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NEWS IN BRIEF

Wikileaks Releases Turkish Cable on Armenian Genocide

BEIRUT (Tert.am) – Wikileaks has released a cable from the US Consulate in Istanbul dated July 12, 2004, containing Turkish and foreign historians comments on the Turkish government's policy of denying the Armenian Genocide, the Lebanon-based *Al Joumhouria* newspaper reports.

According to the cable, the admission of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey is a major obstacle to Armenian-Turkish reconciliation.

Armenian and other researchers have reasonable doubts over the preservation of archives. Prof. Halil Berktaý reported at least two attempts to clear the archives of the documents on crimes against Armenians.

In 1991, several high-ranking Turkish military officials reported an attempted stealing of a number of documents from 1918.

Berktaý believes that the second attempt was made when Turgut Ozal, then president of Turkey, announced his intention to open the archives.

Some historians believe that the archive is being constantly cleared of documents on the Armenian Issue, the cable says.

Condolences Sent to Norway Leaders

YEREVAN (news.am) – President of Armenia Serge Sargisian offered his condolences to King Harald V of Norway and Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg on the tragic assassination of more than 90 persons in Oslo and Utoya Island.

Sargisian said that in this difficult hour the Armenian people stand by the people of Norway and share their pain.

Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian released a statement, saying in part, "We express our condolences and support to the families of the victims, the friendly people and government of Norway."

Armenia and Spain Sign Air Travel Agreement

MADRID (Armenpress) – Agreements were signed this week at the Economic Development Ministry of Spain regarding air travel between that nation and Armenia.

The agreement signed between the countries gives an opportunity to establish regular flights between the capitals of the two countries.

On August 4, the first Yerevan-Madrid flight will take place.

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Armenia Wins World Chess Team Championship in China

By Hovannes Shoghikian

NINGBO, China (RFE/RL) – Armenia won the 2011 World Chess Team Championship in China on Tuesday, July 26, solidifying its internationally-recognized status as a chess powerhouse.

The championship, held in the Chinese city of Ningbo, was contested by the national teams of the world's 10 leading chess nations, including Russia, Ukraine, India and Azerbaijan.

The Armenian team led by Levon Aronian, the world's third-highest-ranked chess player, dominated throughout the 12-day tournament, winning five games and drawing the four others. It sealed the title with a draw against Ukraine in the final round of the competition.

The team mostly consisted of players who won two consecutive world Chess Olympiads in 2006 and 2008. Those victories earned them domestic stardom comparable to the popularity of the world's leading athletes.



Armenia vs. Ukraine

Chess has been one of Armenia's most popular sports ever since Tigran Petrosian, a Tbilisi-born Armenian, became a world champion in 1963. The

country currently boasts one of the largest per-capita numbers of chess grandmasters in the world.

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US House Panel Tells Turkey to Safeguard Christian Heritage

WASHINGTON (RFE/RL) – In an amendment to a spending bill welcomed by Armenian-American lobby groups but opposed by Ankara, the House Foreign Affairs Committee said the Turkish authorities should "end all forms of religious discrimination" of the country's Christian minorities.

The legislation says that they should "return to their rightful owners all Christian churches and other places of worship, monasteries, schools, hospitals, monuments, relics, holy sites and other religious properties." It says the Armenian, Greek and Syriac minorities must be able to "pre-

serve, reconstruct and repair" those properties "without hindrance or restriction."

"Religious minorities are under grave threat in today's Turkey," the AFP news agency quoted Rep. Ed Royce, a Republican from California, as saying during a committee debate.

The Turkish government was quick to criticize the measure. "Turkey opposes the language in the measure because it presents a biased, one-sided perspective and wholly disregards the constructive steps Turkey has taken to safeguard and expand religious freedom and tolerance and to

see SAFEGUARDS, page 16

Dink Murderer Sentenced to 23 Years

ISTANBUL (BBC) – The Turkish killer of the ethnic-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink has been sentenced to nearly 23 years in prison.

Samast, a Turkish ultra-nationalist, was 17 when he carried out the killing in January 2007.

A panel of judges sentenced him to life imprisonment, but commuted the term because he was a minor at the time.



Hrant Dink

Dink was the editor of the bilingual newspaper *Agos*, and had been prosecuted and convicted of denigrating "Turkishness."

His offence was describing the mass killing of Armenians by Ottoman forces in the early 20th century as a genocide.

He was shot dead by Samast outside his office in Istanbul.

Several other people are also being tried for conspiracy over Dink's killing.

Dink's lawyer, Fethiye Cetin, said the sentence sent a strong signal.

"Ogun Samast and other suspects were not expecting this sentence. This could ruin their hope of being freed soon," he told Reuters. "This is very important to deter this sort of crime."

The European Court of Human Rights ruled last year that Turkey had failed to protect Dink, despite being warned that ultra-nationalists were plotting to kill him.

In June, a Turkish court gave two military officers and four other officials jail sentences for failing to act on the intelligence.

TCA Board Meets with California Chapters

LOS ANGELES – Tekeyan Cultural Association Inc. Central Board of Directors held numerous meetings with local chapters' executive committees and trustees of the TCA Arshag Dickranian School.

On Sunday, June 26, at the Tekeyan Cultural Association's Beshgetourian Cultural Center in Altadena, board members met with executive committee mem-

bers of Tekeyan Cultural Association Los Angeles and Pasadena/Glendale chapters, as well as members of Beshgetourian Caretaking Committee.

Kevork Keushkerian, chairman of the Caretaking Committee, welcomed the members and invited Dr. Haroutune Arzoumanian, president of the Central Board, to open the meeting. Arzoumanian made a brief analysis of all the activities of the association for the last year, congratulated the California chapters and the Beshgetourian Caretaking Committee members for a job well done, especially the renovation of the center, and encouraged them to maintain the level of their activities, despite the unprecedented litigation against the TCA.

see TCA, page 16



Participants of TCA California Chapter executive members and TCA Central Board of Directors



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenian MP Accuses Turkish Foreign Minister Of Cynicism

YEREVAN – Nations, not states have diasporas, Secretary of the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) Eduard Sharmazanov stated, commenting on Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's "impressive" remark that "Armenians are Turkey's diaspora."

"What cynicism one must have to make claims to the diaspora, which formed as a result of genocide and forced displacement," Sharmazanov stressed.

Chess to Be Taught at Schools in Armenia

YEREVAN (Aysor.am) – The government has made amendments to its previous decision to provide chess lessons in comprehensive schools for the upcoming school year.

Pupils in second, third and fourth grade will have chess classes twice a week, the government's press office reported.

Byurakan Observatory to Host Seminar on Shirakatsi

YEREVAN (PanArmenian.Net) – By a decision of the Armenian government and UNESCO, 2012 will be declared the year to honor Armenian mathematician, astronomer and geographer, Anania Shirakatsi, on the 1,400th anniversary of his birth.

The main event of the year will be a scientific conference to be held at Byurakan observatory, which will focus of Shirakatsi's works in astronomy as well as the country's monuments dedicated to that field.

As preparation for the event, Byurakan observatory hosted a seminar July 12-13, upon the initiative of Prof. Hrach Martirosyan, of Leiden University.

Sargisian Responds to Russia's Medvedev on Karabagh

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – President Serge Sargisian has officially responded to his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev's proposals on how to end the current impasse in the Nagorno-Karabagh peace process, his office said on Friday.

Officials at the presidential press office refused to disclose the content of the reply. It was also unclear whether Sargisian communicated it in writing, as Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev did on Monday.

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov handed a corresponding letter from Aliyev to his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov during their meeting in Moscow. Neither minister elaborated on the letter at a joint news conference held after the talks.

Medvedev made those unpublicized proposals after failing to broker an Armenian-Azerbaijani framework agreement at the last Aliyev-Sargisian meeting, which was hosted by him in the Russian city of Kazan late last month.

The move was part of broader international efforts to salvage the peace process. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton phoned the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents before the US, Russian and French diplomats co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group visited Baku and Yerevan earlier this week.

The diplomats were cautious in assessing current prospects for an Armenian-Azerbaijani agreement based on the basic principles of a Karabagh settlement proposed by them.

"I think we have to be very careful not to jump to any conclusions or assess too quickly the results of all that diplomacy," Robert Bradtke, the Minsk Group's US co-chair, said in Yerevan on Monday. "We'll see over the coming weeks the results of the efforts that have been made."

US, Armenian Militaries Plan First-Ever Joint Drills

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The United States and Armenia have tentatively agreed to hold first-ever joint military exercises that will highlight their growing security ties, the Armenian Defense Ministry announced on Friday.

Ministry spokesman Davit Karapetian said that the drills will likely take place next year or in 2013 and involve US and Armenian troops engaged in multinational "peacekeeping" operations. He said an agreement to that effect was finalized during US-Armenian "defense consultations" held in Washington this week.

US Assistant Secretary of Defense Alexander Vershbow and his deputy, Celeste Wallander, held the two-day talks with an Armenian delegation headed by First Deputy Defense Davit Tonoyan.

Tonoyan also met separately with US Undersecretary of Defense Michele Flournoy and Eric Rubin, the new deputy assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia. The Pentagon issued no statements on the talks.

The Defense Ministry in Yerevan said they took place "in a warm and constructive atmosphere." "The parties expressed readiness to expand the spheres of cooperation," read a ministry statement.

According to the statement, Tonoyan discussed with the Pentagon officials "joint exercises and trainings with the aim of participating in peacekeeping operations."

Karapetian clarified that they

reached a "preliminary agreement to hold joint exercises of peacekeeping forces of the two countries in Armenia in 2012-2013." The drills will help to improve the interoperability of those forces, he said.

"This is very important considering the peacekeeping operations carried out by US and Armenian troops in Afghanistan," added the ministry spokesman.

Armenia last month almost tripled its participation in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for Afghanistan and currently has about 130 troops on the ground. Wallander praised the additional Armenian troop deployment there when she visited Yerevan later in June.

Tonoyan also discussed the training of Armenian military personnel in the United States.

The review is part of ongoing defense reforms, which are envisaged by Armenia's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO launched in 2005. They are supposed to bring the Armenian military into greater conformity with US and NATO standards.

US and Armenian troops have until

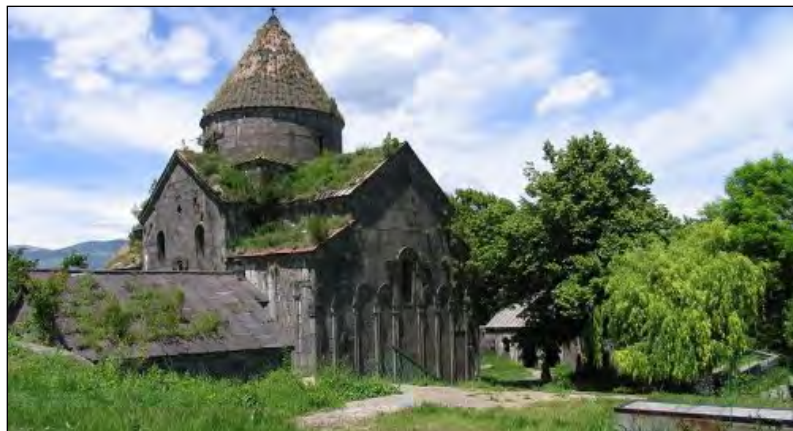
now trained together only in multinational exercises organized by NATO. Armenia has hosted two such exercises in recent years.



Defense Minister Seyran Ohanian (center) and his first deputy Davit Tonoyan (right) inspect Armenian troops in Afghanistan, July 24.

Those drills as well as the Armenian participation in the US-led missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo have underscored Armenia's desire to complement its military alliance with Russia with closer defense links with the West. Yerevan and Moscow bolstered that alliance last year with an agreement that extended Russian military presence in the South Caucasus country by 24 years, until 2044.

Wallander insisted that Russian-Armenian military ties are not an obstacle to growing military cooperation between the US and Armenia.



Sanahin Monastery

Sources Try to Clarify Catholicos' Comments on Sanahin Monastery

By Sona Avagyan

YEREVAN (Hetq) – It seems that the recent furor regarding the Sanahin Monastery just won't go away.

At a press conference this week in Yerevan, Samvel Karapetian, president of the Armenian Architectural Institute, stuck to his guns and reiterated that Catholicos Karekin II made the following statement regarding Sanahin: "I have nothing to do with monasteries up in the mountains."

Karapetian claims that Catholicos Karekin II made the statement during a 2006 meeting that he and institute founder Armen Hakhnazarian had with the Armenian Church leader. Hakhnazarian has since passed away.

Karapetian says that during the meeting, the catholicos mentioned the fact that 84 new churches and other "objects" were being built and that it was a bountiful year for construction.

Hakhnazarian is then to have said that while such construction is understandable, especially in communities built in the Soviet period with no churches, he called on the catholicos to pay attention to the plight of certain

medieval monuments.

Hakhnazarian then singled out Sanahin, saying, "There's a forest growing on the roof."

Karapetian claims that Karekin II tensed up and responded, "I have nothing to do with monasteries up in the mountains."

According to Karapetian, Karekin II added that, "I will not allow one stone to tumble from Khor Virap, Holy Echmiadzin or Geghardavank." The catholicos then repeated, "I have nothing to do with monasteries up in the mountains."

Also at the press conference was Fr. Vahram Melikyan, information coordinator for the Holy See.

The clergyman refuted that Karekin II ever uttered such words.

Melikyan noted that the catholicos would have never used the term "object" to describe a religious site and the fact that Karapetian definitely recalls the church leader using it casts doubts on the entire 2006 conversation.

Melikyan stressed that Catholicos Karekin II was merely talking about the priorities of the church regarding preservation at the time but that he never implied abandoning or neglecting some churches.

Germany Provided 200 Million Euro Within Framework of Financial Cooperation

YEREVAN (Arka) – During the whole period of cooperation, the government of Germany provided Armenia 200 million euro, said representative of German Bank Kreditanstalt fur Wiederaufbau (KfW) Uve Ults. Negotiations are conducted regarding the increase of financing. This issue will be discussed in detail in the meeting of Armenian-German inter-governmental commission, which will take place this autumn in Yerevan.

Armenian Minister of Finance Vache Gabrielyan said that as of June 30, total external state debt of Armenia was \$3.344 billion, of which \$96.2 million was provided by KfW to the government of Armenia and \$49.8 million to the Central Bank of Armenia.

"Only last year KfW provided credit to Armenia in the amount of 51 million euro for the equipment of Vorotan cascade hydro-power station. The second program of renewable energy includes credit amounted to 8 million and a grant for 1.5 million euro. Another 30 million euro was allocated by community development programs and 20 million euro – by mortgage development programs," said Gabrielyan.

Currently, the regional grant program in the sphere of ecology allocated 2.2 million which is implemented by the bank and will probably finish in 2011.

He also emphasized the importance of the agreement signed between Armenia and Germany on the provision of a grant amounted 4 million euro for the establishment of biospheric reserve Shikahogh.

"The new program does not increase our debt and we are obliged to use the money efficiently," said Gabrielyan.

KfW has been supporting Armenia in the implementation of programs of financial cooperation since 1993. Its offices have been in operation since October 1998, in Armenia.



ARMENIA

Armenian Assembly Conducts its 12th Summer Internship Program in Armenia

YEREVAN – The Armenian Assembly's 2011 Summer Internship Program (SIP) in Armenia is currently in its 12th year. Since the program's inception in 1999, 74 interns have participated, working in various government offices, media outlets, non-governmental organizations and think-tanks.

This year's intern class includes Anzhela Babayan and Ishkhanuhi Matevosyan from California, as well as Julia Madden and Tatevik Babayan from Massachusetts. Anzhela Babayan and Tatevik Babayan are interning at the Regional Studies Center (RSC), a Yerevan think-tank managed by political scientist Richard Giragosian. The RSC is a leading think-tank based in Armenia, which conducts research and analysis and develops policy initiatives aimed at bolstering political and economic reform and conflict resolution in the broader South Caucasus region.

