenia and Artsakh. The Assembly truly appreciates today's action, and will continue working for further increases to Artsakh and Armenia.

Spearheaded by Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Co-Chair Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) along with Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) and Armenian Caucus Co-Vice Chair Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), the letter is signed by Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Rep. Tony Cardenas (D-CA), Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA), Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI), Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA), Rep. TJ Cox (D-CA), Rep. Madeleine Dean (D-PA), Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL), Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI), Rep. Jimmy Gomez (D-CA), Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Rep. Jim Himes (D-CT), Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Rep. Andy Levin (D-MI), Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA), Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA), Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-IL), Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Rep. James McGovern (D-MA), Rep. Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Rep. Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA), Rep. Collin Peterson (D-MN), Rep. Kathleen Rice (D-NY), Rep. Linda Sanchez (D-CA), Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD), Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA), Rep. Albio Sires (D-NJ), Rep. Tom Suozzi (D-NY), and Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV).

"What Congress appropriates money for reflects the nation's values and priorities. Supporting Armenia as it undergoes momentous democratic change embodies these values and should be a top priority. That's why I've joined with my colleagues to call for increased democracy assistance and other foreign aid for Armenia," Rep. Speier said to the Armenian Assembly.

The Caucus initiative requests:

- \$60 million for economic governance and rule of law assistance to Armenia through State Department and USAID accounts;
- \$10 million for military aid for Armenia through Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military and Education Training (IMET) programs;
- \$20 million for Armenia to be a regional "safe haven" for refugees;
- \$6 million for Artsakh de-mining, rehabilitation programs, and water supply systems;
- \$4 million for implementation of the Royce-Engel peace proposals, including placement of OSCE-monitored, advanced gunfire locator systems;
- That the State Department and USAID lift any official or unofficial restrictions on U.S. travel, communication, or contacts with Artsakh government officials; and
- The suspension of U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan until it has been verified to have ceased all attacks against Armenia and Artsakh.

The letter states in part: "In the wake of the Republic of Armenia's remarkable Velvet Revolution, we are writing to thank the Subcommittee for its longstanding leadership in support of both Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh). As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2020 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, we ask you to include... provisions supporting a see AID, page 6



Lt. Gen. Jeffrey L. Harrigian

## Harrigian Nominated To Lead Air Forces in Europe, Africa

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany (*Stars and Stripes*) – The next boss of US airmen in Europe shouldn't have a very steep learning curve on the job.

Lt. Gen. Jeffrey L. Harrigian, deputy commander of US Air Forces in Europe – Air Forces Africa since last fall, has been nominated for a fourth star and to lead the command.

**By Jennifer H. Svan**

Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan announced on March 26 that

President Donald Trump had picked Harrigian for the position.

If confirmed by the Senate, Harrigian would succeed Gen. Tod D. Wolters. Wolters earlier this month was nominated to be the next NATO Supreme Allied Commander and commander of US European Command, replacing US Army Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti.



U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Harrigian, U.S. Air Forces Central Command commander, coins Master Sgt. Samuel Mulvany, 124th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, from Gowen Field, Idaho, at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, Aug. 28, 2016.

Air Forces Central Command and the combined forces air component of US Central Command for two years. He oversaw air operations in the Middle East during a critical time in the war against the Islamic State, which has seen its territory greatly diminished in Iraq and Syria.

As USAF-AFAFRICA commander, Harrigian will be responsible for providing airpower to US European and US Africa commands – an area that includes 104 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Like Wolters, Harrigian is a fighter pilot and US Air Force Academy alumnus, having graduated from the Colorado Springs, Colo., service academy in 1985.

Harrigian has more than 4,000 hours flying the F-22, F-15C and MQ-1 Predator. He's flown combat missions in support of operations Just Cause – the US invasion of Panama in 1989 – Desert Storm and Inherent Resolve.

Prior to coming to Europe, Harrigian led

## Armenian Evangelical Church Community Honors Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian

**By Elise Kalfayan**

PASADENA, Calif. – Gathered in Pasadena at the Armenian Cilicia Evangelical Church on Sunday, March 17 were leaders and supporters of the Armenian Evangelical church community, Kessab Educational Association, Armenian Missionary Association, and other Armenian religious and cultural organizations, for a testimonial banquet and celebration honoring pastoral leader, executive, and author Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian for his 60th anniversary of Christian ministry.

The celebration was organized by the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (AEUNA) and the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA). Tootikian has served both organizations in many capacities for decades, including as current and long-time executive director of the Armenian Evangelical World Council.

His years serving churches includes pastoring the Armenian Evangelical Church of Damascus, Syria, along with serving as principal of the local school (1959-1960); Armenian Evangelical Congregational Church, Cairo, Egypt (1960-1965); Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown (1965-1975).

Tootikian is Minister Emeritus of the Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit, where he served from 1975-2005. A graduate of the Near East School of Theology, Rev. Tootikian did graduate work at Hartford, Harvard, and Andover Newton Theological Seminaries, earning two masters and a doctorate. He has been a lecturer at Lawrence Technological University, Southfield, MI, and a lecturer at the University of Michigan. He was a charter member of the AEUNA in 1971, and the Armenian Evangelical World Council in 1978. Of his many published books, six are currently used as college textbooks in North America and overseas.

Banquet guests filled Derian Hall to capacity. The program featured more than 10 speakers, each of whom presented a different perspective on Rev. Tootikian's life, relationships, and achievements. Moderator of the AEUNA Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian thanked Tootikian, who has served multiple times as AEUNA Moderator and in other ecumenical roles, for his example and leadership. President of the AMAA Dr. Nazareth Darakjian thanked Tootikian for researching, writing, and publishing a history of the AMAA to celebrate the organization's centennial. Rev. Tootikian's 42nd book, *The Genesis and Early Development of the* TOOTIKIAN, page 8



Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian addressing guests at Derian Hall, Armenian Cilicia Evangelical Church



## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Panel at Harvard to Look at ‘Democratization in Armenia and Authoritarianism Worldwide’

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — A panel discussion titled “A Trend or an Exception? Democratization in Armenia and Authoritarianism Worldwide,” will take place at Harvard University’s Fong Auditorium (Boylston Hall), on Tuesday, April 30, at 7:30 p.m.

The panel will be moderated by Dr. Lisa Gulesserian, lecturer on Armenian in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, and will feature a panel including Anna Ohanyan (Stonehill College), Dimitri Sotiropoulos (visiting scholar, Center for European Studies, Harvard), and Valerie Sperling (Clark University).

The event is organized by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) / Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues, with the co-sponsorship of AGBU-YP Boston, and

the Harvard Armenian Students Association.

At a time when there is great concern over the apparent decline of liberal democracy around the world, in 2018 Armenia seemed to be a notable exception and was hailed as “badly needed good news for democracy” by the *Washington Post*. As the one-year anniversary of the Velvet Revolution approaches, is the news still good? Is Armenia an outlier, an exceptional case in a world where government-by-strong-man increasingly is the model? What can be learned from the examples of other states where democracy is in peril? Join with a panel of distinguished scholars to discuss these and other issues relating to democracy and authoritarianism in Armenia and around the world.

This event is free and open to the public. A reception and refreshments will immediately follow the program and the question-and-answer session.



Dr. Lisa Gulesserian

## Dr. Christopher Willard to Speak on Mindfulness at Sts. Vartanantz Church

CHELMSFORD, Mass. — Dr. Christopher Willard, a nationally known clinical psychologist, will speak at Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, 180 Old Westford Rd., on Friday, April 12 about the mental stress and health of youth, an ever-growing concern for parents and care-givers. Dr. Willard will discuss how to detect the early symptoms of youthful distress and anxiety, and offer a variety of mindfulness approaches to help young people effectively cope with these issues during their childhood and adolescences.

Willard is an educational consultant based in Boston specializing in mindfulness. He has been practicing meditation for 20 years, and has led hundreds of workshops around the world, with invitations to more than two dozen countries. He currently serves on the board of directors at the Institute for Meditation and Psychotherapy, and is the president of the Mindfulness in Education Network. His concepts on mindfulness have been published in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. He is the author of *Child’s Mind* (2010), *Growing Up Mindful* (2016), *Raising Resilience* (2017) and eight other books for parents, professionals and children, along with six sets of cards and therapeutic games, available in more than ten languages. He teaches at Harvard Medical School.

This event is being planned by the church’s Adult Christian Education Ministry, and is open to the general public. Parents, youth care-givers, and teenagers will find Dr. Willard’s views especially beneficial. The evening will begin with a complimentary light dinner buffet followed by Dr. Willard’s presentation. Ample time will be allowed for questions. In order to help prepare for this informative evening, contact Sandra Adourian if planning to attend by email at [sandra.adourian@gmail.com](mailto:sandra.adourian@gmail.com).

## Members of Congress Substantially Increase Aid for Armenia, Artsakh

AID, from page 5

broad-based strategic upgrade of a U.S.-Armenia partnership based upon shared interests and common values.”

The Members of Congress also called for stricter provisions of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act to ensure that Azerbaijan not take hostile actions against Armenia or Artsakh, and pledge to demonstrate its commitment to pursuing lasting peace through solely non-violent means.

The letter concludes: “Taking these steps will continue to build on the U.S.-Armenia strategic relationship and help to grow the seeds of pro-democratic and civil society institutions in Armenia. We urge the Subcommittee to invest in peace and assist Armenia and Artsakh at this exciting time of continued development.”

“The Armenian Assembly welcomes this increased request in funding to Armenia. Given the remarkable democratic transformation last year in Armenia, we know that the community expects even more,” Assembly

Executive Director Bryan Ardouny said. “Moreover, the OSCE’s Election Observation Mission Report stated that the elections ‘were held with respect for fundamental freedoms and enjoyed broad public trust that needs to be preserved through further electoral reforms.’”

Additionally, the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe’s (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) reported that “election day proceeded calmly, peacefully, free of pressure on or intimidation of voters” and “the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of expression was respected.”

Earlier this month, Assembly Co-Chair Van Krikorian, in testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee, requested \$100 million in democracy and economic assistance, at least \$10 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Education Training (IMET) to Armenia for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, and \$20 million to help resettle and provide a safe

haven for Christians at risk in Syria and throughout the Middle East, with at least \$25 million in assistance to Artsakh. Krikorian cited Armenia’s remarkable year as more than a reason to significantly increase humanitarian aid, suggesting to the Subcommittee that the United States should “reward people who have made progress towards democracy.”

Krikorian applauded the Subcommittee for holding the important hearing, and greatly appreciated “Chairwoman Nita Lowey’s leadership and steadfast support for Armenia and Artsakh.”

Given Turkey and Azerbaijan’s ongoing blockades, the Assembly’s written testimony also shed light on the importance of aid to Armenia and Artsakh, the need to fully enforce Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, and targeted assistance for economic development and job-creation programs in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of the Republic of Georgia. The Armenian Assembly’s submitted testimony for FY 2020 is available online.

### OBITUARY

## Lorraine Seymourian, 84

Energetic Age-Positive Performer

NEWTON, Mass. — Lorraine Seymourian of Newtonville died on March 24 at age 84.

