

Owners Protest Kiosk Closures in Yerevan

By Elina Chilingarian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Owners of kiosks across Yerevan selling food, cigarettes and other goods continued to demonstrate on Monday against the closure of their small businesses, which was ordered by Mayor Karen Karapetian earlier this year.

More than a hundred workers gathered outside the mayor's office to protest against what they see as an illegal and unfair decision that will leave them without a source of income.

Karapetian made the decision following an equally controversial ban on street trade that was imposed by him in January. The ban affected between 3,000 and 10,000 people eking out a modest living in the Armenian capital.

The closure of kiosks began about three months ago and appears to have gained more momentum last week, with scores of owners receiving written notices informing them that their properties will be dismantled in the next three days. Some of them vowed to resist the enforcement of the ban, while others began daily demonstrations outside the municipal administration on Friday.

A spokeswoman for Karapetian, Shushan Sardarian, said that some 1,200 small shops have already been dismantled. Sardarian could not give the

exact number of kiosks that are due be shut down, though it is likely to be in the thousands.

The Yerevan municipality says Karapetian's decision applies to those kiosks that operate without valid licenses or are located on major streets in and out-

acceptable" agreements with the owners of kiosks falling into the latter category. "That means that they will probably be offered other locations [for selling things]," she said.

The protesters dismissed these explanations. "We have one-year contracts with



Above, owners of commercial kiosks in Yerevan protest against Mayor Karen Karapetian's decision to dismantle them. Left, workers dismantle a kiosk in Yerevan.

suppliers [of goods], and we have borrowed loans from banks," one of them said.

Many of the protesters also claimed to have recently purchased government licenses allowing them to sell tobacco and alcohol and paid other taxes in advance. see PROTESTS, page 16



Russian President Dmitry Medvedev met with his visiting Azerbaijani counterpart, Ilham Aliyev

Medvedev and Aliyev in Crunch Talks on Karabagh

SOCHI, Russia (RFE/RL) — Russian President Dmitry Medvedev met with his visiting Azerbaijani counterpart, Ilham Aliyev, on Tuesday for what he described as "extremely frank" talks on the future of the Nagorno-Karabagh peace process.

The two leaders made no public statements after the meeting held in the southern Russian city.

The Kremlin said they discussed "pivotal issues in Russian-Azerbaijani relations" and "the state of the negotiating process on the Nagorno-Karabagh settlement." It gave no details.

"Of course, the Nagorno-Karabagh settlement is one of the most important topics," Medvedev told Aliyev in televised remarks made at the start of the talks.

see TALKS, page 16

Ministry Appeals Dink Payment Ruling

ISTANBUL (*Radikal*) — Turkey's Interior Ministry has denied any responsibility in Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink's assassination, claiming in a failed appeal to the Council of State that paying compensation to the man's family would lead to "unjustified enrichment."

The 10th Istanbul Administrative Court ordered the Interior Ministry on October 27, 2010, to pay 100,000 liras in damages to Hosrof and Yervant Dink, Hrant Dink's two brothers, due to the gross dereliction of duty allegedly committed by the ministry in Dink's assassination. The court said the ministry had not prevented the murder and had failed to protect Dink despite the fact that it was in possession of sufficient evidence that there was a plot against the journalist's life.

The Interior Ministry then appealed to the Council of State to not enforce the judgement. The Council of State, however, denied the ministry's appeals. The Interior Ministry also said the lawsuit against it should have been filed at a court of first instance, rather than at an administrative court; it also referred to Dink's assassination as a "nefarious attack" in its appeal to the Council of State.

Dink was the editor of *Agos* and Turkey's best-known Armenian voice abroad. He was shot in broad daylight as he left his office in Istanbul's Shishli district in 2007.



Hrant Dink

Armenian Church Re-Opens to Worship in Southern Turkey

ISTANBUL (WorldBulletin.net) — An Armenian church was re-opened on Sunday for worship after being closed for nine years in Iskenderun, a town in the southern province of Hatay.

The Armenian patriarchate of Istanbul appointed Rev. Avedis Tabashyan to Karasun Manuk Armenian Church in Iskenderun.

The former priest of the church, Sarkis Serup Bilyan, died in 2002, and the church has been closed since then.

The church was built in 1872.

400 Iranian-Armenians Partake in Pan-Armenian Games

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Armenian community to Iran has always been active in the Pan-Armenian Games. This year, more than 400 Iranian-Armenian sports practitioners arrived in Yerevan to partake in the Games, according to Odette Aghajanian, coordinator of the Armenian sports delegation from Iran.

"It would be better if the Pan-Armenian Games, which are amateur games, became more professional. It would be more useful and interesting," she said.

St. Petersburg Orchestra to Perform In Armenia

MOSCOW (Panorama) — At the invitation of the Armenian Ministry of Culture, within the framework of the Armenian-Russian cooperation, the St. Petersburg State Orchestra will perform concerts in Gumri and Yerevan, from August 27 to September 3, the ministry announced.

The St. Petersburg State Orchestra is conducted by Vladimir Pavlov.

In Yerevan, the orchestra's concert will take place at Aram Khachaturian Concert hall on September 2.

Yanni to Perform Solo Concert in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Panorama) — World famous musician, composer and pianist Yanni will perform a solo concert at Karen Demirchian Sports and Concerts Complex of Yerevan on September 23. Armenian violinist Samvel Yervinyan is in Yanni's band.

In September, the band will also perform on tours in Eastern European countries, in Istanbul, Bucharest, Korea, etc.

The tickets for Yanni's Yerevan concert are not yet on sale.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

New Armenian Catholic Leader Appointed

YEREVAN (Lragir.am) – The Catholics of Armenia have a new leader. The official ceremony of Archbishop Raphael Minasyan's appointment was held at the Arevik Cathedral of Saint Gregory the Illuminator. Armenian Catholics have been without a leader for more than a year, after the resignation of Vahan Ohanyan.

Minasyan is appointed the new head of the Armenian Catholics in Armenia, Georgia and Eastern Europe.

Prime Minister Receives UNICEF Rep in Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian received this week UNICEF representative in Armenia, Laylee Moshiri-Gilani, who is concluding her activity here.

The governmental press service said that upon welcoming Moshiri-Gilani, Sargsian said, "Armenia highly assesses the role of the UNICEF and your own role in defense of children's rights in our country and in solution of issues on improvement of their health and life." Sargsian pointed out the productivity of the United Nations Children's Fund's activity in Armenia and the programs which provide opportunities for children in orphanages.

Moshiri-Gilani also expressed her gratitude for Armenia's high-level cooperation and support, which was one of the reasons for the efficient work by UNICEF's Armenia office.

The new UNICEF representative in Armenia will assume his/her mission from September.

Tourism Index Increases By 15.6 Percent

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – In the first half of this year, 266,155 tourists visited Armenia. Head of Tourism Department of Armenian Economy Ministry Mekhak Apresyan said that the tourism index has increased by 15.6 percent against the same period of the last year.

Armenia receives many tourists, especially from Russia and Georgia. For the first time, Armenia has received tourists from Latin America and Scandinavia. Apresyan noted that showing of a film about Armenia in Scandinavian countries gives its result.

According to him, the tourists' growth is a result of right policy. Considerable work has been implemented in the direction of advertising of Armenia. The diaspora too plays a large role in attracting tourists to Armenia.

Efforts are being carried out to improve infrastructure and services, and to bring in more foreign journalists to tour wineries and historical regions.

3 Drown in Lake Sevan

YEREVAN (Hetq) – On August 8, three people drowned in Lake Sevan.

It is reported that the deaths occurred in areas without lifeguards, away from the main public beach.

Skype Considers Nagorno-Karabagh a Part of Armenia

STEPANAKERT (Panorama) – Skype Internet Company considers Nagorno-Karabagh a part of Armenia, according to the Polish *Biuletyn Informacyjny Studium* (BIS) magazine. Among the paid calls, Karabagh is in the Armenian tariff list – "Armenia-Yerevan" – 12.1 cents, "Armenia" mob. 23 cents and "Armenia-Nagorno-Karabagh" 26.2 cents.

According to the source, Skype is not the only company to consider Karabagh a part of Armenia. It is said that among Armenian operators ArmenTel, K-Telecom CJSC (VivaCell), Orange (Orange Armenia CJSC) and Armenia-Karabagh Telecom can be found.

Nagorno-Karabagh has its own local operator, Karabagh Telecom.

Three Interns Travel to Armenia to Work at FAR Children's Support Center in Yerevan

By Melanie Panosian

YEREVAN – This summer the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) Central Council has teamed up with the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) and Birthright Armenia to create an eight-week internship at the FAR Children's Support Center here. For the summer of 2011 – its inaugural year – the program has accepted three interns from various backgrounds to be the pioneers in this project: Tatevik Khoja-Eynatyan, Crystal Densmore and Krista Tyner.

Coordinated by Birthright Armenia, the interns moved in with host families in Yerevan on June 12 and will reside there as they serve in the homeland until August 7. Along with housing accommodations, the interns are enrolled in Armenian lessons and participate in excursions through Birthright Armenia.

Nancy Basmajian, executive secretary of ACYOA, thanked Linda Yapoyan, the Birthright Armenia director, who has

been "very cooperative in helping the ACYOA coordinate the trip, as has travel agent Shake Derderian."

Through their work at the FAR Children's Center, the interns are gaining knowledge about children and family protection services in Armenia, in addition to hands-on experience in various departments. The center, founded in 2000 in Yerevan, provides psychological, social and medical counseling for Armenian children ages 3 to 18. The FAR Children's Center is the only institution in Armenia that functions as a crisis intervention and rehabilitation center for children in need.

As a facility, it also provides shelter, counseling, outreach services, health care and legal assistance to children and their families 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The interns assist with the operations of the center on a daily basis; yet as Tyner explained, "No two days are exactly the same, which is great because we get to see all aspects of the organization."

Working under Armenia's leading expert in child protection services and executive director of the center, Dr. Mira Antonyan, the interns have the opportunity to attend conferences and social work meetings, and help Antonyan edit articles for publication and conduct research.

Khoja-Eynatyan expressed her appreciation for "Dr. Antonyan's relentlessness and kindness, which have been immensely inspiring." She added, "the knowledge Dr. Antonyan bestows on us about social work in Armenia has been invaluable."

Khoja-Eynatyan, 22, of the St. Mary Church in Washington, DC, is giving individual piano lessons to the children at the center, in addition to using her Armenian fluency to assist as a transla-

tor. She is currently studying at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University for a graduate performance degree in percussion and has already received degrees in percussion and musicology from the same university.

Tyner, 22, of the St. James Church in Evanston, Ill., is teaching dance to the children at the center. A recent graduate of Loyola University in Chicago with a degree in sociology and minors in psychology and dance, Tyner has been chairperson of her parish's senior ACYOA chapter for the past two years.



From left: Crystal Densmore, Krista Tyner and Tatevik Khoja-Eynatyan outside the FAR Children's Support Center in Yerevan, Armenia

US Official Concerned About Karabagh 'Stalemate'

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A senior US official has reportedly expressed concern about a "dangerous stalemate" in the long-running international efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

Alexander Vershbow, the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, was quoted by the Itar-Tass news agency on Friday as saying that Armenia and Azerbaijan have taken "a step back" since the last meeting of their presidents held in Kazan, Russia on June 24.

"Efforts to achieve a breakthrough in the Kazan talks were not successful, and tension along the [Armenian-Azerbaijani] line of contact is rising," he said during hearings at the US Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe held late on Thursday.

According to Itar-Tass, Vershbow added that Yerevan and Baku are unable to finalize the basic principles of a Karabagh settlement proposed by the United States, Russia and France and that "we remain in a non-constructive and dangerous stalemate."

Corrections

The first paragraph of a commentary by Edmond Y. Azadian, "Echmiadzin under Attack" (7-30-11), made a reference to the Fortress of Erzeroum. Instead it should have said the Fortress of Kars.

Also, an interview by Hagop Vartivarian with Panos Titizian, which appeared in the July 30 edition of the *Mirror-Spectator*, incorrectly identified the family relationship between Edward Gulbenkian and Calouste Gulbenkian. They are distant cousins.

We regret the errors.

Western Investor to Look For Shale Gas in Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A Western offshore-registered company pledged this month to explore Armenia's untapped deposits of shale gas, a new and increasingly important source of energy, and possibly attract foreign investment in their commercial exploitation.

A top executive of the company, International Minerals and Mines (IMM), signed a relevant memorandum of understanding with Energy Minister Armen Movsisian in Yerevan.

