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Karabakh Leaders Call For Kocharyan's Release

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) – Karabakh's current and former leaders called on Armenian law-enforcement authorities on Tuesday, May 7, to release former President Robert Kocharyan from custody pending the outcome of his upcoming trial.

In a joint letter to Armenia's Prosecutor-General Artur Davtian, Karabakh (Artsakh) President Bako Sahakyan and his predecessor Arkadi Ghukasyan said Kocharyan should be able to attend Thursday's official celebrations of Karabakh's main public holiday. They cited his and other former Karabakh leaders' "huge contributions" to the Armenian victory in the 1991-1994 war with Azerbaijan.

Kocharyan ran the republic during and after the war before becoming Armenia's president in 1998. His successor and another native of Karabakh, Serzh Sarkisian, will also participate in the official ceremonies in Stepanakert and Shushi, as will Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, left, with Artsakh President Bako Sahakyan

Sahakyan and Ghukasyan also expressed readiness to offer "any public guarantee" that would enable Kocharyan to remain free at least until a court verdict on corruption and coup charges leveled against him. They said his release would send a "signal of solidarity and unity" to Armenians as well as Azerbaijan.

Armenia's Office of the Prosecutor-General responded to the letter later in the day. In a statement, it said that it is no longer in a position to free Kocharyan because the high-profile investigation has already been completed and its findings sent to a court in Yerevan.

Law-enforcement authorities have until now opposed the ex-president's release from pre-trial detention, saying that he could obstruct justice if set free. They ignored a similar appeal made by Karabakh's three main parliamentary parties shortly after Kocharyan was again arrested in December.

Kocharyan and three retired Armenian army generals will go on trial soon on charges of "overthrowing the constitutional order" in the wake of a disputed presidential election held in February 2008. The Special Investigative Service (SIS) says that they illegally used the armed forces against opposition supporters who demonstrated against alleged electoral fraud.

Eight protesters and two police servicemen were killed in street clashes that broke out late on March 1, 2008. Kocharyan declared a state of emergency in the Armenian capital on that night. He completed his second presidential term and handed over power to Sarkisian in April 2008.

All four indicted men deny the charges. Kocharyan, who was also charged with bribery in March, has accused Pashinyan of waging a political "vendetta" against him.

Pashinyan was one of the main see KOCHARYAN, page 3

Lord Ara Darzi Helps with Release of Two Reuters Reporters Jailed in Myanmar

YANGON – The Director of Imperial's Institute of Global Health Innovation saw the release of Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo in Myanmar on Tuesday, May 7.

Professor Lord (Ara) Darzi of Denham, who has worked in Myanmar (Burma) since 2012 on a humanitarian basis, spent recent months in dialogue with the government about the journalists' status.

The two journalists, who have been held since December 2017 after reporting on the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims, were pardoned and released on May 7 in Yangon.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists were released as an international advisory group reviewed the implementation of the late Kofi Annan's recommendations on the



Prof. Ara Darzi with Reuters journalist Wa Lone outside Insein Prison

future of Rakhine State.

Darzi said: "I am delighted that the Reuters reporters, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, have been granted a pardon, released from custody, and are with their loved ones see RELEASE, page 4

Future Generations Carry Memories of the Past

NEW YORK – As the world commemorated the Armenian Genocide throughout the month of April, families reflected on the struggles and survival of their parents and grandparents, keeping the memory of their ancestors alive, while also seeking further meaning in their testimonies and exploring how their memory and trauma passed on to succeeding generations.

In this vein, Christina Barba, Esq., a cohort in the Oral History Master of Arts program at Columbia University, unveiled her multimedia interactive history exhibit, "Living in the Shadow of the Armenian Genocide," during Inter/views: An Interactive Oral History Exhibit on Friday, April 26 and Saturday, April 27, at Columbia University's Faculty House. see MEMORIES, page 20

Christina Barba at Columbia University



NEWS IN BRIEF

Bike Ride Marks Shushi Liberation Anniversary

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – A bicycle ride is starting on May 7 from Yerevan to Artsakh's Shushi as part of events celebrating the 27th anniversary of the liberation of Shushi, Sargis Parsamyan, the author of the initiative, told Artsakhpress.

He said the two-day ride will start from Lchashen after the participants are transported to the village. The cyclists are set to pedal through Sotk Pass, Knaravan, Dadivank, to name a few, with two overnight stays expected during the ride.

The organizer said they were to be joined by Artsakh cyclists upon reaching the capital Stepanakert, from where they would ride to Shushi.

The cyclists are expected to pay a visit to Gandzasar and We Are Our Mountains monument near Stepanakert and take part in the Zhingyalov Hats (a type of flatbread stuffed with finely diced herbs and green vegetables) festival to be held in the village of Haterk on 11 May.

Turkey 'Condemns' Reburial of Yanikian at Yerevan Pantheon

ISTANBUL (Panorama.am) – The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Monday, May 6, condemning the transfer and reburial of the remains of Gourgen Yanikian, one of the inspirations behind the founding of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), at Yerablur Military Pantheon on May 5.

The ministry "strongly condemns" the burial of Yanikian, who killed Turkish Consul General to Los Angeles Mehmet Baydar and Consul Bahadır Demir on January 27, 1973, at the Yerevan military cemetery.

"This action, which attempts to glorify a brutal terrorist as a hero, constitutes a crime of promoting terrorism and it is unacceptable under any circumstance," reads the statement.

Yanikian was an Armenian Genocide survivor. He was sentenced to life imprisonment for the assassinations of the Turkish consular officials. He was released on parole in January 1984. It is widely believed that Yanikian's act was the inspiration for the founding of the ASALA, the Armenian militant organization of the 1970s and 1980s which staged attacks on Turkish diplomats in retaliation for the Armenian Genocide.

Yanikian is known to have remarked, "I'm not Gourgen Yanikian but unacknowledged history coming back for the 1,500,000 Armenians whose bones desecrate my invisible existence." In death, he became a symbol for many Armenians of their resentment toward the Turkish government for refusing to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenian President Meets with Staff of YSU Law Faculty

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – President Armen Sarkissian of Armenia met with the academic personnel of the Law Faculty at the Yerevan State University (YSU) led by Dean, Professor Gagik Ghazinyan on May 6.

The meeting particularly focused on the reforms carried out in judicial and education systems, as well as the issues on supplementing the state, including judicial systems with qualified personnel.

The president listened to the opinions of the faculty staff on the candidates running as a judge for the Constitutional Court.

Armen Sarkissian also discussed the same issues at the meeting with a group of lawyers.

Armenian Intelligence Reveals Espionage by Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (news.am) – Armenia's National Security Service (NSS) on May 7 revealed a case of espionage committed by Azerbaijani intelligence agencies.

According to the NSS statement, a person who has not been identified yet, was receiving orders from Azerbaijani intelligence and was acting on the territory of Turkey. The person introduced himself as an employee of Armenian National Security Service and through personal contacts and chatting on the web persuaded Armenian nationals to provide data about military units and military equipment, including photos. He equipped the Armenian national with cameras.

After that, under control of the National Security Service staff and with the help of Armenian national, he collected information already processed by the National Security Service. He provided Azerbaijani intelligence with data, which is harmful to the detriment of Armenia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and external security.

Criminal proceedings have been filed.

Armenian Businessman Freed From Custody

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The official owner of Armenia's largest food exporting company accused of tax evasion has been released from custody after paying the government 1 billion drams (\$2.1 million).

In a weekend statement, the State Revenue Committee (SRC) said a prosecutor decided to set Davit Ghazaryan free because there are no longer "grounds" for holding him in detention and because he has made the hefty payment "within the framework of the criminal case." The statement did not give further details.

One of Ghazaryan's lawyers, Arsen Sardaryan, said the businessman was released on Friday, May 3, just three days after Armenia's Court of Appeals refused to grant him bail.

Ghazaryan's Spayka company reposted the SRC statement on its Facebook page but did not officially comment on the development as of Monday evening.

Ghazaryan was arrested one month ago after the SRC charged that Spayka had evaded more than 7 billion drams (\$14.4 million) in taxes in 2015 and early 2016. The accusations stem from large quantities of foodstuffs which were imported to Armenia by another company, Greenproduct. The SRC says that Greenproduct is controlled by Spayka and that the latter rigged its customs documents to pay fewer taxes from those imports.

Ghazaryan has strongly denied any ownership links to Greenproduct. He said on April 5 that the SRC moved to arrest him after he refused to pay the alleged back taxes.

Spayka is Armenia's leading producer and exporter of agricultural products grown at its own greenhouses or purchased from farmers in about 80 communities across the country. The company employing about 2,000 people also owns hundreds of heavy trucks transporting those fruits and vegetables abroad and Russia in particular.

Old Yerevan and Young Voices Clash

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – It was a bitter cold evening in January 2019. The noise emanating from the construction site in the center of Yerevan during the day must have been deafening: heavy pounding of steam shovels against the ground, whirring of earth moving machinery, and workers' voices seeking to make themselves heard above the fray. That evening, without forewarning, came the sound of something massive, crumbling, smashing down onto the earth, while brown-grey clouds of dust and dirt rose up from the ground, obfuscating the view. The wall had come down and by a stroke of fortune none of the people inside were hurt.

It was not the Berlin wall, but the wall of a building on 23 Arami St., one of the four walls of a historic building that has been the "second home" of the Little Singers of Armenia since its founding in 1992. That is where they had been rehearsing.

No one should have been taken by surprise. Even without particular expertise in construction methods and building safety, one could have predicted that, if most of the old buildings on that city block were demolished, and a large hole were dug in the center of the large plot of land, the ground beneath building No. 23 would be affected.

In fact, the process leading to the collapse began earlier, in November 2018. And it certainly had to do with the hole. According to government regulations, the hole was supposed to be 10 meters deep maximum, but the one that was being dug went 15 meters down. It

imminent; the continuing excavation work on the hole at Teryan Street and the heavy traffic at times involving three-axle vehicles and heavy machinery, add to the threat to the building, which is located at the juncture of Teryan, Byuzand and Arami Streets. There is a serious danger that the façade of the building on Arami Street will also collapse.

In April, my husband and I were in Yerevan and visited the site. We were not on hand when the first wall crumbled, but the description of the disaster



The building used by the Little Singers

above is not pure fiction. And we had been apprised of the danger as early as 2017, during our previous visit. My husband had photographed the building at the time, as well as the construction site, the area where the gaping hole would become bigger as time went by. Now, in 2019, we could only shake our heads in dismay.

Tigran Hekekyan, the founder and director of the Little Singers, brought us up to date on developments. In an

as a result, its last performance having been on October 11, in the context of the 17th Francophonie summit held in the Armenian capital. The petitioners demand that the structural integrity of the building be restored "and that a temporary venue be accommodated" until the security of the original building is guaranteed.

Calling on "individuals all over the world" to support their efforts, the petitioners stress that they seek "to prevent not only the collapse of the historic building, but also to protect the Little Singers," so they "can work and share the light of love and goodness all over the world." Among the signers of the petition are: Gudz Manoukyan, Tigran Mansuryan, Armen Khandikyan,

Yervand Ghazanchyan, Arkadi Ter-Tadevosyan, Vigen Chaldhranyan, Armen Elbakyan, Khachatur Martirosyan, Artavazd Peleshyan, Armenouhi Karapetyan, Arthur Utmazyan, Avetis Berberyan, Mkrtich Minasyan, Vagharshak Zakaryan, Hrant Vardanyan, Rouben Barbayan, Gagik Ginosyan, Narine Tukhikyan, Aram Satyan and Svetlana Navasardyan.

Hekekyan told us, in closing, that the Old City Closed Joint Stock Co., which organized the construction work, had refused to realize a reconstruction plan proposed by Italian architects and that the same plan had not yet been confirmed by the Yerevan Municipality. In the meantime, the Little Singers were starting rehearsals in rented office space, with a lease that can be extended only for three-month periods.

Where is Old Yerevan?

In the petition reference is made to the "Old Yerevan Project": "The developers," the text reads, "want to take possession of the Little Singers of Armenia choir's building, to demolish it and use the entire property for their project." It continues that due to "The authorities' passivity and the aggressive behavior exhibited by the developers," the matter will end up in the courts, "most probably in the European courts," which could "drag on for many years." To be able to continue their work, the choir would need a new location, which could cost \$5,000 a month.

The Old Yerevan Project presents itself as a program of urban development aimed at preserving the historic the old city of Yerevan. Photos on the website www.oldquarter.am document the demolition of those buildings, and the reader is to assume that they will be reconstructed, to conserve the original design and structure. Instead, it appears that a "tourist pedestrian zone" is to come into being, and "comfortable showrooms, cafes, restaurants ... exhibition halls and museum-shops, art galleries, small hotels ... are expected to be built." Indeed the name Old Yerevan should not be taken literally; it "is *continued on next page*



Members of the Little Singers

began right next to 23 Arami St. and earth-moving machines moved under tuff rocks of the building. One might have even thought the damage had been done on purpose, and in fact, gradually, the wall separated from the building.

On November 27, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had visited the perilous site, viewed the damage and given instructions for repairing the building. But nothing was done. Then, less than two months later, the wall came tumbling down.

That was on January 11. As a result, the building was transformed from the venue of music rehearsals for the world-renowned children's choir to a safety hazard. As documented in March 2019, the danger of further catastrophe was

attempt to save the building, he was circulating a petition that had been signed by numerous artists. The petition, entitled "Children's Choir in Dire Danger!" is addressed "To the developers of the 'Old Yerevan' project, the Yerevan Municipality, the Urban Development Committee of the RA, and the Government of the RA." It states that the future of the choir is in danger. "The historical monument where the rehearsals of the choir 'Little Singers of Armenia' are held is on the verge of collapse. The building's structural integrity has been compromised as a result of illegal construction that is being carried out under the guise of the 'Old Yerevan' project."

The petition goes on to report that the choir has had to suspend activities



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conditional and does not mean the creation of an ethnographic quarter, but the re-creation of the historical and architectural environment. In the architectural interpretation of the project, the harmony of old and new forms is used...."

According to an article in EVN by Lilit Margaryan on April 4, this is not the whole story. (<https://www.evnreport.com/raw-unfiltered/chronicles-of-the-old-yerevan-quarter>) In the 1970s, architect Levon Vardanyan had the idea of protecting the buildings in the historic area that go back to the pre-Soviet era and are characterized as "black buildings" for the use of black stones, but to no avail. Demolition began in the Soviet period and continued even after independence. By 2005 there was very little left and in

reconstructed. Mshetsyan refers in the article to plans by Vardanyan to include a two-story underground parking lot as part of the project.

The home of the Little Singers on 23 Arami Str. fell victim to the construction work. Lilit Margaryan reports that Vardanyan, as author of the project, had slated the building for dismantling and reconstruction at any rate, on grounds that the sidewalks were too narrow and had to be widened to three meters. The building was "on the edge of the street," he said, and "it would be



The collapsed wall



Walls literally separating

that year the Old Yerevan Project was set up. The designated area, enclosed by Arami, Abovyan, Byuzand and Koghbatsi Streets, was divided up into five lots and auctioned off to three private companies. Years later most of the area was declared to be eminent domain and was taken over by the Old City Company. The plan for restoration was indeed an urban development plan, foreseeing non-residential buildings, cafes, restaurants, galleries, shops, etc. all under a 7,000-square-meter glass dome. The historical monuments originally located on the site had been divided into three categories: those to be restored, those to be rebuilt with what was left of the original stones, and those to be demolished and replaced by new structures.

According to an earlier article by Ani Mshetsyan in ArmInfo, there was an interdepartmental consultation in 2017 in which Vardanyan participated, with Narek Sargsyan, chairman of the State Committee for Urban Development of RA, and employees of the Ministry of Culture and Yerevan City Hall. (https://finport.am/full_news.php?id=31291&lang=3) At that meeting, plans were discussed for implementation, which parts of the area and which buildings were to be restored or

taken apart and moved back three meters. This means we are keeping the building in the same area," he is quoted as saying.

Be that as it may. The fact is, construction work on the property where the building stands was carried out, with authorization of the Yerevan Municipality at the time, and in violation of technical requirements related to urban development. Due to the incompetent work, the building suffered massive damage. Reportedly the Ministry of Culture filed a criminal lawsuit with the General Prosecutor's office. Since then the ministry has been phased out.

An Expert's Evaluation

Michael L. Sahakian, a technical consultant, examined that matter and issued his findings on March 27, 2019 to the Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, with copies to the Mayor of Yerevan Haik Marutyan and Chairman of Urban Development Vahagen Vermishyan. In introducing his study of the failed excavation, he stated that he himself, "in 50 years of Project Management, Engineering and Construction internationally, ... has experienced such a predicament due to natural causes but never seen one

with such human incompetence." He added that a Site Safety Manager, Hamo Hayrapetian, certified by the City of New York, accompanied him in his inspection and shared his conclusions.

Sahakian's document explains the technical reasons for the disaster deriving from the faulty construction work, which led to accumulation of excessive liquid, aggravated by rainfall, heavy traffic, and other factors. The storm drain catch basin at Arami Street and Byuzand collects surface runoffs, but the water has nowhere to drain except underground. "All four sides may collapse anytime due to various causes," he writes, and points to the "junction of Arami and Teryan adjacent to the Armenian Little Singers International Building, a landmark of Armenian architecture." He forecasts the collapse of the structure, which "may involve loss of human lives and public property not to mention the landmark building." He specifies that it is not a question of "if" but "when" the disaster would occur, which would necessitate closing the road and entail a huge financial burden for reconstruction.

In his view, this very complex problem requires coordination by the City Building and Safety Department, with the cooperation of experts in foundations soils who have experience in excavation. In addition, "an expert licensed structural engineer in conjunction with the foundations expert jointly need to study and design the remedy" which entails "a complete constructability review."