She was the daughter of the late Michael and Agnes (Haig) Seymour. She was the sister of the late Charles, Winifred, Joyce and Eileen. She leaves many loving nieces and nephews.

Graveside prayers were held at Newton Cemetery on Wednesday, April 3.

She had a longtime radio program titled “Lorraine Entertains,” on WNTN station. She interviewed many celebrities, including Joan Rivers, Michael Douglas, Regis Philbin and the Duchess of York.

She later had a radio program titled “Sexy Seniors with Lorraine” carried on National Radio Network with 106 affiliate stations in 39 states.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

# AMAA's Boston Area Orphan and Child Care Committee Celebrates 30 Years

By Dianne Chilingerian

WELLESLEY, Mass. – The Boston Area Orphan and Child Care Committee of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) will celebrate “Changing Children’s Lives 30 Years and Counting” on Thursday, May 9, at 6:30 p.m. at the Wellesley Country Club.

This year’s event will honor longtime advocate for Armenian causes and organizations, and Co-founder of the AMAA’s Orphan and Child Care Committee, Michele Simourian.

The evening will feature a cocktail reception, walk-and-talk buffet style dinner with

open serve food stations and drinks bars, as well as silent and live auctions, surprise guest auctioneer, wine pull, and prizes to include international travel tickets, exotic hotel stays, sought-after sports and theater tickets, outstanding dining opportunities, and much more. To join the Committee, donate, or purchase an ad in the program book, contact Dianne Chilingerian.

Founded in 1918 in Worcester, and incorporated in New York in 1920, the AMAA is a nonsectarian and a nonprofit Christian charitable organization that serves the religious, educational and social needs of Armenian communities in 24 countries around the world.

For additional information, visit [www.amaa.org](http://www.amaa.org).



Michele Simourian, co-founder of AMAA's Orphan and Child Care Committee

## Forest Lawn Parks Celebrates Armenian Heritage with Movie Night

LOS ANGELES – In a debut cultural event, Forest Lawn will celebrate and revive Armenian history and culture as well as pay tribute to Genocide Awareness Month. The free, one-night-only event on Sunday, April 7, includes the premiere of the documentary “April War Heroes,” followed by a question-and-answer period between the film’s director, Tsvetana Paskaleva, who is one of the most celebrated Armenian filmmakers, and Hovsep “Joe” Hajibekyan of Forest Lawn–Hollywood Hills. After the screening, Armenian community partners will present artifacts, art, and embroidery that represent historic Armenian regions and recover and reintroduce aspects of Armenian culture that were largely eradicated during the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The event also includes Armenian music performances by Ara Dabanjian from Element Band and Friends and traditional Armenian pastries from local Armenian bakeries.

The premiere screening of “April War Heroes” commemorates the third anniversary of the April War or the Four-Day War, which took place in April 2016 and resulted in the death of nearly 100 Armenian soldiers and civilians. The 30-minute film documents the heroic stories of Armenian soldiers who gave their lives during the intense fighting of this war, which began when Azerbaijan attacked the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh and ended when the outnumbered Armenian servicemen pushed back the unexpected and overwhelming enemy attack within days. The screening and conversation with Paskaleva, who has been writing, directing, and filming for more than 25 years, celebrate the power of Armenian film as a tool for remembering history.

“So much of Armenia’s rich history and beautiful culture was lost during the Genocide,” says Joe Hajibekyan. “But with the depth of culture incorporated into Forest Lawn’s Armenian Movie Night, with film, food, artistry, music, and community, we continue to revive and celebrate this legacy.”

Armenian Movie Night takes place from 2:30 to 6 p.m., inside the Hall of Liberty at Forest Lawn–Hollywood Hills, 6300 Forest Lawn Drive, Los Angeles. Doors open for a pre-show reception at 2 p.m.

# Church Endowment Fund Makes Huge Gains

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK – The Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF) “has outperformed our main benchmarks, despite market volatility during 2018,” said Greg Bedrosian, who serves as the chairman of ACEF’s Investment Committee.

ACEF is an independent fund in which parishes and/or individuals create accounts to secure the legacy of a church or institution of higher learning. The non-profit has assets of more than \$104 million, which include over

5,000 different accounts from around the world. The eastern Armenian Diocese is the principal holder in the endowment.

Each year ACEF distributes 4 ½ percent of its earnings to each accounts’ beneficiaries, which are typically the Diocese, a local parish, a family memorial, or another organization benefiting the Armenian community.

Managing the ACEF accounts are two economic and financial experts. Greg Faulkner is a managing director with the global investment firm Cambridge Associates, headquartered in Boston, who has worked with ACEF since 1999. And Bedrosian is the co-founder and chief executive officer with Drake Star Partners, whose

main office is in Manhattan.

Faulkner reported that the 10-year return for ACEF was 7.3 percent, a rate which “outperformed the Manager Selection Benchmark return by 1.0 percent annualized net of manager fees.”

The reason for this success Faulkner explained has been the, “selection of excellent managers who in each asset class have been able to outperform their benchmarks. Our approach is very diversified across the globe. Diversification reduces the risk.”

Bedrosian, who has lived and worked in Europe for 14 years, and came to New York 10 years ago, found that ACEF is “a great way to get reconnected with the Armenian community.”

He praised the Board of Directors and his Investment Committee for selecting talented individuals with strong financial backgrounds. Bedrosian said, “Our job is to work for the strengthening and growth of the Armenian community.”

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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.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## St. James Men's Club Dinner Meeting Featuring Dick Flavin on May 6

WATERTOWN — On Monday, May 6, St. James Armenian Church Men's Club dinner meeting will take place at the St. James Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center. The speaker will be Dick Flavin, an American poet known as the poet laureate of the Boston Red Sox. He is also the team's public address announcer and a former journalist, TV commentator, and playwright.

Flavin was born in Boston and grew up in Quincy, MA. He became the press spokesman for the Massachusetts State Democratic Committee in 1963 and a speechwriter for several politicians, including Ted Kennedy. He went on to become press secretary for the president of the Massachusetts Senate and, in 1967, for the successful campaign of Kevin White for Mayor of Boston. In 1970, Flavin left politics for reporting. He became political editor and reporter for WNAC-TV in Boston before moving to WBZ-TV in 1973 where he spent 14 years as a commentator. It was while at WBZ that he was nominated for 14 New England Regional Emmy Awards, winning 7 times. His work as a broadcaster was honored in 2011 with his induction into the Massachusetts Broadcasters Hall of Fame.

On the creative side, Flavin's one-man play, "According to Tip," was produced at Boston's Repertory Theatre in 2008. The



Dick Flavin

play captured both the public and private life of Tip O'Neill, the Democratic Speaker of the US House of Representatives. It was awarded "Best New Play of the Year" by the critics and writers that make up the Independent Reviewers of New England.

Most notably, Flavin is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Red Sox Rhymes: Verses and Curses*, a collection of 64 humorous and nostalgic poems celebrating the Boston Red Sox.

This St. James Men's Club dinner meeting will begin with a social hour and mezza at 6:15 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m. Mezza and Losh Kebab and Kheyima Dinner \$17 per person. Ladies are invited.

## Sheriff Koutoujian Named to Council of State Government's Justice Center Advisory Board

BILLERICA, Mass. — The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, a national nonprofit organization that develops research-driven strategies to increase public safety and strengthen communities, announced this week that Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian has joined its Advisory Board.

State officials across the U.S. — including here in Massachusetts — have used the findings and technical assistance provided by the CSG Justice Center to develop legislative efforts. In late 2015, Massachusetts leaders asked the CSG Justice Center to help conduct a review of the Commonwealth's criminal justice system. As part of that review, the Massachusetts Justice Reinvestment Working Group, which Sheriff Koutoujian served on, was formed and produced the policy framework for the state's criminal justice reform law in 2017.

"The CSG Justice Center has been at the forefront of historic criminal justice reform across the country, bringing its expertise and experience to countless jurisdictions," said Sheriff Koutoujian. "I look forward to working side-by-side with my fellow board members to ensure this critical work of increasing public safety and strengthening communities continues."

The CSG Justice Center Advisory Board is composed of a bipartisan group of legislators, court officials, law enforcement executives and state executive branch officials, all of whom have significant expertise related to public safety and health. Together, they set and monitor the policy and project priorities for the CSG Justice Center as well as the projects and programs it administers, including the National Reentry Resource Center, the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, and the Stepping Up Initiative.

"We are thrilled to have Sheriff Koutoujian join our advisory board," said Megan



Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian

Quattlebaum, director of the CSG Justice Center. "He is a recognized leader on criminal justice issues not only in Massachusetts but nationwide, and his experience and perspective will be invaluable to our work. We will particularly benefit from his deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities that exist at the intersection of criminal justice and behavioral health."

In addition to serving as a CSG Justice Center Advisory Board member, Sheriff Koutoujian was also recently elected to serve as vice president of the Major County Sheriffs of America, representing sheriffs from more than 90 of the nation's largest counties.

## AIWA Scholarship Applications Are Due on April 20; Over \$75,000 Awarded for the Current Year

BOSTON — April 20 is the deadline for college and university students to submit Scholarship Applications to the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) for the 2019-2020 academic year.

A number of scholarships are awarded by AIWA annually, ranging in value from \$500 to \$5,000, to full-time female students of Armenian descent attending accredited colleges or universities. Students from the United States or abroad entering their junior or senior year in college, as well as graduate students, are eligible to apply for the awards, which are based on merit as well as financial need.

For the current academic year, AIWA (including the Central Board as well as its Affiliates) awarded more than \$75,000 to graduate and undergraduate students from the United States, Canada, Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, and other countries in fields ranging from mathematics and architecture to government, public administration, medicine, art, and design.

New this year was a scholarship of \$5,000 in the name of an AIWA founder, Olga Proudian, awarded annually to a student in the field of diplomacy. This award is provided under the auspices of the AIWA-New England Affiliate.

AIWA's scholarship program was initiated

with the Agnes K. Missirian Scholarship, which was established in 1996 in memory of the professor of management at Bentley University who was a strong advocate for women's rights. Over the years, grants have been added in the names of Ethel Jafferian Duffett, Lucy Kasparian Aharonian (for students in the sciences), Mary V. Toumayan, Hripsime Parsekian (for a student in the field of international relations), Dr. Carolann S. Najarian, Azniv Melidonian and Rose A. Hovannesian.

The AIWA-Los Angeles Affiliate awards annually five Hasmik Mgrdichian Scholarships of \$5,000 each. The Mgrdichian Scholarships are available to California residents.

AIWA also grants several tuition scholarships to students at the American University of Armenia, including \$5,000 to fund two Alice Kanlian Mirak Scholarships there.

To be considered, scholarship applications must be postmarked on or before April 20. They may be downloaded from the AIWA website ([www.aiwainternational.org](http://www.aiwainternational.org)) or requested from AIWA at 65 Main St., #3A, Watertown, MA, 02472; email: [scholarships@aiwainternational.org](mailto:scholarships@aiwainternational.org). California residents are advised to apply directly to the Los Angeles Affiliate at: [www.aiwala.org](http://www.aiwala.org).