The development came two months after a similar agreement signed by the Armenian and US governments. It calls for a "cooperative assessment and technical studies" of Armenia's shale gas resources to be conducted by Movsisian's ministry and the US Geological Survey, a government agency.

In a written statement, the Armenian government said IMM plans to "fully explore and develop shale fuel reserves existing in our country." It said the company will do that through a recently established subsidiary called IMM Energy Armenia.

The statement did not specify any time frames or other details of the exploratory work. Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian, who was present at the signing ceremony, was cited as

stressing the importance of the deal.

According to corporate records available on the Internet, both IMM and IMM Energy Armenia were registered in the Isle of Man, a British-run tax haven, as recently as on June 16.

The US-Armenian memorandum on shale exploration was also signed in June. The Armenian Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources said at the time that the two sides will not only gauge the feasibility of shale mining in Armenia but possibly devise "investment projects" for that purpose.

The ministry added that the agreement is the result of an international conference on shale gas that was hosted by the US State Department in August 2010. It said US officials offered exploration grants to government representatives from Armenia and about two-dozen other countries that attended the three-day forum.

"The organizers ... noted the readiness of the US government and companies to make investments in those countries," read a ministry statement issued on June 2.

Shale has become an increasingly important source of natural gas in the United States over the past decade. Shale gas industries have also emerged in Europe and China.



INTERNATIONAL

Genocide Expert Calls on Israel to Put Armenian Suffering before Politics

By Raphael Ahren

JERUSALEM (*Haaretz*) – If Israel recognizes the Turkish genocide of over 1 million Armenians in the near future, it may be largely due to the decades-long efforts of American-born scholar Israel Charny. But Charny, now living in Jerusalem, is wary of a renewed push for detente between Israel and Turkey, which may torpedo his campaign for recognition.

“The whole business of rapprochement with Turkey is a game that politicians should and must play, because we want to get out of that process as much as possible,” Charny told Anglo File this week. “But I don’t think it should be done with the illusion that we’re dealing with anything but a totalitarian, dangerous government. I don’t think we should ever compromise again on the ethical principal whether to deny the Armenian Genocide or not – that should not be a basis for the attempt to remarry after the divorce.”

Turkey vociferously objects to calling the events between 1915 and 1923, during which Ottoman forces killed more than a million Armenians, as genocide. Israel, which considered Turkey an important regional ally until recently, never officially recognized the Genocide. But after bilateral relations cooled down in recent years, especially after the last year’s flotilla to Gaza, during which Israeli troops killed nine Turks – the demand to recognize the Armenian Genocide gained strength.

The Knesset’s tackling of the issue represents the fruition of decades of work by Charny, the longtime director of the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem. In May he received a prize for his work fighting for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the south-eastern European country’s president.

“Professor Charny is a very fair person who stand on his principles – there is no one like him,” said Georgette Avakian, the leader of the Jerusalem-based Armenian Case Committee, adding that if Israel ever recognized her people’s suf-

fering, it would to a great extent be thanks to Charny. “He is one of the few people in the world who really look for the truth,” she said.

Charny, who was born in New York, co-founded and presided over the International Association of Genocide Scholars.

“Professor Charny is a true pioneer in the field, he is probably the first to introduce the people to comparative genocide studies, which includes recognition of the scope of the Holocaust but not forgetting about the suffering and genocides of other people in the world,” said Marc Sherman, the New York-born director of information services at Jerusalem’s Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide.

In the past, when Israel enjoyed better relations with Turkey, Charny often fought for recognition of the Genocide, against Jerusalem’s wishes. In 1982, he organized in Tel Aviv the first international genocide conference that featured Armenian speakers, Sherman said.

A few years later, after state TV was pressured not to air a film about the Armenian Genocide, Charny arranged a private screening in a Jerusalem cinema. He also testified against revered American-Jewish historian Bernard Lewis, who was on trial in France for denying the Genocide. “Charny never backed down from standing up and confronting the denial of the Armenian Genocide,” Sherman said.

But Charny does not deny Jerusalem’s need for realpolitik.

The Knesset discussed recognition of the Genocide for the first time on May 19. On June 29, member of Knesset, Arye Eldad, introduced a bill to declare every April 24 Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. His bill was rejected but will be discussed, together with a possible official recognition of the Genocide, by the Knesset’s Education Committee.

However, no date has been set yet for the discussion, the committee’s spokeswoman told Anglo File.

“I totally understand that the people who run our country periodically have to make decisions that on the surface are not ethical and of the highest values because there are other value issues that

take precedence. The survival of Israel absolutely is first priority,” he told Anglo File in his book-cramped study in Jerusalem’s Baka neighborhood. “But I’ve got lines to draw.”

Despite legitimate political, economic or military concerns, Israel must not continue to deny the suffering of another people, if only because of its own suffering, Charny said.

“When it comes to Israel’s denial of the Armenian Genocide, I ask first of all: what would our government’s and our people’s reaction be to any government that denies the Holocaust?” he said.

A clinical psychologist by profession, Charny became interested in genocide studies in the 1960s after having a dream.

“I wake up and the dream has led me to very powerful emotional experiences, including rage: How could they do what they did to our people in the Holocaust? How could human beings exercise such a beastly cruelty?” he recalled. “Then I had a horrible realization: I was a specialist in human behavior, accredited from the best American educational and clinical systems, and I never learned one miserable word about human cruelty and evil.”

It was then that Charny decided to dedicate himself to the study of genocides.

“The first thing I did was I wrote *Yad Vashem* and I asked them to direct me to books in their library about the psychology of the Holocaust and genocide. The answer was, we’re so sorry, we have no such books.”

Since then, Charny has written and edited more than a dozen books on the topic, three of which won the American Library Association’s Outstanding Academic Book of the Year award. His latest work, *And You Must Destroy the Evil in You: We Are the Human Beings who Commit Holocaust and Genocide*, came out this week in Hebrew.

Yerevan Mayor Visits Beijing

BEIJING (*Armenpress*) – At the invitation of Beijing Mayor Guo Jinlong, a delegation, headed by Yerevan Mayor Karen Karapetian, was on an official visit July 26-30 to the capital of the People’s Republic of China.

This was the first official visit from the Yerevan mayor’s office to China, aimed at establishing bilateral relations between Yerevan and Beijing and creating bases for cooperation in the urban management sphere.

Yerevan mayor’s office announced that during the July 29 meeting, the mayors discussed the necessity of expanding cooperation between the two cities. Karapetian said Yerevan is interested in the discussion of constructive proposals for urban development.

Karapetian presented to his Chinese counterpart the development prospects and projects of Yerevan.

Jinlong expressed readiness to support the extension and deepening of the cooperation and accepted the invitation to pay an official visit to Yerevan. At the end of the meeting the Municipalities of Yerevan and Beijing signed a memorandum on cooperation.

Within the framework of the visit, Karapetian also met the president of Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd. – a leading global information and communications technology company. Issues on opening of the company’s center in Yerevan and possible cooperation in the sphere were discussed. The sides signed a memorandum of cooperation on joint actions in the sphere.

International News

Italian Archeologist Expects Turkey to Become Christian Pilgrimage Destination

ISTANBUL (*PanARMENIAN.Net*) – A tomb believed to be that of St. Philip the Apostle was unearthed during excavations in the ancient Turkish city of Hierapolis.

Italian Prof. Francesco D’Andria said archeologists found the tomb of the biblical figure – one of the 12 original disciples of Jesus – while working on the ruins of a newly-unearthed church, Anadolu Turkish news agency reported.

“We have been looking for Saint Philip’s tomb for years,” D’Andria told the agency. “We finally found it in the ruins of a church which we excavated a month ago.”

The structure of the tomb and the writings on the wall proved it belonged to St. Philip, he added.

The professor said the archaeologists worked for years to find the tomb and he expected it to become an important Christian pilgrimage destination.

St. Philip, recognized as one of Christianity’s martyrs, is thought to have died in Hierapolis, in the southwest province of Denizli, in around 80 AD. It is believed he was crucified upside down or beheaded.

Sima Musical Trio Performs in Montreal

MONTREAL – On May 29, the art lovers in Montreal had the opportunity to attend a concert by the Sima musical trio, held at the Jirair and Elise Dervishian Hall of the AGBU Center. The trio came from New Jersey, and the concert was organized by the Cultural Committee of AGBU Montreal and sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Armen-Garo Gundjian.

The members of the trio are pianist Sofya Melikyan, cellist Ani Kalayjian and violinist Sami Merdinian. The young musicians formed their trio two years ago and have since performed in Argentina, Canada, Spain and the United States. They have also won the top prize in the JC Arriga Musical Festival. Merdinian was recently named “the most prominent artist of the year” by the Argentinean press. Melikyan and Kalayjian, both former beneficiaries of AGBU scholarships, have participated in a number of AGBU’s Performing Arts Concerts.

The concert included such diverse works as the piano trios of Gayaneh Tchebodarian, Felix Mendelssohn, Joseph Haydn and Arno Babadjanian. The Sima musical trio was praised for their musicality and professionalism. Moreover, they were recognized for their dedication to their art.

Cox: Baku Is Spreading Propaganda

STEPANAKERT (*Arminfo*) – Azerbaijan is spreading false propaganda and the people of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh) have won the right to an independent life, said Baroness Caroline Cox, member of the British House of Lords, who went on a seven-day pilgrimage to Nagorno-Karabagh with a large group of foreign citizens.

In Stepanakert, she said that was, first of all, a spiritual tour. Armenia was the first to adopt Christianity as a state religion. Everybody participating in the pilgrimage admires the beauty of Artsakh and its traditional hospitality. Cox said that people from nine countries came to Karabagh and familiarized themselves with its history. They will return to their countries and tell the whole truth. “She added that Azerbaijan and other countries are conducting anti-Armenian propaganda, but this did not stop the pilgrims.

A sociologist and human rights activist, the chairwoman of the Armenian-British Parliamentary Group and the head of several human rights organizations, Cox has made dozens of humanitarian trips to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh to provide people with medicaments. In 2006 she was awarded a Mkhitar Gosh Medal.



The ship “Armenia” in Beirut

‘Armenia’ Vessel Arrives in Beirut

BEIRUT (*Hetq*) – Armenia vessel was solemnly met in the Marina port of Beirut, on August 6. After the anthems of Armenia and Lebanon, Armenian Ambassador to Lebanon Ashot Kocharian, Archbishop of Lebanon Ghegham Khacherian and Aram Malyan, the representative of the mayor of Beirut, Bilal Hamad, made a welcome speech.

The crew was met by spiritual leaders, members of Lebanese government and parliament, representatives of Armenian community and the media. The sailing vessel started the voyage on May 28, 2009 from Valencia. It passed across oceans, seas and was in several ports. Its voyage ends on the eve of the 20th anniversary of Armenia’s independence. The vessel will then sail from Beirut to Cyprus, where the Armenian president will welcome it.



Community News

Armenian Assembly Commends Senator Menendez for Principled Stand

WASHINGTON — During confirmation hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last week, Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) asked Ambassador-Designate Francis J. Ricciardone a series of questions regarding US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide.

Ricciardone, is the administration's nominee to serve as the US ambassador to the Republic of Turkey and has been serving in Ankara since January on the basis of a recess appointment by President Obama. When asked by Menendez if the United States have ever denied the Armenian Genocide, Ricciardone responded that he stands behind President Obama's characterization and used the Armenian term: *Meds Yeghern*.

"As Senator Menendez has repeatedly indicated, affirmation of the Armenian Genocide is critical to our diplomatic relations with Armenia and Turkey," stated Assembly Grassroots Director Taniel Koushajian.

"We strongly concur with Senator Menendez that if you cannot recognize the historical fact of the Armenian Genocide, then you cannot move forward," added Koushajian.

Menendez also asked if Ricciardone disagreed with President Barack Obama's position on the Armenian Genocide during Obama's tenure as a senator, as well as that of Vice President Joseph Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, during their tenures as senators. In each instance, Ricciardone indicated that he did not disagree with his superiors.

"On behalf of the Armenian Assembly's 2011 Terjenian-Thomas Internship Class, we express our sincere appreciation to Senator Menendez for his continued leadership on Armenian issues," stated Raffi Nersessian, Assembly Government Affairs intern who attended the hearing.

Ricciardone also fielded questions about religious freedom, especially in relation to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Halki Seminary, as well as with respect to the Armenian, Assyrian and Jewish communities.

Senate Foreign Relations Europe Subcommittee Chair Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) presided over the hearing and was joined by Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN), along with Senators Robert Casey Jr. (D-PA), Chris Coons (D-DE) and Joseph Lieberman (I-CT), who was on hand to introduce one of the nominees.