While Ishkhanuhi is splitting her time between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Economics, Madden is interning in the National Competitiveness Council of Armenia. The National Competitiveness Council was launched in 2007 by the government of Armenia, as a public-



AAA interns at Geghard Monastery

AAA interns at the Temple of Garni

private partnership with a national mandate aimed at promoting Armenia's sustainable economic development and enhancing global competitiveness of the country.

Over the course of their two-month stay, interns will have the opportunity to visit places of interest throughout Armenia

and Nagorno Karabagh, meet with various government officials and important figures to discuss issues of concern, and also experience life in Armenia.

Interns have upcoming meetings with Catholicos of All Armenians, the Armenian Minister of Defense, US Charge d'Affaires, Armenia's ombudsman and the mayor of Yerevan, among others.

As part of their homeland experience, the interns also visited historical and cultural sites, including the Temple of Garni and the Geghard Monastery, as well as observing the Ani

ruins from the Armenian-Turkish border.

"The Assembly summer internship program in Armenia provides Armenian-American youth an exceptional opportunity to interact both professionally and socially with counterparts in Armenia. They gain a better understanding of what they can do to strengthen their Armenian communities. Many interns return to Armenia with their friends or parents. Some have even come back to establish their own charities and assistance programs benefitting the people of Armenia," said Yerevan SIP Coordinator Vram Karakeshishyants.

Experts Call on Turkey to Look at Armenian Diaspora with New Eyes

By Emine Kart

YEREVAN and ANKARA (*Zaman*) – Regional Studies Center Founder Richard Giragosian and Civilitas Foundation Director Salpi Ghazarian say Turkey should change its approach towards the Armenian Diaspora.

The two have argued that Turkey's approach towards the Armenian Diaspora is not healthy nor helpful, especially when the issue is restoring bilateral relations between Ankara and Yerevan.

"Turkey doesn't actually understand the diaspora, seeing it as the enemy and that is based on ignorance," said Giragosian, the founder of the Yerevan-based Regional Studies Center (RSC), an independent, non-profit think tank, while Ghazarian said that the diaspora is misunderstood by "official Turkey," since there is not just one diaspora.

Giragosian and Ghazarian's remarks came separately while they were speaking with a group of Turkish journalists who visited Armenia from June 27 to July 3. The seven journalists paid a visit under an initiative by the Hrant Dink Foundation. This was the third "Armenia-Turkey Journalist Dialogue Project," which is organized annually by the foundation with the support of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

"Whether it is in the States or from South America, Europe or the Middle East, our dialogue is fine and great, we have great connections, we understand the diaspora," Ghazarian, said when asked about dialogue between the foundation and the diaspora.

Civilitas was founded by Vartan Oskanian, a former foreign minister of Armenia, in October 2008.

"Not only is it not a problem for us, it is not even a question for us. I explain Civilitas as the opportunity to connect Armenians to Armenians. That includes Armenians in Armenia to Armenians in the diaspora as well. The media in Armenia is not what it ought to be, the government is not as responsive as it needs to be, and so this is an opportunity to improve those processes as well. I don't make a distinction between what we need to do with the diaspora and what we need to do with Armenia. We simply need to be a source of information, of activity and an opportunity to get involved in order for this society to grow in a healthy way and to open dialogue within itself and with its neighbors. For that, I need Armenia and I need the diaspora. I don't make a distinction," Ghazarian went on to say as she hosted the journalists at the Civilitas' office. "Now, you haven't asked, but let me answer. I think that the diaspora is misunderstood, there are several diasporas. There is the new diaspora, the diaspora that left after independence, and it is a diaspora that continues to maintain very real immediate links to Armenia individually. There is a traditional, old diaspora that is both the institutions and a whole lot of individuals. Before independence, that diaspora was known just by its institutions because there was no other way to interact with them. With independence, that diaspora is not the diaspora of the institutions alone. If you look at Armenia now, those who are investing, those who are coming and visiting, are not the institutions. Surely, institutions come, but indeed, it is by and large individual Armenians from the diaspora who need to reconnect," Ghazarian elaborated.

Giragosian hosted the visiting group at the RSC along with young Armenian-Americans,

who attended the meeting between Giragosian and the journalists.

"Turkey doesn't actually understand the diaspora, seeing it as the enemy, and that is based on ignorance. ... What the Turkish government does not understand is that the Armenian government does not control the diaspora. On the contrary, it is very hard for the Armenian government to control or direct the Armenian Diaspora," Giragosian said. "The Turkish government is mistaken in seeing the Armenian Diaspora as the unified anti-Turkish enemy driven by an anti-Turkish agenda. This is simply not true," he added, noting that there is "a second mistake" being made by Turkey.

"Turkey has unofficial ambassadors, bridges to Armenia, the Armenians of Istanbul. They don't use them properly and they don't use them enough. And, within the broader framework of the ignorance about the diaspora, there is also ignorance about the Armenian community within Turkey, ignorance about Armenia in general. Because closing borders and refusing to have diplomatic relations also means that Turkey has not known Armenia since 1990. There is no understanding of the current reality in Armenia," Giragosian argued in remarks, elaborating on what he sees as Turkey's second mistake.

Ghazarian shared her personal story with the group.

"My grandfather was a merchant from Gürün [a town in the Central Anatolian province of Sivas]. He was traveling and when he returned, his wife and grown sons had been killed. On the way to Aleppo, he went to a village where there was a young Armenian woman living with a family. He bought her, paid money for her. My grandmother was not

asked if she wanted to stay or leave; she was bought and taken. He married her and they had a child, my mother. Later my grandmother ran away from him. You know there is this 13- or 14-year-old young woman and a 50-year-old man, so she ran away. Mother never forgave my grandmother for that. My mother and grandmother were raised in an orphanage in Aleppo, and I took my daughter to Aleppo this time last year. We went to the orphanage where my mother and grandmother were raised after we had visited Istanbul a few times. And when we visited Istanbul, my daughter loved it," Ghazarian explained.

"So, her feelings about Istanbul were always positive until Prime Minister [Recep Tayyip] Erdogan said 'We gave them pocket money on their deportation.' After he said that, my daughter asked, 'Really, where was grandma's pocket money?'" Ghazarian continued.

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INTERNATIONAL

International News

Israel's Deputy FM Reaches out to Armenian Counterpart

TEL AVIV (Tert.am) – Israel's deputy foreign minister had a phone conversation with his Armenian counterpart on Monday, July 25.

According to a press release by the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Danny Ayalon and Arman Kirakossian spoke of the friendly relations, historical ties and cultural similarities between the two nations. Ayalon said his country attaches great importance to the continuous development of diplomatic relations and practical collaboration with Armenia. He further said it would be his pleasure to visit Yerevan and invited Kirakossian to visit Israel.

The Israeli official also reiterated his country's sensitive stance on what he called "the Armenian tragedy."

He also expressed support of the OSCE Minsk Group's efforts to reach a negotiated settlement of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

Azerbaijan Seeking Increased Role in International Arena

BAKU (ArmeniaNow) – Against the backdrop of active efforts directed at the Karabagh issue settlement in the nearest future, Azerbaijan has switched to a more active policy in an attempt to strengthen its hand, by trying to become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in 2012-2013. The elections will be held in autumn.

As Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov stated recently, Azerbaijan counts on Russia's support. He also pointed out that he had discussed the issue with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov and that Moscow's support is of great importance to Azerbaijan.

The UN Security Council has five permanent members: Russia, the US, China, France, Great Britain and 10 non-permanent members, elected for a two-year term.

The UN recognizes Azerbaijan's territorial integrity within its Soviet borders. That's the reason Baku is now trying to establish closer connections with that structure.

There are currently three countries from the Eastern-European group competing for UN SC non-permanent membership. Besides Azerbaijan, the other two are Hungary and Slovenia.

Yerevan Mayor to Visit Beijing

BEIJING (Tert.am) – Yerevan Mayor Karen Karapetyan is leaving for Beijing, China upon the invitation of the mayor of Beijing, Guo Jinlong.

According to a press release from the Yerevan Municipality, the visit aims to promote bilateral ties between the Armenian and Chinese capital cities.

Karapetyan will meet with his Chinese counterpart and other officials to discuss issues of bilateral collaboration.

The visit agenda also envisages discussions on exchanging experience in different spheres of urban economy. The meetings will address such issues as urban planning, transportation management, greenery planting and external lighting.

Turkey-EU Relations May Be Frozen

ISTANBUL (AFP) – Ankara will freeze its relations with the European Union (EU) when the Republic of Cyprus assumes presidency of the organization, if the Cyprus problem continuing many years is not settled by that time, said Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"We consider it a disgrace to sit down at the negotiating table with them [Greek Cypriots] at the United Nations. We will not negotiate with a country which we do not recognize," Erdogan declared, ahead of a visit to the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to mark the anniversary of the Turkish military intervention on July 20, 1974.

Bloomberg Photojournalist Deported from Baku Because of Armenian Background

BAKU (PanArmenian.Net) – On the evening of June 28, Bloomberg news agency photojournalist Diana Markosyan was deported to Istanbul from Baku, contact.az reported, citing Turan.

"I'm very surprised over the incident. For three weeks, we've been negotiating with Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry requesting to allow me entrance to Baku. A person in charge asked for 10 days to settle the formalities. He further requested a number of documents including an official letter from Bloomberg, which was provided. Upon receiving a verbal confirmation allowing my arrival, I traveled to Baku airport, where I was refused entrance because of my Armenian origin, although I've never been to Armenia. The Foreign Ministry representative said he's unable to help me. I would understand it, but why promise something you can't deliver?" the photojournalist said in a phone conversation with Turan.

According to RFE/RL Azeri service, on June 28, Markosyan was detained at Baku airport.

Emin Huseynov, director of Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, who has been in contact with Markosyan, stated that she came to Baku in the early hours of June 28, but was not permitted to go out of the airport. "Markosyan is dual citizen of US and Russia. She came to Baku with her Russian passport. Her documents are all in order."

Elkhan Polukhov, head of the press office for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that Markosyan did not have accreditation. "She sent her documents, presented herself. Bloomberg directors as well as Diana herself were told that her visit here would not be possible, the accreditation cannot go through – because problems may arise in providing her safety here. It was suggested that she be replaced by another journalist."

Photos taken by Markosyan have been published in newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*.

On April 18, Swedish journalists

Charlie Laprevote, My Rohwedder Street and Charlotta Wijkstrom were detained and deported from Baku, having come there to film a documentary about freedom of expression in Azerbaijan.

Government Concerned about Russian Migration Scheme

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The Armenian government has told Russian authorities to stop encouraging and helping families in Armenia to migrate to Russia, Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian revealed last Friday.

Sargsian referred to the Russian government's Compatriots program that offers employment, accommodation and financial benefits to married residents of former Soviet republics willing to settle in Russia. It is designed to address the country's serious demographic problems.

The Russian Federal Migration Service (FSM) began operating the program in Armenia in 2009 and has reportedly attracted hundreds of Armenian families since then.

Its activities are sparking a growing uproar from local opposition politicians, public figures and media worried about the continuing outflow of people from Armenia. Some of them have demanded that the authorities in Yerevan ban the FSM scheme in Armenia.

According to Sargsian, the authorities share those concerns. The prime minister said President Serge Sargsian instructed him to raise the matter at a recent meeting of a Russian-Armenian inter-governmental commission on bilateral cooperation that was held in the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don.

"We brought our Russian partners' attention to the fact that that program must not be implemented in the Republic of Armenia with those standards," said Sargsian. "This issue will be the subject of inter-governmental discussions."

"We have to solve this issue at the political level," he told a group of Armenian writers, academics and other intellectuals at a meeting held in Oshakan.

Some of those intellectuals signed earlier this month an open letter to the government urging it to do more to keep Armenians from leaving their country for mainly economic reasons. They echoed opposition claims that the scale of the emigration has increased of late.

President Serge Sargsian disputed those claims this week at a special meeting with top state officials, including the prime minister, that discussed the issue. He said most of the tens of thousands of people leaving the country each year, mainly for Russia, are seasonal workers that eventually return home.

The president admitted at the same time that a lack of economic opportunities and the resulting emigration remains a serious problem in Armenia. He instructed government bodies to propose more measures to tackle it.

Narek Hakhnazaryan Wins XIV International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow

MOSCOW (Armradio.am and *Moscow Times*) – Cellist Narek Hakhnazaryan, a recent Artist Diploma recipient from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, won the Gold Medal in the cello division at the XIV International Tchaikovsky Competition.

Held every four years, the Tchaikovsky is one of the most prestigious competitions in the world.

Hakhnazaryan was born in Yerevan in 1988. A recipient of scholarships from the Mstislav Rostropovich Foundation, he performed in Russia, Germany, Austria, France, Great Britain, Greece, Turkey and Canada. As a result of receiving first prize at the Young Concert Artists International Auditions in 2008, he made his debut that same year at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall in New York City and at the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater in Washington, DC.

He has subsequently performed at the Young Concert Artists Festival in Tokyo and toured extensively in the United States.

Hakhnazaryan plays a David Tecchler cello, dated 1698, on loan from Valentine Saarmaa, granddaughter of the renowned luthier Jacques Francais.

Over the past two decades, the competition has suffered an enormous decline in prestige. This time around, the Culture Ministry made an all-out effort to arrest that decline, appointing the country's most influential musician, Mariinsky Theater boss Valery Gergiev, as competition chairman, hiring an experienced



Narek Hakhnazaryan

competition manager from the United States, instituting new jury voting rules and filling the juries with prominent performing musicians – rather than the professors who have dominated them in the recent past – and severely reducing the number of competitors.

More controversially, half the competition – the violin and vocal contests – was moved to St. Petersburg, ostensibly because of a possible delay in completing renovation of the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, but more likely, in the view of many observers, the result of Gergiev's desire to see a part of the competition take place within his musical empire on the Neva.

As for the cellists, they seemed as a group to be the most talented of all.

Hakhnazaryan performed extremely well throughout.

The Tchaikovsky Competition would not be the Tchaikovsky Competition without at least one good scandal. This year's was no exception. As conductor for the third round of the cello contest, the organizers inexplicably chose Mark Gorenstein, somehow overlooking the fact or unaware that his conducting proved a hindrance rather than a help to the piano finalists at the last two competitions.

Following a rehearsal with Hakhnazaryan, Gorenstein was heard, via the Internet, making a derogatory remark about the cellist, including a crude reference to his ethnic origin. The organizing committee issued an immediate rebuke, which brought an apology from Gorenstein, followed by his departure from the competition "due to illness" and replacement by a pair of capable young conductors from the Mariinsky Theater.

Taking first prize in piano was Russian Daniil Trifonov, 20, the third-prize winner at last year's ultra-exclusive Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw.

The violin jury blithely ignored a new competition rule requiring that a first prize always be awarded. Declining to hand out that prize, it went on to split second prize between Russian Sergei Dogadin, 22, and Israeli Itamar Zorman, 25.

President Serge Sargsian congratulated Hakhnazaryan on the occasion of his victory.

Community News

AGBU's Young Professionals Of Los Angeles Partner with Armenian Bar Association To Help Students Considering Law Careers

By Aleen L. Khanjian

PASADENA, Calif. – On May 19, more than 75 young professionals, including some college and high school students, gathered at the AGBU Pasadena Center's Boyajian Hall for a panel discussion featuring distinguished members of the Armenian Bar Association (ABA). The panelists discussed how they entered their practice areas, their personal experiences in private and government practice and ethical aspects of the legal profession. They were also there to offer professional guidance and advice on succeeding in the industry.