## Armenian Evangelical Church Community Honors Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian

TOOTIKIAN, from page 5

*Armenian Missionary Association of America*, is available from [amaa.org](http://amaa.org).

Fr. Sarkis Petoyan, representing the Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, read a letter from His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian. Fr. Karekin Bedourian, representing the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Orthodox Church, also brought greetings from Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian. Members of Rev. Tootikian's family from as far away as the East Coast were present for the occasion. His son-in-law, Dr. Michael Voskian, presented a personal tribute, as did brother-in-law George Pambakian.

Representing Minister to the AEUNA Rev. Berdj Djambazian, who was out of the country, Rev. Serop Megerditchian spoke about Rev.

Tootikian's ministry.

Zaven Khanjian, executive director/CEO of the AMAA, said, "Rev. Tootikian perfectly fills the following three skills in his life, in his lifetime, and in the ministry. His love is subject to his blatant persuasion, which is based primarily on God's Word, and then on the love of humanity."

Additional speakers were Dr. Ken Tourian a classmate and a close friend of Tootikian; Rev. Dr. Ron Tovmassian, a long-time AEUNA colleague; and Joyce Philibosian Stein, chair of the Stephen Philibosian Foundation and a member of the Armenian Evangelical World Council.

The evening concluded with remarks from the honoree.

On this occasion, several contributions were made to the AEUNA Rev. Vahan Tootikian Armenian Heritage Endowment Fund.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# St. Vartan Cathedral Issues Holy Week Schedule

NEW YORK — St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral will observe Holy Week, April 13 through 20, with a series of special services culminating in the Easter Sunday celebration on April 21.

Holy Week is the sacred commemoration of the dramatic events leading to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, His victory over death and the redemption of humanity and the fallen world. The Armenian Church re-enacts these episodes in the days leading up to Easter.

This year marks the first time the new Diocesan Primate, the Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, will celebrate the Easter badarak at New York's St. Vartan Cathedral. What follows is the schedule of Holy Week events at the cathedral.

**PALM SUNDAY** — the commemoration of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem — falls on April 14. Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan (Vicar of St. Vartan Cathedral) will be the celebrant for the services, which will begin with a Morning Service at 9:30 a.m., and will continue with the Divine Liturgy at 10:30 a.m. The Turenpatzek or "Door-Opening" Service will be held after the Divine Liturgy.

The St. Vartan Cathedral Council will host a special "Children's Day" program on Palm Sunday, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Children ages 5 and older are invited to take part in the Palm Sunday procession, and create arts and crafts.

Please note that this year, the cathedral is placing new emphasis on the services immediately before and after Palm Sunday: the Remembrance of the Raising of Lazarus on Saturday, April 13 (Divine Liturgy celebrated by Fr. Vazken Karayan at 10:30 a.m.); a short Christian Meditation service on Holy Monday, April 15 (beginning at 6:30 p.m., guided by Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan); and a Vespers service in remembrance of the Ten Virgins on Holy Tuesday, April 16 (beginning at 6:30 p.m.).

April 18 is **GREAT AND HOLY THURSDAY**, and the day's services memorialize the Last Supper, Jesus' vigil in the Garden of Gethsemane, his arrest and trial. Two separate services will be celebrated on this day. In the morning, the Divine Liturgy will begin at 10:30 a.m. This will be followed by a luncheon.

In the evening, the "Washing of the Feet"

ceremony will start at 6:30 p.m., with the Khavaroom or Vigil Service following at 8:00 p.m. During the Washing of Feet ceremony, twelve individuals from the community will stand in place of the apostles.

The crucifixion and death of Christ will be marked on April 19 — **GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY** — and again two services will occur. The Order of the Crucifixion of Christ will begin at 12:00 noon. This will be a short service enabling working people in Manhattan to attend, and it will be followed by a luncheon in the Diocesan Complex.

That same evening, at 6:30 p.m., the Order of the Entombment of the Lord, or Taghoom Service, will take place.

On **GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY**, April 20, the Divine Liturgy will be preceded by a scripture-reading ceremony at 5:00 p.m. Easter Eve Liturgy will begin at 6:30 p.m., celebrated by Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, the Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director.

The "Astghikner" Children's Vocal Ensemble from Brooklyn's St. Gregory mission parish (conducted by Maria Sahakyan) will sing the Divine Liturgy. A reception will

follow the services.

The drama of Holy Week culminates on **EASTER SUNDAY**, April 21: the central holy day of the Christian calendar, commemorating the discovery of Christ's empty tomb and the news of his resurrection.

Matins will begin at 9:30 a.m. The Divine Liturgy will begin at 10:30 a.m. The Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, will celebrate the liturgy and deliver the homily. The St. Vartan Cathedral Choir will sing the Divine Liturgy under the direction of Khoren Mekanejian. Florence Avakian will accompany on the organ.

Immediately following the service, the Release of Doves ceremony will go forth on the cathedral plaza.

An Easter Sunday reception and program will follow the services, in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium. The reception will include a home-blessing service, and the recognition of the various names associated with the holiday. The reception is free and open to the public.

For information on these observances visit [www.armenianchurch.us](http://www.armenianchurch.us).

## John Mirak Foundation Supports 'Yes, Armenian Women Can!' Campaign

BOSTON — John and Artemis Mirak met each other and were married in the Boston area after having lost their respective families and becoming orphans of the Armenian Genocide.

"They were rescued in Turkey and brought to America by women relatives, so our family's debt to women is profound," said their granddaughter Julia Mirak Kew. "The Mirak family, through the John Mirak Foundation, supports this campaign in the belief that the roles of women are critical to a new Armenia."

The donation of a scholarship in perpetuity

specifically honors the memory of Alice Kanlian Mirak, the daughter-in-law of John and Artemis Mirak, who worked to connect Armenian women throughout the Diaspora by co-founding the Armenian International Women's Association in Boston over 25 years ago. A graduate of Wellesley College, Alice was very active in her hometown of Winchester, Mass., through local politics, philanthropy, the public-school system, and serving as a volunteer to numerous charitable organizations in addition to being an avid athlete, artist, mother and wife. By making this donation, the Mirak family, now in its

fourth generation, "seeks to follow in the noteworthy tradition of their ancestors."

The John Mirak Foundation symbolizes the strength of Julia's grandparents, who not only survived the massacres, but went on to become successful individuals in their own right, while consistently giving back to their Boston society, and never forgetting their roots. They instilled lessons in their family about the importance of upholding the Armenian arts, education and culture, among them the Armenian Cultural Foundation of Arlington, the oldest non-political institution of its kind in the United States, established in 1945.

"By educating women, a country harvests the capacity of its population," said Julia Mirak Kew, who notes that women and men engage in and contribute to society in different ways. "Educated women will set an excellent example for generations to come and encourage young women to stay in Armenia and contribute to their society."



Julia Mirak Kew

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## Kurkjian to Be Keynote Speaker At Rhode Island Commemoration

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee of Rhode Island will commemorate the 104th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on Sunday, April 28, starting at 12:45 p.m. at the Martyrs Monument in North Burial Ground, Branch Avenue. 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 will be Stephen Kurkjian who spent nearly 40 years as an editor and reporter for the Boston Globe before retiring in 2007. He returned to Boston and completed numerous investigative projects. His book, Master Thieves: The Boston Gangsters Who Pulled Off the World's Greatest Art Heist, was published to critical acclaim in 2015.

Kurkjian has written significantly about the Armenian Genocide and his latest projects focuses on the survivors, including his father, Anooshavan Kurkjian.



Stephen Kurkjian

The entire community is invited to attend. For further information, email [joycey41@cox.net](mailto:joycey41@cox.net)

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COMMUNITY NEWS

# US Senators Introduce Bill to Prohibit Transfer of F-35 Jets to Turkey

WASHINGTON – On March 28, Senators James Lankford (R-OK), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Thom Tillis (R-NC), and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) introduced S.922, a bipartisan bill also known as the “Protecting NATO Skies Act of 2019” which prohibits the transfer of F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft to Turkey until the United States certifies that Turkey will not accept delivery of Russia’s S-400 air defense system, reported the Armenian Assembly of America.

“It’s concerning that Turkey would seek close defense cooperation with Russia, whose authoritarian ruler seeks to undermine NATO and US interests at every turn. That’s why I am glad to partner with Senators Shaheen, Van Hollen, and Tillis to introduce this bipartisan bill that sends a clear message to the Turkish government that it cannot have sensitive, state-of-the-art American military technology and Russian military technology,” said Senator Lankford.

“Make no mistake – the Kremlin is an adversary of the United States and many of our NATO allies. The prospect of Russia having access to US aircraft and technology in a NATO country, Turkey, is a serious national and global security risk,” Shaheen stated. “This bipartisan bill will help ensure the safety and security of the United States and our transatlantic community.”

“As a member of NATO, Turkey must not undermine the security of the United States and our allies. Operating the Russian S-400 missile defense system alongside the F-35 aircraft would do exactly that, and we cannot allow that to happen. This bipartisan legislation would draw a hard line in the sand and protect vital national security interests, and the Senate should consider it without delay,” Van Hollen said.

Last year, Senators Shaheen, Lankford, and Tillis introduced S.2781, a similar bill to restrict the transfer of fighter aircraft to Turkey. A version of the bill was included as an amendment in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 National Defense Authorization Act directing the Secretary of Defense to submit a plan to Congress to remove Turkey from participation in the F-35 program. Spearheaded by Van Hollen and with the support of State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Lindsey Graham (R-SC), the Committee adopted this amendment which would expressly pro-



Senator James Lankford (R-OK), Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC), and Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)

hibit spending funds from FY 2019 – as well as prior fiscal years – to transfer, or facilitate the transfer, of F-35 Joint Strike Fighters to Turkey until the Secretary of State certifies that Turkey is not purchasing and will not accept deliveries of the Russian S-400 missile defense system.

“The Armenian Assembly welcomes this latest initiative. Turkey has proven time and time again that its actions and policies could not be further from US interests than any presumed ally. Turkey’s surreptitious attempts to influ-

ence American politics have been increasingly exposed in the past year, and this bill sends a strong message that Turkey’s actions do have consequences,” stated Assembly Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian.

In an article published by the Gatestone Institute, Dr. Lawrence A. Franklin, who served under US Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, wrote: “The number of instances where Turkey and US interests now clash, and the accumulated ill will that these disagreements are begetting, suggests that Turkey is no longer a

dependable ally of the United States.”

“Just this past week, Turkey-based front companies were exposed by the US Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) as part of a network with Iran and the United Arab Emirates to have transferred over a billion dollars and euros to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Iran’s Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAF), in addition to procuring millions of dollars’ worth of vehicles for MODAF,” Barsamian and Krikorian added.

## Salpi Ghazarian to Speak at Connecticut Armenian Genocide Commemoration

HARTFORD, Conn.— The Connecticut Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee has announced that the commemoration of the 104th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide will take place on Saturday, April 27 at 11 a.m.in the Hall of the House at the Connecticut State Capitol.