Additional questions for the record will be submitted for response by the nominees and will be reviewed before the committee acts on the nomination. The next opportunity for consideration by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will be in September.

Newton Corner Native Runs for Takoma Park, MD City Council

TAKOMA PARK, Md. — Lorig Charkoudian, the Newton Corner native who in sixth grade took on the mayor of the City of Newton, Mass. and the superintendent of schools when they decided to close her middle school, is now running for office in Takoma Park.

She marched into a meeting called by the mayor at Bigelow Junior High School, Newton Corner, Mass., with her band of elementary school followers, carrying signs of her creation stating, "We've been Stranded!"

Now a long-time resident of Takoma Park, Charkoudian has just announced her decision to run for its city council.



Lorig Charkoudian



Beautification efforts such as this in General Antranik Park in Yerevan has been the result of the Armenia Tree Project and Dr. Carolann Najarian's philanthropy and humanitarian service.

Five American-Armenians Who Make a Difference In Armenia

HAVERHILL, Mass. — I am harboring a most curious thought.

I'm wondering what the state of affairs would be in Armenia were it not for those unsung heroes who pitch a hand for the welfare of that country. Many of them work incognito, making their periodic trips to that land and making an impact in some humble way.

Whether it's monetarily, sweat, volunteerism, professional services or humanitarian, it's service above self. To them goes the quiet applause they would probably shun.

By Tom Vartabedian

Today's piece deals with five — only five — of the hundreds who continue to make an impact with their golden deeds. I know I'm opening a Pandora's Box but then, the others, like this quintet, would be satisfied in just letting any limelight fade into the ground unnoticed.

I've always held one thing in mind: the distance from obscurity to fame is much longer than from fame to obscurity. These five are among the dedicated whose reward lies innate as opposed to overt. To them, the country of Armenia owes a debt of gratitude.

In no specific order, let's begin with Armen Toupouzian — a Detroit catalyst whose achievements in Armenia could rewrite the *Book of Golden Deeds*. His role in supporting the ARS Sosseh kindergartens in Artsakh and the recovered territories has been indispensable.

Over the past 14 years, he's made more than 20 trips to the region to oversee and monitor the construction of kindergartens. He was successful in finding sponsors as well as sources for much-needed medical supplies and arranging their shipment there.

I bumped into this man one day while walking along Sayat Nova Street in downtown Yerevan. He was wearing a smile as I recall, after just returning from an isolated area on the outskirts where a gymnasium he facilitated was located. Their pleasure was his pleasure.

"I enjoy seeing happy and active Armenian children," he told me. "It's bound to have an uplifting effect."

On this day, he was just another face in the crowd. The ARS had just presented him with the Agnouni Award for meritorious service and let's just say, the honor was richly deserved.

Much can be said about Jack and Eva Medzorian, though the less the better as far as they're concerned. With them, silence is golden when it comes to a better Armenia.

Over the past decade, both have been to Armenia many times to check on medical shipments sent to depressed areas from the Cambridge (Mass.) Knights of Vartan. These are done through the International Medical Equipment Collaborative.

While there, they comb other regions to assess needs and their ongoing mission knows no hiatus. It is almost relentless.

As each shipment is dispatched from the center in North Andover, Jack Medzorian gathers his fellow Knights and they recite the *Hayr Mer* together — a prayer for added strength and security.

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CBC Interviews William Schabas about Genocide & Human Rights Program

TORONTO — Featured this week on CBC's "Metro Morning" radio program was Prof. William Schabas, who spoke with host Matt Galloway to discuss the Genocide and Human Rights University Program (GHRUP) and broader issues of genocide in the world today. As "Metro Morning" is a program that connects people, neighborhoods, communities, diverse pockets and populations, it comes as no surprise that they were interested to learn more about the GHRUP, what it is about, who attends, what will be taught and why it is important.

Schabas is director of the Irish Centre for Human Rights at the National University of Ireland, Galway, where he also holds the chair in Human Rights Law. He is the immediate past president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars and has been a long-time faculty member of the GHRUP where he teaches Genocide and International Law.

The GHRUP, designed and organized by the International Institute for Genocide & Human Rights Studies, (IIGHRS), a division of the Zoryan Institute, is held annually in partnership with the University of Toronto. The program kicked off its 10th year at the beginning of August, welcoming 23 students from eight different countries.

For host Galloway it came as somewhat of a surprise to learn that a course on genocide held in the summer, when students are usually trying to get their mind off some of the serious issues the world is facing, has such a high demand and draws in such an international crowd. To this end, Schabas commented, "It's kind of a flagship course; there is nothing like it anywhere else in the world. Students do in fact come from around the world. I think that there are a lot of students who are looking for a way to spend maybe not their whole summer, but a couple weeks in the summer to boost their knowledge and maybe target them for a particular field that then they will develop in their postgraduate studies...Here they are moving into what is a very big, and growing interdisciplinary field that we call Genocide Studies."

Responding to why a course like this is important, Schabas stated, "There is the constant threat of genocide, and there are also the issues relating to understanding the genocides of the past. Lurking within the whole issues of genocide are broader questions about human rights in general and about the various kind of atrocity crimes that, while they might not technically meet the definition of genocide, are all things that we ought to give attention to."

During the interview, Schabas highlighted that while the course does study the after-effects of genocide it also deals with genocide as a preventative measure, "We are in the History Department, so in a way we are looking backward. We're looking at the past, but as its often been said, the idea of studying history is so that it doesn't repeat itself, and that's a big, big part of it."

Discussing the future of genocide prevention and the reluctance of world powers to step in and prevent it in the past, Schabas explains that while Rwanda taught us that there is an obligation to take action, the authorization for the action and the muscle to carry it out still come from the leading military powers in the world, who will intervene when they feel that they have to, will take the appropriate action when they feel that they have to, but they won't intervene when it crosses their own national interest. This is where Schabas hopes to see the holes in the protective net get filled in the coming years.



Prof. William Schabas



COMMUNITY NEWS

Sunday School Pilot Program Receives Positive Feedback

By **Melanie Panosian**

WATERTOWN, Mass. — When Sunday School begins this fall in parishes across the Eastern Diocese, children will participate in an enriched educational experience, informed by a Diocesan Department of Youth and Education's (DYE) pilot program held in the 2010-2011 academic year.

The program originated from the 2009 Clergy Conference, where priests expressed their desire to integrate children's church participation with the typical Sunday School class experience. The program models a two-hour Sunday School morning, consisting of traditional classroom instruction and now regular participation in the Divine Liturgy. The pilot phase has proven successful among the parishes, and following an evaluation process, a revised version will be implemented in all Diocesan parishes.

The new Sunday School set-up is in accord with the Diocese's recognition that the Divine Liturgy is the central aspect of life in the church and should be shared within families — by children and adults alike. The Diocese seeks to stress the importance of including children in this integral portion of the Armenian faith as they grow up in the church.

Rev. Untzag Nalbandian, pastor of the Holy Ascension Church of Trumbull, Conn., said: "It has been proven over and over again that those who are in the church today are those whose parents brought them to church at a very young age."

The new Sunday morning format unravels the mystery that is the Holy *Badarak* to many children, through a more interdisciplinary approach that still maintains the existing Sunday School classroom experience. Most of the 40 parishes with Sunday Schools programs in place participated in the program, and 15 submitted feedback for review and discussion at the 2011 Clergy Conference, which convened at

the end of April.

Comments collected from pastors and Sunday School staff through the evaluation survey fueled recommendations for future implementation of the program. For example, some parishes discovered that parents adverse-

may be necessary to keep Sunday School time intact, because parishes negatively view the compromise of Sunday School time that came with extended church stay.

Staff members also stressed the importance of preserving Bible study and classroom instruc-

participating in the choir. These ideas for involvement function towards increasing the link for students between Sunday School and *badarak*, making the two more fluid in children's minds.

Many priests affirmed that they like this Sunday School format better than the traditional, all-classroom format. Still, Fr. Tavitt Boyajian, pastor of the Sts. Joachim and Anne Church of Palos Heights, Ill., explained that he and his congregation believe that additional efforts can be made in order to make the Divine Liturgy "the most spiritually edifying experience for our people."

Ultimately, the overall positive feedback for this pilot program confirmed the Diocese's intention to extend it into the coming Sunday School year and beyond. Moving forward, the Diocese is asking all parishes to review their individual results and make necessary changes, while offering general recommendations for strengthening the program.

First, the Diocese recommends that priests should deliver a special message addressed to the children each week (possibly relating to the Sunday School Assembly topic) and allow for students to participate in *badarak*.

Second, it urges that additional Sunday morning activities need to be kept to a minimum, in order to allot enough time for *badarak* attendance and Sunday School classroom instruction.

Finally, the Diocese seeks to promote an ongoing conversation, involving the entire parish community, about the kind of education children need and how the church can effectively provide them with such.

Nalbandian, voicing his support for the new Sunday School initiative, countered the long-held argument that *badarak* is "too long" and that children "don't understand it."

"Through this kind of regular exposure," he said, "a time will come for every child when they will understand the *badarak*."

It is an Armenian Church variation on an old adage: practice makes perfect.



Fr. Arakel Aljalian teaches Sunday School students at St. James Church of Watertown, Mass. to make nushkhar.

ly affect their children's *badarak* attendance by arriving late or leaving early.

Andrea Carden, Sunday School superintendent of the St. Leon Church of Fair Lawn, NJ, spoke about the impact of the program in her parish: "The adults were a bit anxious at first, but came to see the beauty in having the children at *badarak*."

Schools also found that shorter sessions in the church sanctuary, with occasional extended stays, are more effective than long sessions every week. They found that shorter sessions

tion in Sunday morning's schedule to connect children, who most likely do not partake in such activities during the week, to their faith.

Other ways to strengthen the Sunday morning experience, such as relating the children's church message to a pre-Sunday School "assembly" or to the Sunday School lesson that week, were mentioned. Another idea was to teach children about *badarak* during Assembly some weeks, or have them participate in *badarak* through, for example, passing the Kiss of Peace, reading the Scriptures, distributing *mahs* or



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COMMUNITY NEWS

St. James Armenian Church Gives More Than \$16,000 in Scholarship Awards

WATERTOWN, Mass. — On Sunday, June 19, St. James Armenian Church gave \$16,760 in scholarships to young men and women in the parish. The St. James scholarships are possible through the generosity of St. James parish-ioners who have established scholarship funds to support and encourage the youth of the church in their academic studies and endeavors.



Recipients of the St. James Scholarship Awards with Rev. Arakel Aljalian

Fr. Arakel Aljalian, pastor of St. James, presented the following scholarship awards to the recipients, together with those scholarship fund donors in attendance, to the following deserving St. James parishioners: Tamar Aroyan (Veronica Tarvezian Memorial Scholarship (GKT), Daniel Percy Hindlian Memorial Scholarship); Vartan Babikyan (Martin Martinian Memorial Scholarship); Lucine Bahtiarian (John Kurkjian Memorial Scholarship, George and Rose Tashjian Memorial Scholarship); Alina Bazarian (Michael and Ovsanna Hovannesian Memorial

Scholarship); Christa Bazarian (Alice Kaprielian Memorial and Ann O. Kaprielian Scholarship, Simon DerSimonian Memorial Scholarship); Karina Bekelian (Vernon H. Assarian Memorial Scholarship); Liana Bekelian (Edward and Joyce Berberian Memorial Scholarship, Robert Movsessian Memorial Scholarship); Alexandra Berberian (Alice Khederian Scholarship, Madeline Kasabian Leone Memorial Scholarship); Shant Broukian (Virginia Bedrosian Memorial Scholarship); Aaron Derderian (Jocko Ananian Memorial and Phyllis Ananian Scholarship); Aram Gurekian (Edward and Elaine Patapanian Scholarship, Gladys and Anna Najarian Medzorian Scholarship); Ava Gurekian (Edward and Elaine Patapanian Scholarship, Gladys and Anna Najarian Medzorian Scholarship); Raffi Kazanjian (Armene Tarvezian Memorial Scholarship (GKT)); Andrew Malian (Herach and Anne Kazanjian Memorial Scholarship, Terjanian and Thomas Families Memorial Scholarship); Ani Moushigian (Yervant Balian Memorial Scholarship, Haig and Blanche Yacubian Memorial Scholarship); Serena Seferian (Levoun, Herant, Zarouhi and Raffi Hollisian Memorial Scholarship) and Toros Yeterian (Hovnan and Agnes Hovnanian Memorial Scholarship).