The report concludes: "Both the writer and the Safety Manager are American Armenians with Armenian citizenship also. We have supported the Prime Minister from the days of the amazing Campaign and Revolution. We continue to strive for a better Armenia. We think it would be an unfortunate situation if a disaster occurs; it won't go on the account of the past government but on the watch of the present one in the eyes of the world and the opposition."

Protecting Architectural History

How should one preserve the architectural heritage of a nation? Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall 30 years ago and the subsequent reunification of Germany, followed by the independence of the former Soviet republics and the regained sovereignty of nations of eastern Europe, enormous efforts have been made to revive the beauty of great urban centers, especially in the capital cities. In Berlin, Warsaw, Budapest or Prague, to name a few, this has come about through careful restora-

tion of architectural wonders that had fallen into decay, or outright reconstruction of those deemed past repair. The results vary in excellence but where the aim has been to recover the past architectural achievements, replicas of the original buildings have come into being that maintain the integrity of the original, to the degree possible.

In the case of the Old Yerevan Project, it appears that the aim of project author Vardanyan was not to restore monuments but to "recreate an environment." He has compared his vision to the Vernissage open air market in Yerevan, saying that the current one is "in an embarrassing state." He says one should "imagine a luxurious version of the Vernissage," where there would be makers and sellers of carpets, or silver jewelry and the like. As for solving the problem of those dismantled buildings, whose stones have disappeared or been severely damaged, he thought the problem was not restoration of monuments but what he calls the recreation of the "environment" of the old city. "I do not need the sign to say 'Monument'," he explained in 2014, "I want my grandchildren to grow up and see that Yerevan looked like this in the 19th century." (https://www.armenianow.com/society/59183/armenia_old_yerevan_project_presentation)

But did Yerevan look like the drawings of the project? For architect Karen Balyan, the Vardanyan approach is "pseudo-architecture and a theatrical approach to architecture." One should restore historical structures, in Balyan's view, as has been done in Tbilisi for example, not build anew. For architect Sashur Kalashyan, a member of the Yerevan City Hall Urban Development Council, Vardanyan's idea is artificial, and would create not an urban environment, but a public resort zone.

For the Little Singers of Armenia the issue goes beyond aesthetics. On April 15, A. Vardanyan, who is the Head of the Division of the Programs of Special Regulation of Urban Development Activity, responded to the petition issued on behalf of the Little Singers. Welcoming the professional contributions made by the choir, the writer expressed his concern for the situation caused by the construction work associated with the Old Yerevan Project and announced that his office had sent an appropriate letter to the construction companies "Old City" CJSC and "EMC" CJSC, urging them to implement the necessary measures with regard to securing, maintenance and sale of existing property at the designated location.



YEREVAN (Armenpress) — President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian received co-founders of Repat Armenia foundation, Executive Director Vartan Marashlyan and Chairman of the Board of Trustees Raffi Kassarjian. The guests introduced the President on the Foundation's activities, ongoing programs and upcoming actions. They noted that repatriation and intensification of ties of our Diaspora compatriots with Armenia are the main activity directions of the Foundation. Sarkissian expressed readiness to support the Foundation's activities, highlighting their importance in terms of returning Diaspora Armenians to Armenia and connecting them with the homeland. Above, Kassarjian, left, can be seen with Sarkissian.

Karabakh Leaders Call For Kocharyan's Release

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opposition speakers during the February-March 2008 protests. He has denied any political motives behind the coup charges that were brought against Kocharyan shortly after he came to power in May 2018.

A senior aide to Sahakyan, Davit Babayan, insisted that the letter to the chief Armenian prosecutor will not cause renewed friction between the Karabakh president and Pashinyan.

"This move is not directed at Nikol Pashinyan and there are no personal motives behind it," Babayan told RFE/RL's Armenian service. "Bako Sahakyan has a good relationship with Nikol Pashinyan."

Pashinyan publicly lambasted Karabakh lead-

ers in November during Armenia's parliamentary election campaign. One of the premier's political allies, Sasun Mikaelyan, declared at a campaign rally that last spring's protest movement that brought Pashinyan to power was more important than the Armenian victory in the Karabakh war.

Mikaelyan's remark was condemned by Armenian opposition politicians as well as senior officials in Stepanakert, including the spokesmen for Sahakyan and General Levon Mnatsakanyan, then commander of Karabakh's Armenian-backed army.

Pashinyan accused the Karabakh leadership of misinterpreting Mikaelyan's statement and "meddling" in the Armenian parliamentary race. Mnatsakanyan was sacked in December.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Two Armenians Injured In Kessab Bombing

KESSAB, Syria (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The relative calm in the predominantly Armenian-populated Syrian city of Kessab was shattered when two Armenians reportedly were among the injured in a bombing of a village in Kessab on Monday, May 6.

The Aleppo-based *Kandzasar* newspaper reported that a terrorist organization launched rockets, three of which landed in the Esguran village at around 5:30 p.m. local time.

The two injured Armenians were immediately taken to a hospital in Latakia and both reportedly were in stable condition.

Qatar May Open Embassy in Armenia

DOHA, Qatar (Armenpress) – Armenia's Ambassador to Qatar Gegham Gharibjanyan presented his credentials to Emir Tamim ben Hamad Al Thani this week, the foreign ministry said.

The Emir of Qatar was pleased with Armenia's opening of an embassy in their country and assured Gharibjanyan that soon they too will address the issue of opening an embassy in Yerevan. The emir congratulated the Armenian ambassador and expressed his hope that the Qatari-Armenian relations will develop and record progress.

Gharibjanyan thanked the emir and assured him that he will continue to seek the deepening of bilateral relations and enhancement of cooperation agenda.

UK Ambassador Meets With Parliament Friendship Group Head

LONDON – On May 1, Arman Kirakossian, the ambassador of Armenia to the United Kingdom, met with Stephen Pound, Member of Parliament of the United Kingdom and head of the British-Armenian Parliamentary Friendship Group.

During the meeting the sides discussed the current state of the Armenian-British relations and perspectives of development of cooperation in different fields.

Kirakossian presented the approaches of Armenia regarding the development of Armenian-British relations, foreign policy agenda, different regional issues, and the ongoing process of reforms in our country.

Kirakossian briefed Pound on the formation of Armenia-Britain Parliamentary Friendship Group's composition in the Armenian parliament. In this context, the two touched upon the activities of the group, emphasizing the necessity to give a new impetus within this platform.

Erdogan Says F-35 Project Doomed to Collapse without Turkey

ISTANBUL (news.am) – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on April 30 that the F-35 fighter jet project without Turkey's contribution is doomed to collapse completely, Xinhua reported.

"Those who try to exclude us on an issue where we are a project and production partner can't see beyond the end of this," Erdogan said at a defense industry fair in Istanbul.

He said Turkey did not and will not accept any impositions in the defense realm, adding his country is rapidly taking steps to produce its own air defense system.

"I am saying explicitly that the F-35 project is doomed to a complete failure if Turkey is excluded," Erdogan noted.

The Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin earlier said his country is not just a buyer of U.S. F-35 fighter jets but also a technology partner in the production program.

Ankara's decision to buy the Russian S-400 air defense system has strained its relations with Washington, which has cautioned that the move would jeopardize Turkey's role in the F-35 program.

Lord Ara Darzi Helps with Release of Two Reuters Reporters Jailed in Myanmar

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once more. I know that it will come as a huge relief to their families, friends and colleagues.

"This outcome shows that dialogue works, even in the most difficult of circumstances. I would like to pay tribute to all of those that came together to achieve this – the Government of Myanmar, the world-renowned Reuters news agency, the UN and various governments and international organisations.

"The power of dialogue must be turned towards securing a lasting peace in Rakhine State and the return of the hundreds of thousands of refugees, whose desperate plight continues. This is essential if Myanmar is to build on today's progress so that all its citizens can live together in dignity in the hope of a better tomorrow."

He used a BBC interview to emphasize that "There have been many international institutions and governments involved in the dialogue - and dialogue is the only way to achieve what we've achieved today."

Lord Darzi's contributions to improving the health system in Myanmar, include work to modernise Yangon General Hospital, and hosting a visit to Imperial's Surgical Innovation Centre for the Burmese leader in 2017.

In 2017 Darzi joined the International Advisory Board that was established to oversee the implementation of the recommendations on the future of Rakhine State made by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

He is currently in Myanmar for a meeting on the implementation of the recommendations of the Kofi Annan Commission on the future of Rakhine State, which include freedom of the press.

According to Reuters, the agency for which the two journalists worked, they were jailed in Myanmar after they were



Prof. Lord Ara Darzi with journalists

convicted of breaking the Official Secrets Act walked free from a prison on the outskirts of Yangon on Tuesday after spending more than 500 days behind bars.

They had been convicted in September and sentenced to seven years in jail, in a case that raised questions about Myanmar's progress toward democracy and sparked an outcry from diplomats and human rights advocates.

They were released under a presidential amnesty for 6,520 prisoners on Tuesday.

Reuters has said the two men did not commit any crime and had called for their release.

Swamped by media and well-wishers as they walked through the gates of Insein Prison, a grinning Wa Lone gave a thumbs up and said he was grateful for the international efforts to secure their freedom.

"I'm really happy and excited to see my family and my colleagues. I can't wait to go to my newsroom," he said.

Kyaw Soe Oo smiled and waved to reporters.

The two were then driven away by Reuters colleagues and reunited with their wives and children.

Before their arrest in December 2017, they had been working on an investigation into the killing of 10 Rohingya Muslim men and boys by security forces and Buddhist civilians in western Myanmar's Rakhine State during an army crackdown that began in August 2017.

The operation sent more than 730,000 Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh, according to U.N. estimates.

The report the two men authored, featuring testimony from perpetrators, witnesses and families of the victims, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for international reporting in May, adding to a number of accolades received by the pair for their journalism. (reut.rs/2KFtSgQ) (reut.rs/2M5benE)

(Reuters contributed to this report.)

Armenian PM, US Deputy Assistant Secretary Of State Discuss Bilateral Partnerships

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan on May 6 received Deputy Assistant Secretary in the European and Eurasian Bureau at the US Department of State George Kent and his delegation.

During the meeting Pashinyan said the deepening of friendly ties and constructive partnership with the United States is very important for Armenia which currently is at the stage of radical democratic reforms and moves on the path of institutional democracy and strengthening of economy.

Kent replied that he is happy for again visiting Armenia, this time after the parliamentary elections, to discuss the cooperation agenda with the Armenian side. He said the United States is interested in developing the relations with Armenia and in mutual partnership in priority areas for Armenia.

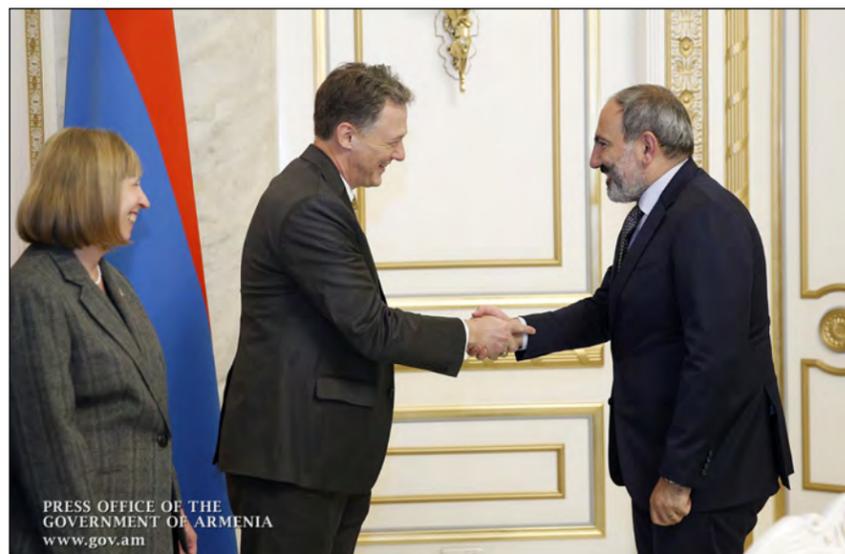
The officials also discussed issues on deepening the mutually beneficial partnership.

As important institutional directions the Armenian PM highlighted the partnership in judicial reforms, fight against corruption, as well as in electoral and

police fields. He said free and democratic elections have been held in Armenia which should be guaranteed institution-

government in the process of implementing reforms.

The Armenian PM and the US



From left, Ambassador Lynne M. Tracy, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the European and Eurasian Bureau at the US Department of State George Kent and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

ally, and the reforms on these directions are very important.

Kent said the US welcomes Armenia's actions aimed at developing democracy, economic progress and other directions and is ready to support the Armenian

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State also exchanged views on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement process and regional challenges.

Kent also met with Minister of Defense of Armenia Davit Tonoyan.



INTERNATIONAL

Turkey Orders New Election for Istanbul Mayor, in Setback for Opposition

By Carlotta Gall

ISTANBUL (*New York Times*) – Turkey’s electoral authorities wiped away a crushing defeat for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday, May 6, ordering a rerun of the race for mayor of Istanbul won by the opposition and heightening the prospect of social unrest and a new economic crisis.

The decision by the High Election Council was immediately condemned by the opposition party as a capitulation to Erdogan and a blow to the democratic foundations of the country, which have drifted closer to authoritarianism under his 18 years in power.

Erdogan has jailed journalists, isolated adversaries and conducted mass purges of the police, the military and the courts. He has strengthened his powers under the Constitution. Now, critics say Erdogan has managed to invalidate what had been a humiliating defeat for his party in Istanbul, the country’s largest city, commercial capital – and the president’s hometown.

Though Erdogan secured another five-year term as president with sweeping new powers in an election last year, he was rendered suddenly vulnerable by his party’s poor showing in the March 31 voting, which took place as the economy has begun to falter.

Erdogan’s Justice and Development Party, the A.K.P., also lost control of the capital, Ankara, as well as several important industrial towns in southern Turkey. But the defeat in Istanbul, which has remained his political base and private fief, as well as a source of great wealth and prestige for his family and inner circle, was especially bitter.

The opposition Republican People’s Party had denounced demands for a new Istanbul election as a bid by Erdogan and his party to undo the will of the voters, who handed a narrow but fiercely contested victory to the opposition candidate, Ekrem Imamoglu.

After a recount of certain contested districts, Imamoglu was certified as the winner by electoral officials and took up office.

There had been hope among the opposition that the High Election Council would rebuff Erdogan’s harangues for a new vote. Its decision reinforced suspicions that the council’s members were beholden to Erdogan’s party for their jobs and vulnerable to coercion.

His party’s mayoral candidate, Binali Yildirim, welcomed the decision, saying “Let it bring good to Istanbul and Istanbul people.”

An opposition lawmaker, Mahmut Tanal, described the decision on Twitter as “the murder of law” and “a black stain.” The new vote was scheduled for June 23.

Opposition party leaders met in emergency session amid talk that they might boycott the second vote. Imamoglu exhorted supporters not to despair.

“We have won this election with the sweat of millions of people. You are the biggest witness to that sweat, you are our biggest comrades,” he said in televised remarks. “You may be upset now, but don’t lose your hope. We are here. Do not give up.”



Ekrem Imamoglu, who had been declared winner of the Istanbul mayoral race

Hearing the news, citizens in some Istanbul neighborhoods who oppose Erdogan took to the streets, banging pots and pans to vent their frustration. “There is a thief here!” protesters chanted in Kadikoy, an opposition stronghold.

“I think this is the greatest distortion of democratic elections in Turkey since the country’s first free and fair polls in 1950,” said Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

“This is a sad day for Turkey,” he added. “Never before has the loser in Turkey refused to recognize the outcome of an election.

This decision throws into doubt hard-earned consensus in Turkey built over decades that power and government changes hands through democratic elections.”

Turkish political analysts, speaking on condition that they not be named for fear of retribution from the palace, said Erdogan had been furious at the loss of Istanbul.

By one account, he threw a tantrum on the night of the election, which was ultimately decided by a margin of 13,000 votes.

According to another account, the ruling party’s candidate, Yildirim, a former prime minister and close ally of the president, was ready to cede the election but was stopped at the last minute and made to declare victory, most probably by Erdogan himself.

As electoral officials prepared to certify that Imamoglu had narrowly won, the president and his party alleged irregularities so broad that they took the extraordinary step of petitioning for the

known for his close contacts in the government.

That group is believed to be led by Erdogan’s son-in-law, Berat Albayrak, 41, who was promoted to minister of finance and treasury last year. The interior minister, Suleyman Soylu, 49, has also emerged as an aggressive player.

Erdogan never went as far as claiming victory, but he did play for time, and he and his allies immediately began trying to reverse the outcome in Istanbul.

The morning after the election, the judge heading the High Election Council confirmed that Imamoglu was indeed ahead in the race, but the count dragged on and was only completed two days after the election.

Officials of the ruling party then issued a deluge of objections and appeals across Istanbul’s 39 districts to challenge the numbers. Recounts were ordered in five districts and invalid ballots



Protesters take to the streets.

election to be held over.

Erdogan’s party made its last-ditch appeal on the grounds that banned officials and voters had taken part in the election and that thousands of names had been dropped unlawfully from the electoral rolls.

The proof they offered was far from overwhelming – mainly focused on allegations of a conspiracy – and many of those allegations were dismissed by the 11 judges of the High Election Council.

But Monday’s decision indicated that the judges had accepted the allegations that some polling station officials were not appointed from among public officials, as required under Turkish law.

The decision was 7 to 4 in a body whose independence has been questioned by the opposition since the judges’ terms were extended for another year at the end of 2018 in an amendment put forward by Erdogan’s party.

Recep Ozel, the A.K.P.’s representative to the election council, said that Imamoglu’s mandate was now canceled and that the Interior Ministry would appoint an interim mayor until the rerun.

The opposition had proved itself seemingly well organized for the March 31 vote, stationing supporters to monitor the count in every polling station.

Once challenged, Imamoglu, the opposition candidate, insisted he was ahead and had the documentation to prove it.

There followed a flurry of conflicting messages and political maneuvering from Erdogan’s camp as the leadership played for time.