Melanie Kevorkian Brown, Chairperson of the committee, announced that this year’s 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.” Utilizing her many years of active engagement in the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian



Salpi Ghazarian

Diaspora, she will discuss the dramatic changes in the homeland.

Ghazarian is the founder of CivilNet online television in Armenia and was editor-publisher of Armenian International Magazine. She lived in Armenia for 15 years and served as Special Assistant to Armenia’s Foreign Minister. She is the grand-

daughter of Genocide survivors and continues to struggle with what to remember and what to forget.

In addition to the committee’s mission of honoring the memory of 1.5 million Armenian victims of the Genocide, it also seeks to promote education concerning the Genocide and to present information about developments in both the Diaspora and Armenia.

As in the past, the committee expects that the Hall of the House will be filled to capacity for the program. A number of dignitaries are expected to attend.

A free reception and refreshments will follow the commemoration.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

# St. Stephen's Elementary School Teams Shine at Watertown Spelling Bee

WATERTOWN – Thirteen students from St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School (SSAES) participated in the ninth Annual Watertown Spelling Bee for Grades 1-5, on Sunday, March 31.

They were Georgette Ishagyan from first grade, Arman Stepanian, Elsa Sarkissian, and Nara Behbahani from the third grade, and fifth graders Lea Karapetian, Lara Chekijian, Anais Kahvejian, Alla Petrosyan, Nicholas Nalbandyan, Julia Chapian, Saro Iskenderian, Gassia Minassian, and Narineh Mardiros.

The fifth-grade team, consisting of Lea Karapetian, Lara Chekijian, and Anais Kahvejian won first place in their first round! They had some very tricky words and made it to the double elimination round.

The third grade team tied for first place in their round.

Georgette Ishahagyan (Gr. 1) participated with first grade students from other schools and got first place.




The Fifth Grade spelling bee winning team




The winning team from the third grade



Gr. 5 students with Principal Boyamian, Ms. O'Connor and Mrs. Joyce






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# Arts & Living

## The Debate About Culture And Culture of Debate

By Archi Galentz

BERLIN – The website of *Aravot* reported on February 21 on the visit of Anna Hakobyan, the wife of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, to Switzerland and the surprise that she brought with her. The surprise was her declaration that Armenia would once again amaze the whole world, this time with post-revolutionary achievements. Armenia is to become one of the most prosperous nations in the world, absolutely comparable to Switzerland.

Hakobyan supporter Pashinyan during the revolution not only visibly and with extensive media coverage, but she is also now leading several charity organizations and is assuming serious representational duties.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan himself, during a meeting at the beginning of February with parliamentarians and the business community in the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Berlin, emphasized the fact that Armenia is not only a country with mining and agriculture, but a land of intellectuals, physicists, a flourishing IT sector and, as a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, a country that may also pave the way to access to a market of 160 million people.

And when asked about the planned elimination of the Culture and Diaspora Ministries, which has generated concern, Pashinyan responded that every government mechanism has a tendency towards excessive control and this could have a negative impact on business.

Proponents of streamlining the government apparatus stress that reforms do not entail neglect of spheres of responsibility. Armenia's desire to introduce new standards of efficiency and its search for new models is also apparent in the cultural realm. In mid-May at the Venice Biennale 2019 we will be in a position to judge whether or not Armenia's pavilion, which according to the exhibition's curator Susanna Gjulamiryan this time is not to be organized on the premises of the Mekhitarists, will be convincing. Exhibition space at the Biennale is extremely expensive, but it is reportedly the explicit desire of the government-aligned commissar of the exhibit to invest considerably more than the usual \$5,000 in the "Olympic Games of Art." The Venice Biennale is the most important exhibition worldwide for contemporary art and architecture. It is particularly important to note that at this periodic event one cannot hide behind tradition and history, because its compulsory thematic focus concentrates on the "Now" – the current condition of the nation's art and its cultural policy. Armenia has been an active participant since 1995 and in 2015 received the highest award, the "Golden Lion," for its national pavilion. The 2017 presentation displayed very disturbing tendencies, and now what is being prepared is a huge installation of multiple interrelated components with a lot of videos which are supposed to provide a critical view of the "Velvet Revolution," how it unfolded and what expectations it raised.

The Biennale should not be considered only an important display that mobilizes national resources for the outside world, since it is actually culture and religion together which constitute the main pillars of the national identity. Such a project has an impact domestically as well. And at home it is still the government restructuring that is shaping discussion in the cultural realm. As mentioned earlier, the elimination of a ministry does not yet mean that

see DEBATE, page 15



Taron Simonyan

## Taron Simonyan Finds Humanity in Far-Flung Locales

YEREVAN – The 39-year-old painter and photographer Taron Simonyan is a citizen of the world. He says he has a home and family in different countries around the world. His parents – sculptor Tsolak Simonyan and philologist Anahit Minasyan – have lived in St. Petersburg since 1963, but Taron "succeeded" in being born in Armavir, Armenia. He was 40-days-old when the family returned to Russia, and since

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Petersburg State Art Academy and then studied at the Ljubeck School of Communication Design in Germany. His first personal exhibition took place at the age of 19 in 1998 in Aachen, then in other cities in Germany, Russia, Armenia, Spain, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates. The Naples Documentary Film Festival, which organizes an exhibition of works by a single artist, in 2015 hosted Taron's exhibition on Zorats Karer – one of the most prominent Armenian archaeological sites, as well as his lecture about Armenia.

My conversation with Taron took place in his home in Yerevan in the presence of his amiable parents, in a completely artistic environment with Ararat and a panoramic view of Yerevan in the background.

**There are artists who do not need new impressions and do not travel, yet they create new worlds in a closed space, relying on their imagination. Taron, you are the contrary. Your art is being fed by various trips, especially to exotic lands.**

One should either close himself up or be open till the end! Everyone should be in harmony with his inner world. I have traveled from childhood, and the love for discovering new horizons emerged in me and grew year after year. I have always wanted to know what exists behind the wall. I have always been attracted to unusual countries and cultures. In 2006 I was in Japan for the first time and stayed there for two and a half months. In Kyoto I accidentally got acquainted with the famous sculptor Yasuo Yashikawa, who owns a bar for local artists. Thanks to him, I met many Japanese artists and entered the Kyoto Traditional and Modern Art Academies. I did sketches in Japan, but only during the nights, as during the days I wanted to use every minute and not miss any information. Everything was new to me. I left for Japan for the second time in 2010, worked with local artists and traveled all over the country. Moving from south to the north, I was watching the sakura's gradual flowering. In the spring, human energy is changing, and every time I have a new energy awakening. So I reached Hokkaido island and got two exhibitions in Sapporo titled "Walk in St. Petersburg."

**So the Japanese recognized you as a St. Petersburg artist?**

Not so much. It is true that I was presenting my works based on the performances of the Mariinsky Theater of Opera and Ballet, but the Japanese said that there are Armenian colors in my works. And I remembered the words of my anatomy teacher that the colors I use are very bright, while pastel shades are dominant in St. Petersburg.

see SIMONYAN, page 13

## Rediscovering The History of Armenian Revolutionaries

By Vicken Cheterian

GENEVA (*Agos*) – The hall at the University of Geneva was packed as I introduced Kadir Akin and his documentary "Red." Only a decade back the scene would have been unusual: an Armenian university lecturer introducing a Turkish intellectual, who had worked for several years on Armenian history. For eight decades intellectual exchanges, even personal friendship between Armenians and Turks were simply non-existent.

Moreover, the theme of the documentary was one of the most contested pages in the Armenian-Turkish history: that of the Armenian revolutionary movement. For Ottoman and later Turkish historiography, the Armenian revolutionary groups were no more than traitors that collaborated with the enemy, colonial empires (Russian, British and French), to destroy the Ottoman Empire. They were enemies of the state. For Armenians, they were heroes who fought against injustice, for the freedom of the nation.

"I did not do this movie for the Armenians, I did it for the Turks," Akin told me when we met before the projection, around a cup of coffee. His interest started when he first learned about Paramaz, an Armenian social-democrat revolutionary, who, with 19 of his comrades, were hanged on Beyazit Square in Istanbul, in 1916. It was in 2010 when he read in an Istanbul leftist publication an article titled: "Let us not forget Paramaz." Apart from this there was no additional information in Turkish. Limited articles available in English on the internet made him realize that there was a Marxist movement in Ottoman Empire 33 years before the founding of the first Turkish Communist Party, founded only in 1920. In spite of the numerous leftist parties in Turkey, Akin wondered why the first socialists in the Ottoman Empire were left in the dark.

It would take him into a long journey of eight years to discover the history of the Hunchagian Social Democratic Party, the first socialist party in the Middle East that introduced Marxism into the Ottoman Empire and Iran, as well as to the history of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation – Tashnagsutyun. He had to travel outside Istanbul – to Yerevan, but also to Beirut to meet historians and members of Hunchag Party, and to Geneva where seven university students founded the Hunchagian party in 1887.

Kadir Akin first worked on a book titled *Paramaz: Armenian Revolutionary, From Abdul Hamid to Union and Progress Armenian Socialists and Genocide*. The book was initially published in 2015, and found much success in Turkey. Its fifth edition has already been released. The low-budget documentary is thick like a book: it documents the history of Armenian political parties until the genocide.

"Until now we did not know how the Genocide influenced Turkish socialism," Akin said. The fact that for decades Turkish leftists continued to ignore socialist militants who preceded them "shows that the origins of Turkish socialism is not internationalism. On the other hand, both Hunchags and Tashnags were member of the Socialist International," he added. He thinks the debates of the past, and especially the program of the Hunchag Party is still relevant for today: "Hunchags wanted Anatolian Federalism," an issue which continues to resonate in Turkey today, as the destruction of the Armenians did not end the question of how a centralized state manages diversity.

see REVOLUTIONARIES, page 14



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Taron Simonyan Finds Humanity in Far-Flung Locales

SIMONYAN, from page 12

**I remember your “Japan’s Colors” photo series at the Armenian-Japanese joint exhibition in National Gallery of Armenia in 2006.**

That exhibition was called “From Ararat to Fujiyama,” organized by specialists of Japanese art curators Andrey and Irina Mikhailov from St. Petersburg, with the participation of 13 Japanese artists (painters, sculptors, photographers, conceptual artists). One of those artists stayed in our home and every morning was meditating in front of the Ararat view. It was a great experience in my life to communicate with the Japanese reality. I remember one interesting thing: in the first month of my stay in Japan, I bought a kimono and went to the same store before returning. The owner of the store remembered me, and appreciating my three-month stay in his country and visiting his store for the second time, he donated seven kimonos to me. Japan has somewhat refined me; it indirectly imposes rules that were difficult, but acceptable and very interesting. When a person sees some news and understands that it is right, good and healthful for him, he begins to be improved at once. From Japan, we have a lot to take: first of all, love and sensitivity toward nature. Once we were returning from Geghard with the Japanese guests. I got out of the car and took a round stone lying on the road and brought it home, and the Japanese woman told me: “You took that stone in vain, cutting it off from its family.”