The St. James parish has a tradition of supporting the young men and women who actively participate in the life of the parish, through the ACYOA, Sunday School, Armenian School and show seriousness of purpose in their studies and future goals. The parish also appreciates the many donors who have made these scholarship opportunities possible.

OBITUARY

Helen L. Baronian

BOSTON — Helen L. Baronian, née Babigian, died on August 5, at the Lahey Clinic in Burlington, Mass. She died from respiratory and heart complications.

She was born on September 3, 1926 in Stoneham, Mass., to Bedros and Khatoun Babigian. She was the youngest of five daughters and the family surprise as her closest sister was 12 years her senior. After college she traveled throughout Europe for a time. When she returned to the United States, she went to work for Aramco.



Helen L. Baronian

She married Jack Baronian in 1959 at Holy Cross Church in New York City. They soon moved to what was to be their home for most of their lives in Flushing, NY. They left New York this past February to be with their eldest daughter in Massachusetts.

Helen Baronian went to New York University on a scholarship and graduated from the Stern School of Business with a degree in journalism. In the 1970s, she worked as a by-line writer for the *Armenian Reporter*. She loved to write and is best known for her profiles on famous Armenians. She also wrote press releases for

the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church and was very active at the diocese, especially under the auspices of then-Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, now Prelate of Jerusalem. She worked on the “One World Festival,” which was a joint venture between the Armenian Diocese and New York City. This festival highlighted Armenian culture and the multiculturalism of the city. She also was a member of the Pro Musica Committee of the Diocese, the purpose of which was to showcase new, young Armenian musicians. Some of the people who were sponsored by the Pro Musica were Ani and Ida Kavafian, Seta Karakashian and Edward Dolbashian.

In the 1990s, Helen and Jack Baronian sponsored four boys from Armenia who needed heart surgery. They would come to the US and stay about three months at the sponsor’s home (pre- and post-operation). In 1996, the couple went to Armenia and visited some of the boys and their families who were now healthy and happy.

Helen Baronian loved ballet, opera, art and Russian literature. She opened her home to everyone, including Armenian athletes, musicians and students, and especially at holidays, would never let anyone she knew celebrate alone.

She leaves her husband, Jack; her daughters, Lucine Kouyoumjian and Jacqueline Baronian; sons-in-law, Joseph Kouyoumjian and Robert Kahn and grandchildren Mariam Kouyoumjian, James Kahn and Jenny Kahn.

Her sisters, Ann Rahm, Mary Papazian, Marilyn Vogel and Violet Merjanian, all predeceased her.

The funeral service was held on Monday, August 8 at the Armenian Church of the Holy Translators, 38 Franklin St., Framingham. The interment was in the Massachusetts National Cemetery, Bourne. Arrangements were by the Giragosian Funeral Home, Watertown.

Memorial donations may be made in her memory to St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, 150 Stratton Road, New Rochelle, NY 10804 or the Armenian Church of the Holy Translators, 38 Franklin St., Framingham, MA 01702.

St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit to Celebrate Ruby Jubilee

DETROIT — St. John Armenian Church will celebrate its 80th anniversary on Saturday, October 22, with Detroit Kef Time. A highlight of the celebration is an All Star Band featuring the Armenian music of clarinetist and native Detroiter Hachig Kazarian and oud player Richard Hagopian. Both are musicians whose artistry is legend.

St. John Armenian Church was originally established in Detroit on Oakman Boulevard in 1931. The Armenian population at that time was estimated to be 5,400. By the late 1950s, the congregation had outgrown the Oakman Boulevard church. The vast undertaking of building a new church

in the historic Armenian architectural tradition was led by Alex Manoogian and Edward Mardigian. The new location was on Northwestern Highway in Southfield, MI. The groundbreaking took place in June 1960 and was blessed by Catholicos of All Armenians Vasken I. The church was consecrated on November 20, 1966 by then-Bishop Torkom Manoogian.

St. John is a landmark in the Detroit metropolitan area, known for its golden dome. Over the past 80 years, the Armenian population of the Detroit metropolitan area has grown to be around 60,000.

The event is sponsored by St. John’s Women’s Guild and the Men’s Society. Seating is limited to 500. For information or reservations, contact Isabelle Vahratian at izzy.vahratian@gmail.com

Kef Time Detroit co-chairs include: Greg Baise, Anna Baylerian, Daniel Cristiano and Yvonne Korkoian; Committee members Sara Andonian, Ardis Gregory, Linda Lutz, Gloria Korkoian, Kathy Mekjian, Carol Ohanesian, Shirley Sarkisian, Isabelle Vahratian and Paul Yousofian; advisors Joyce Obenhoff, chair, Women’s Guild, Dr. David Aprahamian, chair, Men’s Society and Edward H. Korkoian, ad hoc.

Annual Church Festival in New Britain August 21

NEW BRITAIN, Conn. — The annual traditional Armenian Festival (picnic and car show) will take place on Sunday, August 21 at the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection, 1910 Stanley St., 1-6 p.m. Live Middle Eastern music will be featured for dancing and listening. Armenian and American foods and pastries will

be available. The Youth Dance Group will also perform.

The committee in charge includes: Gary Hovhanessian, Peter Bagdigian, David Abrahamian, Lucy Simonian, Yn. Patricia Buttero and Paula Pare.

For more information, call the church.

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In memory of Verjin Mazmanian, who passed away in June, at the age of 103, the ADL District Committee has received the following donations: Edward Simsarian, Worcester, Mass. and Arax Simsarian, New York, NY, \$50; Sonig Vayedjian-Kradjian, Boca Raton, Fla., \$50 and John and Roxie Maljanian, Newington, Conn., \$25.



COMMUNITY NEWS

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Caucus Co-Chair Pallone Reiterates Need for Assistance to Karabagh

Meets with Armenian Assembly Interns

WASHINGTON – Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone Jr., (D-NJ) told the Armenian Assembly of America that he would weigh in with his colleagues on the House Appropriations Committee.

The current version of the House Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 State-Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill, while calling for \$40 million in assistance to Armenia, did not specify a dollar

Appropriations Committee Chairman and Ranking Member, Pallone reiterated the importance of appropriate funding levels to Nagorno Karabagh to help support this fledgling democracy.

The full Appropriations Committee is expected to consider the FY 2012 State-Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill when the House returns from its summer recess in September.

Also this past week, the Assembly's 2011 Summer Internship Class met with Pallone and discussed a range of issues. During the meeting, Pallone conveyed that his fact-finding visits to Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh have helped



Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) with the 2011 Assembly Intern Class

amount for Nagorno Karabagh or Azerbaijan, among other countries. However, unlike Azerbaijan, the House report language did state that the "Committee expects that funds provided will address ongoing humanitarian needs and the plight of victims of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict in a manner consistent with demonstrated programmatic capacity."

"The House Subcommittee action is just one phase in a lengthy Appropriations process," stated Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. "Congress has a strong tradition in providing assistance to Nagorno Karabagh and the Assembly will continue to work with our friends in the House and Senate to ensure concrete levels of US assistance to Artsakh," Ardouny added.

In his August 1 letter to the House

him to better understand the challenges in the region and the need for continued US engagement.

Pallone also discussed the importance of US assistance to Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh as well as US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide, among other issues of importance.

"We appreciate Congressman Pallone's ongoing commitment to help the people of Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh," stated Voice of America intern Samantha Hampar.

"I came away from the meeting confident that Congressman Pallone will continue to advocate for a strong US-Armenia relationship, which is critically important in the face of ongoing threats emanating from Azerbaijan," Hampar continued.

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American-Armenians Who Make a Difference in Armenia

APPRECIATION, from page 4

Michael Ohanian is another stimulus for the country, straight out of Andover, Mass. Your first impression might be, "Michael who?"

He and his wife, Sonia, have given their time and resources to the inception and development of housing complexes in Armenia. These project houses have orphaned children who are of age to begin independent living and assist them in building a firm foundation for their future.

Not once have I heard them ask for a dime. Where the money comes from – take a guess!

When it comes to addressing the psychological needs of traumatized victims of the 1988 earthquake that took more than 25,000 lives in the Spitak (Gumri) region, just turn the attention over to Dr. Louis Najarian.

The New York-based psychiatrist puts his practice on hold once or twice a year and off he goes to provide crisis intervention to victims. It's a volunteer role he's performed for the past

23 year at no cost to the country.

I asked him about it one day and this is how the man responded: "The primary goal of a physician is to heal. Many choose a clinical practice, research or academia. Some aspire to chair departments. Assisting these earthquake victims has allowed me the opportunity to give something on their behalf and impact the mental health delivery system of our homeland."

Last – but not least – is Dr. Carolann Najarian of Lincoln, Mass. If you don't know the name, you perhaps should. For decades, she has been an ambassador of goodwill to Armenia – a breath of fresh air inside a vacuum.

Whether it's been with the Armenian Tree Project or the Armenian Health Alliance, Najarian has answered the ubiquitous call, bringing disaster relief and beautifying the environment. Over time, she has made more than 50 trips to the homeland.

To all of them – a job well done.

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New York METRO

Interns from Armenian Mission to the United Nations Visit Diocese

NEW YORK — Four young people interning at the Armenian Mission to the United Nations visited the Diocesan Center and met with Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), on Thursday, July 29.

The interns — Sarine Arslanian of Brussels,

the UN.

The group received a tour of the Diocesan Center and St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral. They had an opportunity to learn more about Diocesan departments. In addition, they were introduced to the Diocese's large book and artifact collection in the Krikor and Clara Zohrab



From left, Georgi Asatryan, Ambassador Garen Nazarian, Sarine Arslanian, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Hilda Harutyunyan and Alex Kircikoglu

Belgium; Georgi Asatryan of Moscow, Russia; Alex Kircikoglu of New York and Hilda Harutyunyan of Kuwait City, Kuwait — were led by Garen Nazarian, Armenia's ambassador to

Information Center, including the first *Bible* printed in Armenian and ancient prayer scrolls.

They continued on to St. Vartan Cathedral where they learned about the history of the edi-



Taleen Babayan, program coordinator at the Diocese's Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, speaks to the interns and Ambassador Garen Nazarian about the Diocese's rich book and artifact collection.

fice, as well as its artwork and architecture.

At the conclusion of the tour, the interns were received by Barsamian in the *tahlij* (formal reception room) of the Diocese.

Archbishop Barsamian spoke to them about the history of the Eastern Diocese and the determination of its founders to preserve the Armenian faith and culture in America. He encouraged the interns to embrace their Armenian identity and to share their heritage with others.

"I am happy to see young Armenians from

around the world serving our community," said Archbishop Barsamian, adding that he wished them a productive experience at the Armenian Mission.

Nazarian said that the interns would utilize themes raised at their discussion with the Primate in their meetings and workshops at the UN.

During the three-week program, interns are introduced to the work of the Armenian Mission and have an opportunity to learn about foreign policy issues affecting Armenia today.

AMAA James G. Jameson Essay Contest Is Open to High School and College Students

PARAMUS, N.J. — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) has announced it will once again sponsor the James G. Jameson Essay Contest. Topics should touch upon some aspect of Armenian heritage such as religion, literature, language, history, culture, geography, economy or history.

Awards will be made in two categories: high school contestants and college/university contestants. The deadline for entries is September 1.

All Armenian or part-Armenian students from North America are eligible. Only unpublished entries will be accepted. The winner in each category will be awarded \$500, provided from the income of a special fund established by Mr. and Mrs. James G. Jameson of Brookline, Mass.

The essays should be written in English and have a length of 1,000 to 2,000 words. A contestant is allowed no more than one entry per year and only one member of a family may receive an award in a five-year period. If no submitted essay is considered sufficiently meritorious, no award will be granted that year.

Entries and/or inquiries should be directed to: James G. Jameson Essay Contest, Armenian Missionary Association of America, Inc., 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652.

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We are pleased to inform you that in 2011 Tekeyan Centre celebrates the 20th anniversary of the decision made by Tekeyan Trust London to establish a hospitable and beloved place in the Motherland that would also become the symbol of unity of our people, the Motherland and the Armenians that are spread all over the world.

Within two decades Tekeyan Centre faced many difficulties but it has also been fortunate to have many devoted supporters from US, Canada and the world who contributed greatly to the success and prosperity of Tekeyan Centre.

Thus, on the occasion of its 20th anniversary, Tekeyan Centre organizes a great event to bring together its appreciative and meritorious supporters from all over the world.

We would like to invite you to join us in celebrating the milestone anniversary of Tekeyan Centre and in honouring its devotees.