Erdogan himself at times seemed to be ready to concede, amid warnings in Turkey and abroad that, if he tried to cancel the election, the ensuing political turmoil would risk a deeper economic crisis.

Behind the scenes on election night and the days that followed, a fierce power struggle was unfolding between a tight circle of ambitious, hawkish officials around the president who were determined to hold on to Istanbul, and a wider circle of older heads in the party who advised acknowledging defeat in the city.

In the end, Erdogan decided to fight the humiliating results.

“With the influence of those circles around him that I identified as a group, he made himself believe that he might get results with the appeal process,” said Abdulkadir Selvi, a columnist

examined and recounted across all districts.

Politicians, party supporters and analysts feverishly followed every recount, claim and counterclaim. The gap between the candidates narrowed bit by bit.

The opposition-run district of Buyukcekmece became a focus. An A.K.P. official announced that two people from the district had been arrested. They included a municipal worker in the census office who had removed more than 3,000 people from the electoral rolls.

Altogether, the worker had made 7,000 irregular entries by registering people in nonexistent or half-built properties, or by adding them to buildings that were already occupied.

Imamoglu derided the claims, saying that in fact the A.K.P. had been found to be behind several efforts to register people illegally in the district. More than 700 people were removed from the electoral roll by election officials during the formal registration process earlier in the year, opposition officials said.

Ten days into the process, with the numbers still not showing in his favor, Erdogan said that the irregularities had been organized and criminal and that the election should be canceled. Pro-government newspapers picked up the cry.

After that, Erdogan held a meeting of his party administration, which was leaning toward applying for cancellation, according to Selvi, the columnist.

Ali Ihsan Yavuz, deputy chairman of the A.K.P., delivered three suitcases of documents to the High Election Council and gave an hours-long briefing to reporters with a PowerPoint display.

There had been forgery, fraud and unlawfulness, he said.

Nine ballot-box officials had been purged from their public posts, so their appointment as election officials was unlawful, he said, adding that the government was deepening its investigation around the two people arrested in Buyukcekmece in connection with registration and census irregularities.

He suggested that officials purged in the extensive government crackdown since the failed coup of 2016 should not be allowed to vote. A further complaint claimed that 41,000 ineligible voters may have voted unlawfully.

“There is fraud here, corruption,” Erdogan told an assembly of businessmen on Saturday. “Removing this corruption, this fraud will exonerate the High Election Council, and also fill our nation’s heart with peace.”

Community News

Armenian Assembly Promotes Danielle Saroyan Ashbahian to Communications Director

WASHINGTON – The Armenian Assembly of America announced this week the promotion of Danielle Saroyan Ashbahian to communications director at the Assembly's headquarters.

"It is a matter of great pride to be able to promote one of our former interns and current staff members," Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny said. "Danielle's energy and enthusiasm coupled with her hard work and dedication has been fantastic. I am confident she will do a great job in this new capacity to further advance the Armenian Assembly's mission."

Hired during the centennial year of the Armenian Genocide as the Assembly's Public Affairs Associate, Ashbahian has managed the Communications Department since May 2016, handling all print and digital communications while also organizing community events. Ashbahian helped launch the web-



Armenian Assembly of America Communications Director Danielle Saroyan Ashbahian

site www.armenia360.com, a wide-ranging source of news and information with links to major institutions and foundations, and the accompanying weekly news articles emailed to Assembly members and those who subscribe online.

She is an alumna of the Assembly's Summer Internship

Program in Armenia, where she interned for the United Nations Department of Public Information in 2014. She also has prior experience at the office of former US Congresswoman Janice Hahn, the Public Diplomacy Magazine, the Los Angeles Consular Corps, and the San Francisco Ethics Commission.

Ashbahian earned her master's degree in Public Diplomacy from the University of Southern California. During her studies, she focused on the use of culture and technology to increase awareness of important issues through diplomacy. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of San Francisco with an international studies major, a global politics and societies concentration, and French studies, European studies, and legal studies minors. In addition to her internship in Armenia, she completed an internship working with high schools in the Czech Republic, studied abroad in France, and conducted research on cultural exchange programs in Indonesia.

She is active in her local community at St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church in Washington, and has previously served on St. Mary's Board of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) and as a Sunday School Teacher.

Hailing from Rancho Palos Verdes in California, she was part of St. James Armenian Apostolic Church in Los Angeles. She also volunteered as a staff member for many years at the Western Diocese Armenian Church Summer Camp.



Armenian Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny and Armenian Assembly Communications Director Danielle Saroyan Ashbahian sharing an Armenian National Institute (ANI) exhibit to Congressman Albio Sires (D-NJ)



Archbishop Hovnan Derderian bestows the St. Nerses the Gracious Medal upon Vartan Nazerian

Philanthropist Vartan Nazerian Receives St. Nerses the Gracious Medal

BURBANK, Calif. – Philanthropist Vartan Nazerian, a member of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Supreme Council, was given the St. Nerses the Gracious Medal from Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II with an accompanying pontifical encyclical. It was conferred by means of Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America Archbishop Hovnan Derderian at St. Leon Armenian Cathedral in Burbank on May 5.

The encyclical praises Nazerian's efforts and financial support in favor of the activities of the Hayastan All-Armenia Fund, the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party and the Tekeyan Cultural Association, as well as the Western Diocese and St. Leon Armenian Cathedral. Two films were screened on this occasion which provided biographical information and depicted Nazerian's activities in support of the Armenian nation and the Armenian Church in the diaspora and the Republic of Armenia.



Vartan Nazerian, second from left, with friends and family and Archbishop Hovnan Derderian at St. Leon Armenian Cathedral

AUA's Yes, Armenian Women Can!

Campaign Raises Funds to Advance Women in STEM Education

HIDDEN HILLS, Calif. – With the prominent role that women played in the Velvet Revolution in Armenia, and as gender equality becomes a more important issue globally, the American University of Armenia (AUA) seeks to advance women through its Yes, Armenian Women Can! campaign. When the campaign attains its \$2.5 million goal of endowed scholarship fund, up to 100 women will be able to study Computer Science and Engineering each year in perpetuity.

On April 28, a fundraiser was held at the home of Vahan and Liza Bagamian in Hidden Hills. The event was dedicated to raising awareness of and support for the Yes Armenian Women Can! campaign. To date, nearly \$500,000 has been raised of the \$2.5 million goal.

Dr. Armen Baibourtian, Armenia's General Consul in Los Angeles, was present at the event. After welcoming remarks by the hostess, Liza Bagamian, Nelly Der Kiureghian welcomed the guests on behalf of her husband, AUA President Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian. She also presented the overarching purpose of the campaign, which places emphasis on the importance of attracting more Armenian women to the degree programs in Engineering and Computer Science. A panel discussion followed led by Dr. Shakeh Kaftarian, Psychologist, Women's Empowerment Consultant, and Fulbright Scholar at AUA (2016-2017). Her efforts have been instrumental in the development of this campaign, along with the CEOs and Founders of some of the most successful technology companies in Silicon Valley and the dubbed "Silicon Mountain" based in Armenia.

The conversation began with Dr. Yervant Zorian, President of Synopsys Armenia, speaking about the need for more qualified talent to close the existing gap between available jobs and skilled candidates in the technology sector in Armenia's labor market. "High tech has grown fast in the last decade, from only two companies in 1992 to now over 850 companies, employing over 15,000 employees throughout the country. But there are shortages in the industry and many companies struggle to pull resources and find qualified talent. At Synopsys, we are proud that 35% of our employees are women, while in Silicon Valley that number drops to about 9%," he remarked.

Hovhannes Avoyan (M PSIA '95), CEO and Founder of PicsArt, spoke about the important role women are playing in their product design. "At PicsArt, 45-50% of women are engineers, including the Head of AI and our Head of Engineering. The majority of our end-users are women, so we want to make sure women who are representing our customer base are also designing our products," he said.

Al Eisaian, CEO and co-founder of IntelinAir, highlighted the importance of having good command of the English language for potential candidates seeking employment in the tech industry. Eisaian recommended to explore partnering with Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences to encourage students majoring in foreign languages to enroll in computer science courses and enter the field of information technology. Over 85% of the student body at that university are female.

The discussion went on looking into ways of inspiring more young women to embrace STEM. Several great ideas were shared among the guests, such as making resumes name-blind, so as not to reveal a job applicant's gender, a tactic Sevag Ajemian of Globanet is

see WOMEN, page 9



COMMUNITY NEWS

Dr. Daniel and Juliette Abdulian Honored at Merdinian 37th Annual Banquet

By Joyce Abdulian

GLENDALÉ – The Phoenicia Banquet Hall on Sunday, April 28, felt like a family reunion within a Celebratory Banquet. The evening was planned by the Merdinian School Women's Auxiliary, and Co-Chaired by Ani Hanessian and Louisa Janbazian.

Louisa Janbazian welcomed the full house by quoting former Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Vice President, Peter Kougasian, Esq at the 30th Annual Merdinian banquet, "Why Merdinian? What is the purpose of a Christian, Armenian education in this increasingly secular world...? Without the kind of education children receive at Merdinian School, how will our children come to see, that Christian faith is not just tradition, or superstition, or ethics, ...but rather that Christian faith is so important, that for its sake, their Armenian forbears went to their death. We are here today, because we want a School where young minds are at least exposed to the idea that right and wrong really are sacred commandments..."

Master of Ceremonies Alice Altoon, created a warm and informative atmosphere as she moved the program along; also sharing the family connections she has with her first cousin, honoree Dr. Daniel Abdulian.

After the singing of the American and Armenian National Anthems by soloists Arpy Aintablian and Raffi Kerbabian, the opening



Banquet Co-Chairs Ani Hanessian and Louisa Janbazian with Merdinian Board Chair Dr. Vahe Nalbandian and Principal Lina Arslanian

A full table of Abdulian/Atikian cousins, which included the honoree's children, Dr. John, Richard, and daughter Diana, were all present to honor their Uncle Daniel and Juliette. Everyone enjoyed greeting the many relatives and friends present, making an evening full of warm exchanges. Juliette's daughter, Tamara Jabour, of Nashville, Tennessee, was pleased to be at the event. Mr. Aram Boulgourjian, first Principal of Merdinian, as well as many teachers and parents were in attendance.

The booklet message from Dr. John and Linda Kay Abdulian and family is worthy of quoting. "In love and honor of Dr. Daniel and Juliette Abdulian for their long devotion and stewardship to Christian education and the Merdinian School. They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever."

Principal Lina Arslanian congratulated the honorees for their years of devotion to the School. She also shared a poignant account of her appreciation of Dr. Daniel as her personal physician.

Five-year-old Zoey Atachian, Merdinian Preschool student, brought down the house as she sang the Armenian song *Menk Chenk*

Tzeker Sourp Kirkeh (We don't leave the Bible) accompanied by her grandmother, Esther Assilian. Enjoying the limelight, she continued

Armenian) by poet Gevorg Emin. Soloists, soprano Arpy Aintablian and tenor Raffi Kerbabian, presented a meaningful musical program of Armenian songs, the last of which was Dr. Daniel's favorite, *How Great Though Art*.

Elizabeth Agbabian introduced the honorees, depicting how experiences in their youth formed their life's actions of dedication and service. She gave an interesting history of the honorees' family lives in Kessab and Aleppo. She shared her personal and family friendship with both, presenting their life-long love and commitment to the C&E Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School and the AMAA. She also shared how the brothers, Drs. Daniel, Jack, and Misak were a trio of healing hands in the community.

Merdinian Board of Directors Chairman Dr. Vahe Nalbandian presented the honorees with a gift and Lifetime Achievement Award – thanking them for their years of generosity, dedication, and service to the School. The honorees graciously accepted the honor bestowed upon them – Dr. Daniel in his usual dignified manner. Juliette expressed her appreciation by personally thanking everyone involved with the planning and execution of the evening. It was evident how much the evening meant to both of them. Well Done Good and Faithful Servants.



Honorees Dr. and Mrs. Daniel and Juliette Abdulian sharing their table with some family members

prayer was given by Rev. Hendrik Shanazarian, Associate Pastor of the United Armenian Congregational Church of Los Angeles. Dr. Nazareth Darakjian, AMAA Board President, congratulated the honorees for their many years of dedication to the Merdinian School and AMAA – both having served for years on the AMAA Board.



Honorees Dr. and Mrs. Daniel and Juliette Abdulian with Merdinian School Board Chair Dr. Vahe Nalbandian

impromptu reciting a Bible verse she had learned in school. Vahe Snapan, a dignified 8th grade student gave an eloquent, emotional recitation of *Zarmanali Hye* (Amazing

Women's Auxiliary Co-Chairs Ani Hanessian and Louisa Janbazian presented a \$20,000 check to Nalbandian as the Auxiliary's contribution to the School for scholarships and operations.

Nalbandian introduced Azniv Ghazarian, a long-time parent of three Merdinian students – who will miss the school, now that her children have moved on. She lovingly spoke of her years with the PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization) and the life-long friendships forged. She shared how the Merdinian outstanding education within a Christian environment was of foremost importance to her and her family. Perhaps grandchildren will bring her back.

The "Kessab" element was very apparent. Rev. Serop Megerditchian, senior pastor of Armenian Cilicia Evangelical Church of Pasadena, shared how he is a cousin of the late Anush Abdulian. His closing comments and prayer came with a comment directed to Dr. Daniel in their own beloved Kessab dialect.

The devotion to Merdinian, not only by our honorees Dr. Daniel and Juliette Abdulian, but by the entire community, keeps the legacy of the School's founders Charlotte and Elise Merdinian vital. These two sisters planted the seed for countless children to reap the benefits of their benevolence—and pass it forward.

Established in 1982, Merdinian is the only Armenian Evangelical School in the United States. The School offers a broad-based curriculum that fosters academic excellence, high moral values, and spiritual enrichment in the Armenian Evangelical tradition. The School strives to create a safe and nurturing environment where every student receives personal attention to become a successful and responsible individual.

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COMMUNITY NEWS



ANI Director Dr. Rouben Adalian with parishioners of St. John the Baptist Armenian Orthodox Church in Milwaukee, WI on April 7, 2019

YMCA Officials Attend Philadelphia Presentation on Critical Role of Group in Aftermath of Armenian Genocide

PHILADELPHIA — Armenian National Institute (ANI) Director Dr. Rouben Adalian was the featured guest speaker at the Armenian Inter-Communal Committee of Philadelphia's Genocide Commemoration on April 24th where he presented on "The Decisive Role of the YMCA and American Relief in Armenia a Century Ago." Based on John Elder's photographs and testimony, as well as additional material from other archives, the exhibit pays tribute to the extraordinary efforts of two YMCA volunteers who went to Armenia during the first years of the newly-formed republic, John Elder and James O. Arroll, and whose philanthropic accomplishments were widely recognized at the time.

Executive Director of Greater Philadelphia YMCA Dave Mullin, Director of Information Technology of Greater Philadelphia YMCA Jean Scutt, and retired Director General of the Jerusalem International YMCA Leonard Wilson with his wife Joyce attended the presentation.

"Thank you for the great honor paid to the YMCA workers during the horrific events a century ago in your homeland," retired Director

General of the Jerusalem International YMCA Len Wilson stated. "I felt privileged to be in attendance during the very moving church service in your beautiful sanctuary, and to be in attendance for an excellent lecture by Dr. Adalian. I appreciated the opportunity to increase the awareness of your attendees to the role of John R. Mott and the Christian mission work he inspired via John Elder and James Arroll."

Wilson added: "I was most impressed by the scholarly work accomplished by Dr. Adalian. I only wish more research was accomplished on the hundreds of World Service workers inspired by John R. Mott. Dr. Mott's career and accomplishments need to be illuminated for persons outside the YMCA organization to appreciate the goals of our organization that is not a church or a religion, but acts to achieve cooperation and reconciliation embodying the true spirit of our Lord among persons of all faiths."

Mott, who is also featured in the exhibit, was the longtime general secretary of the International Committee of the YMCA in the early 20th century and an early advocate for US humanitarian relief for Armenians, who

inspired Elder and Arroll to take on the challenge of going to Armenia.

The community-wide gathering was organized by Steven Keytanjian and fellow leaders of the Armenian Inter-Communal Committee of Philadelphia, which consists of representatives from the five area churches, their clergy, and the Armenian Sisters Academy. The presentation took place at St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church in Wynnewood, Penn., and Andrew Kzirian served as master of ceremonies.

The ANI exhibit, titled "The First Deportation: The German Railway, the American Hospital, and the Armenian Genocide," was dedicated to Keytanjian's grandfather, Dr. Charles Mahjoubian. The First Deportation exhibit concludes with testimony from Mahjoubian, a native of Konya who resettled in Philadelphia. As a survivor, he committed himself to testifying to the events he witnessed in his hometown.

"Thank you to the entire Armenian American community in Philadelphia for welcoming the Armenian National Institute's exhibit on the YMCA, and participating in the shared history of Armenia and the United States that dates back over a century," Adalian stated. "It was especially encouraging and a true honor to have in attendance representatives of the YMCA, and be able to thank on this day of remembrance the deeply committed and selfless YMCA volunteers who put themselves in harm's way and helped so many survivors of the Armenian Genocide."

Last year, Armenia YMCA welcomed the release of the special digital exhibit, and joined the Armenian Assembly of America in presenting the exhibit in Armenia and Artsakh, with the help of Vardan Hambardzumyan, who heads the YMCA in Armenia and presently serves as executive secretary of Europe YMCA. To date, the exhibit has been shown in Yerevan, Stepanakert, and the American corner in Gyumri, and presently is on display in Vardenis through the continuing sponsorship of the YMCA. This past Friday, YMCA leaders from Germany, Spain, Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Belarus attended a private opening of the exhibit in Vardenis.

Ryan Bean, Reference and Outreach Archivist at the YMCA Archives, who supported the project, remarked: "The Armenian National Institute has done a fantastic job telling this story. It is both tragic and heartbreaking on the one hand, and inspiring and humbling on the other. The timeliness of this exhibit is very appropriate, and I believe we could all learn a lesson from Elder and Arroll."