**Was Japan was your creative boom?**

Actually, Indonesia. I stayed there for more than a year, as, unlike Japan, life is not expensive there. I have worked actively there and later visited the country again. Indeed, national traditions are still very bright in Indonesia. Although the Muslims try to make the whole country Muslim, Bali’s people in particular still strive to preserve their identity and culture at all costs. The Shinto religion of Japan has turned into a kind of museum religion (as technocratic reality cannot affect the viewpoint of people), though Bali’s local beliefs and culture

seem to be on their last breath. I lived and worked in a great art center in Bali where people come from all over the world. One time I made a performance with the painters of different nations: we took canvases, went to the rice fields and started drawing on the spot. It was just a experiment, an emotional explosion, not a creative work. My Indonesian paintings, about 20 large canvases, along with four other artists’ works, have been exhibited at the Yerevan Folk Art Museum.

**And how did you arrive in Africa?**

Before Africa it was Nepal, which is also a location with a very strong energy. I stayed there for a month. I went the Himalayan mountains, and wanted to stay there for a longer time, but because of the revolution in the country, I had to leave my bags and escaped from the country only taking my paintings. I exhibited them in Yerevan too, at the Russian Art Museum. As far as Africa goes, Tanzania in particular, it had such strong impression on me that for two years I was not able to work. Appearing in Africa, you realize that it is the strongest, most interesting area on our entire planet; the most difficult one, the hungriest one, the poorest one, but the most amazing one. The source of everything is there – of civilization, fashion, design, music, sports and bodily beauty. Even now I am very excited about Africa. I went there with my Russian friend, who is an art critic. I took 80 kilograms of paints and canvases. I was particularly interested in Maasais, about one million semi-nomadic people living in Tanzania and Kenya, near Kilimanjaro, in the national park. We did not want to stay in the capital of Tanzania, Dar al-Salam, where more than four million people live. It is impossible to deal with painting there; you could endanger your life. We spent three months in a village on Zanzibar, a tourist island, where I worked very efficiently. On Zanzibar, we got acquainted with two Maasais and traveled with them to the continent, cutting across about 1500-2000 kilometers. When we entered the national park, the connection with the world was cut off; cell phones stopped working. Finally, you understand that you are in another dimension. We went about 40 to 50 minutes in the darkness. There would not be a way back if your companions suddenly leave you. It was kind of playing on the boundary of life and death, but faith leads you to wherever you are. And so we reached the village of Lesoito. Although it was night, the res-



Painting by Taron Simonyan

want to miss any minute. I had to comprehend everything quickly, accumulate it, and when I felt that I could no longer get more information, at 2:00 a.m. I said, “This is enough, I have to go back quickly.” There is a kind of energy that a human being does not need anymore. I had had to not exceed the “limit” in order to not damage my impressions. Returning to Zanzibar, I immediately created my African painting series and opened exhibitions in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The local Art Myph magazine considered my exhibition the best of the year. As a result, I had twenty

large canvases that I brought to Yerevan, but I have not had an exhibition yet.

**You came back from Indonesia recently. This country seems to keep you inspired continuously. Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, the Maasai people ... what’s next?**

I do not know. Maybe Mexico? I feel good in new places. I get energy from communication with new people. I love to communicate with ethnic cultures, seeing more emotional art in them. There is nothing like this in Europe. In St. Petersburg, painters “smash” their head in their studio. What new things can they invent? Whereas in Bali, if you do not have any ideas, you can just go out to the street and nature, the environment, will give you ideas at once. Even in highly developed Japan it is easier to do so, though the Japanese people put their ideas more in line with their diligence. From my example, I can say that travels improve people a lot, expanding their outlook, and are especially important for artists.

**What interesting special story do you remember from Africa?**

One night the cottage where I stayed froze. Yes, sometimes in Africa you can be frozen. I said that it was cold, and they brought a bull inside to warm the cottage. And the cottage really warmed up from the animal’s face. I stayed a week among the Maasais and was dressed like them, I had my mammy Yoyo, who cared for me. We witnessed the celebration of the full-moon festival of Maasais, which takes place twice a year and is the ritual of man becoming a hunter. I had not brought paints with me, only taking photos and videos because, as in my first time in Japan, I did not

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## Rediscovering History of Armenian Revolutionaries

REVOLUTIONARIES, from page 12

Why was a Turkish intellectual suddenly interested in Armenian (revolutionary) history? The other side of the question (that I ask in my book *Open Wounds*) is: why was Armenian history reduced to silence for so long? “The Genocide of the Armenians destroyed this memory, the historic experience of Hunchags and Tashnags from today’s political experience,” Akin told me.

My own interest in Armenian revolutionaries, and especially the history of the Hunchagian Party, was revived as I was reading the magnum opus of Hana Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* – still the major work on the history of that country. There, he mentions that probably the first person who introduced socialist ideas to Iraqi youth was Arsen Kidour, a young Armenian teacher sent to Baghdad, and member of the Hunchagian Party. Batatu, who conducted long interviews with Kidour in Beirut in the 1960s writes that the Hunchags were also “the forerunner of the Communist party of Syria and Lebanon.” They were also the forerunners of Marxist and Communist parties in Turkey, Bulgaria and Iran.

Today, the Armenian revolutionary movement, and the rich political debates of the 19th century, is largely forgotten. They have no place in the two major discourses that developed in the 20th century: nationalism and Islamism. The few Armenian revolutionaries that are remembered today are largely placed within the nationalist discourse – either as the saviours of the Armenian nation, or even further like in the case of Missak Manouchian – who led a group of migrant Communists of Eastern European, Jewish, Spanish and Armenian backgrounds in resisting the Nazi occupation of France, as a hero of French resistance. No one remembers Armenian and Georgian activists who took part in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911 and how for a short while the entire (revolutionary) police force of Tehran was under an Armenian militia led by Yeprem Khan. No one remembers the Baku Commune - that short-lived internationalist government in the industrial city led by the Bolshevik Stepan Shahumian. Armenian Revolutionary history is forgotten and Shahumian has no place, neither in Armenian, nor in Azerbaijani national narrative.

Yet, the documentary of Kadir Akin tells us that the Armenian revolutionaries are also part of Ottoman and Turkish history. And by doing so, he subverts the hegemonic paradigms of nationalism and Islamism, the modern history of the Middle East, and the way it continues to be told in books until now. It has the potential to radically revise the way the modern history of the Middle East has been told and written, making history writing a critical exercise opposing power, hegemonic narratives, fighting against censorship and denialism.

The experience of the Armenian political movements, their debates and the political actions they adopted remains relevant to the current situation in the Middle East: the Hunchagian Party organized the first political demonstration in Istanbul in 1894 demanding for political reforms, 116 years before the Arab Spring; Tashnagsutyun organized probably the first major terrorist operation in 1896 – occupying Ottoman Bank to demand the stop of the anti-Armenian massacres; and Armenian parties organized a major guerrilla movement in the 1890’s, some 70 years before the emergence of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Revisiting those struggles are full of lessons that has been ignored for so long.

More important than the methods of political struggle was its substance: the relationship between the individual that they wanted to become a “citizen” with political rights, and the state, the Ottoman state. Yet, the Armenian revolutionaries, the “sons”, cannot be understood without the constitutional movement, the “fathers”: the movement of reforms in the Ottoman reforms of the 19th century, the Tanzimat, in which Ottoman Armenians played central role. Yet, that is another forgotten story that needs other occasions to talk about.

(Vicken Cheterian is a journalist and political analyst. He teaches international relations at Webster University, Geneva, and lectures in the Global Studies Institute at the University of Geneva.)

# Recipe Corner

## Guest Recipe

### by Christine Vartanian Datian



## Artichoke with Basil Aioli

Contributed by David Vartanian of the Vintage Press Restaurant, named one of America’s Best Chefs\*

### INGREDIENTS

4 large artichokes, trimmed  
3 cups breadcrumbs  
1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese  
1/2 cup melted butter  
1/2 cup chopped parsley  
4 cloves garlic, chopped  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

### PREPARATION

Boil the artichokes in salted water for 20 minutes or until tender. Drain and let cool. Remove the choke. Combine the remaining ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Divide the breadcrumb mixture into fourths. Press the breadcrumb between the leaves of the artichokes with your fingers.

Place the artichokes in a preheated, 350 degree oven for 8-10 minutes or until very hot. Garnish with Fresh Basil Aioli.

### FRESH BASIL AIOLI

1 cup mayonnaise  
6 - 8 basil leaves  
Juice of one large lemon  
1 clove garlic, chopped  
Salt and pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in blender or food processor. Blend until smooth. Serves 4.



\*Best Chefs America features premier chefs like David Vartanian who have been nominated and recommended by their peers in the culinary field. Go to: <https://www.bestchefsamerica.com/>

\*\**The Wine Spectator* writes The Vintage Press has "one of the best wine lists in the world" while Fodor's raves we're "the best restaurant in the Central Valley" and the *L.A. Times* applauds us as "a bastion of culinary merit."



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## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# The Debate about Culture and the Culture of Debate

DEBATE, from page 12

the associated tasks will not receive adequate consideration, but the fact that the Agency for the Protection of Historical Monuments, which has been successfully managed by the Culture Ministry since the 1970s, is now to be placed under the City Development Agency is cause for justified concern. A conflict of interest is effectively guaranteed in this arrangement, and monuments, for example, the last remaining nineteenth-century city villas in Yerevan, might fall victim to the powerful construction industry.

Another idea that is being hotly debated is the proposal to take paintings and other cultural artefacts out of museums and into schools where they can be exhibited. “Your Art” is supposed to be the name of the program, which is to implement what the current prime minister announced during his meeting in the Philharmonic Hall with people from Yerevan’s cultural scene in May 2018.

Pashinyan expressed his gratitude to the intellectuals for having mobilized the population to take to the streets, and then promised to bring the population to the same level as the intellectuals. In point of fact, the idea for “Your Art” is said to originate from Pashinyan. But the intellectuals responded only with concern, and even the offer to make more vehicles available to transport the paintings and to entrust the most valuable items to the security services did little to reassure them.

Armenia, though the smallest of the 15 republics of the USSR, possessed the third largest collection of art treasures in the picture galleries and even today there are astounding collections found in provincial cities like Dilijan or Vanadzor.

“Stupidity” – that is the name for this popularizing campaign suggested by Zaven Sargsyan, director of the Paradjanov Museum, one of the most successful museums in Yerevan, which not only earns its own money, but also supports a lively international program with exhibits recently in Berlin and Istanbul.

“Absurd! We have museums precisely for this reason: so that people go to the paintings and look at them, and not the other way around! Meaningless and unprofessional,” complained an angry Hayk Hovhannisyanyan on his site in the social networks. In Germany, he is the director

there exists no museum law in the Republic of Armenia. And the museums, with few exceptions, are state run and therefore are regulated by orders from above. Even during the time of the previous government, for an exhibition abroad the director of Armenia’s National Library had to take the first edition of the *Urbatagirq*, the first book printed in Armenian

is still in the advisory stage. In the project, museums are to be allowed to run cafés to earn income to finance the renovation of the exhibition rooms. Apparently it is believed that restaurants in museums might expect adequate turnover. In fact, those few museums in Armenia that offer visitors postcards and other memorabilia, like the Aslamazyan Sisters

lections, not to mention copyrights to pictures and similar intellectual property.