*The event will take place at Tekeyan Centre on September 10, 2011.
(50 Khanjian Street, Yerevan, Armenia)*

Among the people invited to the event are prominent government officials, TCA Central Board members, benefactors, local representatives of various establishments, Tekeyan Schools and many others.

PROGRAM

September 10, 2011

18:00 – 20:00

Anniversary celebration & awarding key people contributed to the establishment of Tekeyan Centre (Armenia), followed by a concert

September 11, 2011

19:00 – 22:00

Banquet at Tekeyan Centre (Armenia)



SPECIAL FEATURE

Zareh Tjeknavorian Delves into Mystical, Historical Armenia

NEW YORK — Zareh Shahan Tjeknavorian is a filmmaker in the prime of his career. His work, largely documentary in nature, has been a process of self-exploration. As he said recently, “I have these interests and passions which guide me, and the film work helps me explore them.” Armenian history, society and folk culture lie at the heart of his interests, and have led him to create a number of unusual films and videos which today are shown in universities, museums and festivals throughout the world.

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

Tjeknavorian’s aesthetic sensibilities are greatly influenced by his family and his peripatetic childhood. His father is the Iranian-Armenian composer and conductor Loris Tjeknavorian, and his mother, Linda Pierce Hunter, is a native Californian also with musical talent and many years of teaching experience.

Tjeknavorian was born in Fargo, ND, where his father had established residence in order to teach at a nearby university in Minnesota. He did not remain there long, but moved in turn to San Francisco, Iran for some five years, London, Germany, Paris, London again, and then finally New York City in 1986. He graduated from a performing arts high school called the Professional Children’s School in Manhattan, and then New York University in 1992, with a bachelor’s degree in film and television production.

Tjeknavorian grew up in a very cosmopolitan international environment, with most of his friends the children of diplomats and businessmen attending international American schools. He only had occasional exposure to Armenians through special events, but it was his family that provided his opening to the Armenian world. He said, “For me, Armenia was unreal — a sort



Mamikon Vardanian: In “Enemy of the People,” Mamikon Vardanian, a paralyzed gulag survivor said, “My mirror is my window to the world, and my world appears shattered.”

Yezidis and their unique religion. He did a lot of research on them and shot footage, including informal oral histories. He met, among others, a Yezidi sheikh in a village in Aragatsotn province. These sheikhs were the keepers of many secret traditions of their community, so his interviews were particularly revealing.

He did some film work for USAID on programs like weatherproofing houses for the elderly, as well as a few other small projects to earn money, but he relied on teaching English in a school for the majority of his income. This helped him meet many types of Armenians.

Tjeknavorian witnessed many visually unusual scenes: “I will never forget, walking home on a night with a full moon from the Hotel Armenia to where I was living, near Sourp Sarkis Church. It was in the middle of winter and the streets were packed with snow and ice. With no light but from the moon, the streets were luminous, as if they were lit from beneath. It was incredibly otherworldly, with packs of stray dogs wandering the streets.”

Tjeknavorian made a short film on the activities of the Araratian Diocese called “Veradardz [Return],” commissioned by Louise Simone of the Armenian General Benevolent

Union (AGBU). It was about the attempt to bring people back into the fold of the Armenian Church after the Soviet years.

This led to a second commission from Simone for “Enemy of the People,” a documentary film on Stalinist oppression in Armenia, which was narrated by Eric Bogosian. It became Tjeknavorian’s most widely-known film. The shooting was done in 1995, and he returned to New York in 1996 in order to edit more than 100 hours of material. It took him until 1998 to finish the film. With his team, Tjeknavorian interviewed more than 200 people, including some former NKVD officials (Soviet secret police). The Armenian branch of Andrei Sakharov’s Memorial association helped locate surviving Armenian victims. Tjeknavorian even went to the farthest corners of the Soviet Union to film places to which Armenians had been exiled.

The film team worked with the successors of the Armenian KGB to find mass graves from the Stalinist period, but in the end



“Tigranakeri” : A detail of the “swallowtail” technique of Classical Armenian masonry

found them through other leads, and filmed the dig in which human remains were found. Tjeknavorian pointed out that “very few of the people we interviewed in the film are alive now. Those stories would have been lost forever if we did not record them.”

“Enemy of the People” was prepared in both Armenian- and English-language versions. It was chosen by Alexandra Avakian in 2004 for *National Geographic* readers as one of three films to shed light on Armenia’s history and spirit. Tjeknavorian said, “it was the first film I had made on that scale, and I learned a great deal from the experience.”

Another important film Tjeknavorian worked on, this time as associate producer, is the feature-length documentary, “Khachaturian,” which presented the life and work of composer Aram Khachaturian. It took five years to complete. Tjeknavorian shot all the Armenian and Georgian interviews (Khachaturian was born in Georgia) and spent half a year researching and assembling archival materials. Among other items, he discovered a film of a performance of Mstislav Rostopovich performing the Khachaturian *Cello Concerto*, which had been secretly saved by an Armenian from destruction in the period after Rostopovich defected.

During the filming in Tbilisi, Georgia, Tjeknavorian was almost arrested. He and Vahakn Ter Hakobyan, and the latter’s assistant, were seeking a good panorama of the city without cars, so as to represent the city in Khachaturian’s boyhood. One day they



Tower of Silence in Yazd, central Iran, from a project on Zoroastrians in Iran

found a good place, but then... “We noticed a weird silence in the city. Then I noticed a soldier in a bush. We crossed the bridge and saw a view of Tbilisi, which was amazing. There were no cars, unlike other times. We set up the tripod for the camera and started to shoot. The driver seemed nervous, but we paid no attention. Just as we filmed, a motorcade blew by, with a big limousine. We stopped for it to pass, and no cars followed, so we filmed for several more minutes and finished. We were preparing to leave when a car came and cut us off. It was the local secret police, who took us to their headquarters. Under a portrait of Shevardnadze, we were grilled about what we were doing. It turns out that the spot we were filming was on the route Shevardnadze took every morning to work, and the same spot at which two previous attempts on his life had taken place. We tried to explain the coincidence.” Luckily, in the end they were released. Tjeknavorian later found out that the police had even called someone close to Armenia’s president, and there had been snipers trained on them. As the limousine that went by them was merely a decoy for Shevardnadze, they were not shot, but the story could have had a more tragic ending.



Zorats Karer, Armenia’s Stonehenge, from “Embers of the Sun”

of secret society. During the Cold War, Armenia didn’t even exist on the map. Somebody would ask me about my name and I’d tell them. Then they would ask about Armenia but I couldn’t show it to them on a map. I felt it was like a millennial cult existing in the midst of other people when I went to church gatherings or recitals or events. You’d be in London, Paris or some other part of the world, and then suddenly in a room you saw a painting of Ararat or a bust of Komitas.”

It was his American side that initially had a greater pull on him. Tjeknavorian said, “During late adolescence, when you look for an identity that is greater than you, I still wanted to see myself as a real American and got into a gungho American phase.”

However, by the time Tjeknavorian was in high school, he became interested in the supernatural and the occult, and this led him to Armenia via Iran. He remembered, “I became very interested in Zoroastrianism when I was in high school. The mythology and the ideas, its antiquity, appealed to me greatly. I remember things from my childhood growing up in Iran that were very powerful.” He also was attracted to the work of the British occultist Aleister Crowley.

Eventually Tjeknavorian became interested in Armenian antiquity and his ancestral connection to this ancient culture. When he was 17 years old, he was baptized at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in New York. His father had wanted him to decide when he was ready, and the time had come.

A trip to Soviet Armenia with his father in 1989 after the earthquake was another significant turning point. When his father moved there as conductor of the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra, that opened the way for Tjeknavorian to join him in 1993. He felt that “this was the best time to understand Armenia. It was a time of challenge and hardship, like much of Armenian history.” In Yerevan, he learned for the first time to speak the Armenian language and stayed there for three years.

His interest in occultism and G. I. Gurdjieff drew him to the



Arts & Living

CITF and ADAA Host US Premiere Production from MIHR Theatre of Armenia

LOS ANGELES — The California International Theatre Festival (CITF) presents the US premiere of “Komitas’ 10 Commandments” and “Colors,” by MIHR Theatre from Armenia, co-presented with the Armenian Dramatic Arts Alliance (ADAA) of Los Angeles. The performances will run September 8 and 9, at 8 p.m.; September 10 at 2 p.m. and September 11 at 4 p.m., all at the Los Angeles Theatre Center (LATC), 514 South Spring St.

MIHR synthesizes ethno-modern dance and new-movement theatre with action-painting and history to break down barriers between genres of art, philosophy and culture.

This performance is dedicated to the 140th birthday of Komitas Vardapet, the Armenian composer, priest and musicologist who, by traveling extensively throughout his country recording folk songs and dances in various villages, made it his mission to preserve his culture through art.

Komitas reinterpreted and published over 3,000 songs still played and studied to this day throughout Armenia. Considered the founder of modern Armenian classical music and ranked among the heroes and martyrs of his culture, Komitas lost his mind after witnessing the tragic 1915 Armenian Genocide. Each commandment is a phase of the life through which each artist should pass.

Following “Komitas’ 10 Commandments” comes MIHR Theatre’s inspired performance, “Colors.” Four colors, four characters, four different emotions. The colors are alive; they have a soul, a body and speak their own language. “Colors” is based on the basics of the wildly creative action painting genre in which artists combine movement with colors and present the colors’ specific concept and explores the contact between the body and space. Using paint, projections and MIHR’s signature dance/theatre styles, each performance of “Colors” is unique and represents an original approach towards art synthesis.

MIHR Theatre’s work has been seen around the globe in the Czech Republic, Latvia, Georgia, Russia (Moscow, Arkhangelsk, Tyumen), Egypt and Iran. CITF and ADAA will present their first performances in the US.

On Sunday, September 11, at 2 p.m., prior to the MIHR performance, ADAA will present a staged reading of Bianca Bagatourian’s play, “The Perils of Politeness Live On,” an adaptation of short stories by 19th-century Armenian satirist, Hagop Baronian, featuring live music.

The entire festival, which runs from September 8-18 at LATC, features theatrical performances from around the world. The festival director is Joe Peracchio and its executive producer is Tammy Taylor.

For tickets and reservations, visit www.citfestival.org or e-mail adaa@armeniandrama.org.



Aram Tigran

Armenian Singer’s Death to Be Commemorated

ISTANBUL (*Hürriyet Daily News*) — The second anniversary of Armenian singer Aram Tigran’s death on August 8 will be commemorated with two events in the capital Ankara and the southeastern province of Diyarbakir. Tigran is best known for his songs in Kurdish. “Aram is the voice of the Middle East peoples,” according to one of the organizers, Sait Çetinoglu.

Tigran had requested in his will that his body be buried in Diyarbakir but was denied permission on the grounds that he was not a Turkish citizen.

The first event was staged at the Ankara Yapi Art Center on Mithatpasha Avenue at 7:30 p.m., on Monday, while the second event will be held in Diyarbakir on October 15.

“Aram is the voice of the freedom of peoples. With his voice and his instrument, he is the breath of the oppressed and bitter peoples of the Middle East,” Çetinoglu said.

“Many people who are not Turkish citizens can be buried on this land through a Cabinet decision. [Tigran’s] will should have been respected and followed through, but his burial on this land was prevented because of Aram’s Armenian identity,” Çetinoglu said. “We intend to bring Aram’s will back into the public agenda through these commemoration ceremonies,” Çetinoglu said, adding that they were expecting support.

“Even if we cannot yet bring his body [back] to this land, we are bringing his voice and breath [here.] We expect [to see] everyone who believes in the brotherhood of peoples at this event, regardless of whatever their religion, language or race might be,” he added.

Tigran’s family appealed to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, as well as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, to fulfill his will. Failing to obtain the necessary permit, however, Tigran’s body was then buried in Brussels.

Tigran passed away on August 8, 2009 following a brain hemorrhage he suffered in Greece.

“He had given voice to the freedom of peoples in all languages spoken in the Middle East and conveyed their emotions,” Çetinoglu said, adding that Tigran’s music was extremely diverse, as he had composed and sung songs in nearly every language.

Tigran’s commitment to Kurdish music despite his Armenian roots was not surprising at all, according to Çetinoglu.

“Gomidas, the milestone of Armenian music, had also issued his doctorate thesis on Kurdish music,” he said.

“Even if we cannot yet bring his body [back] to this land, we are bringing his voice and breath [here.] We expect [to see] everyone who believes in the brotherhood of peoples at this event, regardless of whatever their religion, language or race might be.”