The YMCA Archives extended congratulations to Adalian and ANI on the release of the digital exhibit in 2018, and added: "This exhibit both illuminates a tragic humanitarian disas-

ter as well as highlights the capacity of the human spirit to persevere and do good in the face of a seemingly hopeless situation."

Hambardzumyan wrote that he was "absolutely grateful to ANI for disclosing so eloquently the story of the YMCA in the Republic of Armenia back in 1918."

Earlier in April, Adalian presented on the YMCA at St. John the Baptist Armenian Orthodox Church in Milwaukee, WI. "It was a particular pleasure to share the exhibit in Milwaukee, where in attendance was Mr. Ara Churchian who identified himself as a former student of John Elder when decades ago he attended the American Presbyterian Missionary School — now called Community School — in Tehran, Iran. The audience was quite excited to learn that one of their parishioners knew John Elder in person. I thank Mr. Churchian for his participation and especially the St. John the



ANI Director Dr. Rouben Adalian with YMCA officials and the Armenian Inter-Communal Committee of Philadelphia, organizers of the community-wide Armenian Genocide Commemoration on April 24, 2019 at St. Sahag & St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church

Baptist Armenian Church Parish Council and its Chairman Lyle Dadian for organizing the event, and Father Nareg Keutelian who presided," Adalian said.

The YMCA digital exhibit is one of seven exhibits developed by ANI based on American documentation of the Armenian Genocide. Earlier this month, ANI released "The United States Military in the First Republic of Armenia 1919-1920," a groundbreaking exhibit that documents the extent of U.S. humanitarian intervention during the difficult years in the life of the newly-formed Armenian state in the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide. Based upon the photographic collection of an American medical officer, Dr. Walter P. Davenport, the exhibit reveals the depth and breadth of measures taken by U.S. military personnel to stabilize the humanitarian crisis in Armenia, and especially the caretaking of the most vulnerable part of the population through hospitals, orphanages, food distribution points, and other facilities.

All of the digital exhibits posted on the ANI website are freely downloadable on www.armenian-genocide.org, and are provided to the public in high resolution to be readily printable anytime and anywhere from standard-size to poster-size.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Bipartisan Group Expresses Disappointment, Asks Trump to Affirm Armenian Genocide

WASHINGTON — On Monday, May 6, a bipartisan group of legislators sent a letter to President Donald Trump expressing their disappointment in his April 24th statement, and asked him to directly affirm the Armenian Genocide, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly).

Shepherded by Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Co-Chair Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA), the letter is signed by 28 Members of Congress, including the Caucus leadership:

Representatives Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Peter King (R-NY) and Adam Schiff (D-CA).

“The Armenian Assembly applauds Congresswoman Jackie Speier for spearheading this initiative and the bipartisan support from the Armenian Caucus Members,” stated Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. “We appreciate the continued efforts to unequivocally affirm the Armenian Genocide, especially given the

alarming statement by Turkey’s authoritarian leader that the relocation of Armenians in 1915 was ‘reasonable.’ The mass deportation of an entire race is never reasonable - not 104 years ago and not today,” he added.

“We want to express our disappointment that your statement did not directly acknowledge the Armenian Genocide as President Ronald Reagan did during his presidency. However, there is no wrong day to recognize the Armenian Genocide. We hope you will consider future opportunities to pay fitting tribute to the memory of those targeted for their faith, those who perished and those who survived, as well as to the brave men and women in our military, who continue to proudly serve our country and defend our most cherished ideals and freedoms,” the letter to President Trump read.

The letter also references the heroic efforts of Major General James G. Harbord, General John J. Pershing’s Chief of Staff during World War I, who, at the direction of President Woodrow Wilson, led an American Military Mission to Armenia in 1919. Major General Harbord and the United States Military in Armenia is highlighted in the Armenian National Institute’s (ANI) new exhibit, available online.

As with previous administrations, this year’s

statement reflected a dictionary definition of genocide and used an Armenian expression, Medz Yeghern, which the Armenian Assembly described as a missed opportunity to end genocide denial, especially in light of Turkey’s outrageous attempts to justify the genocide.

Last month over 25 U.S. Senators and Representatives issued statements and participated in events from New York to California commemorating the Armenian Genocide. Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) remarked in her April 24th statement:

“One hundred and four years ago, the Ottoman Empire began its horrific, systematic murder of more than 1.5 million innocent Armenian men, women and children. For over a century, the Armenian people have stood courageously against those seeking to rewrite history and deny the Armenian genocide,” Speaker Pelosi said. “We have a moral obligation to remember these barbaric acts of ethnic cleansing and continue to acknowledge the truth of this dark stain on the history of the world. To honor the memory of those lost and the suffering of those who survived, we firmly and unequivocally denounce all attempts to devalue or minimize these heinous crimes,” she added.

Archaeology’s Genocide Problem: Forgetting On the Armenian Highlands

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — On Friday, March 15, Vanderbilt University’s Anthropology Department hosted a lecture by Cornell University Prof. Adam T. Smith. His lecture was titled “Archaeology’s Genocide Problem: Violence, Heritage, and the Techniques of Forgetting on the Armenian Highlands.”

Smith presented a survey of prominent archaeological texts in the field, pointing out how some of those writers, when discussing the heritage of Eastern Turkey, had failed to mention Armenians as natives of the land from earliest times until Islam, instead portraying the land as exclusively having Turkish heritage. He described this phenomenon as “the powerful narratives of denial,” not only in regard to the Armenian Genocide, but also the Turkish government’s negating the historicity of an ancient Armenian presence in Anatolia. Indeed, as Rouben Adalian states: “Despite the three-thousand-year existence of the Armenians and their continuous construction of civilization in their historic homeland, no archeological site in Turkey is permitted designation as historically Armenian.”

Professor Smith further emphasized that “archeological research is highly skewed” as Turkey denies that Armenian archeological finds are actually Armenian. Even the names of Armenian towns in Anatolia have been Turkified, again negating a historic Armenian presence there. According to Professor Smith names of approximately 75% of sites of the geographically historic Armenia have been changed.

Smith then offered a chronological timeline of ancient Armenian history discovered through archeological finds, starting with the first notation of an “Armenian” as such on the tomb of

King Darius of Persia, ca. 518 B.C. He reminded us that “there is no ancient Turkey,” and that “Anatolia is relatively a new term used since the 10th century A.D.”

Against this background Smith elaborated on the various techniques of “unseeing” employed by the state authorities to erase the memory of the Armenian presence in Turkey. He divided these into four processes: omission from texts, monumentalization, de-ethnicization, and denial of denial — including disappearance, surveillance, prohibition, and self-censorship.

Lastly, Smith discussed the importance of “archaeology as bearing witness” to the Armenian Genocide. He stressed “the need for archaeologists to be able to access important historical sites in the ancestral homeland” of historical Armenia (not just the Republic of Armenia), which so far has been denied to archaeologists. He also expressed hope that academics would not be influenced by politics but rather maintain the standards of academic integrity and present the subject matter in an objective way.

It is noteworthy that Smith’s archaeological work is pioneering in that he is introducing a new approach to Genocide studies which so far has been dealt with primarily by historians and sociologists.

Members of the Nashville Armenian community attended this lecture and actively participated during the question-and-answer session. After the lecture the community members met with Professor Smith and discussed various issues ranging from the impact of the Genocide on their immediate families, to community activities in Nashville, to Tennessee House Resolution 100 (which recognized the Armenian Genocide on the occasion of its centennial in 2015).

Michael Zildjian to Speak on Zilosophy at St. James Men’s Club Dinner Meeting

WATERTOWN — On Monday, June 3, there will be a St. James Armenian Church Men’s Club dinner meeting at the church’s Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center. The guest will be Michael Zildjian, author, podcaster, and speaker.

Zildjian is a Watertown native and former student at the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) day school here. His Zilosophy platform leads conversations which teach self-awareness and honest self-evaluation with the goal of helping people make informed choices that allow them to bring their best to whatever they do. Zildjian’s first book, *Zilosophy on Golf*, has been praised by golfers and non-golfers alike as a great way to simplify golf and life. At the talk, he will lead a discussion based on what it means to be the best Armenians we can be for our community and the world.

Having grown up in a small town, Zildjian never dreamt of being a writer. When he decided to move across the country to go to college at Pepperdine in Malibu, Calif., a whole world opened up to him that he had never imagined. Since then, he has traveled to 45 of the continental United States, and has dived head first into the cultures of a dozen or so international countries. He has met people from all walks of life, from rock stars to geologists, sharing his stories and his philosophical views about life while drinking adult beverages or playing a round of golf. Zildjian has played a lot of golf in a lot of places.

After moving on from careers as a concert promoter, producer, artist manager, licensing representative for TV/film, marketing/branding consultant, bartender, rideshare driver and a disposable lighter repairman, Zildjian decided it was time to take his passion for philosophical conversations to the next level. And thus Zilosophy was born. It is where Zildjian could build a platform for public dialogue about the things he had always collaboratively pondered with friends, family and strangers. Zildjian is not a therapist, and he makes no professional therapeutic claims about his musings.

Over time, he began to realize that there are many correlations between golf and life. Deep philosophical conversations about both topics with friends and professional golfers formed the basis and the foundation for Zilosophy.

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. Ladies are invited. Keljik Hall, at the Mosesian Cultural Center of the church, is located at 465 Mt. Auburn St.



Michael Zildjian

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Campaign Raises Funds for Women in STEM Education

WOMEN, from page 6

implementing. His company is also offering paid maternal and paternal leave to promote sharing family responsibilities between parents. Nishan Majarian, CEO of Agrian, Inc., spoke about the importance of creating flexible work opportunities and how this could be advantageous to women raising families. Vahe Kuzoyan, President and Co-Founder of ServiceTitan, who just raised \$165 million in the latest round of his company’s fundraising, spoke about the need to source female talent and create a pipeline of seasoned managers by offering skills training in specialized areas, such as negotiations, where women may not be as aggressive as the job entails. “It’s also going to take a societal level shift. It can’t just be businesses, it has to be everyone working together to make changes happen in the country.”

AUA has already played a pivotal role in preparing Armenia’s next generation of female technology leaders through the Zaven and Sonia Akian College of Science and Engineering (CSE). The University boasts of a

record of inspiring examples of women who have graduated or are currently enrolled and will soon enter the field. One example is Anush Gambaryan, an early graduate from AUA’s Computer and Information Science (CIS) program who now heads the Artificial Intelligence department at PicsArt. Another is Anahit Serobyanyan, who graduated with a Masters in Computer Science (CS) in 2013 and went on to join VMware in Armenia. Currently, around 40% of students in the College are female, however, research shows that by 2025, the need for computer programmers in Armenia will triple due to the ever-increasing innovation in the country’s tech sector. This is consistently growing the market demand for even more women to enter the field and set new records outpacing that of Silicon Valley. The visionary initiative of Yes, Armenian Women Can! will ensure that Armenia continues to uphold its “Silicon Mountain” status while crossing new milestones and setting high standards for gender equity in the technology sector.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Taner Akçam Speaks at Washington Event Commemorating Genocide Anniversary

WASHINGTON — On Friday, April 26, Professor Taner Akçam, the Robert Aram, Marianne Kalousdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University presented his latest book, *The Killing Order of Talat Pasha and the Denial of the Armenian Genocide*, as part of a Armenian Genocide Commemoration organized by the Jerair Nishanian Foundation (JNF) at St. Mary Armenian Church Hall.

While the guests were arriving, The Hrant Dink Contemporary Oratorio, Istanbul, played on a large screen.

Master of the ceremonies and the coordinator of the program, Diramayr Yetetzgin Anahid Kalayjian, JNF Board member, started the event and invited Pastor of St. Mary's Church Rev. Hovsep Karapetyan for the opening remarks and prayer.

Tagvor Nishanian, PhD, vice-president of JNF's Board of Directors and son of the founder, welcomed the packed audience and presented the work of the foundation since its inception 25 years ago. The foundation was established as a private nonprofit charitable corporation. He established his foundation because of a strong sense duty to his homeland Armenia, instilled upon him by his parents' past. Both were survivors of the Armenian Genocide, but his father died when he was a child, and his mother raised him and his five older siblings by herself. Not only was she successful in raising her family, they thrived, and he was able to move to the US to attend college.



At the Armenian Embassy entrance from left Lucine Shirinian, third secretary, Deputy Chief of Misson Ara Magarian, Taner Akçam and Dicle Akar.

providing scholarships for students attending Gavar State University. More recently, they have expanded the program to include graduate students at the National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia in Yerevan. To qualify for the scholarships, applicants must show a financial need and strong academics.

In addition, the foundation has renovated portions of Gavar State University and supports Greater Washington DC Armenian churches, among other projects.

The foundation is committed to supporting the translating and publication of literary projects towards the advancement of Armenian education and cultural issues, including those written about the Armenian Genocide by Akçam.

Odette Zakarian emotionally recited a moving one of many

Siamanato's famous poems, "The Dance," in Armenian. Her intonation conveyed the horrific scenes from that dreadful tragedy. As if the audience hadn't been moved enough with their emotions, Zaven Kalayjian, JNF Board member, delivered "The Dance" in English to ensure that everyone in the room lived those atrocities once more time.

Victoria Petrosyan, spouse of Armenian ambassador, sang *Dele Yaman* and with her piercing voice moved the audience. Many in the audience got misty eyed. She continued her repertoire with Komitas' famed *Groong*. Her powerful voice conveyed the message of the song loud and clear.

Vazrik Nishanian, Board member of JNF introduced the guest speaker, Akçam.

Akçam received his doctorate in 1995 from the University of

Hanover, with a dissertation on *The Turkish National Movement and the Armenian Genocide Against the Background of the Military Tribunals in Istanbul Between 1919 and 1922*. Akçam was born in the province of



Tagvor Nishanian, PhD, JNF Vice President

Ardahan, Turkey, in 1953. He became interested in Turkish politics at an early age. As the editor-in-chief of a student political journal, he was arrested in 1976 and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. Amnesty International adopted him as a prisoner of conscience. A year later, he escaped to Germany, where he received political

Holocaust and Genocide Studies at University of Minnesota. Selected Publications

Akçam has published numerous books and articles in English, French, German and Turkish, including *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012, *Judgment at Istanbul: The Armenian Genocide Trials*, with Vahakn Dadrian and *A Shameful Act: Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*. New York: Metropolitan Books, November 2006.

Akçam acknowledged the efforts of many Armenian individuals who had been tremendously helpful to him, especially Kevork Marashlian, local commander of the Knights of Vartan, Stepan Ohanian because of his assistance with translating his articles into Armenian, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, the Jerair Nishanian Foundation who invited him tonight and sponsored the translation and publication of this book released 2 days ago in Yerevan, Armenia, the access he had to the priceless archives of Reverend Father Krikor Guerguerian, the AGBU Boghos Nubar Library in Paris, NAASR, Hrant Gulian of New Jersey, Gulbenkian Foundation and Knights of Vartan Grand Council and many other organizations.

Akçam added that the book is part of a larger project. He treated the audience to an tremendously informative and meticulous presentation sharing the many obstacles he had faced to obtain copies of the telegrams, deciphering the codes and recreating the documents that proved the killing orders of Talat Pasha to annihilate the Armenians. Akçam was elated when he coincidentally stumbled upon the documents in the National Archives of Turkey, which clearly incriminated the denials of the Armenian genocide.



Anahid Nishanian, JNF Board Member

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Honorary Member of JNF, offered concluding remarks and Benediction. His analogy between the phrase from the song *Groong* bringing good news then and referring to Prof. Akçam bringing good news today to all Armenians lifted everyone's spirits. He introduced also Dicle



Prof. Taner Akçam

The overall mission of the foundation is very simple: to facilitate an opportunity for underprivileged, talented young Armenian students to attain higher education in various disciplines and achieve their inherent potentials, and in term, contribute to the welfare of their motherland and future generations.

Through a collaboration with Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), the foundation focused on one of the needy regions of Armenia, Gavar,



Vazrik Nishanian, JD, JNF Board Member (left), Odette Zakarian, reciting "The Dance."



From left, Vazrik Nishanian, Alineh Templin, Tagvor Nishanian, benefactor Jerair Nishanian, Anahid Nishanian, Taner Akçam, Arch. Vicken Aykazian, Rev. Hovsep Karapetyan, Yeretzig Anahid Kalayjian and Zaven Kalayjian

asylum. In 1988 he started working as Research Scientist in Sociology at the Hamburg Institute for Social Research. His first research topic was the history of political violence and torture in the late Ottoman Empire and early Republic of Turkey. Between 2000 and 2002 Akçam was Visiting Professor of History at University of Michigan. He worked also as Visiting Associate Professor at the Center for

Akar, life partner of Akçam, who being Kurdish, has written a book about the Armenian orphans in the Middle East and teaches English in the International School in Munich, Germany.

Prof. Akçam concluded the presentation with a book signing session and everyone partook of a light reception.

—Shoghig Missirian Sahakian



COMMUNITY NEWS



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COMMUNITY NEWS

LA County Honors Arsen Danelian during Armenian History Month

LOS ANGELES — Longtime community leader Arsen Danelian, Esq., was honored by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles for his service on April 30, during the city-designated Armenian History Month.

Kathryn Barger, Supervisor of the Fifth District, presented the certificate of recognition to Danelian, who was joined on stage by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, who nominated him for the honor. Also joining Danelian was his wife Hasmik Danelian, Ed.D., Superintendent of the Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District of California and his daughter, Nyree Kolanjian, Esq.

“Throughout April, it has been an honor to recognize the accomplishments and contributions of outstanding Armenian-Americans who live, work, and serve in Los Angeles County,” said Barger, who represented the Board of Supervisors, the governing body of the County of Los Angeles that oversees a population of more than 10 million people. “In addition to his professional work, Arsen is best known for his work with the faith community, particularly in the Armenian Apostolic Church.”