Legal rights concerning gifts are not regulated either, and this is an invitation to criminal acts. In Armenia only automobiles and real estate have to be notarized as gifts. Anything else can, metaphorically speaking, be listed on a paper napkin and checked off. Whether or not such a gift – regardless of value – is received after the death of the giver can no longer be determined. In the concrete case of the Kalentz Museum, four months after the death of my father, who left no testament, several pages of a document appeared with a list of gifts, and was used in the court proceedings to argue against the notary’s drawing up an inventory of the works held in the house-museum. This bundle of pages was neither notarized nor supplied with the name of a witness; it did not even have a handwritten line from the “gift giver,” who a full year prior to his death was supposedly giving literally all his art works to his older brother who resided abroad. And the several pages were presented in photocopied form. Perhaps it reads like a soap opera, but it was only after police investigated this case of document forgery that months later the original document was made available. The experts however were not allowed to take enough samples, to examine the ageing of the paper and ink, and to establish the date of the “donation,” since the suspect, as owner of the document, did not give his permission for them to extract samples from the A4 format pages. Allegedly this was done to avoid endangering the cultural-historical value of the “document.” The graphological examination of the “checkmarks” or “tics” as a supposed signature was determined unattainable on grounds of simplicity. In the end, after six months and the removal of three leading commissars the case was considered closed, without any conclusion. What legal recourse remains is the possibility to take the State Attorney to court and to go through three instances to demand he fulfill his duty to investigate the suspicion of a serious crime of document forgery.

Even the special hearing that was supposed to declare the “gift” as null and void, remained without result, since Armenian law does not provide for any strict form for a gift. The grounds for such a declaration would have been found in numerous formal errors, like the nebulous formulation “whole archive,” or the lack of signatures on each page of the list, or the lack of the actual transfer and acceptance of the gift objects; and, the authenticity of the signature was not a subject of the hearing. It is that simple. One can however appeal the decision. Armenia is a state of law.

Pashinyan himself even added during his meeting in the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Berlin that the new government “would not like to interfere in the work of the courts.” The courts, however, seem to expect instructions to come “from above.” And if we do not interfere, that does not mean that others will not do so.” Apparently we are not dealing here only with the measurable degree of independence of jurisdiction, but with the belief that the juridical system is a service, one that settles problems and if necessary even legalizes matters of fact. And that is what’s called the culture of debate, something that varies greatly from one nation to the next.

With the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution on the horizon, one might place the main emphasis on an increase in prosperity and economic activity and consider cultural aspects as peripheral phenomena. But how is one supposed to attract investors to the country in droves and reach Swiss living standards in record time if bonds, shares and other capital assets do not enjoy the same value status as an automobile? How can one guarantee legal security if fundamental mechanisms of treating property are apparently stuck in the Soviet era, when real estate enjoyed the highest protection status?

(This commentary first appeared in the current issue of the *Armenische-Deutsche Korrespondenz*, ADK, 2019/1, Nr. 182, pp. 52-54. The ADK is the quarterly publication of the Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft. The article was translated from the original German by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach.)



Prime Minister Pashinyan in Berlin (2nd from left).

(in 1512), and which exists in very few copies, and wrap it up in a piece of cloth and tuck it into his inside jacket pocket to transport it. There were written instructions from President Sargsyan, but no funds for transportation or insurance had been authorized. In the exhibition titled “The Art of Calligraphy and the Charm of Pictures,” which was presented in Halle an der Saale on the 500th anniversary of book printing, this priceless item was exhibited like a relic, under protective glass in accordance with museum practice, only to be tucked again into the inside pocket of the director (who did his best not to perspire) for the journey home.

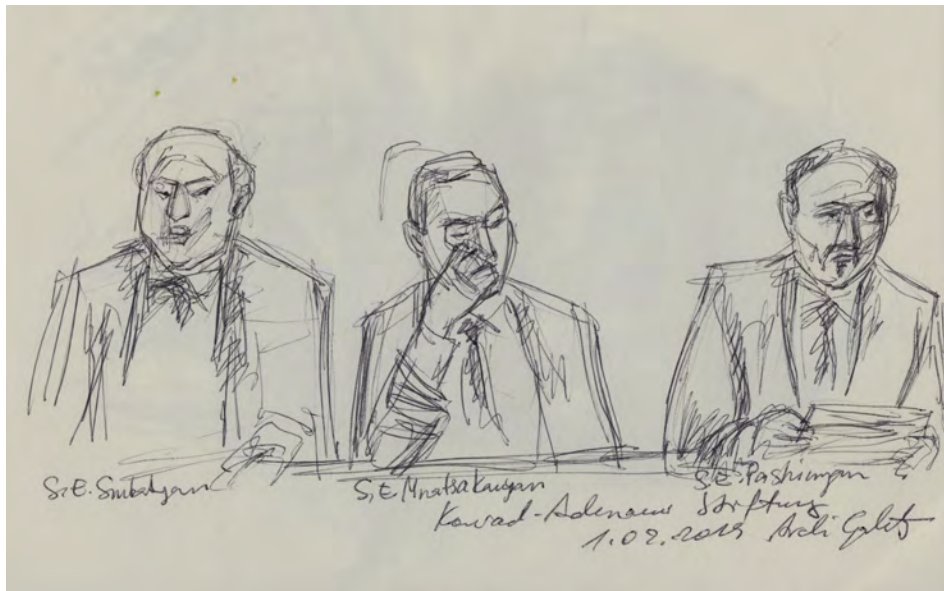
It is well known that hope is the last to die. The website of the Moscow-based Armenian

Museum in Gyumri or the Paradjanov Museum in Yerevan mentioned above, do manage to generate some income. It is clearly not enough to finance renovation work and the sales are the director’s own responsibility. The legal situation is not settled and individual initiative entails significant risks.

The absence of legally clear regulations does not make life any easier for the limited number of private museums either. And the elimination of the Culture Ministry will mean yet more chaos. It is not only the fact that a legal dispute may lead to long drawn-out court proceedings, but also that there is nothing concrete regulating cultural assets on the law books. Take, for example, the Tamanyan Museum, which was founded in 2001 and represented successful cooperation between the state and private individuals. The state provided rooms and workplaces and the architect’s heirs made the exhibits of the museum available in the form of drawings, photographs and models. Last year, however, the family took back the exhibits and the museum was closed, or rather, forcibly fused with the National Museum Institute of Architecture.

The fate of the Kalentz Museum in Yerevan is even more dramatic. It opened in 2010 as a purely private house-museum and was initially dedicated to the work and life of my grandfather, the painter Harutyun Kalentz. The bitter inheritance battle following the death of the museum founder, my father Saro Galentz, in October 2017 laid bare the fundamental weaknesses of the legal system in Armenia. It starts with the fact that one cannot register artworks or manuscripts or other intellectual wealth as property. The museum, which had four jobs paid by the Culture Ministry for six years, was never registered anywhere, and there was never a list of the museum’s exhibits. The notary who handled the inheritance initially refused to draw up a list of the artworks actually on hand, on grounds that there existed no precedent in Armenia. And when she was then ready to conduct this pioneering task, evenings, after office hours, she was simply not permitted to enter the house. It took three instances in court before the Supreme Court ruled, in January of this year, that the notary would be allowed to conduct her task unhindered. By way of comparison: elsewhere the police would simply decide on the basis of an application by the person entitled to the inheritance and would secure the entrance to the house with a seal.

In this case, however, the decision on the part of the Supreme Court did not lead to any final settlement, since the authorities register only real estate and automobiles as property that may change hands, but not libraries or art col-



Ambassador Smbatyan, Foreign Minister Mnatsakanyan and Prime Minister Pashinyan (left to right), during the meeting in the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. Sketch by the author.

of a highly respected restoration studio and has actively supported Armenian institutions for years. Anthropologist Gayane Shagoyan also hopes that Pashinyan, who has often proven willing to change his mind, will do so again, and cancel the “museum delivery service” program.

The Culture Ministry is to be subordinate to the Education Ministry and “Your Art,” regardless of the form it is to take, is clearly a project for education. It will not guarantee the continuing expansion of museum collections, it will not serve the aims of research into art objects and it will expose museum pieces to ever greater dangers, since for example any abrupt change in temperature and humidity, usually accompanying transportation, is simply catastrophic for paintings.

What is still more disturbing is the fact that

Museum of Moscow and National Culture reported on February 25 on two museums in Yerevan that have been begging to be renovated for almost 40 years. It is not a question of cosmetic appearance but of mold that has attacked the foundation masonry, the wooden floor and a number of exhibits.

The reference is to a house in Yerevan’s city center, with two important institutions, one on top of the other. One is the atelier of Ara Sargsyan, a sculptor originally from Istanbul who studied in Vienna and was close to the Nemesis Group; and the second is the museum of the painter and graphic artist Hakob Kodjoyan, who studied in Munich and was among the founders of the national painting style. The report is alarming, but it does contain some hope in that it mentions a law project that



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.

FLORIDA

**APRIL 11 — One of the opera world’s hottest stars, Alessandro Safina, will bring in his pop-opera rhythms** to USA during his upcoming concert tour in April. Safina appeared with Elton John, Cher and Jennifer Lopez for Queen Elizabeth’s 73rd Royal Variety

Performance. He also performed for the Pope, sang duets with Andrea Bocelli, Sarah Brightman, and Rod Stewart. Americans first became familiar with Safina when he performed Elton John’s “Your Song” with actor Ewan McGregor for the Oscar-nominated soundtrack of “Moulin Rouge.” Safina will be accompanied by Victor Espinola and the Forbidden Saints. The tour will feature Armenian Duduk Soloist and Classical Clarinetist Mher Mnatsakanyan and Bassist Hova Burian. The performance will be held at Fillmore Miami Beach in Miami (Times 8:00-9:30pm)

MASSACHUSETTS

**MARCH 31-APRIL 14 — Needlelace Workshops at the Armenian Museum.** Join us for this unique opportunity to continue the tradition of Armenian needlelace! Taught by Textile Curator Susan Lind-Sinianian, these three sessions are a unique opportunity to learn intricate regionaltechniques that were passed down through generations from mother to daughter. All materials are supplied so just show up ready to learn techniques practiced by Armenian women for centuries. Examples from the Museum’s textile collection will provide inspiration as you find your voice by sewing edgings on linens. Have Armenian needlelace at home? Bring them in to share your family story! Sundays, 3–5 p.m. Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor. Cost: \$90, Members discount: \$60. 65 Main St, Watertown..