—Sait Çetinoglu

English Director to Make Film about Genocide Survivor Astra Sabondjian,

LONDON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A true story of love, loss and survival set against the backdrop of the Armenian Genocide is being brought to life by two women from Muswell Hill, a suburb of north London.

Based on the novel, *Affinity with Night Skies*, by London-based author Astrid Katcharyan, the story is to be made into a film called, “Astra,” by director Athena Mandis, and tells the tale of how one woman made her own history and changed the lives of future generations of women in the process.

An early suffragette, the protagonist Astra Sabondjian not only chose her own path to love at a time when most women had arranged marriages, but also found time to carve out a career in journalism, save her husband from the gallows, raise a family, open a prestigious couturier house and school for dressmakers in Athens.

Spanning two generations the story is told over countless wars in the Ottoman Empire as Astra and her husband, Setrag, a liberal newspaper editor, fight for their love and survival. The story begins in 1905 in Erzeroum as Astra and her family flee to Smyrna to escape the Turkish massacre of Armenians.

Mandis says: “This story has real resonance to me as big events have shaped where I am today. As the daughter of a Greek-Albanian trade unionist who fled to the UK to take political asylum I know only too well the ripple effect of conflict and diaspora.” She adds: “This is a story of a woman who weaves in and out of patriarchal society to create her own compelling history. It begs to be told and I am hugely excited to be part of it.”

The two women are taking the script to the Venice Film Festival later this year and are looking for film finance.

“Like the protagonist it is named after it is written in the stars that this film will be made,” say the two women. “It’s just a matter of time until the world falls in love with Astra.”

Tankian Releases Video Announcement in Support Of Bone Marrow Registry

LOS ANGELES — Serj Tankian, lead singer and songwriter of the acclaimed rock band System of a Down, has released a public-service video announcement in support of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR).

The video, which includes a sequence of shots showing ABMDR’s life-saving work, features Tankian making a personal appeal to join the ranks of the registry.

“Thirty seconds: that’s how long it’ll take you to watch this announcement,” his message says. “What if I told you that in just 30 seconds you can help someone just like yourself to live again; to love; to play; to laugh?”

“By joining the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry, you’re taking a huge step toward saving an Armenian life. Once you’re registered, you’ll be part of a vast network of donors who have already saved lives all over the world. But we still need your help. Only an Armenian donor can save a fellow Armenian, and it only takes 30 seconds.”

Commenting on the release of the video, Dr. Frieda Jordan, president of ABMDR, praised Tankian for his dedication to humanitarian causes and being “a wonderful role model for Armenian youth.”

Tankian’s video announcement can be accessed through the ABMDR website (abmdr.am) and will soon be posted on YouTube and elsewhere.

ABMDR, a nonprofit organization, helps Armenians worldwide survive life-threatening blood-related illnesses by recruiting and matching donors to those requiring bone marrow stem cell transplants. To date the registry has recruited over 20,000 and facilitated 13 bone marrow transplants.



ARTS & LIVING

Armenian Identity Festival

By Kevork Keushkerian

PASADENA, Calif. — The fourth annual Armenian Identity Festival took place on Sunday, July 31, from noon to 8 p.m. at Pasadena's Victory Park. It was organized by the Armenian Community Coalition of Pasadena, and Mary Agulian was the mistress of ceremonies. More than 3,000 people, representing all sectors of the community, attended the event.

The festivities began with the presentation of the colors by members of the United States Marine Corps, followed by the singing of the American and the Armenian national anthems by Ara Sahagian. This festival coincided with Pasadena's 125th anniversary. To mark that occasion, city and county dignitaries, including Pasadena Mayor Bill Bogaard, Pasadena Police Chief Phillip Sanchez, Pasadena City Council member Gene Masuda, Pasadena Unified School District Board member Ramon Miramantes, Robin Salazar and others sliced a birthday cake as part of a special ceremony. Ara Sahagian sang *Happy Birthday, Pasadena*.

Live musical entertainment throughout the day was provided by Sahag Sislian, Kevork Chakmacyan, Nshan Tchaghatsbanian and Khatchig Nahabedian. People enjoyed the ethnic foods, while children participated in various activities. There were many exhibitions, including classic cars and motorcycles. Children's dance groups, choreographed by Lilian, presented Armenian folk dances. Furthermore, Hye Kempo karate students performed authentic defensive movements. A gold and diamond

pendant donated by Albert Tchoukadarian of Noble Jewelers in Monrovia was the grand prize of the raffle. The lucky winner was Sarkis Sahagian of Pasadena.

On behalf of the Armenian Community Coalition of Pasadena, Chairman Khatchik "Chris" Chahinian presented two plaques of appreciation. One was presented to Bogaard and the other one to the United States Marine Corps.

The Armenian Community Coalition of Pasadena is working toward erecting a monument dedicated to the victims of the Armenian Genocide at Victory Park. To that end, six artists presented designs for the proposed monument, which were on display. Also a campaign has started to collect signatures for a petition to be presented to the city. The mayor and the police chief were among the first to sign said petition.

The Armenian Community Coalition of Pasadena is composed of representatives of schools, churches and cultural organizations. Its mission is to bring the Armenian community together and work with other public groups to improve the education of our children, increase employment opportunities and enhance living conditions in Pasadena.

It is interesting to note that the first Armenian settled and opened a business in Pasadena in 1889, just three years after the founding of the city. He was M.S. Pashgian, and his building remains on Colorado Boulevard to this day. He also was the grand marshal of the Rose Parade in 1915. Today, there are six Armenian churches, four Armenian schools, two Armenian newspapers and three Armenian cultural organizations in the city, serving a population of 30,000.

Santa Fe Group Show Features Paintings By Richard Tashjian

SANTA FE, N.M. — Artist Richard Tashjian was part of a show of native New England artist paintings being held at the Johnsons of Madrid Fine Art Gallery Madrid, NM, which opened Saturday, August 6.

All of the plein-air watercolor paintings were of areas throughout New Mexico, namely Dixon, Diablo Canyon, Jemez Mountains, Nambe and Black Sea Mesa, on the way to Los Alamos.

In particular, two locations where he painted in Armenia in the 1980s, remind him very much of the terrain of his beloved New Mexico, where he lives now.

One is the Jemez Mountains and the Aragats Mountains in Armenia, the other is the village of Embudo Velare along the river Rio Grande in New Mexico, similar to the Hrazdan River in Armenia.

Tashjian's palette is clean and crisp, like the New Mexico air.

The exhibit runs through September 6.

For more information, the Johnsons of Madrid Gallery of Fine Art is located along the historic Turquoise Trail at 2843 Highway 14, NM 87010.

For more information, visit www.turquoisetrail.org or



"Jemez Mountains, New Mexico," water color

KARSH



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ARTS & LIVING

Zareh Tjeknavorian Delves into Mystical, Historical Armenia

MYSTICAL, from page 9

Tjeknavorian continued to explore the continuity between antiquity and living Armenian culture. He made a short lyrical film exploring his interests in prehistoric Armenian monuments, “Embers of the Sun” (2001), which is just under 12 minutes long. It was the first project on which he collaborated with his wife, Alina. In 2006, he finished “Tigranakert: An Armenian Odyssey,” about the discovery of an ancient city in Artsakh. Tjeknavorian filmed the second summer of the excavations there.

He also has delved into more modern aspects of Armenian history. He made a student film, “Verabrogh,” on a woman survivor of the Armenian Genocide, which was a black-and-white study of her face. As a mature filmmaker

ditions. He declared, “we do it because it is inseparable from our own lives. I don’t see it as a profession or a career. It is just something that I am. In certain periods I did other work. It turned me into a guerrilla filmmaker and jack of all trades. I have become a proficient cameraman. Alina does sound. So we are like a two-person small production company.” She also does the editing for their films now.

The young couple has a number of long-term ongoing projects, of which a 10-year effort to document Armenian folk traditions is the most significant. Among the large mass of material collected, Tjeknavorian said, “I found a few of the last Sasountsi Davit epic tellers, the oral story tellers. Though illiterate, they knew the story. I interviewed them and filmed some of



An Urartian rock inscription from “East of Turkey, North of Iran”

he prepared “Credo” (2005), which sets fragments of the silent film “Ravished Armenia” (1919), a dramatized account of the odyssey of Aurora Mardiganian, along with additional material provided from Yerevan, to Loris Tjeknavorian’s *Symphony No. 2*. He also filmed a commemorative event in 2005 on the Genocide as “The Value of Sorrow,” raising the question of whether something positive may emerge from sorrow and pain.

More recently, he prepared a short introduction to the philanthropic work of the Near East Relief and its archives, held by its successor organization, the Near East Foundation. This film is called, “Lest They Perish” (2009). He is at present preparing a full-length feature documentary on the work of the Near East Relief and welcomes any visual or documentary material and personal stories that individuals might be willing to provide. Shant Mardirossian, the chairman of the Near East Foundation, is co-producing this film as an individual.

Finances have always been problematic for the type of projects Tjeknavorian works on. In particular, it is difficult to get funding from Armenians for film projects, but Tjeknavorian and his wife, Alina, have adapted to these con-

their versions of the epic.” They will be incorporated into “East of Turkey, North of Iran,” a project treating spirituality, archaic tradition and archeology in rural Armenia. Another major project documents the disappearing traditions of Zoroastrians in Yazd and Tehran (in Iran). Tjeknavorian also hopes to use his father’s music more in future works, as his artistic influence on his son is great.

Ballet Dancers Vanessa Zahorian and Davit Karapetyan Get Married

SAN FRANCISCO (*New York Times*) – Vanessa Andrea Zahorian and Davit Karapetyan were married Monday at City Hall here by Andrea Goldman, a deputy marriage commissioner. On June 11, the couple had a religious ceremony at St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral in Yerevan, where Zenon Barseghyan, an Armenian Apostolic Orthodox priest, officiated.

The bride, 32, and the bridegroom, 30, are principal dancers with the San Francisco Ballet.

By Paula Schwartz

California in Moraga. She is the daughter of Patricia J. Zahorian of New Cumberland, Penn. and Dr. George Thomas Zahorian of Hershey, Penn.

The bridegroom, who trained at the Armenian School of Ballet, is the son of Melanya Karapetyan and Rashid Karapetyan of Yerevan.

At the end of June 2004, Karapetyan, who was a dancer with the Zurich Ballet, arrived on the West Coast for an audition with the San Francisco Ballet. Zahorian noticed him right away.

“He’s dark-haired and big-nosed,” she said. “I liked his big nose. His profile is so striking. He has a perfect physique: slim, long legs and perfectly-pointed feet for ballet and a great arch.”

But she was in a long-distance relationship.

A year later, he joined the San Francisco troupe, and they were partnered in rehearsals for “The Nutcracker.” As they danced together, Karapetyan’s feelings for her developed. “I saw she was a very nice girl and this can grow between us, this relationship,” he said.

When he invited her to a movie, she turned him down, explaining that she was dating someone else. But after that relationship ended, she recalled thinking, “I’m nervous about exploring this, but I can give it a try.”

In November she agreed to a movie but arrived with another female dancer from the company. “I thought it was a little strange,” he said. Later that month he invited her to his apartment and made dinner. “We were watching TV and we were kind of flirting, and he reached over and gave me a kiss,” she said.

Zahorian said they wanted to keep their relationship private, but by December, other dancers had begun to notice their spending time together.

After six years of dating, he said, “I felt like we were very ready to go to the next step.” After their last performance together in “Romeo and Juliet,” in May 2010, he proposed onstage, with the company’s approval.

As they took their final curtain calls, in front of an audience of 3,000, Karapetyan was handed the microphone. “I was so nervous I just went blank,” he said. When he dropped to one knee, the audience figured out what was happening. Then he took out the ring hidden in his costume’s poison pouch.

“It’s a very emotional and sad ballet, and it ended with happy tears for once,” he said.



Davit Karapetyan and Vanessa Zahorian

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

AUGUST 21 — Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Picnic will be held at American Legion Farm, 1314 Main St., Haverhill, 12-5 p.m. Music by Jason Naroian Ensemble. Menu includes shish, losh and chicken kebab dinners, kheyma, pastries and beverages. Air-conditioned hall. Bring your lawn chairs. Adults entrance donation, \$1 pp. For more info, visit www.hyepointchurch.org.

SEPTEMBER 16 and 17 — Save the dates: 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, Estrellita 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 further details please visit our website @ www.almainc.org or call the administrative office at ALMA (617) 926-2562, ext. 31.