Barger thanked Danelian, his family and Derderian for attending the ceremony in person to celebrate his “immense involvement and contributions to Los Angeles County and the Armenian community.”

She highlighted the positive impact Armenians have had in both California and the nation, making “a real difference in this country by giving back in ways that are very much under the radar.”

Danelian said he felt “honored and humbled” by the recognition bestowed upon him. He thanked Derderian for nominating him and for his leadership, as well as to Supervisor Barger and her colleagues for their tireless work in Los Angeles County.

“For the past 45 years as a community activist, I have engaged in serving this community and my church purposefully with humility,

courage, and character,” said Danelian, founding member of the Glendale-based law firm Baker, Olson, LeCroy & Danelian. “Today’s recognition by the Board of Supervisors of Los

received hundreds of thousands of Armenian orphans, survivors of the genocide, and embraced them to feel at home.”

Turning to the accomplishments of

ing out that Los Angeles has the largest Armenian community outside of Armenia. “We are connected to our roots, to our ancestral land of Armenia, but we also feel that we have the moral duty and responsibility to serve this freedom-loving country, which has been a home for our children and for the many generations to come.”

Danelian’s service to the Los Angeles community spans decades, organizations and cultures. He has served as a member of the Diocesan Council, as Chairman of the Ambassadors of Faith of the Western Diocese and as a generous benefactor of St. Leon Cathedral in Burbank. He has been honored with the prestigious St. Nerses Shnorhali medal and the accompanying Pontifical Encyclical of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of all Armenians in recognition of his four decades of service rendered to the Armenian Apostolic Church. Earlier this year, Danelian traveled to the Vatican to have an audience with His Holiness Pope Francis, where he personally expressed his deep gratitude for His Holiness’ stand with the Armenian people and for the Armenian cause. He also met with His Eminence Pietro Cardinal Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See.

Danelian is also the former chairman of the Board of Directors of the Healthcare Foundation of the Glendale Adventist Medical Center and the recipient of the 2014 Erwin J. Remboldt Founder’s Award of the Glendale Adventist Medical Center for outstanding philanthropy. He has also served as Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Glendale Symphony Orchestra Association, as a member of the Board of Directors of the Glendale Rotary Club, Chairman of the Glendale Schools 2000 Action Planning Team for Developing Pride and Confidence in the Glendale Unified School District (1992-1993), and as a member of the Arroyo-Verdugo Sub-Region Advisory Council, Southern California Association of Governments (1993-1994).

—Taleen Babayan



Arsen Danelian holds the recognition, along with his family, friends and Archbishop Hovnan Derderian

Angeles County is a testimony to the importance of the impact of community involvement in furthering our democratic values as well as the Armenian cause.”

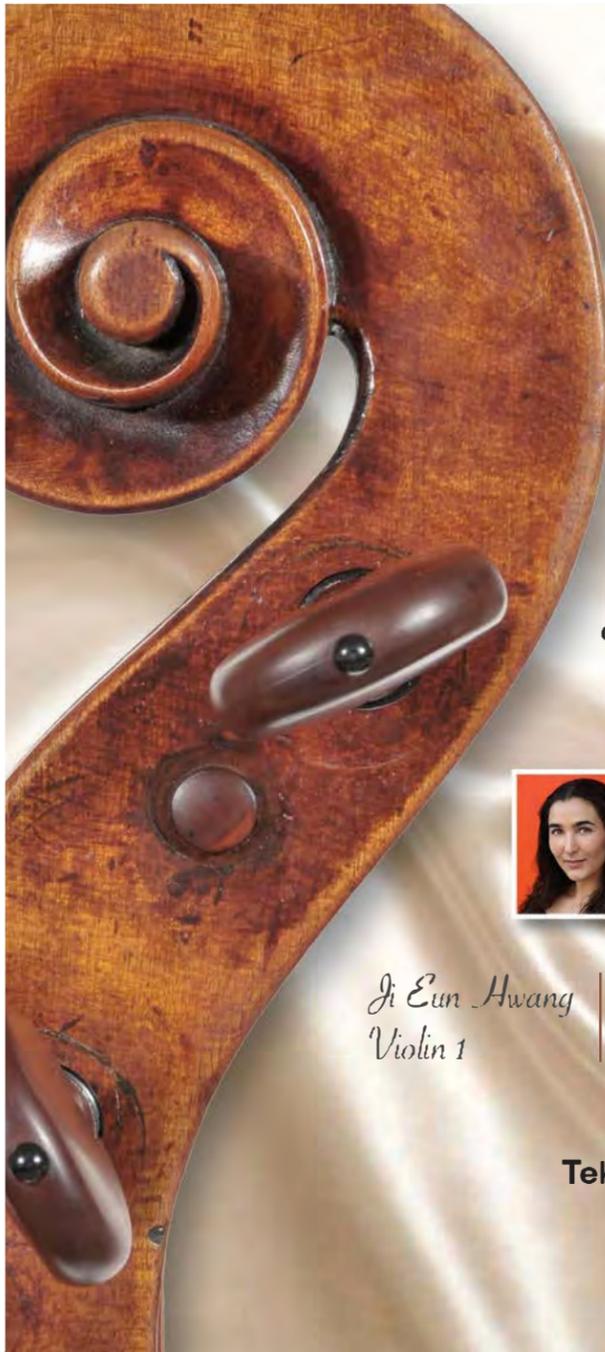
In his remarks, Derderian elaborated on the symbolism of the month of April for the Armenian people as the world commemorates the martyrs of the first genocide of the 20th century, an “unpunished genocide, which has paved the way for many other genocides.”

“We have commemorated the saints on April 24, but the day also has become for us a day of rebirth,” said Derderian. “On this very special occasion, we also extend our gratitude to the United States of America, which

Danelian and his efforts towards his surrounding society, Derderian noted his service is “a token of gratitude to this nation” by “serving institutions that heighten the well-being of the community at large and bring hope to the lives of the members of the greater Los Angeles community.”

Derderian traced the history of the Western Diocese that was established over 100 years ago as a direct result of the Hamidian massacres of the Armenians in 1895, that caused many to flee historic Western Armenia and seek haven in America.

“Since then, we have flourished and we have grown to become exemplary citizens of the United States of America,” he said, point-





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Arts & Living

Our Man in Hong Kong

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/HONG KONG — My interviewee is ballet dancer and dance teacher Davit Vardanyan. Originally from Yerevan, he has lived in Hong Kong for three years. In 1997-2003 he studied at the Yerevan Choreography College and in 2003-2005 he continued his studies in Germany with the famous dance instructor and Soviet ballet veteran Pyotr Pestov. Davit participated in the Bolzano International Dance Competition, where he took second place, and became a finalist in the Istanbul ballet competition. He has worked in the Schleswig-Holstein Theater, Stuttgart Ballet, Dresden Opera, Amsterdam's National Ballet and the Royal Ballet in Antwerp (Belgium). Davit starred in ballet classic repertoire, as well as in modern ballet performances by Kylián, Forsythe, Neumeier, Cranko, Van Manen, Ekk, David Dawson and many other famous choreographers.



Davit Vardanyan

Davit, how did you choose ballet?

I did not choose: my parents took me (laughing). There was already a dance tradition in our family. My grandfather Henrik Vardanyan was one of the founders of the Armenian State Dance Ensemble and the first soloist. My uncle Ashot Vardanyan is also a folk dance artist. So one day, held by my hand, I was taken to choreography college, to the ballet class, and my fate was sealed.

And you, like the other brilliant boys from your generation, have become pupils of Hovhannes Divanyan and Armen Grigoryan, the aces of Armenian ballet pedagogy. What is the reason that almost all our international ballet dancers were trained by these two teachers?

First, they are great devotees of their work. They gave you so much energy that you become engaged in your chosen profession with great love. Unlike today, during our college years there was no YouTube and no internet, so we learned everything from our teachers. Later, when we went abroad, we learned a lot of other things. Some of my senior friends who had participated in the Lausanne Ballet Competition said that if we wanted, we could send a video of our performances, and in case of admission, continue our education in Europe. I did it, my video was approved, and I received offers from three European ballet schools at the same time. I consulted comrade Hovhannes and comrade Armen, and I chose John Cranko's ballet school in Stuttgart. So I have never danced on the Armenian stage as I was already out of Armenia at the age of 15. In Yerevan I danced only once in 2015, dancing Escamilio in "Carmen."

After graduating from Cranko's school, you started dancing at different theaters in Dresden, Amsterdam and Antwerp, but despite your successes you did not stay in Europe.

see VARDANIAN, page 14



Louise Mara plays the character of Miriam in "The Mouse in the Bread"

Young Filmmaker Wants to Explore Differences to Create Universal Themes

BELMONT, Mass. — Filmmaker Sharisse Zeroonian wants to explore the space between identities: Are you Armenian? Geeky? Disabled? Different?

"The Mouse in the Bread," the short film that Zeroonian wrote, directed and stars in, has been shown several times in the past year in local festivals and movie theaters.

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

From the opening scene, which shows the Armenian and American flags swaying in the wind, we know we are seeing an Armenian family. Yet, their ethnicity is not a focal part; it is just one aspect of who they are. The narrative follows Lili, played by Zeroonian, as she fits into her family life, living with her parents Miriam and John (played by Louise Mara and Alexander Hauck), as well as her extended family. Lili, a high school senior, is very close to her cousin, Kevork, played by Miguel Velazquez, as well as her grandparents. Everything becomes unhinged, however, when Kevork commits a crime. It seems all of a sudden, the gossamer-thin balance is thrown off for everyone in the family with the arrest.

"The Mouse in the Bread" was adapted from a short story Zeroonian had written.

"The characters were people I see in my life, people who struggle with relationships and lost connections," Zeroonian explained.

Lili is a complicated character, one that seems to have a hard time finding herself as well as her place.

"Are you crazy or are the people around you crazy? School, the Armenian community, and not gelling with people," she said about her main character. Lili, as the film progresses, becomes less endearing.

In addition, she said her characters were created as a result of a "reaction to people relying on tropes or stereotypes."

She added that she wanted her characters to be stereotype free and be considered "normal, everyday and authentic."

"The Mouse in the Bread" is currently available on Amazon Prime and can be viewed for free.

She also railed against mass media, when it shows "people of those backgrounds and a lot of misconceptions," showing that a minority family was experiencing every single thing through that background and could not just experience something.

One creative force that she can relate to is comedian, writer and actor Aziz Ansari, whose Netflix series "Master of None" is about an American of Indian extraction, see FILMMAKER, page 15

California Honors USC Shoah Foundation as They Honor Yom Hashoah

LOS ANGELES — The University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation has received a resolution from both houses of the California Legislature on Monday that commemorated the Institute's 25th anniversary, the same day as an event at the State Capitol in honor Yom HaShoah, a day of remembrance for the 6 million Jews killed during the Holocaust.

Lawmakers and general public in Sacramento were also given a demonstration of the Institute's Dimensions in Testimony interactive biography initiative, which enables visitors to ask questions to Holocaust survivors and instantly receive pre-recorded responses. They were also shown a video that showcased some of the 55,000 testimonies of survivors the Institute has collected.

USC Shoah Foundation Finci-Viterbi Executive Director Stephen Smith was on hand during the ceremony.

"It was remarkable to see the leaders of the California State Legislature remembering the Holocaust with dignity and empathy," Smith said. "It was heartening to hear their resolve on countering antisemitism and hate in all its forms. The resolution to institute a Holocaust Memorial Day for California was passed in the presence of Holocaust survivors, taking up the commitment to make the memory and education the duty of future generations."

Governor Gavin Newsom later stopped by a reception for the California Legislative Jewish Caucus and met Smith for a few minutes.

Sen. Ben Allen, chairman of the California Legislative Jewish Caucus, stressed the importance of Holocaust education.

"Unfortunately, we are losing more and more of our teachers, our survivors, our martyrs every year," he said. "That's one of the reasons why taping their stories, recording their stories, remembering the victims, is such an important thing."

Presented by Allen and Assembly member Richard Bloom, Joint Members Resolutions No. 161 lists several milestones the Institute accomplished since its founding in 1994, and concluded by commending it for "its work in countering anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of hate and intolerance, as well as for the key role it is playing in developing technology to help people foster empathy, promote understanding and build respect."

The ceremony had been planned for some time, but came just two days after a deadly attack at a Southern California synagogue left one woman dead and others injured. That incident cast a somber mood over the event and served as a reminder of the continuing importance of fighting antisemitism and all other forms of irrational hatred.

Many lawmakers stopped by to interact with Dimensions in Testimony and to ask questions of Holocaust survivor Pinchas Gutter, whose answers were recorded a few years earlier. Among them were Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis and Sen. Holly Mitchell, whose 3th Senate District includes USC.

"We feel very deeply about the need to make a big push on Holocaust education and to make sure young people, regardless of background, understand this atrocity," said Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel, vice chair of the Legislative Jewish Caucus. "I think sometimes in the Jewish community, we assume everybody knows about it, but then, as I remind my colleagues, there are more Latinos in California than there are Jews in the world. There's a lot of people who don't know our history, who don't know our story, so it's very important that we elevate the stories. Pinchas said that. This is a universal lesson about racism and about the fact that things can spiral out of control very quickly."

Our Man in Hong Kong

VARDANIAN, from page 13

I had a different reason to appear in Hong Kong. You know that dancers are often subject to traumas. While working at the Royal Ballet in Belgium, I had some problems with my back so that I was advised to leave dance for good. For some time, I was able to dance even with my injured back, but the problem had to be solved and I was advised to go to Hong Kong to recover my health through Chinese medicine. Here I danced for a few months and decided that it is time to shift to my two other specialties – dance education and culture management. And so I was invited to teach in one of Hong Kong's most prestigious ballet schools, SJ Ballet des Arts.

So you are the first Armenian in history in the dance world of Hong Kong. Is ballet life there very different from that of Europe?

If in Europe we had prepared for three weeks for about 15 performances, in Hong Kong we prepare for four performances for two months. Here, the rhythm is a bit slow. On the other hand, Hong Kong, like Armenia, is backward in terms of modern ballet. Here ballet is just a classic, always the same "Swan Lake," the same "Sleeping Beauty"... there are no modern performances at all.

Did you start talking Chinese?

Only few phrases. There is no need for it because everyone speaks English. By the way, the Europeans who work here, mostly Americans, do not receive a warm welcome, but because I am Armenian, the attitude towards me is very pleasant, although few people know about the Armenians.

Although one of the most prominent figures in the history of Hong Kong, was the Armenian state figure and philanthropist Khachik Astvatsatorian, aka Paul Chater, who made a great contribution to his development...

Yes, there is a small Armenian community here. I have met with them once, although there is no connection, and in general, my time in Hong Kong is very busy and full. We work even

during weekends. And despite my very busy schedule, I feel very good here. I love my job and I really enjoy working with children. As I have mentioned, I am also working in the area of cultural management and I have a great desire to present Armenian ballet art in this region.

Yes, it seems that the first steps are being carried out. Last year, our ballet band traveled to Malaysia. How do you evaluate their performances?

Geographically being so close to Malaysia, I went there, especially taking into consideration the fact that my teacher Armen Grigoryan and his son and my good friend, the Zurich-based dancer Arman Grigoryan, were there. Our ballet band was invited to present first of all Aram Khachaturian's ballets. For the first time in the capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, divertimentos from the "Gayane" and "Spartacus" ballets, as well as the "Swan Lake" and "Marduk-Jarduk" ballets were shown. Since Malaysia is an Islamic state, the concerts were governmental. The princess of Malaysia was present at our performance. I personally witnessed that there were many people present during four evenings, and our performances were very well received.

Years ago, when our artists presented "Spartacus" in another Islamic country, in Qatar, the ballerinas were forced to cover their legs and arms. Did the same thing happen in Malaysia?

Fortunately no, there is not much severity there.

Where do you teach now?

Last year, while in Yerevan, I suggested my services and cooperation in ballet education to the Ministry of Culture of Armenia, but finding no interest, I came back to Hong Kong. Recently I met Angela Ho and Peter Kjaer, big ballet lovers, who invited me to work in their newly opened Ho Ballet school as dance director. This is a beginning of a new project, so I hope my activity in upcoming years will be connected to this school.

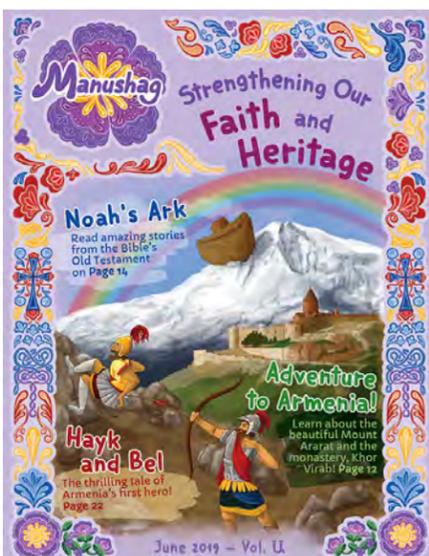
MIT Armenian Society Pays Tribute to Komitas, Tumanyan and Rusinian

CAMBRIDGE, Ma. – The MIT Armenian Society is organizing an evening to celebrate the 150th birth anniversaries of Komitas, one of the forefathers of Armenian classical music, and Hovhannes Tumanyan, a poet and leading political activist who coordinated relief efforts for victims of the Armenian Genocide, along with the 200th anniversary of Nahapet Rusinian, a writer whose work was instrumental in developing the Western branch of the Armenian language. Join MIT Armenian Society in honoring the memory of these great individuals with song and dance performances from Siranush Babakhanova, Mary Galstian and Izabell and Natalie Tenekedzhyan.

This year marks yet another anniversary: one year ago, peaceful protests in Armenia brought a new democratic government to power. Now the administration promises an economic miracle driven by reforms in science and education. At the panel discussion, two Armenian professors at MIT, Daron Acemoglu and Areg Danagoulian, will provide their perspectives on the topic "From Inclusive Politics to a Technologically Advanced Economy: Armenia's Way Forward."