The panel was moderated by Assistant US Attorney John Lulejian, who is a federal prosecutor of violent and organized crime and a member of ABA's Board of Governors. He introduced the panelists and brought each of their areas of expertise and past experiences to light. Panelists included ABA chairman, Edvin Minassian, and criminal defense attorney Garo Ghazarian, who is the vice chair of ABA and the dean of the People's College of Law. The treasurer and secretary of ABA – Sara Bedirian and Hovanes Margarian, respectively – also spoke, as did Deputy Public Defender Victoria Ourfalian and Assistant US Attorney Tamar Kouyoumdjian.

Event organizer Theodore Khachaturian of Callanan, Rogers & Dzida, LLP emphasized that this event was one of many partnerships that YPLA has taken advantage of in furthering



Event organizer Theodore Khachaturian introduces the panelists at the May 19 panel at the AGBU Pasadena Center.

the mission of the group. "We are proud to partner with the Armenian Bar in accomplishing the AGBU Young Professionals' goal of familiarizing yet another generation of young Armenians with the achievements of professionals in our community. I was pleased to see so many young adults come out who were eager to hear about the different career paths available in law," he said. "Our distinguished panel emphasized that regardless of the path you choose, success is only achieved through honesty, integrity and a sense of social justice."

Minassian praised the YPLA team. "It was our pleasure to partner with YPLA. They are a great group of energetic and vibrant professionals in our community. We were very impressed with the caliber of the attendees and the enthusiasm they showed for a potential career in law. Just as the diversity of the specialties of our panelists was important to make this an effective program, the active engagement of the audience was equally important. We look forward to future programs with AGBU YPLA," he said.



At the conference, from left: Dr. Sevak Avagyan, Dr. Frieda Jordan, Dr. Vergine Madelian, a staff member and Taleen Peroomian

ABMDR Delegation Participates in International Medical Congress of Armenia, Readies for Gala

LOS ANGELES – On the occasion of the third international Medical Congress of Armenia, a delegation from the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) visited Yerevan earlier this month, participating in the medical congress and becoming familiarized with the registry's life-saving work in the homeland. The Third International Medical Congress of Armenia was held from July 7 to 9, at the Yerevan State Medical University.

The ABMDR delegation consisted of several members of the registry's Board of Directors and Board of Advisors, including Frieda Jordan, PhD; Arpi Kestenian, representative of Glendale Memorial Hospital; Ramella Markarian, representative of Glendale Adventist Medical Center; Lara Yeretsian, Esq.; Naz Atikian; Vergine Madelian, PhD and Taleen Peroomian, as well as Vicken Sepilian, MD, president of the Armenian Medical Society of California.

For members of the delegation, most of whom were visiting the ABMDR Stem Cell Harvesting Center in Yerevan for the first time, becoming familiarized with its operations was a gratifying experience. The delegation's visit coincided with the facility's 13th stem cell harvesting procedure, which was carried out for a patient residing in Belgium.

Welcoming the delegation were Sevak Avagyan, MD, the registry's executive director; Mihran Nazaretyan, MD, PhD, MPH, the registry's medical director, as well as other local staff members.

During its visit to the Stem Cell Harvesting Center, the delegation was shown the Wall of Angels, on which are inscribed the names of those who have made financial contributions to the ABMDR, including delegation members themselves.

Later the delegates were honored at a dinner hosted by former First Lady of Armenia and ABMDR honorary chair, Dr. Bella Kocharian. During this event, which likewise was held in the Armenian capital, Avagyan spoke of the far-reaching contributions of each delegation member to the registry's work and thanked them for their continued support.

The ABMDR participated in the Third International Medical Congress of Armenia as a globally recognized Armenian health organization dedicated to immunogenetics research, stem cell harvesting and bone marrow transplantation.

At the Armenian Medical International Committee (AMIC) meeting during the conference, Dr. Vergine Madelian presented a groundbreaking research paper that see REGISTRY page 7



Delegation members during their visit to the Stem Cell Harvesting Center, with Dr. Sevak Avagyan (third from left) and Dr. Mihran Nazaretyan (far right)

HMADS Celebrates its 29th Commencement

By Janet Marcarian

BAYSIDE, N.Y. – On June 17, the day of the sixth-grade graduation at Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School, heavy rains and ominous skies did not deter anyone.

Four students were representing the Class of 2011. The program began with a Color Guard and Processional where the fifth-grade students joined the future alumni. After the Invocation given by Fr. Bedros Kadehjian and Zariné Boghosian's poignant message, the presentation began.

A potpourri of English and Armenian poems followed, where Walt Whitman's narration of "Miracles" flowed with enthusiasm and inquisitiveness. The graduates' true interaction and deep understanding of the main concept resonated throughout the audience. A tribute to Alan Hovannes was given by a short biographical sketch. His music expresses spiritual and sentimental nobility, which reminds us of his Armenian ancestral connections. The song *Yar Nazani* was masterfully performed by the fifth and sixth graders. The girls' beautiful voices expressed the true meaning of the lyrics by Hamasdegh.

Is our world a safe place? Is there such a place? Can we build a small world "open only to light, serenity and peaceful existence?" These questions were asked and answers were attempted through the poem "Evil Things" by poet Zahrad, also known as Zareh Yaldizchian.

The graduates' fluency and command of their mother tongue was impressive, due to the instructions of Hourig Ghougassian.

As the evening progressed, the Class of 2011



The members of HMAD's graduating class with their teachers and principal

received their well-deserved diplomas with the enthusiastic applause from the audience, their proud parents and relatives. The guest speaker of this year's commencement exercises was Alex Apelian (Class of 1989). He recently received his MBA from New York University specializing in marketing. Apelian's speech was impressive because of the way he was able to present his ideas. He was precise, articulate and spoke with pride about HMADS, his accomplishments and long lasting friendships that remain to this date.

It is customary to end the program with Armenian songs. Our music is unique not only because it "speaks" to us, but because we are so in tune towards our ancient lute that it can still pull the strings of our hearts.

Is there any better way of expressing this by singing *Dsidernag* with angelic trills performed by Zovinar, or *Karnan Kootan Hanetsi* by Komitas (showing his playful and bucolic interpretation of the peasants' life) and at the end, *Azk Parabantz* by Arno Babajanian.

Thanks go to choir master A. Boghossian and pianist N. Dadourian for selecting a few musical gems and presenting them with so much depth and true understanding.

On a personal note, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the graduates and their families. You have been an inspiration to me...

As you know in "the searching is the finding" of all your goals and perhaps someday you will "fly over the rainbow" where I will be waiting with open arms, the wind gently disheveling my white hair.

(Janet Marcarian is a HMADS sixth-grade teacher.)



COMMUNITY NEWS

ARPA Presents Lecture on Armenian Merchants of Isfahan

LOS ANGELES – Prof. Levon Chookaszian will give a talk on the Armenian Merchants of Isfahan and their help in introducing Western art to those in the East.



Prof. Levon Chookaszian

The talk, sponsored by the Analysis, Research and Planning for Armenia (ARPA) Institute, will take place on Thursday, August 11 at 7:30 p.m., at Merdianian Auditorium, Sherman Oaks.

During the 16th through the 18th centuries, the Armenian merchants in Persia

were active not only on the transit route that cut across Armenia but also on many other routes that traversed the Eurasian continent. Together with merchants of the homeland, they patronized and inspired Armenian artists and promoted their works. By disseminating and supporting Armenian art, they promoted themselves and commemorated their own names and became the ambassadors of culture. They sponsored the production of numerous illuminated manuscripts and helped the Armenian culture by saving them. They exported and imported a great diversity of artifacts, introducing to the Western people with the cultural achievements of the eastern people, and similarly the culture of the Eastern people to the Western people.

Chookaszian was born in 1952 in Yerevan.

He graduated from Yerevan State University in 1974 with a degree in philology. He has published around 400 articles and reviews for scholarly journals and newspapers and has prepared numerous entries on Armenian art, painters, sculptors and architects for the *Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia*, the *Armenian Question Encyclopedia*, the *Armenian Abridged Encyclopedia* and the *Saur Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon* (Germany, Munchen-Leipzig). He has participated in many international congresses and symposia on the topic of Armenian, Georgian, Persian and Byzantine art.

Between 1978-1996 he was a senior fellow and professor of Armenian art at the Center for Armenian Studies in the Yerevan State University. In 1996 he received a UNESCO grant and established the UNESCO Chair of Armenian Art History and Art History Department at Yerevan State University. Since then he has been the director of the UNESCO Chair. Between 1992 and 2009, he delivered numerous lectures on Armenian art at universities, libraries and the museums around Europe and the US.

For information write to info@ARPAInstitute.org.

ASA's 44th Annual Hantes Is a Crowd Pleaser

RADNOR, Penn. – From the opening number with glowing globes manifesting this year's "Light the World" theme, to the invigorating upperclassmen finale, this 44th annual pageant of the Armenian Sisters' Academy of Radnor expressed the children's pride in their performance as well as their Armenian heritage. The crowd-pleasing production was a result of many months of practice, flexible teachers who rearranged schedules and volunteer parents who patiently taught the students.

In the end, it is all about the students. The youngest ones who performed in their very first hantes, to the veterans who know that their songs and dances are almost as big a part of their education as the academics. And then there were the graduates, who had the honor of opening the pageant and performed on the

Archbishop Carroll stage for the last time.

It added up to yet another moving performance, complete with beautiful costumes and smiles to match. Parents, grandparents, family and friends clapped along to familiar melodies, encouraging the students with whistles and thunderous applause. Watching the students' hearts swell with pride was delightful.

Peace was promoted, kindergarten was bid farewell and even Mickey Mouse was honored in this production that involved every student in each grade. Whether singing in Armenian or English, or dancing to centuries old music, the many months of rehearsals were well worth the effort.

Complimenting the performance was a sense of community at the hantes and picnic that followed on school grounds.



Fancy footwork from second- and third-grade boys Narek Boghosian, Kevork Zeibari, Sevag Yepoyan, Apo Handian, Jack Ajdarian and Raffi Pogharian encouraged the audience to clap along.

OBITUARY

Chakeh (Baghdoyan) Baran

WATERTOWN – Chakeh (Baghdoyan) Baran of Watertown died on July 25. She was the wife of the late John Chukri Baran.

She leaves two children, Jire Baran of California and Dr. Shant Baran of Boston; and two siblings, Dr. Armen Baghdoyan and Valentine Baghdoyan both of Watertown. She also leaves many members of the Baran, Baghdoyan, Kupelian and Zanazanian families.

Services were held at the Armenian Memorial Church, Watertown, on Thursday, July 28. Interment was in Westview Cemetery, Lexington.



Donation

In memory of Garabed Hovsepian, father, and John Boghosian, Godfather, Ruth and Will Swisher of Newington, Conn., and Charles Hovsepian of New Britain, Conn., donate \$100, to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Author Michael Bobelian Discusses Genocide Recognition with Assembly Interns

WASHINGTON — As part of the Armenian Assembly of America's Terjenian-Thomas summer internship program, students are provided with a full schedule of meetings with members of Congress, policy analysts and other speakers. Earlier this month, the "Lecture Series" featured Armenian-American author Michael Bobelian who has written extensively on the Armenian Genocide recognition movement in the United States. He was introduced by Armenian National Institute (ANI) Director Dr.

Rouben Adalian.

Bobelian met the 2011 intern class to present his book, *Children of Armenia: A Forgotten Genocide And The Century-Long Struggle For Justice*. Highlighting Washington, DC as the preeminent venue for political action, Bobelian focused his lecture on the decades-long struggle for US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide. Bobelian shared the historical background on the Armenian community's legislative efforts to affirm the historical truth of the

Armenian Genocide. His presentation covered a wide range of issues associated with the recognition movement, from the personal trauma felt by Armenian Americans to the debates and votes in the United State Congress.

"Michael Bobelian enlightened us about the struggle for Armenian Genocide recognition within the American political system," stated Anna Aroutiounian, intern with the Armenian National Institute. "I enjoyed the way he presented the subject throughout his work and I also appreciate the amount of personal time that he spent with us," added Aroutiounian.

Bobelian dedicated nearly six years researching his book. He described the process of searching through the vast catalogs of the US National Archives. He also met with several key figures in the Armenian-American community, including Genocide survivors and prominent political figures. According to Bobelian, his



From left, ANI Director Dr. Rouben Adalian and author Michael Bobelian



Michael Bobelian (seated) with Assembly interns

interview with 1996 presidential candidate Sen. Robert Dole (R-KS) was particularly noteworthy. He specifically discussed how Dole identifies himself with the Armenian-American community and how devoted he was to Armenian Genocide recognition during his time as senate minority leader.

When Bobelian concluded his presentation, he signed copies of his book for each intern.

Employment Opportunities at the American University of Armenia

Vice President of Operations/Chief Operation Officer Provost

AUA is a privately-endowed independent American institution of higher education in the Republic of Armenia, and is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Reporting directly to president, these positions require the incumbent to reside in Armenia, and will require interaction with the US Embassy, the Armenian government, and various funding agencies.

VP of Operations/Chief Operating Officer: Provide leadership, strategic planning, and effective operation of the university; maintenance and operation of the university's physical plant, infrastructure, facilities, equipment, and grounds; execution of campus facilities planning; management of capital construction projects; campus safety, security, and emergency planning; to information and communication technologies services; planning and growth of the university's Papazian Library; seek funding sources and write proposals to funding agencies for the expansion and renewal of the university's physical facilities to ensure excellence, growth and competitiveness. The VP will play a key leadership role in managing profit and loss, both within the university itself and within its associated business units. He or she must demonstrate the ability to think and act strategically; to be innovative; to establish positive relationships with key stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, and administration; to launch new products/initiatives; and to lead organizational change initiatives using data-driven decision making methodology. Candidates must have a strong leadership credentials; evidence of successful administrative abilities and management experience; an earned masters degree; excellent written and spoken English is essential; excellent written and spoken Armenian is a plus. Previous experience in an international setting and knowledge of Armenia, NIS countries and the Middle East is preferred but not required. The position will require interaction with US Embassy, Armenian government, and various funding agencies, as well as coordination for joint programs with our universities.

Provost: Provide leadership in academic planning, development, assessment, and implementation; have a commitment and capacity to evaluate continuously and enhance the University's academic programs to ensure excellence, growth and competitiveness; manage the academic budgeting process; promote the university's core values; demonstrate the ability to think and act strategically; be innovative; establish positive relationships with faculty, staff, students, community, government and private sector; and to lead organizational change initiatives using data-driven decision making methodology; represent the university in scholarly publications and conferences focusing on international education and other matters germane to the growth of AUA. Candidates must have strong academic and leadership credentials; evidence of successful teaching; research and administrative abilities; financial management skills; an earned doctorate degree; a strong track record of research, as evidenced by past research publications; senior faculty and academic management experience. Knowledge of grant application and administration is essential.

Please send a letter of interest and CV to: American University of Armenia Corporation, 300 Lakeside Drive, 12th Floor, Oakland, CA 94612, Attn: Gaiane Khachatryan, Recruitment, Personnel and Public Relations Manager; e-mail: gaiane@auac.net.

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ABMDR Readies for Gala

REGISTRY, from page 5

has been published in the July issue of Tissue Antigens. The paper, which contains the results of an extensive study conducted by a team of ABMDR scientists and researchers, for the first time confirms the uniqueness of the immunogenetics of Armenian populations across the world.

Jordan was also a featured speaker at the conference.

Match for Life 2011 Gala

On Sunday, July 31, the ABMDR will hold its most important annual event, the Match for Life Gala.

The program will take place at the Glendale Hilton, with Mark Geragos, Esq., as master of ceremonies. The event's main corporate sponsor is the Glendale Adventist Medical Center.