SEPTEMBER 18 — Trinity Family Festival, 12-5 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Delicious dinner; moonwalk for kids; children and family games, starting at 1:30 p.m., Armenian music by the Greg Krikorian Ensemble. Yalanchi cook-off. Blessing of Magdagh, 4 p.m. Raffle drawing for cash prizes, 4:30 p.m. For information, contact the church office at (617) 354-0632, e-mail office@htaac.org or visit www.htaac.org.



On September 18, Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge, will hold its Trinity Family Festival, from 12 to 5 p.m., featuring a delicious dinner, children and family games, as well as Armenian music by the Greg Krikorian Ensemble. For information, contact the church office at (617) 354-0632, e-mail office@htaac.org or visit www.htaac.org.

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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Cyprus at a Crossroads

By Edmond Y. Azadian

There are many mini states and ethnic enclaves which clamor for recognition, but their right for self determination has been too politicized by the interested parties or the major countries, who try to let the wounds fester, because down the road, that volatile state may yield political dividends.

One such issue is the problem of Nagorno Karabagh. The Minsk Group member countries and regional powers all state that any settlement that satisfies the opposing parties will be acceptable to them. Yet no one tries to push the parties for a compromise solution, since any unresolved issue remains handy for the major powers, to be manipulated for their own advantage.

In all the cases, background history, legal status and common logic is the same, yet once one begins to compare those conflicts, there are many explanations and excuses to make every case a unique one. For example, when the West decided to dismantle the former Yugoslavia to break the back of Slavic dominance in the heart of Europe, an artificial country was created in Kosovo, whose inhabitants did not aspire for self determination and the sacrosanct principle of territorial integrity was not even brought up. And one of the holiest pieces of territory for the Orthodox Slavs became the homeland for Muslim Kosovars. And Serbia was bombed into acquiescing to the forced reality. Yet when it comes to Karabagh, all the powers that be have created a rectangular wheel trying to join the two irreconcilable principles of territorial integrity and right for self determination. Today more than 80 countries have been coerced to recognize Kosovo's independence.

To counteract the West's forceful creation of Kosovo, Russia acted unilaterally to wrest South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia, creating independent nations, although only recognized by Nicaragua and Venezuela, besides Russia. While Russia upholds the principle of territorial integrity in the case of Karabagh, it does not hesitate to trample on that principle when it comes to Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Today one of the hot issues in the Middle East is the forced division of Cyprus, a sovereign country, which was the victim of the Turkish aggression and remains divided to this date.

Recently, the Turkish prime minister visited Northern Cyprus to celebrate the 37th anniversary of Turkish aggression, which they call a "Turkish intervention." The Turks on the island were not threatened by the Greeks in any way and they were well integrated into the general population.

But Bulent Ecevit, the Turkish prime minister at the time, decided to "liberate" the Turks in the north and unleashed his Attila campaign to occupy 38 percent of Cypriot territory. To this day, 30,000 Turkish troops are stationed in Northern Cyprus to force down the throat of the Greek majority the concept of the division of the island. During the Turkish invasion, Armenians suffered as well, when the Melkonian Educational Institute was bombed, and the Armenian church and a large property around St. Makar Monastery came to be under Turkish occupation.

The Turks used as an excuse the Geneva agreement over Cyprus to come to the "rescue" of the Turkish minority, with the help and collusion of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

For 37 years, Turkey stubbornly has kept its occupation army in place to force down its own solution, which is the partitioning of the island. In 2004, Kofi Annan presented a plan on behalf of the UN, which, in essence forced the Greeks to become the bad guys for the international community. Under the guise of a federal state, a formerly sovereign country would be partitioned, Greeks and Turks having their own autonomies in their respective designated territories and both enclaves operating under a federal government and a joint presidential council. Turkey through its armed aggression and illegal occupation of the island was raising the Turkish minority into a co-equal position, and thus was being rewarded, rather than being reprimanded or punished. Sixty-five percent of the Turks voted in favor of the Annan plan, while 76 percent of Greeks voted against it. After the failure of the plan, the Greek government of Cyprus joined the European Union, infuriating the Turks.

During the 37 years of occupation, Turkey tried to change the demographic profile of the island to have a stronger say in any negotiation. Today two-thirds of 250,000 Turkish Cypriots are imports from Anatolia; while Anatolian peasants flooded the island, many Europeanized native Turks left for England, further tightening Ankara's grip over the island.

Although Ankara provides the majority of the budget in

Northern Cyprus, during the current year, riots broke out and native Turks called for an end of the occupation of the "colonial" forces.

Following the recent parliamentary elections in Turkey, victorious Prime Minister Erdogan took two trips, one to Cyprus and the other to Baku to make claims, which presented duplicity of the Turkish foreign policy.

While in Baku he chided Armenia as an aggressor and demanded an end to the "occupation of Azeri territory," and in Northern Cyprus, he praised continued Turkish occupation of that country. His trip also coincided with the announcement of the Greek Cypriot government to become president of the European Union, during 2012. Erdogan's vintage temper rose again and announced that Turkey would freeze all the relations with EU.

Unlike Kosovo, although no country has recognized Turkish government in Northern Cyprus except Ankara, the thrust of Erdogan's policy seems to be to solicit that recognition from the international community before the upcoming Greek and Turkish negotiations in Cyprus.

Unfortunately, the member countries of the European Union do not always have consistent and unified policy vis-à-vis Turkish threats or intimidations.

For example, last year, when the EU set a deadline for Turkey to open its harbors to Greek-Cypriot boats for trade, Ankara continued to play hide-and-seek until the last moment. Before midnight of the deadline, Ankara announced that it had decided to open one single symbolic harbor for Greek Cypriot merchant ships but did not announce the name of that particular port. Today, the deadline is long behind us, and no Greek-Cypriot ships are allowed to Turkish ports, without any consequences.

While the world community recognizes the Greek-Cypriot government as the legitimate representative of the island, Ankara refuses even to recognize that government.

Erdogan's administration takes bold and challenging initiatives, and in the end, greater powers give in, allowing Ankara to have its way.

Recently, Russia, China and the NATO countries rushed to supply arms to Turkey, and despite NATO warnings, Ankara decided to leave its options open, once again reasserting its independent stand.

Turkey has the strongest standing army in the NATO structure after the US, yet many countries continue to supply arms — including Israel which has recently sold \$180 million of fighter jets, despite the public row with Ankara — and then they allow Turkey to dictate its will in any negotiation or confrontation. The trend is ominous, and if Turkey continues its policy of bullying, it may create cracks within the ranks of the EU and still allow Turkey to entertain the prospect of joining the EU.

The island of Cyprus was ceded by the Ottoman government to England, at the conference of Berlin in 1878. It was a price paid by the Sultan to check Russian encroachment of its territory. Britain used the island as a military outpost in the eastern Mediterranean, and in 1960, it gained its independence after decades of a liberation war by General Grivas.

Today, as Ankara promotes its ambitions of new Ottomanism, it looks like part of the island will revert to Turkey. Turkey was allowed to occupy part of Cyprus, accusing the Greeks of planning to unite the island with Greece (Enosis). The ironic twist is that Turkey is trying to attach a chunk of Cypriot territory to the mainland, thumbing its nose at the world.

Erdogan administration's Ottomanist guru, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, has his eyes not only on Cyprus, but on many of the former subject nations; Turkey's influence has already infiltrated the Arab world, just paying some lip service to the Palestinian cause. Turkey has launched an extensive trade and cultural expansion in the Arab world. When there was a danger of partitioning Iraq, Turkey was there to extend to oil rich areas of the country to "protect" its Turkman brothers.

Davutoglu has created inroads in the Balkans through Muslim Kosovo and the fifth-column Turkish community in Bulgaria. Bucharest, to this day, cannot recognize the Armenian Genocide, although Bulgaria has suffered very much under Ottoman rule, because of the Turkish communities' clout in that country. Ankara has decided to bankrupt Greece and Armenia through its arms race in the region. It already has Azerbaijan under its wings.

Cyprus is becoming a casualty of this new Ottomanist expansion, through the self-interest and myopic policies of the great powers.

We hope at least one power realizes the danger and keeps in check this Turkish expansionism, before Armenia becomes the next victim.

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COMMENTARY

Appeal: Critical Moment in Armenian History

By Jirair Libaridian

There are moments in a nation's history when sustaining hope presents a serious challenge, when optimism can be maintained only if reduced to self-delusion, when indifference carries significant responsibility and when silence should inspire guilt.

The current moment in Armenia is just such a moment if, that is, one cares about Armenia as a state.

Emigration from the two decade old independent state has reached extremely dangerous proportions: Dangerous to the national security of Armenia, dangerous to the structure of statehood, and threatening to the concept of nationhood with any sense of worth that carries meaning beyond the awareness of a common past.

It is time to realize, as many are doing in Armenia, that the pace of current emigration brings us face to face with a calamity of historic proportions, a calamity larger than the very difficult problems cited routinely.

We pride ourselves for our knowledge of history and yet we display total ignorance of what that history may mean, what lessons it may teach us, if we are interested in learning any. So many of our leaders – political, intellectual, scholarly and religious – lace their speeches, articles, books and sermons—with references to the tragedies that fill that history. They also point to the necessity to learn from that history. And yet, they seem to be oblivious to the simple fact that Armenia is being emptied and that hard and one cruel fact has its irreversible consequences.

It is quite well known that emigration from Armenia has a history that is at least 1,000 years old. Our historians have marked many moments when massive numbers of Armenians left their homeland. Yet historians and others have not always appreciated the consequences of such exoduses. We know that the Ardsrunis of Vaspurakan built the Church of Akhtamar, but we do not seem to care that they did so in order to celebrate their becoming kings at the expense of the central authorities of the Armenian kingdom, thus creating a very vulnerable mini-state while weakening the overarching Bagratuni kingdom; we also do not seem to care that having become a prime target for Byzantine expansion, at the end of their “royal existence” the Ardsrunis exchanged their kingdom for property outside Armenia and left their land with tens of thousands of their subjects. This is the same Akhtamar Church regarding which major Armenian institutions, in Armenia and in the diaspora, raised uproar recently. It seems, at times, that to feel like a nation requires no more than to appreciate the art of the past. That and similar instances of mass migration explain, in part, as to why historic Armenia was lost.

The above-mentioned incident of mass emigration and similar events are tied directly to the most tragic and consequential event in our history, the Genocide during World War I. To varying degrees, the Genocide and the campaign for its recognition have consumed politics and political discourse in the diaspora and in Armenia. Coming to terms with that calamity has taken decades; it is not all that clear that we have managed it yet. First we needed to narrate the events to ourselves and then to the world. Some went on to explore the reasons for the policies of the Ottoman Turkish government. Meanwhile, we decided that international recognition of the Genocide is where our efforts should be concentrated. We expected other nations to support our campaign because they and the rest of the world could learn lessons from the Armenian Genocide, from history, our history. Yet we have failed to ask the equally important question: Once they had decided that killing a people was desirable, why did the then rulers of the Ottoman Empire think they could execute the deportations and massacres necessary to achieve it? Why did they think it was possible to achieve what we now call genocide on such a scale? Why was it even an option, technically speaking?

The simple truth is that Armenians had been reduced to a minority in their own land and their numbers had fallen below such a threshold that any solution to their problems in their own hands had become impossible. A thousand years ago, Armenians had constituted at least 90 percent of the population of historic Armenia, estimated to be somewhere between one and four million. In 1914, there were 2.2 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, according to our own patriarchate. Massacres until then can account for only a small portion of the lack of increase in those numbers reflecting natural growth in the population. Emigration by individuals, families and groups – albeit for valid reasons—as well as conversions account for the rest.

That depletion and the diminution of the population is responsible for genocide becoming a plausible solution of the “Armenian problem” the Young Turk government perceived and, once adopted, for the successful execution of that policy. And this, despite the heroic deeds of fedayees before the war

and the heroism of many in the centers of Armenian resistance during the Genocide itself.

Our numbers had fallen below a certain threshold, to a level that had made an Armenian revolution against the state in the Ottoman Empire impossible and successful self-defense against genocide by and large hopeless. In fact, the rare place where resistance assured the survival of significant number of Armenians during the massacres and deportations was where Armenians constituted a compact majority, such as Van. We are all humbled by the courage of individual heroes, the resolve of so many communities to act with dignity in the face of certain death and, at the end, the death of a people: but all of these do not necessarily compensate for the absence of strategic and realistic thinking or for the necessity today to assess the lessons of that calamity.

Nearly a century later, we may now be reaching a similar threshold in the Republic of Armenia, where the decreasing level of the population closely linked to the unresolved conflicts with neighbors that is threatening the viability of the economy and national defense.