The program will take place on May 16 at 6 p.m., at 31 Ames St. in Cambridge. A light dinner will be served to guests approximately 10 minutes before the start.

Manushag Armenian Children's Magazine Launched



HOUSTON, Texas – *Manushag Armenian Children's Magazine*, a new publication aimed at children, has been published, and the first issue is dated June 2019. This 32-page magazine will be released four times a year with alphabet lessons, history stories, Bible stories, recipes, coloring pages and more. Subjects addressed include helping children become even more excited about faith, culture and heritage. The first issue is available for free on the website (www.Manushag.org).

This magazine is created under a 501(c)3 non-profit, and there will be no advertising or political messaging. Just good, healthy material for our children to learn and grow. When you sign up, unselect "Ship to my billing address" so that you can put your child's name in the shipping address.

Time Out Market Adds six New Vendors to its Food Hall Lineup

BOSTON – It's been a busy few days of food hall news.

Time Out Market just released a second round of vendors that will open at its Fenway market, right on the heels of High Street Place, the food hall scheduled to open in downtown Boston this fall, revealing its first round in April.

Six new vendors were announced on Monday morning, including BISq, Mamaleh's Delicatessen, George Howell Coffee, Revolution Health Kitchen, Gelato & Chill, and chef Michael Schlow, who will open a second Italian-inspired vendor in addition to the Italian vendor he already has planned for the market.

Schlow's second concept will focus on Roman-style pizza, with pies that highlight simple ingredients – think Margherita pizza with imported San Marzano tomatoes, fresh mozzarella, and basil, and Pizza Bianca with whipped ricotta, parmigiano, mozzarella, and rosemary.

Cambridge deli Mamaleh's will bring its classic sandwiches to Time Out Market, along with its smoked fish options and phenomenal pastrami. At BISq, another Cambridge stalwart, chef Alex Saenz will offer expertly curated charcuterie and cheese boards, as well as sandwiches and terrines. Artisan roaster George Howell Coffee will offer a menu of batch-brewed single farm coffee, micro-lot coffee, seasonal coffee-based mocktails, and pastries and desserts from Seven Start Bakery and Praline.

Other new vendors announced include Gelato & Chill, which will offer small-batch gelato flavors like ricotta fig, creamy dark chocolate, and pistachio; and Revolution Health Kitchen, featuring salads, acai bowls, soups, and fresh juices.

Another new development includes details about Nancy and Tim Cushman's two Asian concepts that were announced in the first wave of vendors. At Ms. Cluck's Deluxe Chicken & Dumplings, diners will be able to order creative takes on chicken and dumplings, while Gogo Ya will focus on modern Japanese and sushi dishes like crispy nori sushi tacos and bento bowls.

In addition to the Cushmans, previously announced chefs and restaurants include chef Tony Maws (who will offer versions of his famous Craigie burger), chef Peter Ungár (Tasting Counter), Nina and Raffi Festekjian (Anoush'ella), and Union Square Donuts.



Nina and Raffi Festekjian of Anoush e'lla

ASA's Sixth Annual Journalism Internship Program Set for 2019

At its recent meeting the Board of Trustees of the Armenian Students' Association of America, Inc. (ASA Inc.) announced it is again sponsoring two internships in journalism in partnership with the *Armenian Weekly* and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.



Interns will work under the supervision of either the editorial staff of the *Armenian Weekly* or the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

"The ASA, Inc. Journalism Internships coupled with its Annual Scholarship Grant Program which awarded \$102,000 in grants in the previous couple of years continues its mission of providing financial assistance and professional level opportunities to qualified students of Armenian heritage. The ASA, Inc founded in 1910 is the oldest Armenian student organization in the United States," said Brian Assadourian, Chairman of the ASA Inc. Board of Trustees in making the announcement.

Participants in the six-week internship program will receive a weekly stipend of \$150. Interns will work under the supervision of either the editorial staff of the *Armenian Weekly* or the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

"The Internship provides a valuable opportunity for students of Armenian heritage to have hands-on experience as a member of the editorial staff of the respective publications" noted Dr. Michael G. Mensoian, a member of the ASA Inc. Board of Trustees who oversees the program.

The *Armenian Weekly* and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* are two of the leading English-language newspapers in the United States and Canada keeping our community informed of developments locally as well as in Armenia and the Diaspora through their print and online editions. The offices of both papers are located Watertown, Massachusetts.

Applications for the ASA Inc. Journalism Internship are now available and may be downloaded by accessing <http://www.asainc.org>. Applications must be submitted no later than Friday May 30, 2019. Candidates must have completed at least their sophomore year of college by May 2019. Currently enrolled graduate students are also eligible.

Since its establishment 106 years ago the Armenian Students' Association of America, Inc. has encouraged the educational pursuits of Armenians in the United States by providing financial assistance in the form of scholarship grants, professional opportunities through internships, and fellowship through social and professional activities.



ARTS & LIVING

Filmmaker Wants to Explore Differences to Create Universal Themes

FILMMAKER, from page 13

who does not filter everything through his background. Sure he is Indian, but he is also a New Yorker, an actor and a 30-something looking for love.

"Dev [Ansari's character] and his family are shown as Indian-American but are not a complete caricature," she said.

The cast of "Mouse" is diverse, though they play Armenians; all were found on Facebook.

"I put out a casting call on Facebook," she said, specifying male and female actors of various ages. After writing her post, she and her family got on a flight to Florida for a vacation.

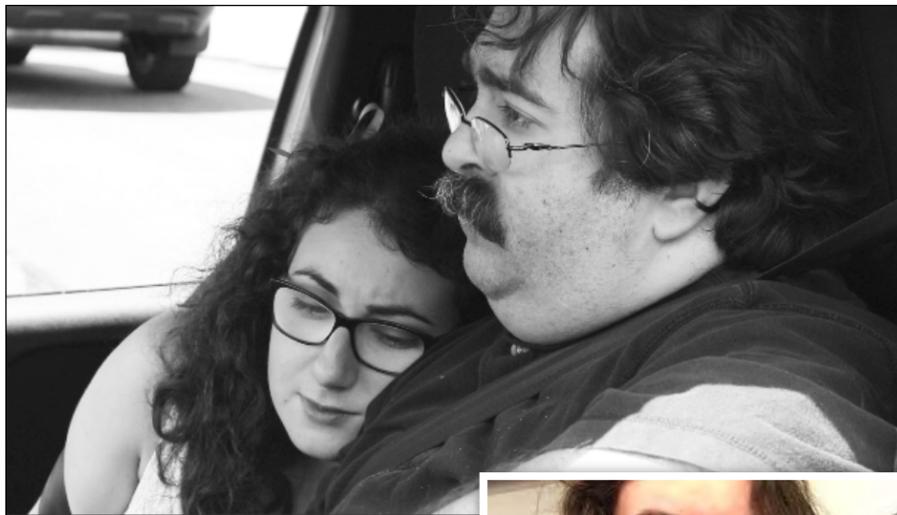
"I landed and opened Facebook to find 30 notifications," she said, with many actors sending videos. She praised her actors as "wonderful," who not only acted in the film, but in the case of a few of them, lent their houses to the production.

In a recent interview she said that her favorite part of the process is writing dialogue.

As for the "technical stuff" having to do with filmmaking, she said, "I learned it because I had to."

There is lots of dialogue between parents and children, as well as people within a community as well as outside it. Also addressed are learning disabilities, a theme to which Zeroonian is returning now.

"I primarily consider myself a writer," she said. Her most recent project which she hopes to complete for television, is based on a play she wrote in high school. The project is called "One Plus One Is Two." The original play, she explained, took place in the 1960s was about a woman who grew up with learning difficulties. Now, for the TV pilot, as an adult, she is campaigning for special needs students in public schools, in essence, "avenging the way she was treated as a kid."



Sharisse Zeroonian as Lili, with Alexander Hauck, who plays her father in "The Mouse in the Bread"

The TV adaptation is set in the present day, when the former child has a husband and grown daughter and is writing a story about her.

"The show is about being a real person and making real mistakes. Parents and children plan to do better, step back and readjust," she said.

Zeroonian characterized her script as a mix of comedy and drama.

One influence on this project is "A Woman under the Influence" by John Cassavetes, about a woman who is acting increasingly bizarre and her concerned husband tries to get her help at an asylum.

"He [Cassavetes] is tiring to see if the woman is mentally ill," she said. "This is the same idea." "I really enjoyed his work," she added.

Another influence is Greta Gerwig, an



Sharisse Zeroonian

actress, playwright and director who in 2017 received much acclaim and three Academy Award nominations for writing and directing "Lady Bird." The film is about the dynamics of

a family, specifically a mother and daughter.

As for dialogue on screen, she said she finds "The Sopranos" to be tops, as well as the film "Good Will Hunting."

The 24-year-old Belmont native has also written and directed other short films, including "Well Water" in 2017 and now she has her sights set on a TV series.

Zeroonian received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Boston University. She currently works at an after-school program.

She was briefly a linguistics major before realizing that it did not present a "viable career path."

"I am a lot happier because I am getting to be creative," she said.

To watch "The Mouse in the Bread," visit the link <https://www.amazon.com/Mouse-Bread-Sharisse-Zeroonian/dp/B07PGWHLRV>

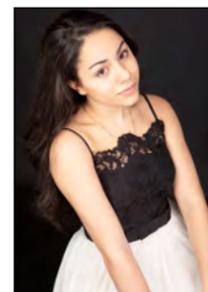
To make a donation to her fundraising platform for her proposed television project, visit <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/one-plus-one-is-two-pilot-episode?fbclid=IwAR1i33B7tQcps73Pmr0CPo8-iZBVcwqF955c9JPM9lm6k0SyouNLI5oolKs#/>

Armenian Night at Pops to Feature Debut Appearances By Cellist Navasardian, Conductor Bairos

BOSTON — The Friends of Armenian Culture Society (FACS) will present the 68th annual Armenian Night at the Pops on Friday, June 14 at 8 p.m.

The featured soloist will be the young and enormously talented cellist Laura Navasardian of New York. At age 15,

Navasardian will be the second youngest emerging artist to perform with the Boston Pops. She will join Jacomo Bairos, who will be having his own debut at Boston's storied Symphony Hall. Navasardian will perform



Laura Navasardian

Tchaikovsky's *Pezzo Capriccioso* for cello and orchestra, as well as *The Swan* from the *Carnival of Animals* by Camille Saint-Saens.

Navasardian won the first prize at Cremona International Music Competition in Italy in 2014. She was also the top prize winner at the 2016 New York Music Competition as well as the 2016 Grand Prize Virtuoso Competition in Salzburg, Austria. She has performed at Carnegie Weill Recital Hall as a guest performer and winner of American Fine Arts Festival. She performed on numerous occasions at the Weill Recital Hall and Merkin Concert Hall in New York; Auditorium Museo Del Violino with the Festival Orchestra in Cremona, and Saal Mozarteum in Salzburg.

As winner of the Kaufman Music Center Concerto Competition, Navasardian performed a concerto with Kaufman Music Center Orchestra at Merkin Hall in 2018, conducted by Nathan Hetherington and appeared with 92Y School of Music Orchestra under conductor Tomo Matsuo at the Y92 Centennial concert in New York.

The evening's program will also include "A Symphonic Journey" with the Boston Pops performing favorite orchestral works and anthems originating from European composers, put in context by Rick Steves, America's leading authority on European travel. The concert will conclude with Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* (Europe's official anthem), paying homage to continent's motto of "United in Diversity."

Tickets for this concert are available from www.FACSBoston.org.

Recipe Corner

Guest Recipe

by Christine Vartanian Dalian

Armenian Toorshi – Picked Vegetable Medley

Recipe, history and photo courtesy of <http://www.thegutsygourmet.net/toorshi.html>



This traditional recipe was handed down to the late Buzz Baxter by his Aunt, Dickie Paul, in Fresno, CA. This delicious medley of pickled vegetables is a popular condiment throughout the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

For this recipe: use cabbage, cauliflower, garlic, green beans, carrots, sun-chokes, onions, peppers, okra, broccoli, Armenian cucumbers or whatever you have.

INGREDIENTS

- 9 cups water
- 7 cups distilled white vinegar
- 1/2 cup pickling salt, (Kosher salt or other non-iodized salt)
- 1/2 to 1 1/2 tablespoons sugar depending on sweetness desired
- 2-3 whole cloves garlic
- 2-3 hot dried chiles
- Whole cloves, dill, tarragon, and or basil (optional)
- Cabbage (cored and quartered)
- Carrots (cut in 3 inch rounds or quartered and cut into 2-3 inch lengths)
- Cauliflower (cut into florets)
- Celery stalks (cut into 2-3 inch pieces)
- Small white onions (skinned and left whole)

PREPARATION

Prepare the vegetables in the desired amount of each and place in a large covered jar or crock and pour the liquid and spices over the vegetables. Stir occasionally for about three weeks when pickles are ready to eat. Serve chilled.

Serves 4-6.

Note: Fermented cabbage called for in some Armenian recipes, e.g., Bitliszee Tutoo, is prepared much in the same way as above.



ARMENIAN TOORSHI
Yummy pickled vegetable art
TheGutsyGourmet.net©



ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

ARIZONA

NOVEMBER 2-3 — ARMENIAFest at St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church. Weekend food and cultural festival featuring traditional Armenian foods, beverages, exhibits, music and dance performances. 8849 E. Cholla St., Scottsdale.

NOVEMBER 16 — SOAR (Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief) Annual Golf Tournament. Saturday 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Stonecreek Golf Club, 4435 E. Paradise Village Pkwy, Phoenix. This is a fundraising event for Armenian orphans. For more information, contact Dr. Alan Haroian, 603-540-1961.

CALIFORNIA

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, Kharper 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'Shaughnessy, 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.

MASSACHUSETTS

MAY 11 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church Presents "Battle of the Bands," 7 p.m., doors open; 7:45 p.m., music and dancing, Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. All are welcome to join us for a night filled with vibrant music, great food and dancing. Featuring the musical styles of Classic Groove (R & B, Soul, Motown, Jazz), Hye-Kef-G Band (Armenian) and Black Sea Salsa (Salsa, Latin American). Saturday. Donation: \$40 per person, includes dinner buffet from each genre of music. Cash bar available all night. Tickets can be purchased at the door or by calling the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632, by May 3. Tables of 8 can be reserved with payment in advance. For further information, log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/694/.

MAY 13 — Trinity Men's Union 10th Annual Tavloo Tournament and Dinner, Monday, 6:15 p.m., Social Hour and Dinner, Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Open to all. Donation for Losh Kebab and Kheyma dinner is \$15 per person. RSVP requested by May 10 to the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632, or email tmuhtaac@gmail.com. Tavloo Tournament to follow dinner; entry fee, \$5. All levels welcome. To sign up, please contact David Dorian atmuhtaac@gmail.com or call 617.501.4300. For further information, log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/692/.

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 Street. Free, reception to follow. Books will be on sale.

MAY 19 — Concert at the Armenian Museum. Concert to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Komitas Vardapet and poet Hovhannes 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.

MAY 30 — Annual Spring Dinner and Drawing sponsored by the Friends of Holy Trinity 1000 Club, 6:30pm, Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Open to all. You don't have to be a member of the 1000 Club to join us for a delicious losh kebab and pilaf dinner, \$9.99 per person; tickets on sale at the door. Regular monthly raffle drawing at 8 p.m., plus 5 \$25 door prizes. "One-time" numbers will be sold on the night of dinner; special offer: purchase five "one-time" numbers for \$20, save \$5. For further info, contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632, or log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/696/.

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 more Plus Activities for the Children, White Elephant Table, Gift Basket Raffles.

JUNE 3 — 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. Guest will be Michael Zildjian, author, podcaster, and speaker. Zildjian is a Watertown native and former AGBU student. His Zilosophy platform leads conversations which teach self-awareness and honest self-evaluation with the goal of helping people make informed choices that allow them to bring their best to whatever they do. He will lead a discussion based on what it means to be the best Armenians we can be for our community and our world. 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.

JUNE 6 — First Thursdays: Jazz at the Armenian Museum of America, Watertown, 6-7 pm: Gallery hours will be extended until 7 pm for guest to explore the Museum. 7 pm: Reception in the Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor. 7:30-9:30 pm: The Black Sea Salsa Band

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

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

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

JUNE 14 — The Friends of Armenian Culture Society presents the 68th annual Armenian Night at the Pops, featuring cellist Laura Navasardian as soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra. Symphony Hall, Boston. 8 pm. For tickets and information, visit <http://www.FACSBoston.org>.

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

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

JUNE 22 —Armenian Food Fair, 11 a.m. -7 p.m., St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church Ladies Guild.

Jaffarian Hall, 158 Main Street, No. Andover. Serving all day. Lamb Shish Kebab, Chicken & Losh Kebab, Kheyma, Vegetarian plates. Pastry, Boregs, Choreg, Khadaif, Paklava, Gift Table, Country Kitchen, White Elephant, 50/50 Raffles and much more.... Take out available. Call the Church @ 978-685-5038 Ann @978-521-2245 or Sossy @ 978-256-2538

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

JULY 5 — Armenian Church of Cape Cod presents Third Annual Kef Time - Dinner & Dancing Friday, 6 to 11:30 p.m. at The Cape Club, 125 Falmouth Woods Road, North Falmouth. Chicken Kebab & Losh Kebab dinner Leon Janikian band with special appearance by Harry Minassian and a DJ \$65/person, children 7 to 14 \$15 For tickets/tables contact Andrea Barber (617)201-9807

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

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

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

SEPTEMBER 16 — Registration is now open for the 2019-2020 sessions of the Abaka Dance Academy, 101 Bigelow Ave., Watertown, MA. Principal/director Apo Ashjian. Classes begin September 16 for grades Nursery II - Grade 10 students. Check the schedule and enroll today at www.abakadanceacademy.com. For more info, email abakadanceacademy@gmail.com or call 617-283-2010.