The gala will be an opportunity to celebrate recent ABMDR milestones and share ongoing goals with the public. In addition, during the event the registry will honor a number of outstanding supporters and volunteers, including Dr. Vergine Madelian as Woman of the Year; George Titizian as Man of the Year; Ani Azar, Dr. Evelyn Baghdasraian and Sophik Zargarian as Volunteers of the Year and 4over, Inc. as Business of the Year.

Match for Life 2011 will also feature Victor Espinola, Armen Movsessian and Alexander Zhiroff of the world-music ensemble The Forbidden Saints.

For tickets or sponsorship opportunities, email abmdrla@sbcglobal.net.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

The American University of Armenia Hosts Students from Northeastern University

BOSTON and YEREVAN – This summer the American University of Armenia (AUA) hosted a group of students from Northeastern University for their study abroad program. The students were taught a course on Human Rights and Civic Development in the Caucasus, which was very well received. The classes were held at the newly-built state-of-the-art Paramaz Avedisian Building, located at AUA's Yerevan campus.

In addition to their academic work, the students had the opportunity to visit many historic landmarks and beautiful natural sites during their stay in Armenia, which made their study abroad experience all the

Armenia and its diaspora throughout the world. The Study Abroad Program represents one strategy by which that obligation has been realized. AUA also believes that diversity is an important principle of college life. The variety of student cultures on campus provides a richness of contrasts and contexts for the intellectual growth of all students, which is very valuable. It is these differences that provide a realistic view of the world, and AUA is committed to fostering such diversity in its academic environment.

In addition to its short-term summer abroad programs, AUA also offers opportunities for students from outside of Armenia to pursue masters degree studies in the fields of business and management, industrial engineering and systems management, political science and international affairs, health sciences, computer and information sciences, law and advanced English studies. AUA is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), one of six regional accreditation agencies recognized by the US

Department of Education. Consequently, AUA's credits can be transferred to US institutions of higher education and its degrees are recognized in the US. In addition to its primary mission of training students from Armenia, AUA therefore offers students from the diaspora an opportunity to earn an American-accredited master's degree at a small fraction of American tuition prices. More information about AUA can be found on its web page, <http://www.aua.am>.



Students from Northeastern University in Boston went to the American University of Armenia as part of their study-abroad program. With the students is Prof. Gregory Aftandilian of Northeastern.

more memorable. "The American University of Armenia provides endless learning opportunities," said Victoria Hines, one of the visiting students. "The academic quality of the program was outstanding. The students and faculty were very welcoming, and did everything to ensure we got the most out of our study abroad experience in Armenia."

Since its inception, AUA has embraced many challenges and responsibilities, among them the need to serve as a bridge between

Los Angeles Young Professionals Award Scholarships to Mentees of the Generation Next Mentorship Program

By Aleen L. Khanjian

PASADENA, Calif. – On Sunday, June 26, the AGBU Young Professionals of Los Angeles (YPLA) continued their philanthropic efforts and maintained their commitment to fostering the next generation of Armenian American leaders by awarding scholarships to eight mentees of the AGBU Generation Next Mentorship Program. These scholarship awards were based on academic excellence, extracurricular involvement, essays, recommendation letters and financial need. The YPLA presented the awards at the mentorship program's ninth annual "GenNext Showcase." The showcase highlighted the various talents of mentors, as well as mentees. The 200 attendees enjoyed presentations by the mentees, involving culinary arts, jewelry making as well as visual and performing arts.

Former YPLA chair, Sevana Melikian, introduced the individual recipients by saying, "This is the first year YPLA awarded scholarships to youth in our community. We were overwhelmed with the quality of applicants and were so proud of what they had achieved at such a young age. We're looking forward to hearing about their future successes throughout their college years and beyond." YPLA raised funds for these scholarships at a social networking event on June 23, at the Coda Bar & Lounge in Sherman Oaks.

Current YPLA chair, Yeghig Keshishian, adds, "The advancement of the Armenian Diaspora starts with a proper education; and, all of us on the AGBU YPLA Steering Committee are committed in our resolve to advance the interests of our diaspora. The

scholarships we have allocated this year for GenNext mentees is just one example of how AGBU has continuously promoted the social advancement and general welfare of its community."

The AGBU Generation Next Mentorship Program assists Southern California youth of Armenian descent by providing them with posi-



Mentors and their charges who received awards at the Generation Next Mentorship Program

tive role models, guidance and support. Through one-on-one mentoring, monthly group activities and parenting seminars, the program assists and supports Armenian students who are faced with difficult choices in today's sometimes tense school environment. For anyone interested in becoming a GenNext mentor and making a direct impact in the life of a young Armenian, visit www.agbugennext.org.

The AGBU YPLA is a network of individuals between ages 22 and 40 who mirror the AGBU's mission to preserve and promote Armenian identity and heritage by adding dimensions to the lives of young professional Armenians through educational, cultural, social and humanitarian programs. For more information on how to get involved with YPLA, contact: agbu.ypla@gmail.com.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly Summer Interns Participate in Roundtable Discussions on Armenian-American Issues

WASHINGTON – Since their arrival earlier this month, the Armenian Assembly's Terjenian-Thomas summer interns have participated in various roundtable discussions.

Last week, Assembly Grassroots Director Taniel Koushakjian led a workshop on issues of key interest to the 2011 internship class, including among others: US assistance to Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh, recently-introduced legislation regarding US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide (H.Res. 304) and protection of Christian churches in Turkey (H.Res. 306), Turkey's and Azerbaijan's blockade of

Armenia, Armenian-Turkish relations, human rights and women's rights, as well as the Assembly's work to strengthen civil society in Armenia. Participants had the opportunity to engage with staff on the issues for which the Assembly advocates.

"Taniel Koushakjian was very informative and thorough in providing our group with a wealth of valuable information on current Armenian-American issues, ranging from the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict and Armenian-Turkish relations to an overview of recent House resolutions introduced in Congress,"

stated Sosseh Taimoorian, intern at the Armenian National Institute. "I definitely left the meeting with a better understanding of the issues at hand."

The 2011 internship class participated in a roundtable discussion with Nagorno-Karabagh Representative to the United States Robert Avetisyan. The hour-and-half-long session focused on the history of Nagorno Karabagh, Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing of its Armenian population and the subsequent war launched against Nagorno Karabagh by Azerbaijan in 1991.

In addition, the roundtable also highlighted US assistance to Karabagh for humanitarian needs, as well as the current status of the peace talks, on which the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia met recently in Kazan, Russia.

"This was a very informative discussion," stat-

ed Tigran Terpandjian, intern with the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia. "I gained new insights about the peace process, how entangled the conflict has become and also how US assistance can help with Artsakh's development needs," added Terpandjian.

The Assembly's Terjenian-Thomas summer interns have already put their new skills to the test in meetings with elected officials and by participating in various think-tank discussions.

At a recent discussion at the Heritage Foundation, Assembly Government Affairs intern Raffi Nersessian raised the issue of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict and the implications of US foreign policy following the recent Turkish elections.

"Training the next generation of community leaders on the issues that matter most to our community is vital to advancing the Armenian cause," said Koushakjian.



Assembly Grassroots Director Taniel Koushakjian discusses Armenian-American issues with interns.



Summer interns with Nagorno Karabagh Representative Robert Avetisyan (back row, center)

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TCA Arshag Dickranian School Wins AGBU Basketball Tournament

LOS ANGELES – The Dickranian Lions Junior-Junior Boys Basketball Team won first place in the AGBU Basketball Tournament held at the AGBU Pasadena Center on June 11. This was yet another victory for the Dickranian Lions, which has shown time and again to be a challenging team to play against.

The AGBU Tournament began on the first week of April and ran through June 11. Team MVP, John Gukasyan, demonstrated his undisputed talent and skill with his ability to score for his team in the last few decisive seconds of the game, thus securing the team's championship.

"I am very proud of our players," said Coach Rudolph Rameh. "The students' skills are

improving every year and we have some really good players at this school. We look forward to playing with different schools and tournaments in the future."

Aside from the fourth, fifth and sixth grades, this was the first time that first, second and third graders participated in the tournament.

The school's varsity team also participated in the Double Pump Tournament held in Las Vegas in April, winning two games and losing one. The trip helped the Dickranian Lions gain the necessary experience preparing the players for the CIF competition next year.

For more information, visit www.dickranianschool.org.



Dickranian Lions Junior-Junior Boys Basketball Team with Coach Rudy Rameh and Principal Vartkes Kourouyan



COMMUNITY NEWS

Interview with Panos Titizian, Veteran ADL

By Sarkis Majarian



Panos Titizian

The name Panos Titizian is a familiar one, from Lebanon to America. He has been active for more than 60 years as a leader of the Democratic Liberal (Ramgavar) Party and the

Armenian General Benevolent Union. In virtually that same period, he has contributed articles to the ADL, as well as independent Diasporan Armenian press, with totally unique interpretations and analyses of issues of concern to the Armenian people and internationally, particularly as regards Armenian-Turkish relations.

Titizian recently visited New York and New Jersey, where he met with leaders of local institutions and organizations. This interview reflects his impressions of those meetings.

Sarkis Majarian: Mr. Titizian, what was the purpose of your recent visit to New York and New Jersey?

Panos Titizian: The visit was occasioned by my long-held intent to write my memoirs about my involvement in the public life of our nation. More accurately, through those memoirs, I wish to touch upon the important events having taken place mostly in Lebanon during the past 50-plus years, the role of a certain segment of the community in those events – a certain circle, which included the ADL Party, the AGBU and the neutral bloc. I was aware of the fact that if I didn't undertake such an effort, it would be a great loss, first for me, and then for our circles. That's because whatever isn't put down on paper evaporates. I'm probably the last survivor among those leaders who have since passed on.

SM: The first step of the interview was taken. What do you have to say about that?

PT: Yes, that step was taken. The interview took place with my longtime friend, Hagop Vartivarian, at his home in New Jersey. The first part of our interview was devoted entirely to the sociopolitical environment of the Middle East, from the end of World War II down to the present. After all, it was the Middle East that served as the stage for the reestablishment and renaissance of our Diasporan-Armenian life.

On this occasion, it is a pleasure for me to say a few words about Hagop Vartivarian. The six to seven volumes of his *Hantiboumner* [meetings], containing interviews with dozens of Armenian writers, intellectuals, community activists, clergymen and others, have not only created great interest in Armenian circles but have also added a whole new dimension to the social history of the Armenian Diaspora.

It was a delight for me to once again confirm that Hagop is an erudite individual with wide interests, an active person who has his finger on the pulse of Armenian life. He's not only active but practical-minded. He is the driving force behind practically all our undertakings on the East Coast. One can say he's a dynamo.

SM: Naturally, you had meetings to take practical steps and reach decisions in that regard.

PT: Yes. Let me say that I put forth effort toward this end a year ago. I contacted people in Beirut, for someone to research and bring to the surface everything which I have written and has been published. I also gave a rough deadline and promised to pay whatever was required but nothing serious was done, despite the promise made to me. Faced with such a situation, I thought that perhaps it would be best to go to the East Coast and see my old friend Hagop Vartivarian, who has become somewhat of a specialist in the area of interviews. I figured that the interviews I had with him could successfully be rendered in article form for public consumption, and then be compiled in a book. This was the main purpose of making the trip. Taking advantage of the opportunity, I also wanted to see Berge Setrakian, president of the Central Board of Directors of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, with whom I have been closely connected for more than four decades. Moreover, I have endeavored, along

with him, to make my modest contribution to certain important AGBU projects. These two aims led me to New York.

SM: Very well. So, first you met with Mr. Hagop Vartivarian and then Mr. Berge Setrakian.

PT: When I set out, these two appointments had already been previously made. After I arrived at Newark Airport in New Jersey, Hagop Vartivarian took me to my hotel and "ordered" me: "Wash up right away and relax. I'll come back in 30-45 minutes, get you and together we'll go to an event."

SM: What event?

PT: I didn't know what the event was. Hagop was in a hurry (Hagop is always in a hurry, going from one engagement to another). When we went to the event [held at the Hovnanian School in New Milford, NJ], I found out that one of our historical monuments, St. Giragos Cathedral, in Dikranagerd is to be renovated, and that the Turkish government has given permission for its renovation and consecration. This then was what the event was all about, and it was a very solemn affair, at that.

SM: Who organized that event?

PT: It was organized by the Dikranagerd Compatriotic Society. I must say that I got the impression that there were quite a few natives of Dikranagerd and/or descendants thereof in attendance. Furthermore, present were some rather influential and successful individuals, who had been able to assemble not only our religious leaders – I have in mind chiefly Archbishop Aram Ateshian, patriarchal vicar of Constantinople, and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America – but also a dozen or so benefactors, who have made names for themselves and enjoy a fine reputation not only locally but also in national circles, and who have mostly served the Holy See of Echmiadzin. These were benefactors who belonged to the AGBU as well as the Knights of Vartan, and they were attending this event, whose objective was to secure funds for the renovation work of the Dikranagerd Cathedral.

SM: Mr. Titizian, how do you explain the Turkish government's granting of this permission?

PT: Explaining the objective hidden behind this and similar permissions granted by the Turkish government can take us far afield. It is necessary to put the explanation of this matter in its wider context, in the sphere of overall Armeno-Turkish relations. Taking the opportunity presented by this development, namely governmental permission to renovate an Armenian church in an important Kurdish region, let us attempt to explain Turkey's attitude principally as it regards the Armenians.

Kemalist Turkey rose from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire in 1923. The "mosaic" character of the multiracial Ottoman Empire was replaced by the purely ethnic national identity of the Turk. The Turkification of the people living in Turkey and its transformation into a homogenous collective constituted a cornerstone of the new governmental policy. To that end, the government went so far as to call millions of Kurds "mountain Turks." Starting from the initial days of the founding of the new republic, they put up a wall of silence concerning the Armenian people and the Armenian Case.

They made them taboo. And if, for the purpose of modernizing the country, they replaced the Arabic letters with Latin letters, the idea behind that was to prevent the new generation from being able to read the personal memoirs of their grandfathers written in Ottoman Turkish. Among those grandfathers, the "Great Fathers" of Turkey were those who were among the main executioners responsible for annihilating our nation.

Although no article exists among Turkish laws putting restrictions on speaking about Armenian issues or the Armenian Case, nevertheless they are taboo. No one dared to speak about the Armenians. A wall of silence was erected insofar as Armenian history was concerned. Thus, the leaders of Kemalist Turkey continued to carry out, in various ways, the work left undone by the Young Turks.

In view of Turkey's policy of wiping out all

traces of Armenians, all segments of Western Armenian society enjoined in the pursuit of the Armenian Question, stage by stage, and the work of obtaining international recognition for the first genocide of the 20th century, committed against the Armenians.

Over the course of decades, the Armenians succeeded in destroying the wall of silence. A large number of countries and international courts of justice recognized the deportations and massacres carried out against the Armenians as genocide. Incidentally, in 1944, when Raphael Lemkin coined the word "genocide," he was influenced by the Armenian massacres having occurred in Anatolia. Expressing himself about the trial of Soghomon Tehlirian, Talaat's assassin, in Berlin, he said the following: "If the murder of one Turk, Talaat, is a crime, then what is the massacre of 1 million Armenians?" Subsequently, in 1948, the definition of genocide adopted by the UN included the decision to annihilate a nation, an ethnic group or a certain collective unit in a premeditated and organized manner. That was what the Turks did to the Armenian people. One after the other, internationally-famous jurists, courts of law, human rights groups, as well as numerous countries, proceeded to recognize the Armenian Genocide as fact. Turkey is endeavoring, in vain, with threats, distorted histories, hired "historians," homegrown jurists and historians, to continually deny the great crime committed against our people. That's because the wall of silence no longer exists; it's been destroyed. Even impartial Turkish intellectuals, like Orhan Pamuk, consider as worthless the fabrications of their own government.