**APRIL 7 — “Vaping 101: A Seminar for Parents,” sponsored by the Parent Partnership of Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston,** 12:30 pm-2 pm, Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. All are invited to an educational session designed to help parents and caregivers learn more about the effects of the dangerous epidemic of teen vaping. Presenters are Carlene Newell, Health Educator/Tobacco Specialist, Karen Koretsky, Community Coalition Director, Arlington Youth Health and Safety Coalition, and Cindy Sheridan Curran, Arlington High School Truancy Officer. Admission free; light refreshments served. RSVP by April 5 to Director of Youth Ministries at youth@htaac.org. For information, log onto <http://www.htaac.org/calendar/event/667/>

**APRIL 7 — Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture Armenian Heritage Park** on The Greenway, Boston. Sunday at 7:00 am. Coffee & Conversation from 8:00am -9:00am. A crane lifts and pulls apart the two halves of Abstract Sculpture, made of steel and aluminum, to create a new sculptural shape. The annual reconfiguration is supported by the Park’s Charles and Doreen Bilezikian Endowed Fund. Rain date: April 14. RSVP appreciated – [hello@armenianheritagepark.org](mailto:hello@armenianheritagepark.org)

**APRIL 8 — “What Every Person Should Know About Buying and Selling Real Estate from your First Home** to Investment Properties,” Trinity Men’s Union Dinner and Meeting, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, Monday, 6 p.m., Social Hour, 7 p.m. Dinner, Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge MA. Guest Speakers: Lauren Carroll, real estate agent; Alex Steinberg, home inspector; David Lazowski, mortgage broker; and Kristina Yee Vitullo, real estate attorney. Everyone Welcome. Donation for Lenten dinner of baked shrimp scampi is \$15 per person. RSVP requested by April 5 to [tmuhtaac@gmail.com](mailto:tmuhtaac@gmail.com), or David Dorian, 617.501.4300. For further information, log onto [www.htaac.org/calendar/event/669/](http://www.htaac.org/calendar/event/669/).

**April 11 — Jonathan Conlin, “Mr. Five Percent: The Many Lives of Calouste Gulbenkian,** the World’s Richest Man,” at the AGBU Center, 247 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. Presented by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). 7:30 p.m. Details to follow.

**APRIL 12 – Presentation on “Connecting with your Family Through Mindfulness” by Dr. Christopher Willard,** a nationally known clinical psychologist. Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford, MA. 6:30 p.m. Dr. Willard will discuss how to detect the early symptoms of youthful distress, and offer a variety of mindfulness strategies and approaches to help families effectively cope with everyday childhood anxieties. A complimentary light dinner will precede Dr. Willard’s presentation. Contact Sandra Adourian for reservations, (617) 926-7344 or email [sandra.adourian@gmail.com](mailto:sandra.adourian@gmail.com).

**APRIL 12 — Massachusetts State House annual Armenian Genocide Commemoration,** 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. Reception to follow. Boston. Bus transporta-

tion free from Watertown to State House. Deadline April 8 to register. [Bostonagcc@gmail.com](mailto:Bostonagcc@gmail.com)

**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](mailto:Bostonagcc@gmail.com)

**APRIL 24 — Save the Date! “In the Shadow of Branches: Diana Apcar/Berjouhi Kaillian.** 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 Kaillian (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](mailto:office@htaac.org), or log onto [www.htaac.org/calendar/event/622/](http://www.htaac.org/calendar/event/622/).

**APRIL 27 – SAVE THE DATE! Hai Guin Scholarship Association 2019 Spring Benefit Luncheon.** Belmont Country Club. Saturday, 11:30 a.m. Shopping and Support Luncheon, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. by St. John’s Armenian Church, 978-500-1116 or Andrea Garabedian 978-618-3030 to reserve your tickets (\$65 each).

**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 Gulesserian. 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@stthagop.com](mailto:assembly@stthagop.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,



ARTS & LIVING

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.

**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](mailto: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 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:hello@armenianheritagepark.org)

**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](mailto: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](http://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 Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan. 6:30 p.m. Old Tappan Manor, Old Tappan, NJ. For more info on reservations and booklet sponsorships, please go to [www.stnersess.edu](http://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 9 — Alessandro Safina, will bring in his pop-opera**

**rhythms** to the US. Safina will be accompanied by Victor Espinola and the Forbidden Saints. The tour will feature Armenian Duduk Soloist Mher Mnatsakanyan and Bassist Hova Burian will take part. Official FaceBook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/AlessandroSafinaUSA/>

**APRIL 10 — Wednesday, 7 p.m., Jonathan Conlin, “Mr. Five Percent: The Many Lives of Calouste Gulbenkian,** the World’s Richest Man,” at Columbia University. Co-sponsored by the Columbia Armenian Center and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

**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](mailto: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](http://phillykov.com) or call 610-389-4633

RHODE ISLAND

**APRIL 7 — Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church, Providence, the Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church** will present the first in a series of talks, “Meet with Armenian Doctors,” on Sunday, April 7, at 12:30 p.m., in Hanoian Hall of the church complex. ( 70 Jefferson St., Providence).Pulmonologist Dr. Raffi Calikyan will speak and take questions. Admission is free and open to the public.

**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](mailto:joycey41@cox.net)

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 Toumanyan. 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.*



COMMENTARY

# Mirror Spectator

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1509

COMMENTARY

## What Is Next after the Vienna Summit?

By Edmond Y. Azadian

News is scant, but commentaries are in abundance after the summit between Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azeri President Ilham Aliyev in Vienna on March 30. No breakthroughs were expected and none were reported.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group's announcement inviting the parties to the Vienna summit sounded somewhat like an ultimatum directed at the negotiating parties; yet the co-chairs of the group – the US, Russia and France – had toned down their rhetoric and had returned to their role of facilitators before the meeting happened.

The format of the Vienna meeting included the participation of the co-chairs as well as the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, in the second part of the meeting, the two leaders were left alone for more than two hours for private talks. Following the summit, the leaders kept their discussions close to their vests, revealing almost nothing to the public. Therefore, everything has been left up to speculation.

The prospect from Moscow seems gloomier. Commenting on the nature of the conflict, Deputy Director of the Center for Political and Strategic Analysis Alexander Khramchikhin stated, "If the parties are at odds, how can they compromise, which is essential for settling the problem? I can see here only one outcome; one of the parties may surrender quietly. But how can one surrender without a war?"



Through many years of negotiations, Azerbaijan's position has been unyielding and bellicose. To quell the unrest of the displaced Azeris as a result of war, Azerbaijani leaders needed that toughness, mostly for their domestic audience. In recent months, some things may have changed. That dialogue has become more serious and Aliyev has been willing to yield at least on minor issues. It took Pashinyan a few minutes of "elevator talk," as it is known informally, in Dushanbe, Tajikistan in September 2018 to reduce the tensions on the border.

Until recently, all the meetings between the leaders and their foreign ministers were characterized as "talks," yet the Vienna meeting seems to have advanced those contacts to a higher level, characterized as "negotiations."

Aliyev's calm and affable behavior during meetings always contrasted with his hostile public statements, leaving the Minsk co-chairs and his interlocutors at a loss. Although Azerbaijan was the losing party on the battlefield, its leader, Aliyev, tried to dictate the agenda of the negotiations. It was not palatable for the Armenian side to hear about his intentions, yet his strategy made sense in the given situation of both parties; Aliyev did not mince words when he said that Armenia suffered from a weak economy and its citizens were emigrating in droves. Therefore, he said, he watched Armenia's steady depopulation and in the end Azerbaijan could take over its entire territory without a serious fight. We need to admit, however painful it might be, that Aliyev's strategy had been justified.

Today, however, a new scenario has emerged with the success of the Velvet Revolution. Armenia is facing new prospects of developments and the trend of emigration has halted, if not reversed. Additionally, the Armenian side has realized that the Turks and Azeris respect power and pleading for peace is interpreted as weakness. Therefore, this new thinking is reflected in Armenia's new policy and rhetoric. Also, Pashinyan's overwhelming popular mandate is in contrast to Aliyev's authoritarian rule, open for everyone to see. At this point, the Armenian side believes that Yerevan is setting the agenda.

Currently, very few facts are available for the public to objectively assess what transpired at the summit. What remains to be analyzed are the events which led to that summit. Once the Vienna meeting was announced, Azerbaijan resorted to staging massive wargames to flex its muscles. Armenians responded in kind; for the first time, leaders from Armenia held a meeting in Karabakh with the National Security Councils of both republics. That sent a message of unity, if there had been any doubts about it. Then, representatives of both legislative and executive bodies from the two republics sent strong messages to Azerbaijan. Indeed, My Step faction deputy Sasun Mikayelyan announced, "If attacked, we will march right to Baku."

Armenian Defense Minister David Tonoyan's statements similarly brought about a reversal in tone. Speaking to an Armenian-American community gathering in New York, where he was participating in a United Nations-affiliated forum, he said, "As a minister of defense, I stated that we have reformulated the 'territories for peace' approach to the 'new war-new territories' approach. ... We will get rid of the defensive stance and will increase the number of military units capable of transferring military operations in the territory of the adversary."

This statement received an angry response from the Azeri defense establishment, which demanded clarification from Armenia's defense minister.

The new-found robust rhetoric in Armenia is ascribed to the strategic transformation of its armed forces, as formulated by Stepan Safarian, director of the Armenian Institute of International Relations and Security, in his statement, "The

Armenian parties drew conclusions from the April 2016 and Azerbaijan today is deprived of the element of surprise. At the same time, the post-April enhancement of border equipment has significantly limited the possibility of Azerbaijani sabotage and attacks."

In short, he concluded, Armenia has rendered any kind of Azeri aggression unwinnable.

The Vienna meeting is assessed as showing positive movement by all parties concerned. Pashinyan made a public comment at a gathering of Vienna Armenians, expressing some cautious optimism.

President Aliyev has refrained from making any comments and has asked journalists to refer to the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs' statement. That statement, by and large, is in line with Pashinyan's positive assessment.

In his comments, Armenia's prime minister referred to the general expectations of the public, which tries to find winners and losers in the meeting. Pashinyan reassured all that such an approach is not applicable in this case, and went on to describe the parties as having exchanged ideas and expressing their own views about solving the outstanding problems.

It seems that the Dushanbe agreements have been reevaluated and further humanitarian actions have been considered. Although Aliyev stated that is too early to think about those steps, such as allowing border residents to carry out their agricultural activities unhampered or exchanging visits of POW families, he also made an oblique remark that he had come out from the meeting with a minor victory. He gave credit to the co-chairs who refused to entertain Pashinyan's proposal to involve Karabakh (Artsakh) in the negotiations.

However, the co-chairs' comments were directed at both parties. When they asked the Armenian side not to introduced any new elements in the negotiations, meaning a new negotiator, at the same time, they cautioned Aliyev to tone down his martial rhetoric. And Aliyev kept his side of the bargain.

For Pashinyan, Karabakh's participation was not a pre-condition. He kept his flexibility not to jeopardize the negotiations. Incidentally, his proposal was not a "new element" per se; it was just a return to the original format of negotiations. Indeed, Karabakh was a signatory of the ceasefire of May 1994. Any final settlement still has to be ratified by the Karabakh legislature.