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

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

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

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

NEW JERSEY

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

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



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Arms Race and Rhetoric Escalate In Caucasus

By Edmond Y. Azadian

As US battleships are deployed closer to the Persian Gulf to escalate tensions with Iran, the Caucasus region has already become a powder keg because of regional rivalry as well as ancient scores yet unsettled.

The Trump administration is pursuing a dual goal in pressuring Iran, Israel's archenemy: to offer additional favors to his friend, Benjamin Netanyahu (in addition to the gift of Golan Heights) and second to punish Iran for its strategic partnership with Russia.

Within the context of that global development, the Caucasus is dominated by unrest, political ploys and a real potential for a conflagration.

Turkey is a major player in all these developments, both in the Caucasus as well as the greater region. It is a partner with Russia and Iran in the Syrian battlefield. It is, at the same time, an antagonist of Iran when it comes to the latter's friendship with Armenia and its tacit war with Azerbaijan.

As the noose is tightened around Russia by the US and Europe, the Kremlin has found temporary relief in its budding friendship with Turkey. Turkey, technically a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member, is undermining US plans to pressure Russia and Iran by buying arms from Russia as well as oil from Iran.

Where does Armenia stand in this ever-changing scenario? Armenia's major problem is with Azerbaijan and Turkey, both wooed by and placated by the West and Russia, and each motivated by their own selfish interests.

Negotiations with Azerbaijan have led nowhere, nor will they yield any tangible results in the foreseeable future.

Just as the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) countries were holding their regular meeting in Yerevan, in the presence of Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, Turkey and Azerbaijan planned war games on Armenia's borders, under the code name Mustafa Kemal, to remind all the neighboring nations of Turkey's pan-Turanian ambitions.

Political analysts believed that Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev was not in the mood to participate in that provocative action but he was prodded by Ankara to change his mind.

This demonstrates that the temporary lull in the Russian-Turkish rivalry is the result of expediency, a ploy to boost Turkey's stand against Washington for more concessions and to revive its sluggish economy rather than a result of any real philosophical change. Deep down, Turkey remains a staunch NATO ally subscribing to its philosophy, strategy and military goals.

The reasons behind Turkey's insistence on buying Russian S-400 defense missiles remain something of a mystery, in view of the fact that the purchase may result in the cancelling of its contract with the US for F-35 war planes, which would make the Turkish air force the strongest among all the countries in the Middle East, including Israel.

With the regime change in Armenia, relations with Russia were strained originally but recent moves by both parties indicate that they at least remain on a workable level.

Moscow's decision to replace the aging MIG fighters at the Erebuni airbase near Yerevan offered a welcome relief for military planners in Armenia. Russia will be supplying more advanced SU-30mm aircraft which will enhance Armenia's airpower against Azerbaijan.

According to military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer, Russia has been boosting Armenia's military capability, not necessarily against Azerbaijan, but as part of its global plan of containing NATO and in this case, its vanguard member Turkey, which may switch sides any time. The military expert believes that Russia has no intention of getting into a war with Azerbaijan, where it has so many valuable assets. Moscow presented proof of this reluctance in the 2016 April War when Azerbaijan attacked Armenia without provocation.

Felgenhauer added that he believes that with the addition of these new weapons, Armenia can wage a successful war against Azerbaijan, but those weapons must be used with caution, since Azerbaijan is equipped with Zenith missiles to which this model warplane is vulnerable.

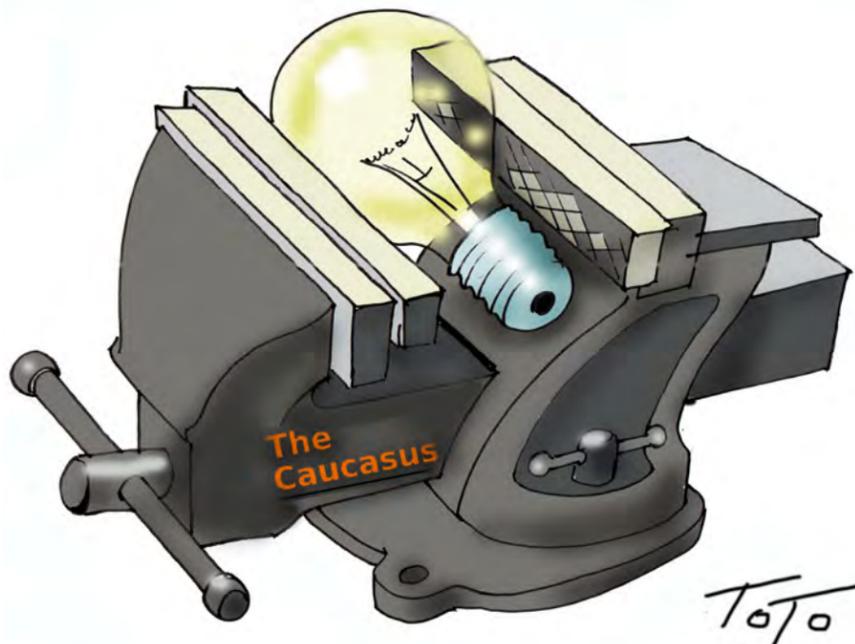
Other analysts believe that the Kremlin's decision to arm Armenia with that grade of military aircraft was not altogether altruistic; in fact, John Bolton's offer to the latter to buy arms from the US was one of the motivations behind the upgrade.

The verbal agreement reached between Azeri President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Dushanbe has significantly reduced the cases of ceasefire violations along the border, but it has not eliminated them completely.

"Ceasefire violations targeting the borders of Artsakh and Armenia will continue as long as there is no peace agreement to restrain Azerbaijan," said Maj. General Astvatsatur Petrosyan, the commander of the Eagle Bombers Squad, recently, calling for an active engagement by the neighboring countries.

"Unless there is an agreement signed by five to six nations," he added, including Turkey, Azerbaijan, Russia, Georgia and Iran, "the situation will be fraught with hazards."

It is mostly improbable that all those countries might come together for a common cause, and not particularly for Armenia; each has its own agenda and priorities, and



Armenia most certainly figures at the bottom of their lists. They have built alliances and have developed economic projects circumventing Armenia. Only a compelling political reason may gather them together.

Armenia's major trading partner is Russia. From all indications, it is obvious that relations with Russia have been fully restored after a shaky start. Russia frowns at Armenia's relations with NATO but tolerates them because it is clear they will lead nowhere, whereas in the case of Georgia, tensions continue. The earlier defiance of Russia by Tbilisi cost Georgia some territorial losses but the Georgians are still defiant. Just recently, the country's new president, Salome Zurbishvili, continuing the previous regime's foreign policy, has announced that there is no reason for NATO to refrain from building a military base in Georgia. That is exactly the policy to whip the Kremlin into a frenzy. Should there be a flare up between Russia and Georgia, Armenia will suffer a serious economic blow, since most of Armenia's trade passes through Georgia.

Armenia itself is engaged in an economic revolution after the Velvet Revolution. The US has pledged generous assistance. It remains up to the new government to make good on its promises and benefit fully from US support and develop its own economic infrastructure.

Azerbaijan is restless because the status quo is not in its favor. Nor is the passage of time helping it.

Unless a popular revolution, like the ones that hit Armenia and Georgia, takes care of Aliyev's authoritarian regime, Azerbaijan will continue its bellicose posture and threats.

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EDITOR
Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR
Marc Mgrditchian

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:
Edmond Y. Azadian

CONTRIBUTORS:

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

CORRESPONDENTS:

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

Contributing Photographers:
Jirair Hovsepian

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

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FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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COMMENTARY

Learning Armenian in the Fourth Generation

By Harry A. Kezelian

One of the most controversial issues in the Armenian community in America is the use of the Armenian language. This very newspaper was founded in 1932 to cater to the English-speaking generation of Armenians who were born in America, because they were unable to read the Armenian-language newspapers such as *Baikar*. Yet, in places like Lebanon and Syria, speaking, reading, and writing Armenian is a prerequisite for membership in the community – not to mention in Armenia, where it is the official language. Many Armenians who have immigrated to the US from Armenia or the Middle Eastern countries in the past 40 years seem to think that one who does not speak Armenian is no Armenian at all. We heard this claim not only from them, but also from their American-born children, who have been fortunate enough to learn Armenian from their parents.

When I was young, I heard some Armenian-speaking children my age refer to people like me as *soods* (fakes). This seemed to primarily revolve around our inability to speak Armenian. I did not know the Armenian language growing up, other than the bits and pieces that were used in our home. Words like *gatih*, *choor*, *misig*, *havgit*, *bachig*, *anoushig*, *hokis*, and phrases like *parev*, *inchbes es*, and *khent es inch es* were in my vocabulary, but that was about all, and I knew that some of this was baby-talk. I knew that my Armenian name was Haroutiun and this was stressed to me a great deal, as it was an inherited family name. We were raised as Armenians – myself and all of my first cousins – in the active Armenian community of Detroit. We were proud to be Armenian by descent, attended Sunday School and St. John's Armenian Church, and ate home-cooked Armenian food. We went to Armenian festivals, bazaars, dances, and weddings at which Armenian music was played. When we got to be the right age, we learned to dance Armenian line dances. We were taught our family history, what towns in Turkey we were from (Fenesse, Kharpert, and Sepastia), and how great-grandma survived 1915. Our parents were dues-paying Church members, Sunday School teachers, choir singers and generally active members of the Armenian community. But the only people in the family who spoke fluent Armenian were our grandparents and their generation. Our parents were born in America, and our grandparents were born in America. Our great-grandparents, most of whom were deceased, had been born in "the Old Country," before the Genocide. In other words, we were typical fourth-generation, Armenian-American children. The idea that we were "not Armenian" didn't cross our minds for a minute, until we encountered those who made this claim based on our language skills.

I, for one, ignored those who didn't consider me "really" Armenian. I didn't know why they were wrong, but I knew they were wrong. Later I learned the historical reasons. But this essay is about learning Armenian, and indeed I did learn Armenian. My reasons for learning it had little to do with the shaming that me and my friends sometimes received for not speaking Armenian, because although I was shy and lacking in social skills, I was nevertheless an adamant defender of my own pride and that of my family and friends. The reason I wanted to learn Armenian was simply because I knew it was our ancestral language, because my grandmother and some of my aunts spoke it and I wanted to be able to also, because we had old books written in the language, and just because I wanted to know as much as possible about our heritage. Undoubtedly, being a book lover also made a difference. And so, I began my journey.

There was a time at a very young age when I had some kind of bizarre assumption that since all the older people in my family spoke Armenian, I would one day speak Armenian too at their age. When I realized that this was not true, I asked my parents to teach me Armenian. They replied that they didn't really know the language. Then I asked my grandparents to teach me. They said they had no idea how to teach it, they just spoke it casually. And that is how I became possibly the only child in Armenian-American history to ask my parents to send me to Armenian school. In the one year that I took weekly Armenian classes (age 12-13), I learned the alphabet, and nothing else. I could read Armenian but didn't know what I was reading. The same thing happened to my best friend. The problem was that the teacher assumed all of our parents spoke Armenian, and that we could practice with them. I realized this problem quickly and told my mother I wanted to quit. But the goal of learning Armenian burned within me. During my high school years, I had an Armenian-English dictionary and tried to form words and sentences using it. I practiced the alphabet, scribbling my name in Armenian in the margins of my notebooks. Finally, I found a clever way to learn things from my grandmother and aunts. The three of them would speak Armenian to each other in restaurants very frequently. They would use it when they didn't want someone to know what they were saying. If a wild looking character entered the restaurant, one of them would say "*Asi ov e? Naye, marte khent e.*" This always seemed to happen at the same restaurant, which we frequented once a week. One day, I tried a new experiment. If they said a phrase I didn't know, I would ask them afterward what it meant. I would also try to get them to explain each word in the phrase.

It was around this time that I learned the history of why some

Armenians didn't speak Armenian and some did. And I'm not talking about those who were completely assimilated and forgot about being Armenian. I mean those who, like my parents and their friends, remained extremely active in the Armenian community. It happened this way. Those who had come to America early on, including many survivors, gave birth to a generation of children born in the US in the 1920s - my grandparents' generation. Having immigrant Armenian parents who didn't speak English very well, for the most part they grew up speaking only Armenian in the house. They didn't learn English until they went to kindergarten. Of course, in the 1930s there was no such thing as an Armenian day school or kindergarten in the States. Apparently, the culture shock that ensued when they first had to learn English was a bad experience for them. They were called "foreigners" and insulting names, and made to feel like lesser people by the dominant WASP society. When they grew up and had kids of their own in the 1950s, their hurt Armenian pride made them, like me, defiant to the outside world and they plunged themselves into Armenian community life. But they didn't want their children to feel like "foreigners" as they had, so the vast majority, active or not, chose not to speak Armenian to their children in the home. They wanted to prove they were genuine Americans, but at the same time, they were loyal to most of the other Armenian traditions, in particular, the church. In this way my parents and their generation grew up in a happy, loving Armenian-American environment although they spoke English as their native tongue. I should note that due to the immigration quotas in place from 1924-1965, growing up in the 1960s, there were few Armenians coming in from other countries, and therefore there were very few people my parents' age who did speak Armenian. Not knowing Armenian was considered normal. And so, when they raised me and my generation, they attempted to do it the same way their parents had raised them. The only problem was, in the meantime tons of Armenian refugees had poured in from the Middle East, and they were having kids too. Those kids were my age, and though they were lucky enough to learn Armenian from their parents, some of them also inherited the idea that those who hadn't were sood. As the group with American-born parents grew up alongside the group with foreign-born parents, the cultural clash was inevitable.

I further learned that the concept of Armenians who didn't speak Armenian didn't start in America. I found out that in Ottoman Turkey, there were whole towns, villages, and regions where the Armenians only spoke Turkish. Kayseri (Gesaria) was notorious for this, as was Yozghat. These were two backgrounds that were common among my fourth-generation peers in Detroit. Nobody in the old country had suggested that Armenians from Gesaria were not real Armenians because they didn't speak the language. They knew very well they were Armenian and they were devout members of the Armenian Church. They too, were murdered in the Genocide. But the most irritating piece of information was this: the majority of the Armenian population of Lebanon and Syria hailed from Cilicia, and most of the Armenian urban communities in Cilicia were Turkish-speaking, such as Adana, Aintab, and so on, and others spoke unintelligible dialects from places like Zeitoun and Kessab. They didn't speak this language in the Old Country, they learned it in Beirut. In truth, it is an amazing accomplishment of the Lebanese and Syrian Armenian communities that they were able to form a strong Armenian school system and teach Standard Western Armenian to this group of people who almost all spoke only Turkish or some rural dialect. They actually revived a language in the Diaspora, which defies all odds. But unfortunately, this seems to have been partially accomplished by shaming those who didn't speak Armenian, for example with the slogan "*Turkeren khosoghin, hayeren badaskhaneh.*" This not only led to conflict when the Lebanese Armenians later migrated to America, but it was historically inaccurate. How could a Lebanese Armenian claim that only the Armenian speakers were real Armenians, when their own grandparents spoke nothing but Turkish? Were their grandparents Turks, then? And on top of that, they were saying this to the Armenian-Americans, most of whose grandparents came from the provinces of Kharpert, Sepastia, and Dikranagerd, all solidly Armenian speaking areas, Kharpert dialect being one of the closest to "standard."

But knowing this, I still wanted to learn Armenian. Our folk music and our badarak, which I loved, were sung in that language. It didn't make you a "real" Armenian either way, but it held the key to a deeper understanding of our culture. We have books upon books written in Armenian, and they are not ever going to all be translated into English. In those books are the riches of our culture. And we can say the same about folk songs and even everyday conversation, the feel, the rhythm, the idiomatic phrases of the language. And what about visiting Armenia? What about speaking Armenian to visitors from overseas? What about passing on our heritage for goodness' sake!

And so, when I went to college at the University of Michigan, I took four semesters of Modern Western Armenian under one of the greatest living scholars of the language, a product himself of the Armenian schools of the Middle East, Prof. Kevork Bardakjian. I put more effort into it than any of my other classes. After all, it was undergrad, and people said it was the time to "take whatever classes you like." I frequently called my grandmother to get her take on some of the phrases, because I wanted generational transmission to be an important part of my

learning the language. By the end of the two years, I could read, write, and speak Armenian at something like an elementary school level.

I continued my education. I was fortunate to find my grandfather's Armenian Saturday School textbook, and I was even more fortunate that it was Roupen Zartarian's reader *Meghraked*. Unlike most Armenian children's textbooks, this used colorful yet simple language, was written by a major literary figure, and because it was written before the Genocide it had a historical value that made it very interesting to me. Since I was a history buff, and since my family hadn't really read Armenian since the 1920s, my identification with the Armenian language was tied in not with the Diaspora, but with pre-1915 Anatolia.

Zartarian was born in Kharpert (where two of my great-grandparents were born) and considered a member of the "provincial" school of Western Armenian literature. His numerous old-fashioned words, and his short folktales written in verse with some dialect and Turkish words and folk song-like rhymes enthralled me. And I was ecstatic when I found a reference to the Tamzara, written by someone who undoubtedly witnessed that old Western Armenian folk dance many times in its original form on its home soil.

My next challenge was to gain better fluency in conversation. At the same time, I had decided to train to become a subdeacon under the head deacon at St. John's, Onnig Boyajian. Deacon Onnig, upon seeing that I could read Armenian well, was delighted to take me on. Since I addressed him in Armenian almost from the beginning, he would speak to me during our lessons or during badarak almost exclusively in Armenian. His Armenian, spoken in a deliberate Bolsetsi accent, was easier to understand than that of many others. My conversational skills were improving so much that when I briefly attended Seminary, some of the other students, born in Jerusalem and able to speak fluent Armenian a mile a minute (which I could barely understand), commented to me that "*Inchkan makoor hayeren ge khosis*" (What clean Armenian you speak!)