Turkey's current leaders expended great effort over the past 10 years or so in order for Turkey to become a full-fledged member of the European Union. They carried out major reforms internally, in legislation, jurisprudence, prisons and other democratic realms, according to the Copenhagen accession criteria.

The permission to renovate first the Holy Cross Church of Van and now St. Giragos Cathedral of Dikranagerd must be considered as joyful occasions from our vantage point. These are our cultural and spiritual monuments, which are being saved from destruction. Let's be glad for this. Never mind that the Turks are taking those steps to throw dust in the eyes of the Armenians and the international public.

SM: Fine, let's accept all this and suppose that the splendid, magnificent St. Giragos Cathedral of Dikranagerd was reconstructed. However, there are practically no Armenians there any longer. What purpose will that reconstruction serve? What good will it do for our case?

PT: That's a good and fitting question. That question is probably on the minds of many people: when our nation has so many needs in the diaspora and in Armenia, why should we go and renovate a cathedral in a region populated solely by Kurds?

There is a certain degree of logic in what they're saying. However, it seems to me that when that cathedral is reconstructed and consecrated, naturally a group of Armenians, especially those who are originally from Dikranagerd, their children and offspring, along with clergymen, will go there once, twice or thrice annually and celebrate the Divine Liturgy. In this way, more interest will be created: since a cathedral is being reconstructed in such a place as Dikranagerd, which is located in southern Turkey, then there's the likelihood that the numerous Armenian monuments in Erzerum, Van, Ani, etc., which were densely populated with Armenians, will also be reconstructed. Now, utilizing these sorts of renovations as historical precedents and treating them farsightedly is advantageous for us in the long run; therefore, it is necessary for us to have undergone these expenses and made this sacrifice.

SM: Then shall we hope that similar steps and others close to this will gradually prompt the Turkish government, move it closer, to the reality of reconciling with the idea of recognizing the genocide, finding a solution to the Armenian Question and redressing our demands?

PT: Yes, and why not? If we think that there

were approximately 2 million Armenians living throughout Western Armenia, among whom very few, an insignificant number, had fought against Turkey as *fedayees*, as soldiers joining the Russian forces, is that a reason for a million people having lived on those lands for more than 3,000 years to be annihilated, their historical monuments to be reduced to ruins and the survivors, in turn, to be driven from their historical lands to the desert and become scattered from there to the four corners of the world?

After denying, rejecting all this for more than 95 years, when they admit today and permit the historical monuments of those people to be renovated, this will one day be a factor in favor of the redress of our demands. If the Turks really sit down to reckon with us and if it is proven that indeed the Armenians have had numerous churches, monuments and forts on those lands; if the international public is further informed and takes a position favoring their preservation, you don't know what life will bring. Ten years ago, there were many things that we couldn't conceive of even in our wildest imagination but today they've become reality. It's possible that all this will serve the purpose of rendering justice, giving retribution to our people.

We must admit that Turkey began to make gigantic forward strides when the pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party took the reins of government in 2002, headed by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He worked wholeheartedly to enable Turkey to partake in the discussion of its membership in the European Union. In order to accomplish that objective, Turkey had to adopt the Copenhagen accession criteria. This was contingent upon making profound changes in the country's order – social, legislative, democratic. Huge accomplishments were registered in that regard.

The absolute Turkish army was forced to contract within its "professional" boundaries. Turkey proceeded to occupy 16th place in the international economic arena, through the abolition of economic concessions and the promotion of free trade. Despite the world financial crisis, Turkey registered an enviable 6-percent economic growth.

Turkey was compelled to grant certain ethnic, cultural and linguistic freedoms to its Kurdish minority, largely under pressure from the European Union.

Furthermore, Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkey's foreign minister, has adopted the policy of zero enmity with neighboring countries.

SM: What position has Turkey taken regarding the Armenian people and Armenia?

PT: Turkey's persecution of the Armenian people is continuing with its denial of the Armenian Genocide. By putting pressure on Washington to prevent Congress from voting in favor of a Genocide resolution, Turkey is on a course of self-destruction. Instead of that, it must concentrate its efforts on normalizing its relations with the Armenian people.

On the other hand, the possibility of the opening of the borders and the establishment of normal relations, between Armenia and Turkey, remains narrow.

The Protocols remain frozen because Turkish diplomacy has become a hostage to Azerbaijan. Let me explain. After signing the Protocols, Turkey went ahead and made the granting of concessions to Azerbaijan towards resolution of the Karabagh conflict a precondition to the reopening of its borders, as well as the establishment of normal diplomatic relations, with Armenia. This was something that had no connection at all with the Protocols signed between the two countries. The reason is that there is a separate process ongoing for the resolution of the Karabagh conflict involving the Minsk Group.

The Armenian people can be glad for the permission granted by the Turkish government, first for the renovation of the Holy Cross Church on Lake Aghtamar and now the St. Giragos Cathedral of Dikranagerd. Perhaps these actions may serve as precedent for rescuing monuments of Armenian culture and civilization from the danger of permanently disappearing.

Nevertheless, all this amounts to dust being thrown in the eyes of the international public



COMMUNITY NEWS

and AGBU Leader, Community Activist

and the Armenians.

In order to become a “normal” country and move forward, Turkey is obliged to squarely face its history and recognize the crux of its history – the fact of the Armenian Genocide – and make corresponding restitution.

SM: Let’s hope and see. Now, after this lengthy digress, let me move on to my other question. Could you mention the names of the benefactors and prominent figures who participated in that program held in New Jersey?

PT: Yes. As I noted at the beginning, Archbishop Aram Ateshian, patriarchal vicar of Constantinople, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, and Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Diocesan Legate in Washington, DC. Also present were Mr. Garen Nazarian, Armenia’s ambassador to the UN, and his gracious wife, Nina. Mr. Nazarian is a serious, well-prepared and experienced diplomat, with a mastery of Armenian, English and Russian; he is surrounded by young, patriotic assistants, who have come from Armenia and are studying in America’s best universities. Prior to mentioning the benefactors’ names, I would like to say parenthetically that I had a private, three-hour conversation with Mr. Nazarian, during which we discussed the prospects for security, maintenance of stability and cooperation in the Southern Caucasus.

Naturally, we also discussed the resolution of the Karabagh conflict – a conflict that represents a complicated situation, which greatly differs from all other similar conflicts. Ambassador Nazarian stated that the main goal during negotiations, and daily diplomatic work, in general, has been to gain international recognition of the rights of the people of Karabagh. He noted that it seemed to the opponents of the process of conflict resolution that Armenia has been drawn into the process of conciliation but that’s not the case at all. President Sargisian has stated on a few occasions that reconciliation can only begin when Turkey recognizes the 1915 Genocide. Reconciliation can happen only after repentance and recognition of the Genocide. This will greatly contribute to the establishment of continuing peace and cooperation among the peoples and countries of the region. Turkey’s position of speaking in terms of preconditions is not acceptable to us, and Armenia will never question the historical fact of the Genocide. It’s a regrettable circumstance that Turkey, as a regional power, is not capable today of honoring its international commitment; namely, lifting the restrictions on the borders, normalizing relations with neighboring countries.

Returning to the benefactors present at the program, mention can be made of Kevork and Nighogos Atinjian, Dr. Raffy and Mrs. Shoghag Hovanessian, Mr. and Mrs. Hratch and Suzanne Toufayan, Mr. and Mrs. Nishan and Margaret Atinjian, Mr. and Mrs. Sarkis and Ruth Bedevian, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph and Jackie Basralian, chairman of the Dikranagerd Compatriotic Society and Knights of Vartan Times Square Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee, Mr. and Mrs. Hrant and Ruby Gulian, my longtime friend, Grand Commander of the Knights of Vartan Prof. Dennis and Dr. Mary Papazian, as well as Mrs. Karine Kocharian, director of Ardzagang television program of the Greater New York area.

SM: Was this New Jersey program the only one you attended, or were there others?

PT: The following day, Vartivarian again “ordered” me, saying that we were going to Trumbull, Conn., where the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the Holy Ascension Armenian Church was to take place. Driving over 100 miles, we reached the church, whose priest for the past 28 years has been Fr. Untzag Nalbandian, who now has a young, very affable assistant priest, whose name escapes me at the moment [Fr. Martiros Hakobyan]. A nice thing happened there: an elderly gentleman, who had been there when the church was built and who is now 100 years old, was present at the celebration, which was presided over by Edward Gulbenkian, the grandson of Calouste Gulbenkian, and whose wife turned out to be someone I knew: the daughter of Dr. Roubian of Beirut. What gave me great joy here was the

fact that Alex Manoogian was ordained deacon in this church. When he saw that the majority of the Armenians having come from the “old country” were Turkish speaking, he said, “I’ll be your Armenian teacher.”

Thus, Alex Manoogian became the Armenian teacher in the Trumbull area. This was a moving revelation to me. When I was asked to speak, first I recited a few lines from Vahan Tekeyan’s poem “The Armenian Church” and then said that Mr. Manoogian had urged me to take on many projects. I stressed that he had always remained true to his self. When he came from Smyrna and saw that the immigrants were speaking Turkish, he became a teacher in order to teach them Armenian. This is truly a moving circumstance, isn’t it? Similarly, it is heartening that a scion of Gulbenkian was presiding over the celebration. I saw a warm Armenian spirit there and derived great satisfaction.

SM: What would you like to say about your meeting with Mr. Berge Setrakian?

PT: First, let me say that our dear president is a very dynamic individual. He told me that he is in New York only 90 days out of the entire year. He’s out of the country two thirds of the year. There’s a great advantage to that because wherever he goes, he puts his finger on the pulse of Armenian reality, closely studies the Armenian communities he visits, learns about their daily concerns, difficulties, expectations and accomplishments, etc. Thus, taking a broad view of the Armenian scene, he has become a seasoned leader. Mr. Manoogian used to view the world from his office, whereas Mr. Setrakian goes personally and becomes informed on the spot, examines the issues and, parallel with his personal business, he occupies himself with and manages the affairs of AGBU. Among other things, he frequently visits Armenia. Recently I learned that Vera, his personable wife, after a visit to the Gulf, was on her way to Armenia to furnish the private house purchased by them there. This made me very happy.

After discussing current events, our conversations on both sides took us closer to more fundamental national concerns, particularly how to put the diaspora on a sounder and more balanced foundation. Achieving this goal presupposes creating collaboration between the AGBU and other like-minded elements in terms of clear-cut, practical and tangible goals and means.

It was very pleasant for me to see a practical, visionary and discerning man in Berge Setrakian.

SM: Earlier you mentioned “many issues.” All of us know that one of them is the closing down of Melkonian. Did you discuss this?

PT: First, let me say that I’m an alumnus of Melkonian. I lived at Melkonian for eight years, without spending a day outside of the school’s confines. Thus, I have every reason to take an emotional approach to the matter, but that won’t solve our problem. I’m well informed and have closely followed the Melkonian issue. As an institution, Melkonian was founded in 1926 by two benefactors, Garabed and Krikor Melkonian. First, let me make a few corrections. AGBU is not the sponsor, the guardian of Melkonian Educational Institute. The benefactors gave Melkonian to AGBU. AGBU is the owner of Melkonian. Let me cite a small example: let’s say, God forbid, a bomb fell on an AGBU institution, some 10-20 Armenians died and a \$100-million lawsuit was brought against AGBU. The AGBU is liable: i.e., it could go bankrupt if it doesn’t have that money; it is obliged to pay it because the institution is its, it is the owner.

There are documents proving this; as it is, all the courts showed that this is the case, and all the individual plaintiffs lost their case wherever they went. This is the de jure side. The de facto side is the following: Melkonian played a major role in our national life when the generation of orphans and the children succeeding them were educated there. From the 1930’s to the 1960’s, Melkonian was one of the few educational institutions whose graduates became priests, teachers, editors and other national workers all over the diaspora.

This secured a great reputation for Melkonian and its benefactors. However, life changed. The Armenian communities gradually began to

come into their own and prosper. Thus, instead of sending their children to Melkonian, parents sent them to the local Armenian school, where they could receive the same amount of Armenian education. I should also mention that previously 70-80 percent of those who went to Melkonian were from the Near East – Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jerusalem. However, when the Arab-Israeli War took place, resulting in an increase of Arab nationalism, societal changes occurred from top to bottom in Egypt and Syria. One had to pass the state-administered college entrance examinations (Baccalaureate II) in order to qualify for higher education. Thus, students couldn’t be prepared for these examinations at Melkonian, located on a Greek island. The successful completion of the Baccalaureate II was a must for every family that sought to send their son or daughter to an institution of higher learning, even the American University of Beirut. This requirement dealt a blow to Melkonian day after day. The point is that Melkonian’s pupils had to come from other countries, other places. Where would they come from? First, let me say that in 1972 Mr. Manoogian sent his director to Lebanon to inform that Melkonian should be shut down because it was no longer serving its purpose and that another raison d’être had to be found. Mr. Manoogian even thought of relocating the school to Marseille, where at least it could satisfy the educational needs of our European, or Western, communities. Melkonian’s board of trustees requested of Mr. Manoogian to grant them a conditional period, during which they would endeavor to find a large number of pupils and thus justify the school’s existence.

That conditional period was granted to them. During that time, in the 1970s, the Lebanese civil war broke out, families fled to Cyprus and parents enrolled their children in Melkonian. However, when the danger passed, they all went back to Lebanon. Subsequently, another wave came as a consequence of the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979). That, too, passed. Melkonian was again left with its difficulties. As a solution, it was proposed that if Melkonian had certain income-producing structures on its property, as well as modern buildings for boys and girls, we could have 300-400-500 pupils, and therefore the school must remain open and function. Members of the Melkonian Alumni Association promised that they would send their children and grandchildren to Melkonian, and everything would be fine. To the best of my knowledge, only two persons sent their grandchildren from the West: one was Haigashen Ouzounian, who sent his two granddaughters; I, Panos Titizian, was the other, who sent my grandson to study there and paid his tuition in full. Thus, the alumni didn’t acquit themselves, as promised. This is the same alumni association, which keeps the pot of discontent boiling until the present, demanding that the school maintain its existence without fail on the same site. In addition, there is also a group of naïve individuals who are in agreement with the alumni association, without knowing the core of the problem. Thus, the school was faced with the same problem. Despite the fact that the principal made the rounds of the Arab world and elsewhere, the school’s enrollment remained slightly over 200, and the main sources of that number became Armenia (as if Armenia was in need of national self-preservation), Karabagh, Bulgaria, etc. The families sending their children from the aforementioned areas weren’t doing so solely for educational purposes; rather, they also considered it a means of pursuing their dream of emigrating to the West one day....

As far as Melkonian’s curriculum of that period is concerned, 80 percent of it was in English and the remaining 20 percent Armenian; thus it wasn’t at all different from the American-Armenian schools. AGBU made up the annual deficit of \$500,000 incurred by this sort of institution. That is to say, \$6,000 expense per student. When it cost only \$50 a year in a place like Arab Punar in Jezireh, this is unfair. It was in a way possible to reconcile with the situation, if the Armenian education was on the level that existed when Hagop Oshagan, Vahan Tekeyan, Vahe Vahian or Vahram Mavian were teaching

there, or close to it....Thus, the cost/effectiveness relationship was totally out of sync. If AGBU was obliged to shut Melkonian down, the money saved will serve the goal of national self-preservation. AGBU is a service institution in the realm of Armenian life, and that is what’s important in this century, in the present, ever-changing world. Thus, based on this and other considerations, that which is going on presently against AGBU, particularly against its president, Berge Setrakian, and Louise Simone, cannot be justified at all. Today Berge Setrakian is the person who has come to his position at the right time. He is the son of a middle-class family from Beirut, who has risen from the ranks of the AYA to a high position in the field of law. After coming to New York from Lebanon, he became a partner in one of the top international law firms. He knows both the East and the West. He often goes to Armenia with projects beneficial to the advancement of the nation. He’s a young man with the will and dynamism to serve the Armenian people, and he has the stamina to serve both AGBU and the Armenian nation for at least 15-20 more years.