At this time, the foreign ministers of the two countries are tasked with continuing the negotiations and preparing the next summit.

In the sense that the parties have agreed to continue the negotiations, it is an achievement in itself and the co-chairs can bank on that.

However, how fast the negotiations will proceed and in which direction, those are questions that can only be answered in time.



## COMMENTARY



## My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Armenia's Leaders Take Strong Positions Against US &amp; Azerbaijan

The most noteworthy Armenian foreign policy development of the week was supposed to be the first negotiating session between Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev over the Artsakh conflict. But since there was no breakthrough in these negotiations, we shall focus our attention on important related issues.

On March 28, 2019, while addressing the Armenian Parliament, Prime Minister Pashinyan criticized the United States government's lack of reaction to last year's democratic changes in Armenia, dubbed as the "Velvet Revolution."

This is the first time in a year that Pashinyan has used such strong language in referring to the United States. "The U.S. has long been acting as the most ardent defender of democracy in the entire world," Pashinyan stated. "I want to ask all of us a question: how did the U.S. react to the unprecedented democratic change in Armenia? It was a profoundly and quintessentially democratic change and nobody can doubt this. I, for example, have told America's representatives that I believe that they basically came up with zero reaction. Why?"

Pashinyan then went on to defend Armenia's independent political line regardless of the pressures exerted on Yerevan by major powers. "When we say that our country's sovereignty is of paramount importance to us we don't mean that we need to replace dependence on point A [Russia] by dependence on point B [the United States]. We take our sovereignty very seriously and I want to assure you ... that our government is strongly committed to protecting our country's and people's sovereignty in all directions."

President Trump's administration has so far paid only lip service to the dramatic and peaceful changes in Armenia. President Trump sent a congratulatory message to Pashinyan last September praising the "Velvet Revolution" and expressing readiness to help the new government implement sweeping reforms. Likewise, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo saluted the "remarkable changes" in Armenia. However, these beautiful words have remained on paper. No concrete steps were taken to assist Armenia. That is partly due to the fact that the Trump administration can care less about democratic developments in foreign countries and also due to President Trump being self-absorbed with his own ego and personal interests.

Prime Minister Pashinyan's declaration is a very positive development for Armenia's foreign policy and a sharp departure from the previous Armenian leaders' position. So far, most of the pressure on Armenia has come from Russia. This is an inevitable fact given Armenia's economic, political and military reliance on Russia. The new development is that Armenia's leaders are no longer willing to blindly succumb to Russia's desires and orders trampling upon their country's sovereignty. When Armenia's interests are in question, Pashinyan has neither shied away from criticizing the

European Union nor reasserting Armenia's sovereignty in his discussions with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

If the United States wants to win over Armenia, it has to offer a carrot rather than a stick. As the saying goes, you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar.

The second most astounding development last week was the declaration of Armenia's Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan during his visit to the United States. "As the minister of defense, I state we have reformulated the 'territories in exchange for peace' approach to 'new war in exchange for new territories' approach," Tonoyan announced on March 29 in New York at a meeting with members of the Armenian community. "We will get rid of the trenches and persistent defensive stance. We will increase the number of military units capable of transferring military operations to the territory of the adversary," Tonoyan stated. "We will not give up anything."

While some may interpret the Armenian Defense Minister's words as war-mongering, in reality, Tonoyan is responding in kind to the thousands of threats issued over the years by President Aliyev to conquer Meghri and even Yerevan, Armenia's capital. It is time that Armenia's leaders speak from a position of strength, not weakness.

Clearly, Aliyev is not ready for war. Otherwise, he would have already attacked. His threats should not be taken seriously. It is proper to silence him through counter-threats, and if needs be, preemptive attacks.

Armenia's Defense Minister is sending a clear message to Azerbaijan's President not to embark on a foolish adventure. Otherwise, his pipelines and oil wells will come under attack, devastating the country's economy and toppling his regime. It is significant that such a hard-hitting message is being sent to Azerbaijan while Armenia's Defense Minister is on U.S. soil.

## From Africa to Armenia, Women Speak out on Environment, Rights

By Anoush Ter Taulian

I attended the World Conference on Women organized by the United Nations in 1985 in Nairobi, Kenya. I brought up the issues of the 1915 Armenian Genocide in workshops on human rights, and women and armed conflict. When I passed out flyers on the Armenian Genocide, Turkish women told the police I was spreading lies and the police confiscated my flyers.

I decided to hold a press conference about how there should be freedom of speech for all women at the conference. The delegation from Papua New Guinea reserved a room for me. The Turks found out and the press conference was cancelled. I protested to a newspaper editor who was sympathetic because he had worked for a helpful Armenian. Later he came to the village where I was staying and took photos.

The village women who faced a lot of oppression said the men had taken over their basket selling. I said I would teach the women and girls painting and when the men stole their paintings we made more.

I had made a stop rape painting in Swahili with a woman kicking a man who was attacking her with a knife. I had taken it to the Kenyan women's association who liked it and said they would use it in their anti rape education. However a sexist policeman said my painting was anti-government and so for the only time in my life I ended up in jail for a night.

I found out the police had also arrested Kenyan women in the Green Belt Movement for planting trees because Kenyan President Moi didn't want a group of women to unite against his corrupt illegal logging and land grabbing

Dr. Wangari Maathai, an environmental activist who had a vision of women's empowerment through tree planting and founded the Green Belt Movement was also at the conference.

I would like to share her inspirational story — from rural social activist to Noble Peace Prize winner.

Dr. Maathai a Kikuyu, was born in a mud caked house in rural Kenya in 1940. She was awarded a scholarship in the J. F. Kennedy Airlift Program that allowed hundreds of East Africans to study in the US. She went to university in the US during the Civil Rights movement and became the first female in East Africa to receive a doctorate.

When she returned to her village the women complained that they had to walk long distances to get water and wood and their children were hungry.

Dr. Maathai remembered in her youth the flowing stream she used to play in. She realized the connection between water and trees and saw how when the fig trees were cut down the stream dried up. She had the idea of planting trees and in 1977 founded the Green Belt Movement (GBM) an environmental NGO focused on planting trees and women's rights.

She held educational seminars, Unlocking Women's Potential In Transformative Leadership, for women to identify their problems and solutions to raise their self-esteem and empower them.

She had women gather seeds and start seedlings which were distributed to local women with an incentive program for each seedling that survived. They replanted local species to rehabilitate degraded watersheds and provided homes for birds and other animals.

They did community education on how trees maintain hydrology by

capturing vegetation moisture and fog water. They taught how the trees help protect people from harmful UV rays, and acted as a filter to remove toxins like carbon monoxide. They helped the community reactivate their spiritual and emotional connection to the land.

The GBM members also engaged in democratic reforms and political actions like registering voters and pressing for human rights such as freedom of speech.

The women who protested Moi's takeover of land in public parks and forests were ridiculed and told they did not know what they were doing. The police said the women needed a permits for their conservation work and arrested many Kenyan women for planting trees.

In 1989 when Dr. Maathai protested Kenya's President Daniel Moi's proposal to erect a 62-story skyscraper in the middle of Nairobi's park she was beaten and jailed. Moi's government continually harassed her and threatened to mutilate her if "she did not behave like a woman should." Moi's parliament recommended the GBM be banned as subversive and discredited them. Dr. Wangari's reply was "We are dealing with rights of the people issues that require anatomy above the neck."

Standing up to tyranny she continued risking her life to protect the environment and speaking out for democracy and was arrested many times. In January 1992 she received information she was on a list targeted for assassination and was arrested for spreading malicious rumors and treason. Senators Edward Kennedy and Al Gore helped pressure Moi to drop the charges.

In February 1992 when she was supporting a group of women on hunger strike to get their sons released from jail, the police knocked her unconscious and detained her. The group persevered, got sanctuary at a church for a year, and with worldwide support their sons were released. In 1999 protesting the privatization and destruction of the Karura forest Dr. Maathai was injured and later arrested drawing more attention to the corruption.

Triumphantly her protests helped governmental change and her Green Belt Movement has now planted 53 million trees, spread to dozens of countries and influenced many reforestation projects like the Armenian Tree Project.

When Carolyn Mugar visited Armenia in 1992 with her late husband John T O'Conner, an environmentalist, people were trying to survive a bitter winter due to an energy crisis and a blockade by Turkey and Azerbaijan by cutting down trees. The sides of mountains were eroding and streams were drying up. Viewing the bleak deforestation in 1994 they founded the Armenia Tree Project to stop desertification, soil erosion and to provide firewood, lumber and jobs.

The ATP, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary, has planted over 6 million trees and over 7 million pounds of fruit have been gathered. The ATP Sponsor A Tree program provides Armenians around the world to have a root connection with their homeland.

The ATP also empowers women. Most of the tree growers are women. Like the GBM a women's backyard nursery program provides a source of income to impoverished village women.

Last year Mrs. Mugar went to Kenya to see how the Green Belt Movement ecotourism worked. The Yerevan ATP now shows the compelling film "Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai" as part of its environmental education program.

Before her untimely passing in 2011, Dr. Maathai served in the Kenyan parliament, and received over 50 awards including the Noble Peace Prize and 15 honorary degrees like a Law Degree from Yale. She has written many books including Unbowed: A Memoir.

Dr. Maathai wrote "So that humanity stops threatening its life-support system, we are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own."

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## LETTERS

## 1915 – Where Was God?

To The Editor:

Failure to answer this question created a crisis of faith in the hearts of many genocide survivors, leading to the irrelevance of church and faith in subsequent generations. Gone is the fear of God, true repentance, worship — a daily walk with the Lord. The lifeline to the church is now manmade — bazaars, dinners, dances and bingo.

Armenians who believe that God forsook their people, was powerless to intervene, distant — even non-existent — sadly reveal that they cannot recognize God because they neither know Him nor His call to us. Not all who decide to follow Christ will die for their faith but all share the same call as the beloved martyrs, to live for their faith, to "pick up their cross to follow" Him. Death to self, death to the ways and ambitions of this temporal world, death to prideful and sinful ways are not fleeting spiritual thoughts but the heart of the gospel.

"Who is God" is the question that can answer "where was God." Jesus Christ, our Savior, preached repentance — turning away from our old life — to follow Him with abandon. His path to glory came through unjust suffering — following Him sets us on that same path.

Jesus didn't die to give us a better life or even a long life, He died to reconcile us to the Father, giving us eternal life. Our eternal life came at great cost to our Savior and may well cost us dearly as He said, "A servant is not greater than his Master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also." Christian martyrs don't die for a legacy of bingo and bazaars, they proclaim to an unbelieving world that Jesus Christ is worth living for and dying for.

The Lord said, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." The sad testimony of empty pews is not only that people are absent.

It is right to honor our precious forefathers on April 24. It is noble to seek justice but even therein, consider the judgment, the wrath of God, in store for those who kill believers, the Body of Christ in this world. Above all this, pray for a hunger to open the Bible, to finally determine where God was by finding the truth of who God is.

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