The most recent stage in my Armenian-language learning has been to tackle real literature. The first book I chose to read was *Aykegoutk* (the Vintage) by Peniamin Noorigian. This is by no means a world-renowned book, but it is very, very good writing. I chose it because Noorigian was one of the few writers who had been born in the Old Country and grown up there long enough to really understand its lifestyle before the Genocide, but had also immigrated to America around the same time as my great-grandparents, and wrote his book in this country afterward. Unlike some other more political writers, Noorigian impressed me because he had founded the first and only independent Armenian literary journal in the United States, *Nor Kir*, which lasted a little over 15 years. He seemed to be a man who thought for himself and did not blindly follow the tenets of ideology. At the same time, he was steeped in tradition, being the favorite student of the father of provincial literature, Tlgadintsi, whose works he compiled and published in Boston in 1927. My great-grandfather was from the same village as Noorigian (Hussenig, Kharpert), and when I found out he had donated to the Tlgadintsi book, I was sold.

Reading Noorigian was difficult but enjoyable. I was fortunate that by this time, the well-known website Nayiri was up and running and I could find the meaning of an Armenian word in a matter of seconds, though I often had to use the dialect dictionary. Noorigian's book was basically a collection of unrelated short stories about his childhood in Hussenig. But the writing! How can I describe it? It was fresh like springtime. It was like dew sprinkled on countryside grass in the morning. It was full of difficult dialect words, but looking these up and learning their meaning was a pleasure for me. These words were always interesting: Noorigian does not deal in big formalistic words, but forgotten dialect and slang that is poetic and beautiful and reeks of the countryside and the small towns. And in his writing, I always heard the voice of a 12-year-old boy, as wise as a child can be, but not yet corrupted by adulthood. If Noorigian had any youthful love affairs or mischievous adventures, he left that out of the book. He spoke in the innocent but wise voice of a twelve-year-old, happy in his life in the Armenian countryside (though occasionally, his current self would make a side comment about the loss of that lifestyle), in the freshness of spring, his head wet with the morning dew. And I suppose when I heard that voice, I heard the voice of myself, when I was twelve, and I had eagerly, innocently asked how I could learn the language of my forefathers.

I am writing this to implore the youth of my generation, the 4th generation born in America, to learn Armenian. But do not let anyone tell you that you "have to learn it" to be Armenian. That is nonsense, even from the most conservative historical point of view. Do not learn it because you feel an obligation. Do not learn it because someone made fun of you for not knowing it. Do not learn it because you don't feel Armenian enough. Instead learn it because it is your birthright. Learn it because it is the key to unlocking the treasures of your heritage. Learn it because it is beautiful, as beautiful as a spring breeze or morning dew. Learn it because it is a secret language. Learn it so you can use it in real life. Learn it because it is the language of your great-grandparents. Learn it so, just maybe, you can one day teach your children. Learn it because you are Armenian enough.

(Harry Kezelian is a resident of Detroit.)



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

US Lists Azerbaijan and Turkey Among Most Egregious Violators of Religious Freedom

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) issued on April 29, 2019, its Annual Report listing the “world’s most egregious violators of religious freedom,” among which, not surprisingly, are Azerbaijan and Turkey. Both states are categorized as “Countries of Particular Concern.”

USCIRF, as an independent, bi-partisan commission, advises the President, Congress and the Secretary of State on international religious freedom issues. In its Annual Report, USCIRF describes threats to religious freedom around the world and recommends to the State Department countries for designation as “countries of particular concern” for engaging in or tolerating “systematic, ongoing, egregious violations.”

Contrary to Azerbaijan’s leaders’ repeated false claims of “tolerance” in their country and propaganda by various foreign Rabbis and Protestant leaders, the USCIRF Report asserted that the “government continued to control religious activities through the 2009 Law on Freedom of Religion and related amendments of the administrative and criminal codes, which require religious communities to register with the government and criminalize all unregistered religious activity. In a positive development, four non-Muslim religious communities received registration from the government. However, throughout the year, local police forces continued to harass, raid, detain, and fine religious communities that did not comply with registration requirements and various restrictions on the production, possession, and dissemination of religious literature, although one community did report a lessening in

police harassment. During the year, Protestants, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and some Muslim groups were targeted, with some members of the Muslim community being forced to endure an additional layer of scrutiny by authorities who suspect and seek to limit Iranian-government influence or subversive activity in the country.”

The Annual Report also stated that “Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) contended that approximately 68 prisoners of conscience – many of whom are members of the Muslim Unity Movement (MUM) – remained imprisoned in Azerbaijan on religious grounds. Throughout 2018, claims of “systemic and endemic” torture persisted, particularly against members of the MUM.”

Azerbaijan’s dictatorial regime controls the activities of religious groups by requiring them to register. USCIRF reported that those “denied registration or refuse to register on theological grounds are considered ‘illegal’ and may face police raids, detainment, arrests, or fines.” Several Christian groups active in Azerbaijan, such as Baptists and Jehovah’s Witnesses “continue to be unable to register.” In some cases, the government delays the process of registration for years due to “technical flaws” in their applications. “For example, Jehovah’s Witnesses have sought registration in the city of Ganja since 2010 and have yet to receive a response on their most recently submitted application from May 2016. Baptists in the village of Aliabad outside of Zaqatala have similarly sought registration since 1994 and been denied. They have reportedly been informed that they cannot even meet to celebrate Christmas together.”

The USCIRF reported: “In 2014, the European Court of Human Rights noted that the law gives officials ‘unlimited discretionary power’ to define and prosecute ‘illegal’ religious activity.”

Furthermore, “in 2018, Azerbaijan underwent its Universal Periodic Review at the United Nations. Several countries expressed concerns about religious freedom conditions in Azerbaijan – such as mandatory registration requirements; restrictions on nontraditional religious communities and the ability, generally, of religious groups to practice in private and in public; and individuals imprisoned and tortured for their beliefs. In addition, civil society organizations submitted similar information and recommendations about religious freedom concerns in Azerbaijan,” according to the USCIRF Report.

Surprisingly, even the possession of the Holy Qur’an could be illegal in Azerbaijan. “In February 2018, MUM [Muslim Unity Movement] leader and Shi’a Muslim theologian Taleh Bagirov (also known by the surname Bagirzade) received an additional five-month sentence for allegedly possessing micro-discs containing the text and audio recordings of the Qur’an,” as USCIRF reported.

Another major religious violation is the closure of places of worship. “In 2018, mosques that the government purportedly had closed for repairs remained shut down years after their closure and with no official timeline for the completion of the renovations or the mosques’ reopening. Critics of the closures believe it is part of a government effort to target Muslims who are considered ‘radical.’ The Ashur Mosque, also known as the Lezgi Mosque, located in the Old City of Baku, was closed in July 2016 despite protests from the local Muslim community, which expressed concern that the repairs were an excuse and part of an attempt by the government to disperse the community. At the end of the reporting period, the mosque remained closed. During the year, numerous other “nontraditional” home mosques throughout Baku and other regions, including one that was apparently connected to the Naqshbandi Sufi community, continued to face raids and closure.... In April 2018, the new building of the Haji Javad Mosque in the Yasamal District of Baku was completed. The original mosque had been destroyed amid protests in July 2017,” the USCIRF reported.

The Report also covered raids on homes and centers where religious services were being held without the group being registered by the government. The Report cites the harassment of the members of the East Pentecostal Church and Jehovah’s Witnesses. In addition, several members of Jehovah’s Witnesses were prosecuted for their objection to serve in the military, despite a provision in the Azerbaijan’s constitution that allows alternate service for conscientious objectors.

Finally, the Aliyev government has confiscated all religious materials that had not received approval prior to being produced or imported into Azerbaijan. “The sale and distribution of religious literature can only be carried out at preapproved stores or sites,” according to the USCIRF.

Next week, we will cover the violations of religious freedoms in Turkey.

Why First Intifada is Back on Middle East Art Scene

By Sam Brennan

“PALESTINIAN ART has always brought the struggle for freedom and the [Israeli] occupation to the people of the world,” Vera Tamari, a multidisciplinary artist, said to Al-Monitor. “A lot of the art that came out in the 1970s and 1980s reflected this through the symbolism of the time, but there has been a change of representation in Palestinian art. It has become more authentic in many ways.”

On April 30, the Beirut-based Dar El-Nimer for Arts and Culture, a Palestinian cultural organization, hosted four prominent figures and founders of the Palestinian contemporary art scene – Nabil Anani, Sliman Mansour, Tayseer Barakat and Tamari – to discuss the movement. Of particular focus was how their works had changed after the first intifada, the five-year-long uprising that began in 1987, two decades into the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Golan Heights and Gaza stemming from the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

“Our perception of art changed during the intifada,” Mansour told the audience. “When we started, we were very young, in our early 20s, and we wanted to set up a group for artists. The occupation forces were completely against this association,... but we were young and revolutionary and had lots of energy.”

Their energy was channeled into a string of galleries and artist associations. The outfits would periodically run into trouble with Israeli authorities, so names were often changed and locations moved to avoid suppression.

The art produced in those early years, although not lacking in passion, did not fully encapsulate the complex political situation and discontent of the people at the time.

Mansour said, “As an artist [before 1987], I thought we were documenting the past, but we had to move to another level because we were not in harmony with the people in the street.”

He further explained, “We were living in ... a cultural ghetto. We didn’t know what was going on in the rest of the Arab world or the world in general. We thought we created something great, but when we looked at other artists, we were just normal.”

Before the intifada, much of the work produced by Palestinian artists played on explicit symbols and involved traditional artistic styles. The symbols eventually became a language in and of themselves.

“Orange trees are a symbol of Palestine, or a part of Palestine that was occupied before 1967, while olive trees represent a part that was occupied after 1967,” Anani explained to Al-Monitor. “So, in a work where you find oranges, it means that the artist is talking about

the coast of Palestine, and where you find olive trees, the artist is talking about [areas farther inland].”

As the intifada helped open Palestine to the rest of the world and highlighted the Palestinians’ discontent, artists felt required to introduce more depth to their work and raise the level of creativity. “[Before the intifada], it was very hard to get art books,” Mansour explained to Al-Monitor.

At Dar El-Nimer Barakat had said, “The intifada led us to change. At the time we were conventional. We changed from symbolism to new visuals. We used local materials, we stopped working in simple symbols like the olive tree, keffiyeh and villages. We instead started to make art that went deeper.”

This development manifested itself in more abstract art, as seen in Tamari’s work with clay. Prior to the intifada, the Palestinian village was painted almost as a form of documentation, recording the architecture and natural environment. After 1987, however, Tamari incorporated clay from the land itself and even used broken traditional pottery to represent the history and reality of Palestine without relying on the usual symbols.

“At one point art was a documentation of reality using aesthetic means, but nowadays I think that new art is much more real.... It has additional layers of explanation and representation,” Tamari said, although the old symbols still sometimes creep into new abstract works.

In tandem with the discussion, Dar El-Nimer opened an exhibition featuring pieces by the artists, “Challenges of Identity,” which runs through May 11. Tamari is showcasing a new work consisting of six meter-long sheets of collaged fabric that combine images of women and an olive tree.

“I always use the theme of the olive tree,” Tamari told Al-Monitor. “[I also] previously used women in art, as a [matriarch], a person who is hard working and rooted in the land and is a symbol of authenticity, and I always admired the dexterity of Palestinian women.” She emphasized, “The woman is like the olive tree,” underscoring the durability of both with the passage of time. The combining of symbols and use of unconventional materials is emblematic of how contemporary art changed after the intifada.

Mansour noted that while events like the intifada revolutionized the work of Palestinian artists, current events – like the Great Return March launched in 2018 in Gaza, during which Israeli forces killed some 200 Palestinians – are unlikely to have a similar effect. The modern artists do not have a singular agenda anymore, Mansour said.

“The young generation now are open to many ideas, and they have seen lots of artwork,” Mansour said. “Young artists know about art history, and they are doing what they want to do. They already have this.”

Despite the growing sophistication of both artists and audiences, works made prior to the intifada remain salient for many, with political posters Mansour made in the 1970s and 1980s being reprinted and re-emerging online and in shops. Mansour is not particularly optimistic about this revival, telling Al-Monitor, “I think this is because nothing has changed on the ground. The occupation is still there.... Many people have developed bourgeois attitudes [and become comfortable], while others are very angry. So, nothing has changed from 40 years ago, and art is a part of that.”

The four artists believe that the shift they made in the late 1980s to produce more conceptual and novel art will be carried forward by others in the future.

“The new generation is very intelligent,” Bakarat told Al-Monitor. “They know new media, and they have been everywhere in the world, and they send our message to the outside world. They are competent, [fresh] and have a vision. This is perfect.”

(Sam Brennan is a Beirut-based freelance journalist who writes on culture, technology and politics. This commentary originally appeared in Al Monitor on May 3.)



Future Generations Carry Memories of the Past

MEMORIES, from page 1

The aptly-titled project is a seven-minute video Barba created that brought to life the concept of post-memory through video footage, photos and narration, weaving together three generations of voices: her grandfather Andranik Donpet Vartanian, who was born in Mush in 1900 and at the age of 15 became an Armenian Genocide survivor; his only child, Susan Vartanian Barba, born in Tehran in 1939 and later immigrated to the United States; and Susan's daughter, Christina Barba, born in New Jersey in 1979.

"A goal I had in creating the video was to make explicit the legacy that my mother carries as the child of a genocide survivor and implicit in the work is the legacy that I carry," said Barba, an attorney who works in the public sector. "My legacy as a granddaughter of a genocide survivor has been a deeply-rooted motivator throughout my adult life."

It was this impetus that enabled Barba to have a deep interest in conveying the oral histories of second-generation Armenian Genocide survivors, like her mother, and it was a subject she was sure of pursuing when enrolling at Columbia. As a participant of the Oral History program, Barba liked the idea of a "dialogic encounter about the past where the interviewee is given authority."

"I always knew that I wanted to do something with my mother's story, who worked with my grandfather in taking his testimony" said Barba. "It was kismet when I came across my grandfather's video footage and I was positive I wanted to include it in my exhibit."

While Barba's grandfather remained tight-lipped about his suffering in the Armenian Genocide, he slowly began to share his account with his family as he grew older. In 1983, he agreed to have some of his testimony filmed as part of a project spearheaded by J. Michael Hagopian, founder of the Armenian Film Foundation, that sought to preserve the visual and personal histories of the witnesses to the

Armenian Genocide. The testimonies of hundreds of survivors can now be found at the USC Shoah Foundation in Los Angeles.

The focal point of the video is footage of Barba's grandfather, Andranik, describing his

and I will only escape when I am six feet deep under the ground because I cannot forget as long as I am alive."

Although Christina was only 4 at the time of filming, when she watched the footage, she,

While selecting what clips to include in her multimedia project, she aimed to convey the duality of life – both the horror and beauty her grandfather had experienced and that her mother carries with her.

"I wanted to particularize my grandfather's life so as to portray him as more than a victim since his life was far more complicated and beautiful than that," said Barba.

In contrast to her mother's upbringing in a home where her genocide survivor father remained quiet on the topic, Barba remembers her grandfather speaking about his escape from the Armenian Genocide "freely."

"He had a way of speaking metaphorically, almost like a poet," she said. "Even when I was young, he was able to tell me about what he lived through without it being terrifying."

Barba's childhood experiences and the time she spent with her grandfather helped shape her Armenian identity, so much so that her friends who weren't Armenian learned about the history and culture when visiting her home.

In addition to learning about the significance of her Armenian heritage, her family also encouraged education and the value of living a life that positively contributed to society, a lesson she has carried with her throughout her professional career.

"When I was growing up, both my parents and grandparents constantly emphasized the importance of education and encouraged me and my sister to do something meaningful with our lives," said Barba. As a law student, she coordinated The Genocide Teaching Project, which educated high school students about genocide. After she graduated, she spent a chunk of her career as an Assistant District Attorney at the Bronx County District Attorney Office, where she prosecuted public corruption, a move she says was "strongly inspired by a desire to utilize the court system to ferret out the truth and to seek justice for victims of crime."

Although over a century has passed since the Armenian Genocide, Barba feels that exhibits such as hers make it "very apparent that the Armenian Genocide is still affecting us," noting that the impact of the genocide transcends into the present day.

"Its legacy continues today," said Barba. "Not only through the children and grandchildren of survivors, but how we carry on as a civilization, and how various works of art or academic works are seeking to transmit knowledge and memory to a wider audience, not just to commemorate and memorialize."

To view Barba's video, visit <http://oralhistory.columbia.edu/living-in-the-shadow-of-the-armenian-genocide?rq=living%20in%20the>



This photo was taken in 1945 before the family moved from Tehran, Iran to the US.

experiences in the Armenian Genocide in the presence of his daughter, Susan, as she hears her father recount his first-hand memories that are filled with sorrow and survival. One moment in particular causes Susan's eyes to well with tears, as her father remembers being forced by Turkish soldiers to play Russian Roulette, a tragic instance that resulted in the death of his childhood friend.

"That memory, like a nightmare, weighs on my mind night and day," Andranik says in the video, reflecting on that dreadful day 68 years ago. "It has become a nightmare on my soul

too, became a witness to her grandfather's story and the transmission of memory and inherited trauma.

"Oral historians are always interested in how memories are passed from one generation to another," said Amy Starecheski, PhD, Director of Columbia's Oral History MA Program. "By documenting that process with one family's story of the Armenian Genocide, Christina shows us, in beautiful detail and in real time, how an experience becomes a story, and a story is continually brought to life as it is retold."

Barba's project traced the theoretical concept of post-memory that was coined by Marianne Hirsch, the William Peterfield Trent Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, back in 1992. Originally used to describe the relationship between the children of Holocaust survivors and the memories of their parents, it now refers to relationships of later generations who know about the trauma only through stories, images and behaviors.

Through her exhibit, Barba highlights how the following generations were affected by the Armenian Genocide and their reaction towards it, particularly in terms of the emotions felt in response to Turkey's denial of the massacres.

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