Let me also add that it is not possible to give a complete picture regarding the closure of Melkonian Educational Institute in the course of such an interview as this. This is the case, particularly since the issue is heavily colored with emotional contents. There are many Melkonian alumni, who sincerely regret the school’s closure without being closely informed about the reasons behind AGBU’s decision. There are also those individuals who, exhibiting an exaggerated sentiment or nostalgia, are trying to play the role of “savior,” as “members and friends of Melkonian Alumni Association”.... “Alumni” is understandable but what is meant by “friends”? It’s as if by exhibiting worthless platonic loves, people either wish to create interest around themselves or perhaps they’re trying to add fuel to the fire, in order to wage a secret, full-scale and impassioned struggle against the AGBU leadership. This is not the first time that an Armenian educational institution has closed down due to conditions. Forgetting about Constantinople, Tiflis and Moscow, let’s concentrate on the recent past. Prior to the Lebanese civil war, there were more than 50 Armenian schools there; today their number has dropped to 28. This is a regrettable but inevitable loss. However, that doesn’t mean that we should act with a defeatist attitude; rather, we should face new challenges, realistically overcome them, and give new form and impetus to our struggle for survival....

It is possible that I will reflect upon the Melkonian issue in a more exhaustive manner in the future. Until then, I stress once again that today’s modern plans and projections are based more on services. Huge buildings, institutions, etc. can lose much of their importance from one day to the next. New projections must be feasible and sustainable.

It is with this mentality that the AGBU leaders, with Berge Setrakian at their head, are endeavoring to act.

In concluding our interview dealing with fundamental national issues, as Andranik Dzaroukian once said, “Let’s talk plain, and not try to put new feathers on our problems.” Our concern in the diaspora is to endure, to maintain and protect our national identity, national belongingness and national legacy. On the other hand, our independent country of Armenia is facing major imperatives. It is at such a geopolitical and strategic focal point where the interests of regional and international forces clash. In order to be equal to such a complex situation, we are obliged to develop a new mentality, one which will be modern, suitable for the rapidly changing times and taking steps corresponding to them. That is what AGBU’s leaders, led by Berge Setrakian, are attempting to do.

I wish to take this occasion to express my thanks to President Berge Setrakian, Dr. and Mrs. Hovanessian and Mr. and Mrs. Vartivarian for the warm treatment extended to me during the course of this visit.

(This is a translation, by Aris G. Sevag, of the text published in *Nor Gyank* weekly’s June 9 issue.)



New York METRO

Clothes and Humanitarian Aid Shipped to Paros Lighthouse Foundation In Armenia from NJ Knights/Daughters of Vartan at St. Leon Church

By **Aram Arkun**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

FAIR LAWN, N.J. — Poverty and desperation still takes its toll in the Republic of Armenia, but money is not the only way to help. One alternative is to donate clothing or other humanitarian items to the Paros Lighthouse Foundation in Armenia via the Knights and Daughters of Vartan in New Jersey at St. Leon Armenian Church. After clothing and other items are collected, they are loaded at the church and shipped to Armenia. The most recent shipment was loaded out on April 27. Knights member Leo Manuelian provided some information on how the process works.

Harut (“Harry”) Chantikian has been sending clothes to Armenia ever since that nation’s independence almost 20 years ago, through various organizations. He became affiliated with the Paros Lighthouse Foundation, and a few years ago he spoke at one of the Bakradouny Lodge meetings of the Knights of Vartan. He explained that he needed a place to sort out his clothes. It happened that the church owned a house on its property that was being used for storage. The Parish Council discussed the project and eventually decided to permit its use.

Chantikian had a backlog of clothing to box, which took two months, during which time efforts were made to persuade local Armenians to bring in their clothing for donation. Every week they advertised in the church bulletin. After sending out two 20-foot containers, the volume of donations began to increase from Armenians in other churches in the area, as well as from a non-Armenian church nearby, the Central Unitarian Church of Paramus. Members of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan as well as non-members who are in the St. Leon parish came every Saturday to box and label for about three hours. Manuelian said, “The clothes began to come in such volume that we did not have a moment to breathe. Every Saturday we packed 60 to 70 boxes, so we soon reached 500, then 700 and finally 1,000 boxes. We ordered a

40-foot container. Harry put the manifest together listing the dimensions, weight and contents of each numbered box. We give tax write-offs, if requested. Chantikian then sends the paperwork to the Paros Lighthouse Foundation, who ordered a container, which is paid for by the United Armenian fund. The con-



Loading boxes at St. Leon Armenian Church on April 27 for shipping to Armenia

tainers are the size of an 18-wheel flatbed truck, all steel.

The filled boxes are stored in the house until the truck arrives. The driver will only wait two hours for the truck to be loaded, and then seals the container. That seal is numbered and the number is used for tracking purposes. On April 27, 1,050 boxes had been assembled. Chantikian, born in Cuba, speaks Spanish, therefore he was able to find four- or five-day laborers to take the boxes outside, and then when the truck arrives do the loading. The container goes via sea, eventually reaching Poti, Georgia, from which it is sent on a truck to Armenia.

Manuelian and others from New Jersey have visited the Paros Lighthouse Foundation facility in a small village called Bdgounk, about 15 minutes outside Yerevan. The Ghazarian family,

Seta and her husband Zuhrab, started the foundation. Originally from Beirut, they live in California. They built a warehouse in Bdgounk, and also completed a 10,000-square-foot facility to take care of runaway girls — victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. The foundation prepares donations to needy villages.

children. They provide dental/medical care, mental counseling, career training and bible study.

Manuelian visited the Paros establishment twice in Armenia and left confident that the donations from America were being handled properly and distributed to those in true need. Others from New Jersey have done the same.

Most recently, the co-founder of Paros, Seta Ghazarian, has sent out a desperate appeal for funds. The number of poor in Armenia asking for food has increased dramatically. Ghazarian said there are many women with bones sticking out. The situation motivated her to start a soup kitchen. Armenian refugees in Armenia from Iraq also are in bad shape. Manuelian will visit Paros in July, and so he has started a small fundraising drive, with several hundred dollars already raised.

The Knights/Daughters and others at St. Leon began collecting again on May 14 and every Saturday. They are looking for gently used clean clothes that are not torn or stained. No short shorts or bikinis are suitable for Armenia, and underwear, socks, shoes, sheets and pillowcases can only be accepted if brand new and in original packaging. Brand new packaged toys are acceptable, but none with batteries since these would require extra expenses for the recipients.

Tablecloths, curtains, fabric, pots, pans, flatware, cutlery, handbags, canes, walkers, wheelchairs, bicycles, school supplies, computers (Pentium 3 or better), computer monitors (flat screen only), glasses and dishes are also desired. Fashion accessories, games, books, music (tapes, disks, or records), wall hangings, clocks and tools are not considered suitable as humanitarian aid. Manuelian estimates that the value of the merchandise collected and shipped through St. Leon facilities to Armenia has exceeded one million dollars.

For more information, see www.parosfoundation.com, or come to St. Leon Armenian Church on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Pickup of donations can also be arranged through Leo/Sona at (201) 746-0409 or Harry at (201) 556-9061.

Zohrab Summer Interns Begin New Projects in Diocese’s Zohrab Center

By **Taleen Babayan**

NEW YORK — The Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) has been a hub of activity in the summer weeks, as the library’s doors have opened to its summer interns.

The dedicated and diligent interns, including Armen Bandikian, Jennifer Manoukian and Nicole Saglamer, have been working hands-on to help further the vision of the Zohrab Center and to make its resources more accessible to individuals interested in Armenian studies around the world.

The interns have been tackling a wide-range of responsibilities this summer, including cataloging books and digitizing the center’s holdings to make them available for the general public.

Last summer, with the help of the interns, the center’s online catalog was launched. More than 15,000 books in the library’s collection can now be accessed by visiting www.zohrabcentercatalog.com.

While the interns’ contributions have indeed been valued in the center, they too come away with a newfound appreciation for Armenian literary traditions and culture.

“For me, working at the Zohrab Center has been more than a job, but rather an experience that allows me to leave work each day having learned something new,” said Saglamer, a sophomore studying chemistry at NYU, who is interning in the center for the second consecu-

tive summer.

It was the center’s materials on Zabel Yesayan that created Manoukian’s ties to the Zohrab Center. While working on her thesis paper on the author, she found useful one-of-a-kind resources for her research.

“I relied heavily on the Zohrab Center’s periodical collection for my project,” said Manoukian, who studied Middle Eastern studies and French at Rutgers University. “While doing my research, I realized how valuable and unique it is to have such a vast collection of Armenian-language resources open to everyone.”

Echoing Manoukian’s sentiments, Bandikian, a senior studying information systems at Stony Brook University, said he felt “compelled” to intern in the center for another summer.

“After working here for two years, I am still amazed to see the types of books I come across while doing my work,” he said.

The Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center was founded in 1987 by Dolores Zohrab Liebmann, in honor of her parents, Krikor and Clara. Her father, Krikor Zohrab, was a prominent lawyer, author and parliamentarian in the Ottoman Empire, who was arrested and killed during the Armenian Genocide.

The Zohrab Center serves as a research library and has a rich collection of books relating to Armenian history, literature and religion. It also serves as a cultural center, hosting conferences, lectures, film screenings and book presentations, among many other events tailored to the local Armenian community.

For more information, visit www.zohrabcenter.com.

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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Echmiadzin under Attack

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Armenians seem to have been cursed with a self-destructive gene, which will never allow them to achieve their aspirations. Mind you, the largest and only Armenian Empire was built by Tigranes the Great. That empire was destroyed by the Romans, whose army was led by Lucullus. He had the support of Tigranes' son, who helped the Roman army to overthrow his father and destroy his empire.

In the year 1045, when the Bagratuni dynasty was in decline, one of the Armenian princes, named Vest Sarkis, handed the keys of the capital city of Ani to the Byzantine rulers, thus ending the history of another Armenian dynasty.

In more recent times, by the end of World War I, General Antranik was holding the fortress of Erzerum, with the help of munitions and supplies leftover by the retreating Russian Army. Most of the Eastern Armenian soldiers defected, announcing that the area was not their homeland. Thus we lost valuable pieces of historic Armenian territory, perhaps unfortunately, for good.

These days that self-destructive gene has been bugging some people in the Armenian media and in positions of power, to undermine, or to destroy the foundations of the Holy See of Echmiadzin, under the most appealing slogans of "democracy" or "free speech" or defense of "human rights," without pausing to ponder the long-term damage they can cause.

Echmiadzin has been under Soviet rule for 70 years and is still recovering from the damage of that oppressive regime. Many Armenians, mindful of the historic role of the Mother See, have been supporting and helping the supreme spiritual center to overcome its challenges. Others, however, within and without Armenia, have unleashed an unholy war, based on manufactured gossip and self-serving causes.

This ugly campaign began with some trial balloons in the ARF media, proposing to create a diaspora structure, with Catholicos Aram I of Cilicia, as its titular head.

Then the disease spread through the opposition papers in Armenia, namely *Hayakan Jamanak* and *Chorrord Ishkhanutioun*, with marching orders coming from the former President Levon Ter-Petrosian, who insulted the Catholicos for not joining the political street rallies, which he organized to "dismantle" the "kleptocracy."

Another tabloid named *Hraparak*, which seems to be willing to publish any article containing character assassination, for a fee, joined the chorus. Recently, a more influential paper, *Aravot*, has taken up the campaign, using an illegally-taped conversation between His Holiness Karekin II and the Georgian Patriarch Illya II, showing the Armenian Pontiff in an unfavorable light. That doctored tape was placed on Facebook by Georgians to embarrass the Catholicos. Aravot's editor, Aram Abrahamian, portrayed the Catholicos in his lead article as "ignorant" and a "mafia figure." It turns out that Mr. Abrahamian's TV program was recently removed from "Shoghakat" television channel, sponsored by Echmiadzin. So much for morality in media in Armenia.

These attacks have not been spontaneous; some quarters must be orchestrating them. We cannot blame all of these attacks on the Catholicosate of Cilicia, however, as much as it may serve the cause of that see.

When you have ill will, you can turn upside down any positive initiative or project and criticize, if that is your main purpose. Thus, the Catholicos develops a program to meet the perennial problem of clergy shortage in the Armenian Church and generates the resources to send 30-40 young aspiring clergyman to the centers of higher learning or major seminaries overseas, some accuse His Holiness of trying to "take over" the diaspora or planning to place his "people" in positions of power. The Catholic Church is strong and unified because the Pope assigns cardinals in different dioceses and no one attempts to play the "democracy" charade. For a long time, in the absence of educated clergy, Armenians have been used to having the services of many pedestrian spiritual leaders, who would be displeased to be replaced by younger and more educated clerics.

Another point of criticism is that a certain monastery has not been renovated. Recently, the issue was around Sanahin (which by the way is being renovated by the Ministry of Culture), ignoring the fact that a dozen other monasteries or churches have been renovated by Echmiadzin.

Armenians have been lackadaisical in their comfortable positions of local feudal lords and they get upset as the church strives to get organized as a unified – and unifying – entity. The cases in point are in Europe, especially in Switzerland and Nice, France, where troublemakers are trying to challenge the church hierarchy, always with the lofty slogans of "democracy" and "free will" of the people.

Following the Genocide and the deportations, Armenians settled in many European countries. Surviving the initial cultural shock, they settled into a more or less harmonious community life. Almost all the churches were local parishes without the framework of a diocese to make them a unified entity.

The new influx of immigrants has changed the scene entirely. Massive migrations from Iran, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria and Armenia have created an explosive situation, because each group was coming up with a different set of social and political baggage of values. This situation called for local leadership with foresight that could put to best use these differences. Unfortunately, polarization developed in Southern France between Armenians from Turkey and Armenia, and somewhat from Lebanon, reaching a critical situation, especially in Nice.

A crisis developed also in the Swiss-Armenian community, for entirely different reasons. The origins and the development of the Swiss crisis have been amply explained for anyone who has taken an interest to listen, but it has been exploited by some for their own selfish agendas.

The Geneva parish priest, Abel Oghloulkian (Manoukian), otherwise an erudite clergy, with a rebellious nature, fomented trouble. Being an articulate person, he was able to enlist to his cause a few local leaders. Oghloulkian, rather than using his education and religious training for constructive causes, created problems wherever he was assigned, first Vienna and then Geneva.

He broke his vow of celibacy and got married, contrary to church canons, and Echmiadzin was lenient considering his religious knowledge.

In 1992, His Holiness Vasken I had begun to form a diocese for the growing Swiss-Armenian community. After his demise, Catholicos Karekin I continued the project, with little success.

And now the situation exploded in the face of Catholicos Karekin II who simply tried to continue the task initiated by his predecessors. It looks like Oghloulkian and his ilk rather prefer to keep the Swiss-Armenian community in small parishes, than in unifying into a diocese, where the rebellious priest would remain under the jurisdiction of a Primate.

He challenged Echmiadzin's plans and was defrocked.

In all these local conflicts, certainly no party is blameless. The onus is on the local leadership and particularly outside armchair pundits, who run to the rescue of a rebellious clergy in the name of "democracy," "right to criticize authority" and so on.

Any freedom, not balanced with constructive responsibility, is reckless anarchy. Yet we find people with a great zeal to criticize without any constructive contribution.

The most vocal opposition to Echmiadzin, and for that matter to Armenia, comes from an online publication called KEGHART, co-edited by Dr. Dikran Abarahamian. Each issue has an orgy of anti-Armenia diatribes, putting to shame the Turkish and Azeri media.

KEGHART ran a petition against Echmiadzin "deploring patriarchal order" and in support of the rebellious clergy, rather than criticizing the indignant behavior of the defrocked priest.

Along with a number of insulting articles, we also find an editorial with a headline: "Hands off the Diaspora," with a further comment that "the scandalous incidents in Nice and Switzerland are not isolated events. They seem to be part-and-parcel of a plan to subjugate diaspora communities to the will of disgraceful rulers in Yerevan."

We have heard this same mantra for 70 years in the ARF press. It looks like the anti-Armenia crusade has changed hands and is being taken over by a more virulent group.

Any Armenian, with minimal sanity, would think what's wrong if Armenia and the diaspora work hand in hand, even under "the rulers in Yerevan?" Why espouse the cause of our enemies, pitting the diaspora against Armenia? Don't we have enough divisions imposed on us by our enemies and unfortunate turns of history?

KEGHART seems to be the gathering place of former Communists, fellow travelers and anarchists willing to inject any amount of poison to further alienate the diaspora from Armenia.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Armenia's independence with tremendous problems inherited from the past; a sagging economy, brain drain, many colorful religious sects infiltrating the society fabric and enemies in Ankara, Baku and Tbilisi bent on Armenia's destruction.

Armenia's leadership has been marked by many failures; Echmiadzin is reeling from its 70-year slumber; Armenia's population is abandoning the historic homeland in droves, after dreaming of independence for six centuries.

Where is the cure?

Spewing poison or trying to place one stone over the other so that the much-dreamed of homeland will survive for posterity?

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The Stones Will Cry Out

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

An exhibit in Paris in June would have been a magnificent tribute to the traditional Armenian stone crosses known as khachkars had it not been for the fact that, at the last minute, UNESCO erased all mention of where the stone crosses featured in photographs were located. The explanation for the elimination of the place names, as well as of a huge map of historic Armenia designating them, was that, since the *khachkars* were not all on the territory of the Republic of Armenia, but could also be found in present-day Azerbaijan and Turkey, it would be better to maintain silence.

But, there is no way to maintain silence; The stones will cry out. And they did. Representatives of the Collectif VAN (Vigilance Armenienne contre le Negationnisme) protested with an open letter to Irina Bokova, director general of UNESCO. They argued that not only does it violate academic practice to fail to mention the location of the art works, but, by so doing, the exhibitors were rendering themselves complicit in a wild distortion of the historical record. To ignore the place names is to conceal the historical presence of the Armenian people and civilization in that vast region.

Travelers through eastern Anatolia and present-day Azerbaijan will find some *khachkars* in their places of origin — although thousands have been deliberately destroyed — and will make the historical connection. It is not only the beautiful stone crosses but the wealth of religious monuments — chapels, churches, cathedrals or monasteries — populating that geographical region that testify to the physical and cultural presence of Christian Armenians over centuries. As Italian art historian Alpago Novello stressed, this religious art was an integral part of the Armenians' identity. "The Armenians' tenacious attachment to the Christian religion," he wrote, "testified by the thousands of crosses erected or sculpted almost everywhere and for every occasion, and by the extraordinary wealth of sacred buildings, was not merely a spiritual matter but a prime feature of their very identity and a symbol of their physical survival."

Yet that very presence is subject to denial and distortion. My brother, my husband and I experienced this during a journey through eastern Anatolia in May. In place of the historical record we encountered mythology, with its own personages, events and causality. In this mythological landscape, we were not in historic Armenia, let alone Western Armenia, but in eastern Turkey, in one of the Anatolian provinces, and everything we might have expected to recognize from past historical accounts had disappeared or had been transformed into something else — often into its very opposite.

We were part of a small group of Armenian Americans seeking to retrace the steps of parents and ancestors, to visit their villages and towns where they were born and lived before the Genocide. It was like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. We had scattered pieces from our parents, like names of villages, descriptions of some localities and we had read the accounts of eyewitnesses to the Genocide. But when we looked at a present-day map of Turkey, we more often than not found nothing resembling the place names. Our German guidebook did not offer much help.

Without Armen Aroyan, our tour guide who has 25 years' experience in accompanying pilgrims through the region, and our driver, who spoke both Turkish and Kurdish, we would never have found our way.

By asking at various points along the way, we did find Mashgerd, my father's village. We learned it is no longer called Mashgerd but Chakirtash. Here what we were looking for was the church in which, as my father had recounted, the townspeople had been locked for four days before being taken out to be killed. "There is no church here," the villagers told us to our dismay. There was a church some kilometers away that we could reach on foot, they said, but none in the town. Although the villagers had no knowledge of such a church, we knew there must be one, first, because wherever there was a sizable Armenian community there was a church or at least a chapel; secondly, because my father had written about its being in Mashgerd.

After a long while, a very old man appeared and said, yes, in fact, there was a church — *Kilise* — in the town. He led us down a dirt road, past a fountain and pointed to a large structure which at first did not look at all like a church. It was not shaped like other Armenian churches we knew, with their round central structures mounted on dodecagons or other polygons, rounded arches and conical domes, but was oblong and had a flat roof. The old man pointed to certain bricks cemented into the façade, which had Armenian characters inscribed on them: names, dates and khachkars. Aroyan explained that they were stones, which had perhaps been taken from the cemetery and used in building the church, according to a custom known throughout the area. Or, they were bricks designed to be part of the façade. So this was indeed a church, and it must have been the one my father knew!

Back in 1916, when the people were let out of the church after four days and taken to the center of the town, my father (eight at the time) had run for his life and managed to reach his grandmother's house about 100 yards away, and hid in the stable behind it. I walked that distance in several different directions from the church and the nearby central square looking for a dwelling that would fit that description, and I found several. Which one might have been his grandmother's house? There was no way of telling.

Locating Tzack, my mother's village, was not so easy, also because its name had been changed to Inn in Turkish. How different it was from her descriptions! At that time, there were about 100-150 families in Tzack, now, the villagers told us, the only inhabitants were three brothers and their families. An old woman, well into her 70s, welcomed us warmly and, hearing that we were Armenian Americans, told us that she herself was half Armenian. Her mother had been saved as a child and been married off to a Turkish man. "I remember only," the woman said, "that she always cried. She had lost everything, everyone, all her family." She went on to tell her own story. "I too was married to a Turkish man," she said wistfully, "and as a bride I also did nothing but cry." Visibly shaken by the recollection, she excused herself: "I have high blood pressure and cannot speak much longer."

Another piece of the jigsaw puzzle was Agin (Agn), the town where my mother's adoptive Turkish parents lived. Today it is known as Kemaliya, named after Mustafa Kemal, who praised its beauty, whereupon it was renamed and restored. It was nothing like the other villages we had seen. The main street was lined with beautifully renovated wooden façades, giving it the air of a Swiss chalet ski resort. There was a building housing a museum, which bore the unmistakable architectural traits of a lovely Armenian church with its graceful arches.

What we were looking for in Agin was the mosque on whose steps a Turkish shepherd had laid my infant mother, whom he had found, the only survivor among a field of corpses of women and children. As was the custom with foundlings, he took her to the town, and left her on the mosque steps, where a gendarme named Omar found her and took her in. Omar's wife, Gulnaz, who was childless, did not want the baby because it was *Giavour* (Christian), and because she felt she was too old to bring up a child, so she took her back to the mosque the following day and placed her again on the steps. While Gulnaz chatted with her lady friends, the child crawled over to her and tugged on her skirt, which she took as a sign from Allah that she should take care of her, and she did.

The mosque was very old and beautiful, built in 1070, restored in 1960 and again in 2005, located in the center of the village on a street going up from the main street. In front of the mosque was a small piazza, where perhaps Gulnaz and her lady friends had sat.

On the way to Erzincan, we stopped at Kemagh Gorge. Standing on the bridge over the river, we gazed up at the rocky ledges on both sides. It was from those lofty heights that Armenian men, lined up two by two and tied by the wrists, were thrust down the gorge, after having been bayoneted in the ribs by their murderers. Although the name Kemagh Gorge rings with an ominous tone to the ears of anyone familiar with the history, a newcomer to the site would have no way of knowing what he was seeing. A plaque fitted into the stone makes no mention of the tens of thousands of Armenians pushed to their deaths into the river. Instead, it commemorates six Turkish soldiers who had perished in a tragic automobile accident some years back.

Everywhere we went, we found remnants of Armenian churches, like the one in Zatkig, a village on the road to Kars, a 10th-century church, which, though in ruins, had bits of blue and white frescoes. Stones had been walled into the formerly open arches and the structure was now being used to store wood. From the abundance of hay in the back, it appeared that it may also have been being used as a stable. A similar image greeted us just prior to our entry to Erzurum, a city from the ancient Armenian kingdom at the end of the fourth century: the ruins of a church with grass growing on what once was its roof. It looked like hair sprouting from the head of a Benedictine monk which should have been shorn.

But in Kars, our next stop, the church stood out in magnificent contrast. The Apostles Church, built by King Abbas in 937, had been turned into a mosque in 1064. For 40 years beginning in 1878 during the Russian occupation, it served again as a Christian place of worship. It was a museum between 1969-1980, and again became a mosque in 1994.

But there could be no mistake about it — this was a church. The majestic reliefs on the upper portion of the façade under the dome between the arches are easily identifiable as the 12 apostles, at least, to anyone familiar with church architecture and iconography. The sign in English, placed there for the benefit of foreign tourists, gives no hint as to who worshipped there earlier. It said the church had been built by one Bagratid King Abbas (932-937) and listed its subsequent functions. The word "Armenian" was nowhere to be found. Who the Bagratids were was left to the imagination.

The same mythological reality greeted us at Ani, the magnificent ancient city, once capital of the Armenian kingdom. Two large plaques on the side of the city's ancient walls inform the visitor of Ani's long illustrious history, again without reference to the word "Armenian."

It was Ashot III (952-977), king of the Bagratids, who built Ani, "with its 1001 churches." This was clearly a metaphor, but just as clearly evidence of the fact that a large number — hundreds — of churches had graced the rolling hillsides and nested in the cave-like apertures along the steep slopes of the gorge down to the Ahurian River. One such edifice is the Church of St. Gregor of Abughamrents, erected in the middle of the 10th century, another is the Church of the Redeemer, completed in 1035-1036. Though now only half the structure stands, historical photos make reconstruction possible. Another, the Church of St. Gregor built in 1215

by Tigran Honents, hosts the most beautiful and best-preserved frescoes both inside the structure and on the outer walls, frescoes that cry out for restoration.

The masterpiece in Ani is the cathedral, an imposing structure despite its advanced state of decay. According to the account of a contemporary historian, Stephan of Taron in the 10th century, the Bagratid King Ashot died in 977 and was succeeded by his son, Smbat (977-989). Smbat commissioned the master architect Trdat to build a magnificent church. In the year 989, the year of Smbat's death, an earthquake hit Constantinople, causing immense damage to the Santa Sophia church. Trdat, the famed stone mason, knew what to do, as he had drawn up a plan and built a model of the church. So he went to Constantinople and led the reconstruction effort. Then Trdat returned to Ani and set to work on the cathedral.

When we left Ani and set out on the road to Van we encountered one monument, which very prominently featured the word "Armenian." This structure, built between 1995 and 1997 in Igdir, was modeled on the Genocide memorial in Montebello, Calif., but it honors the memory of Turkish martyrs killed by Armenian assassins. In the museum, photographs depict Turkish diplomats and other public figures assassinated by terrorists belonging to the ASALA movement. According to the plaques inside the building, up to one million Turks fell victim to them.

The highpoint of our pilgrimage was Akhtamar, perhaps the most beautiful Armenian church ever built, with its unique *bas* reliefs depicting scenes from the old and new testaments. Its harmonious architectural forms gain in majesty by virtue of its location, high on a hill on an island in the green-blue-turquoise-colored Lake Van, surrounded by snow-capped mountains. Akhtamar has gained special significance over the past year, both artistic and political. The façade of the church has been fully restored, including the *bas* reliefs, the most magnificent such restoration effort in Turkey. And in September 2010, Turkish authorities allowed a church service to be celebrated there, for the first time in 95 years. An altar piece with a depiction of the Virgin Mary with child, which was brought for the first service, remains. Now the church should host the divine liturgy once a year. We were allowed to sing the Lord's prayer (*Hayr Mer*) inside one chapel, but when Armen started filming the event, a guard told him to turn off the camera.

Though it defies belief, there is no indication that Akhtamar was and is an Armenian church. The architect was a monk named Manuel, who had built a palace for Gagik I, King of Vaspurakan, and between 915 and 921, he erected the church at Akhtamar. Though this is documented by historian Thomas Artsruni, there is no mention at the site today of who Manuel was, or what church he belonged to. This fact — perhaps even more than the controversy surrounding the 2010 service, the disagreements regarding who should or should not attend, or whether or not the cross could or should be placed on the top of the church — captures the psychological dilemma in official Turkey's attitude towards the Armenian question.

The official refusal of the Turkish establishment to acknowledge the 1915 Genocide has led it to attempt to deny the very existence over a thousand years of an Armenian civilization and culture. Because to acknowledge it would raise the question: what happened to that civilization? Why was it destroyed? How was it destroyed? Thus to say or to write, "This was an Armenian church" is so charged with associations that one prefers to avoid the words.

But such an enterprise is futile. No amount of denial can eradicate the fact that such a civilization did exist in Anatolia since time immemorial. The stones do cry out and increasing numbers of visitors from the Armenian Diaspora are traveling through the region and hearing the wonderful tales that the stones have to relate. Ordinary Turkish citizens, like the many we met during our visits to the villages and towns, had no problems in acknowledging the past.

The problem lies not with the Turkish people. In fact, there is a wave of ethnic rediscovery sweeping across Turkey, whereby hundreds if not hundreds of thousands of Turkish citizens are uncovering their Armenian roots and working through their family histories.

The problem lies not with them, but with the Turkish establishment who, as Hrant Dink put it, has been suffering from "paranoia" as a result of the historical burden of the Genocide. To protect the paranoia, the Turkish establishment has perpetuated the fantasy of denial, going to absurd lengths trying to rewrite a history of the region which omits the Armenian presence.

As any clinical psychiatrist will attest, overcoming such paranoia must involve facing reality. This means acknowledging the historical record, not only recognizing the Genocide perpetrated by a specific Young Turk regime in a specific time frame and circumstances, but acknowledging the existence of the Armenian component — cultural, political, and religious — as an integral part of the history of what is today's Turkey. The most appropriate approach would entail cooperative efforts by the Turkish authorities with Armenians, from the Republic of Armenia and the diaspora, to restore and rebuild the artistic treasures of the Christian tradition, to rehabilitate that contribution to world civilization and to reopen the houses of worship. The role of UNESCO should not be to provide cover for the distortion of history, but to let the stones cry out.

(Muriel Mirak-Weissbach is the author of *Through the Wall of Fire: Armenia — Iraq — Palestine: From Wrath to Reconciliation*, 2009. She can be reached at murielweissbach@googlemail.com and www.mirak-weissbach.de.)



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Congressional Panel Urges Turkey to Return Church Properties to Christians

The House Foreign Affairs Committee adopted a strong-worded measure on July 20, pressing Turkey to return all Christian church properties “to their rightful owners.”

By an overwhelming 43-1 vote, the congressional panel adopted a sweeping amendment to the State Department’s Foreign Relations Authorization Act, urging “the Secretary of State in all official contacts with Turkish leaders and other Turkish officials to emphasize that Turkey should:”

- 1) end all religious discrimination;
- 2) allow the rightful church and lay owners of Christian church properties to perform religious and social services;
- 3) return to their rightful owners all Christian churches and other places of worship, monasteries, schools, hospitals, monuments, relics, holy sites and other religious properties, including artwork, manuscripts, vestments, vessels and other artifacts and
- 4) allow the rightful church and lay owners of Christian church properties to repair all churches and other places of worship, monasteries, schools, hospitals, monuments, relics, holy sites and other religious properties within Turkey.

Despite intensive efforts by Turkey’s ambassador in Washington, Turkish and Azerbaijani organizations and lobbying firms hired by Ankara, almost all members of the Committee, including Turkey’s staunchest supporters, voted in favor of the amendment, dealing Turkey a devastating defeat. The single negative vote was cast by Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) because of his isolationist ideology and not his

support for Turkey!

This near unanimous vote did not come as a surprise to me, as I had long advocated the passage of such a measure realizing that members of Congress could not possibly vote against religious freedom. All 15 members of Congress who spoke during the hearing indicated their support for the amendment. Here are excerpts from some of their remarks:

• Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA), who offered the amendment jointly with Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI), stated: “We want Turkey to return confiscated property to Christian communities and at a minimum to provide compensation for properties that can’t be recovered.... In this particular area, their [Turks’] practices for many years...have been atrocious.”

• Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA): “This amendment is urgently needed to address the vast destruction of Christian religious heritage as a result of the Turkish government’s theft, desecration and disregard of ancient Christian holy sites and churches.”

• Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN), one of the staunchest supporters of Turkey: “I do support the amendment. I do support religious freedom, and I hope that this amendment does pass.”

• Rep. Gerald Connolly (D-VA), co-chair of the Turkish Congressional Caucus: “Religious freedom is a tenet of American philosophy and it is a cardinal of our American values. I look forward to supporting the language.”

• Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA), co-sponsor of House Resolution 306, which formed the basis for the proposed amendment: “Turkey is identified as a country among the world’s top violators of religious freedom.... So we urge Turkey to return all confiscated church properties taken from these religions that were frankly stolen.”

• Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY): “Turkey is an ally in NATO, and we recognize that. I wish frankly that they would act more like an ally to the United States than they have lately. They really have gone astray.... Their Foreign Minister has set out a policy of Islamism and has moved away from the European Union, the West and the United States, and has behaved very poorly frankly with the flotilla and Israel and the whole bit.”

Turkey’s ambassador to the US, Namik Tan, disingenuously attributed the setback suffered by his country to the

work of “radical Armenians.” He must have forgotten that the Turkish government is the one paying millions of dollars to lobbying firms each year to influence members of Congress, and that 43 out of 44 Foreign Affairs Committee members, including Turkey’s staunchest supporters, could not possibly be in the pockets of a handful of “radical Armenians.”

Turkish leaders have not made a public statement after the adoption of the amendment, in order to hide this embarrassing episode. Surprisingly, Armenian government officials have not commented either on this issue. Obama administration officials have also remained silent and refrained from overt efforts to block the amendment in view of its overwhelming bipartisan support.

While Armenian, Assyrian and Greek-Americans have won the first skirmish, they have not yet won the final battle. The Authorization Bill along with this amendment will next go to the full House for approval. A similar bill has to be adopted by the Senate. A joint committee of both houses will then attempt to reconcile the differences between the two versions.

Turkish lobbyists and the Obama administration still have an opportunity to remove the amendment from the larger bill. Supporters of the amendment must remain vigilant, urging their House and Senate representatives to vote in favor of keeping the church amendment in the Authorization Bill.

Even though the amendment has no legally binding effect, it is a moral victory for all those who cherish religious freedom and a major political success for the Armenian-American community, which went toe to toe against the mighty Turkish lobbying machine and dealt it a devastating blow. The amendment also exposes the alarming condition of Christian churches in Turkey, paving the way for other countries and international organizations, such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO, to support their restoration.

Yet, the most effective way of forcing Turkey to return the confiscated Christian churches to their rightful owners is by filing lawsuits in the European Court of Human Rights. The Turkish government has accepted the jurisdiction of that court and has readily complied with its verdicts.

Armenian-Azeri Dispute Shifts to European Court

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has become a new front in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, with each side filing hundreds of individual cases claiming abuse and discrimination by the other.

Relations between the two countries remain poisoned by the status of Nagorno Karabagh, where the ethnic Armenian population has declared its own state. The entity has not been recognized as independent by any other country, and Azerbaijan continues to insist on sovereignty.

Experts say that in the absence of a settlement, both sides are keen to score political points by winning legal battles against the other.

Most appeals to the European court relate to injuries or property losses sustained in the war, which ended with a ceasefire in 1994, but a steady trickle of new complaints is keeping lawyers busy.

Two ongoing cases – Chiragov and others versus Armenia and Sargisian versus Azerbaijan – had their initial hearings in Strasbourg on the same day last September and are almost exact mirror images of one another. In both, the plaintiffs are claiming damages under articles of the European Convention on Human Rights that enshrine rights to property, family life and justice and outlaw discrimination.

“Sargisian v. Azerbaijan” also includes complaints of inhuman and degrading treatment and breaches of freedom of confession, the latter with regard to the destruction of Armenian cemeteries in Azerbaijan.

The plaintiff, Minas Sargisian, has since died, but his case is being pursued by his widow.

There are plenty more cases in the making in which Azerbaijanis and Armenians claim they have been harmed by the opposing state.

On the Azerbaijani side, many cases concern the hundreds of thousands of people forced to leave their homes during the Karabagh war and still unable to return.

By Seymur Kazimov, Naira Bulh gadaryan

Ahmed Shirinov, now 71, has submitted a claim to the ECHR concerning the loss of his property when he fled his home in the Jebail district as Armenian forces attacked in 1993.

“The Armenians destroyed my home, my farm and all my livestock. I had built all these buildings myself, and I lost everything in a single day. That cannot go unpunished, so I’ve decided to go to the international court,” he said.

Proving ownership in court will be especially difficult because many people like Shirinov left in such a hurry that they took no personal documents with them.

Teyyub Babayev was left in the same position after leaving the Kapan region of Armenia as he felt his situation as an ethnic Azerbaijani deteriorating in 1988.

Because he was a resident in Armenia itself, rather than in Karabagh or one of the adjoining districts it still controls, compensation is the most Babayev can hope for if his case is taken up by the ECHR.

“The forced migrants have the hope that sooner or later they will return to their homes – if not themselves, then their children or grandchildren. But we don’t have that hope. As refugees from Armenia, we will never be able to return to our homes,” he said.

In Armenia, there is considerable interest in the case of Arthur Badalyan, whose lawyers are to pursue a compensation claim at the ECHR, alleging the Azerbaijani authorities held him illegally for two years and subjected him to torture before releasing him this March.

Badalyan says he crossed the border from Armenia into Azerbaijan by accident, and was then detained.

“They wanted to force me to talk about the strength of the Armenian army. I refused to do so. They beat me up. They beat me on the feet

so that I couldn’t stand or walk, and then they tried to force information out of me using electric shocks,” he said.

The International Committee of the Red Cross finally located him and arranged for his repatriation. His family says he returned seriously disturbed and still finds it hard to sleep.

His lawyer Edmon Marukyan insists, “Azerbaijan must pay compensation to this citizen of Armenia for the fact that it illegally held him on its territory, used torture and caused serious harm to his health.”

Officials in Azerbaijan deny that Badalyan was mistreated in detention.

“You can’t even talk about torture as a possibility. Badalyan’s statements are completely absurd,” Teymur Abdullayev, deputy head of the defense ministry’s press service, said.

If these cases are accepted for consideration by the ECHR, they will not be tried for some years since the court has a large backlog. “Chiragov and others versus Armenia,” for example, was submitted to the court in 2005 but the first hearing took place only last autumn.

In both Azerbaijan and Armenia, critics accuse the other side of putting cases to the ECHR for political ends.

Arman Melikyan, an adviser at the Refugees and International Law network in Yerevan, told IWPR that he regarded the cases brought by Azerbaijanis as a “political trend” designed to give the unresolved Karabagh dispute an airing in a new forum.

Melikyan said that if the court allowed such cases, it could open a wave of complaints from Armenians, for example those who fled Baku and other towns in Azerbaijan because of ethnic violence in the late 1980s.

“If a case brought by Baku Armenians was accepted for consideration, a question would

arise about when the individual became a refugee, since it wasn’t during the period of military operations in 1989-94, but earlier on, as a result of ethnic cleansing conducted in Azerbaijan.... it would be clear that the problem wasn’t a consequence of war or aggression by the Armenians,” he said.

In Azerbaijan, similar accusations are made about Armenian cases at the ECHR.

“These appeals to the European court by individual citizens of Armenia are purely political. Many international organizations now recognize Armenia as the aggressor, and the whole world recognises that Nagorno-Karabagh is part of Azerbaijan’s territory,” Malahat Hasanova, a member of parliament from the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan party, said. “Armenians are trying to justify themselves in the eyes of the world community, so they present themselves as victims of the conflict. I don’t think these cases have any substance at all.”

The authorities in the two countries are keeping a close eye on current cases – both their own and the other side’s.

Chingiz Askerov, Azerbaijan’s representative at the ECHR, said more than 600 refugees in his country had filed complaints against Armenia, and the number was growing every day.

Not all cases will end up in the courtroom, since plaintiffs must overcome legal hurdles and come up with relevant evidence.

“There are very few lawyers working in this area,” said Asabeli Mustafayev, head of the Resource Centre for Democracy and Human Rights in Azerbaijan. “In addition, a group of con-men has been selling aggrieved citizens application forms for the European Court. Documentation compiled in that manner is of dubious quality.”

Plaintiffs alleging loss will have to demonstrate not only that they owned property but also that it was deliberately taken away from them. This will be particularly hard to prove in



US House Panel Tells Turkey to Safeguard Christian Heritage

SAFEGUARDS, from page 1

preserve places of worship belonging to Jews and Christians," Namik Tan, Turkey's ambassador to Washington, said in a statement.

But the two main Armenian advocacy groups in Washington hailed the almost unanimous committee vote. Bryan Ardouny, executive director of the Armenian Assembly of America, singled out Royce and the two Democratic co-sponsors of the amendment for praise.

One of them, Howard Berman of California, has been a key congressional backer of draft resolutions describing the World War I-era mass killings and deportations of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire as genocide.

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) called the amendment a "powerful victory for religious freedom." "Ninety-six years after the genocide perpetrated against the Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians, the Turkish government has destroyed or confiscated the vast majority of their holy sites and places of

worship," the ANCA executive director, Aram Hamparian, said in a statement.

The measure was also welcomed by high-ranking representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the United States. "I hope that this will be the first of many steps towards preserving Armenian Christian heritage in Turkey," said Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, legate of a church diocese in the eastern US.

Ayvazian attended the committee debate together with several other Armenian-American clerics.

The eastern regions of modern-day Turkey were home to hundreds of Armenian churches built there since the early Middle Ages. The vast majority of them were destroyed, ransacked or turned into mosques during and after the 1915 slaughter of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

One of the few surviving examples of the ancient Armenian civilization in the mountainous area, the 10th century church of Surp

Khach (Holy Cross), was renovated by the Turkish government in 2007. The church perched on the legendary Akhtamar Island in Lake Van saw its first mass in nearly a century last September.

The authorities in Ankara also reluctantly agreed to allow the Armenian patriarchate in Istanbul to restore a cross on its dome. But they have resisted calls for the church's return to Turkey's Armenian community.

Akhtamar currently has the status of a state museum.

The Turkish government caused outrage in Armenia and its worldwide diaspora later in 2010 when it allowed hundreds of Turkish

nationalists to perform Muslim prayers in another historic Armenian church, the 11th century Holy Virgin Cathedral.

The imposing cathedral is located at the ruins of Ani, the capital of a medieval Armenian kingdom. It lies less than one kilometer from the Turkish-Armenian border.

Built by an Armenian royal dynasty in 1001 AD, the cathedral has for centuries been regarded as a masterpiece of medieval Armenian architecture. According to official Turkish sources, Seljuk Sultan Alparslan converted it into a mosque when he captured Ani and surrounding regions in 1064. The Seljuks were driven out of much of historical Armenia a century later.

Armenian-Azeri Dispute Shifts to European Court

DISPUTES, from page 15

Nagorno-Karabagh itself, which Armenia says lies beyond its territorial jurisdiction.

"The Republic of Armenia has no authority in the Republic of Nagorno-Karabagh and cannot therefore take responsibility for any alleged violation of an individual's rights there," Gevorg Kostanyan, who represents the Armenian government at the ECHR, said.

Some commentators believe Armenia and Azerbaijan would do better to seek a negotiated settlement that makes provision for all refugees on both sides, instead of encouraging individual claims.

"I don't believe the ECHR is the right institution to sort out the issue of compensation and restitution for refugees in the Karabagh conflict," Thomas de Waal, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, said.

"As we have seen in Cyprus, the court is able to rule on individual claims, but that can actually complicate things. For example, what do you about a refugee who is now living in a place that used to belong to another displaced per-

son, for example an Armenian from Shaumyan region living in a house in Shusha that used to belong to an Azerbaijani?"

The presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan are due to meet in Russia later this month. Russian, American and French mediators would like them to finally sign up to a set of basic principles for a peace process that would gradually return Armenian-controlled regions around Karabagh to Azerbaijani control, and assigning Nagorno Karabagh itself an interim status pending an referendum on its future.

"One of the six key basic principles in the document the presidents are discussing in Kazan is the right of return for all displaced people," de Waal said. "I think that a comprehensive approach which covers everyone who lost their home in the conflict as part of a wider settlement has to be the right one."

(Seymur Kazimov is project officer at the Azerbaijan Media Centre. Naira Bulghadaryan is a correspondent for Radio Liberty in Armenia. Sara Khojovyan, IWPR Armenia country director, also contributed material to this report.)

TCA Board Meets with California Chapters

TCA, from page 1

Maro Bedrosian, chairman of the TCA Board of Administrators, presented the Sponsor A Teacher programs' successes during the past 11 years, and Central Board Assistant Secretary Vatche Semerdjian discussed the impact of Tekeyan on the cultural life of the Armenian Community in the Los Angeles area.

A discussion of current events and issues were openly discussed with the participation of Rouben Terzian, Edmond Azadian, Vahan Voskian, George Mandosian, Harry Meneshian, Papken Megerian and others.



Participants of TCA California Chapter executive members and TCA Central Board of Directors

Armenia Wins World Chess Team Championship

CHAMPS, from page 1

Two of its three post-Soviet presidents are keen chess players who have promoted the game while in office. The current president, Serge Sargisian, heads the Armenian Chess Federation. He personally supported the national team during its Olympic triumphs.

Earlier this year, Sargisian's government decided to make chess a mandatory subject in primary schools.

The Armenian National Congress, an opposition grouping led by former President Levon Ter-Petrosian, was quick to welcome the "brilliant" victory in Ningbo. "Thanks to this feat by

our chess players, Armenia has entered the chess Olympus for good," it declared in a special statement.

"This is a great result," agreed Vanik Zakarian, the honorary chairman of the Armenian Chess Federation. "Our team has been considered a major contender in all chess competitions held in recent years."

Zakarian said the championship victory is no less significant than the Olympic titles. "What makes chess Olympiads different is that all teams compete in them, whereas only the selected best teams take part in world championships," he said.



MASSACHUSETTS

SEPTEMBER 16 and 17 — A weekend of Art and Renewal with The Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA), featuring the works of Yousuf Karsh.

- September 16 — ALMA will host a gala celebration at the Fairmont Copley Plaza, Boston, honoring the life and works of world-renowned Armenian-Canadian photographer, Yousuf Karsh, and the permanent collection of his portraits gifted by his wife, Estrella Karsh. Reservations can be made online by visiting ALMA website at www.almainc.org or call (617) 926-2562, ext. 31.

- September 17 — Opening reception of the exhibition Karsh: Celebrating Humanity in ALMA's newly-designed Bedoukian Gallery, 6:30-8:30 p.m., 65 Main St., Watertown. Celebrate the new face of ALMA and the many faces of Karsh. For info, contact ALMA.

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