This is not an accusation against our people or any of its members who find no other solution to have a dignified life but to weigh the option of leaving; individuals make decisions regarding their own present and future on the basis of their own needs and possibilities. These possibilities for a dignified future are created, ultimately, by those who lead and run the state and determine its policies. Many other nations have been invaded and massacred but not all peoples subject to such crimes have left their homelands. Leadership counts in Armenian as in any other history, as was the case of the Ardsrunis. In contemporary times, democratic processes should place some controls over the actions of leaders; but when votes are tempered with systematically and on a massive scale, individual citizens end up with limited or no input in state policies.

The accelerated tempo of emigration is not hidden. After all, there are hardly any families in Armenia that do not have relatives abroad.

Certainly there have been those, especially in Armenia, who have discussed it in public forums; a few have sounded the alarm. It is possible that we are finally witnessing a discussion of the subject as a primary concern for many in the homeland.

But for most, especially in the diaspora, so many citizens leaving their land has been seen just as another deplorable situation, one of many the republic has faced since independence. The enormity of the problem has not been sensed, it seems. Intellectuals and scholars have hardly ever raised this issue with the proper alarm. We certainly have not seen a joint declaration of the three traditional parties – the Dashnaksutiune, Ramgavar and Hnchakian parties – or any joint declaration by diasporan organizations expressing concern for the depopulation of Armenia. Even if such a statement had been at the unfortunate level of the issued in October 1988 against the Karabagh Committee, at least it would have reflected a serious concern shared by all. The reader may remember that the Karabagh Committee had made the defense of Karabagh a priority and was moving toward Armenia's independence; a joint declaration that trusted Moscow for a resolution of the Karabagh problem and practically argued that these parties saw the future of Armenia only as a member of the Soviet Union. I know many would like to forget that declaration and the policies that generated it; after all, we have our own amnesia problem with regard to our past. The logic was that Turkey would annihilate the rest of us in Armenia, should that last remnant of a homeland become independent. Armenia has been independent for 20 years now and Turkey has not decimated its people. Most of Armenia's people are not being provided with the option to stay and make a decent and dignified living, while the option to emigrate is either coming as the only available option or as the most attractive one, sometimes made attractive by concerned relatives abroad or by Russian initiatives to populate Siberia. And that possibility is not bringing our parties and organizations together.

Nation states can survive wars and pestilence, famine, bad governance, corruption and other hardships; they can even survive authoritarian, totalitarian and dictatorial governments. But they cannot survive the critical loss of what makes and justifies a state, its people.

There have been dictatorships that have provided a solution to at least one problem by some objective standard, and redeemed themselves, even if partially. Armenia has had its share of such an experience during the Soviet period. The non-democratic and often brutal regime did bring industrialization and modernization to whatever was left of historic Armenia and developed a strong cultural and state infrastructure. Although economically and politically bankrupt at the end, it was possible to change the regime as well as the political and economic systems and still create the possibility of a viable country. How many believe that a viable Armenian state could be maintained once it has lost a critical segment of its population?

In contemporary times emigration from Armenia started in the 1970s, as a side product of the USSR decision, under US

pressure, to permit Soviet Jews to emigrate. The economic collapse of the Soviet Union that presaged independence was accentuated in Armenia due to the Karabagh war and the energy blockade. Emigration from Armenia accelerated and has continued in the 20 years since independence, overwhelmingly for social and economic reasons.

The first few years after independence constituted the most difficult period in the recent history of Armenia: collapse of the bankrupt Soviet economy, the obsolete state of its industrial basis, the energy crisis, the war with Azerbaijan, the earthquake that devastated one-third in the north of the country and the influx and often immediate departure of some 300,000 refugees from Azerbaijan.

The difference between those first years and the recent decade or more is that by 1996 some important challenges facing the country, other than the successful management of the war, were resolved: the energy crisis was resolved, the systemic changes had been placed on a firmer footing, reconstruction of the earthquake zone had been placed on a more organized, even if slow footing, and the refuge situation had been stabilized. There remained the question of the resolution of the conflicts with Armenia's two neighbors, Azerbaijan and Turkey. These two unresolved conflicts had economic security and strategic dimensions for both Armenia and Karabagh; these too could have been resolved.

Further, there have been major differences in the thinking of the first administration, of which I was part, and those that followed it. One difference was that the first administration considered resolving the problems with our neighbors essential for Armenia's economic future as well as for its long-term security. The republic was created and independence pursued to provide a better and more secure life for its citizens. That sense of primary responsibility for the security of its territory and citizens was extended to Karabagh and its Armenians inhabitants. Calculated strategizing against all odds, the will of the people in Armenia, the endurance of the people of Karabagh and sacrifice of our young from Karabagh and Armenia, and a few from the diaspora, as well as strategic and tactical mistakes committed by the leaderships in Azerbaijan secured the positive outcome of the war. The Karabagh war ended in 1994 – at least its most recent phase – with a victory that was a real one, and not a moral one, however much the latter may matter more to some.

Yet what we have seen following those early years has been phenomenally inept, at best, and tragically wasteful, at worst.

It is unfortunate that the years under the second president can best be characterized as the “Wasted Decade,” to be charitable as a historian. None of Armenia's remaining major problems were resolved during those crucial years; in fact, it appears that everything was done to make sure these problems were not resolved, statements to the contrary by those responsible notwithstanding. The construction of new buildings and opening of new cafes and expensive boutiques in the center of Yerevan, usually to launder monumental amounts of money accumulated illegally by a few, do not amount to what is known as economic development.

Those 10 years should have been used to resolve Armenia's conflicts with its neighbors by pressing for the maximum advantage Armenia had achieved but could not conceivably maintain forever. After all, it was obvious to all, except for those who had decided to ignore the larger picture that these advantages would dissipate over time.

Instead of making decisions worthy of statesmen, those leaders engaged in duplicitous behavior – claiming one thing and making sure the opposite occurs, a behavior which was applauded by most of the diaspora organizations, including those with vested interests in the campaign for the recognition of the Genocide as the most important item on the national agenda, as proof of the purest in patriotic behavior.

These years were used, instead, to make unprecedented use of the power such leaders held to accumulate their own wealth and enjoy the execution of arbitrary power. In the meanwhile they turned Armenia's fledgling and admittedly imperfect democracy into a system that was certain to fail, for the benefit of the few.

The occupied Azerbaijani lands outside of Karabagh remained under Armenian control, yes, but Armenia and Karabagh kept bleeding, losing dangerous numbers of their population, thus endangering the foundations of these states themselves. The status quo did not mean the freezing of everything; and the dynamic processes did not proceed in our favor.

We had to understand, and we did, that if Armenia wanted to continue as a viable state and if Armenians wanted to be there and live there, we had to get along with the neighbors we had, we had to resolve the conflicts we had with them. Today Armenia has an antagonistic relationship with one neighbor; in the absence of a peace treaty, it is practically on a war footing with the second, Azerbaijan; and because of that state of affairs with the first two, it has unhealthy relations with the last two, Iran and Georgia and a fragile relationship with Russia.

Some did think that preserving the status quo on the ground was the most important achievement the Armenian

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Obama's Lack of Credibility Undermines His Initiative on Genocide Prevention

If President Obama ends up being a one-term President, he has no one to blame but himself. While it is true that he inherited the Bush administration's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and a devastated economy, he has not only failed to lead the nation out of its quagmire, but in some respects has made matters even worse.

Perhaps President Obama's biggest failure has been dashing the hopes and expectations of the American public. While most politicians routinely make promises they do not keep, voters trusted this particular President's assurances that "Yes, We Can" bring about "Change."

Regrettably, within weeks of taking office, President Obama proved that he is just another unprincipled politician by going back on his solemn promise of acknowledging the Armenian Genocide and playing immoral word games for which he had chided his predecessors. Since then, he has not kept his word on hundreds of other issues, thereby undermining his credibility and causing his popularity to plummet like a lead balloon.

Having lost trust in President Obama, most Americans no longer take him seriously even when he attempts to do

the right thing. Last week, he issued an important "Presidential Directive" on the prevention of mass atrocities and genocide, mandating the creation of an "Interagency Atrocities Prevention Board" within 120 days. This new board is to be composed of top US government officials, including the Vice President, the Secretaries of State, Defense, Treasury and Homeland Security, the Attorney General, the National Security Advisor and Directors of the CIA, National Security Agency and Defense Intelligence Agency, among others.

In his Directive, President Obama claimed that "preventing mass atrocities and genocide is a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States." He went on to assert with a straight face that "history has taught us that our pursuit of a world where states do not systematically slaughter civilians will not come to fruition without concerted and coordinated effort." President Obama should be reminded of the wise words of philosopher George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." How could U.S. officials take any credible action to prevent future genocides when they refuse to acknowledge past genocides?

For this new super agency on "Mass Atrocities" to have any credibility, President Obama should stop playing political games with genocide, recognize previous "Mass Atrocities" and draw appropriate lessons from them. Otherwise, his new Directive becomes just another clever ploy to boost his poor rating.

Actually, President Obama came quite close to saying the right thing in his Directive, as he was citing historical examples of mass atrocities and genocide: "Sixty six years since the Holocaust and 17 years after Rwanda, the United States still lacks a comprehensive policy framework and a corresponding interagency mechanism for preventing and responding to mass atrocities and genocide." Curiously, President Obama started his historical narrative with the

Holocaust and avoided any mention of the Armenian Genocide – the first genocide of the 20th century. If the United States is serious about fighting mass atrocities and genocide, it should start by refusing to deny and distort historical facts in order to accommodate modern-day political considerations.

In his directive, President Obama suggested that the proposed interagency board consider the recommendations of the Genocide Prevention Task Force, co-chaired by former Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and former Secretary of Defense William Cohen. This is a serious mistake because both of these cabinet members had sent letters to Congress opposing the adoption of a resolution on the Armenian Genocide. How could these genocide denialists serve as appropriate guides to prevent future genocides? These two former officials have lost all moral standing to make any pronouncements on the subject of genocide.

President Obama also issued last week a presidential proclamation banning the entry into the United States of individuals who have participated in "widespread or systematic violence" against civilians and committed "war crimes, crimes against humanity or other serious violations of human rights."

Here are my humble suggestions regarding the two foregoing presidential initiatives:

1) Since descendants of genocide victims have a unique sensitivity regarding acts of mass violence, President Obama should appoint one representative of each of those victimized groups to the "Interagency Atrocities Prevention Board," at least in an advisory capacity; and

2) To prevent new genocides, President Obama should ban the entry into the United States of not only those who have participated in gross human rights violations, but also those who are genocide deniers, because denial is the final step of the genocidal process and a license to commit future genocides.

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state could attain, for itself and for Karabagh. Such major players included the second president of Armenia and his accolades. Idolized by some for his promotion of the historically important Genocide recognition issue to the level of state policy, the second president despised history and any lessons it might humbly offer; the Genocide issue for him was just a weapon that could be used tactically to humble Turkey so it would no longer make progress in a Karabagh settlement a precondition for the normalization of bilateral relations; the Genocide recognition issue was also critical in his thinking that such promotion of the Genocide recognition issue to the level of state policy would secure the geometric increase in diasporan investments in Armenia.

For many of the supporters of the second president, Genocide recognition was only the first step toward reparations, although the second president himself rejected such claims on behalf of the Republic of Armenia. I know many would like to expand Armenia and Karabagh to include more territories. I will be happy to support such thoughts if a plausible strategy is attached to such a goal. When I was very young I too entertained such goals; I found them justified. In response to my questions, when I was slightly older, as to how we are supposed to achieve those goals, I was told that there are secrets only the leaders know and we have to trust and follow these leaders. Time passed, it became clear that no one had the magic formula.

Relying on Russia – Soviet or otherwise – it appears was the non-magical part of that non-existing strategy. Russia has had both positive and negative impact on our history.

One cannot forget, however, that Russia acts according to its own interests, and not ours; and we have to learn to accept and work with that fact. Russia has not accepted and will not accept Armenian control of districts in Azerbaijan outside of Nagorno Karabagh as delineated during the Soviet period. While Armenia itself appears to be safe at this point, from the Russian point of view Karabagh is a negotiable entity; after all Moscow has many more issues to resolve with Baku than with Yerevan. Demanding the maximum may make one feel good. Who does not want to feel good? But since when feeling good is the basic measure of wise decisions and policies regarding the future of a nation or a state?

These "feel good" issues—we want more land, we want all, we won so we can want what we want – above have been obscuring the real problems for some time. And they have led us to this point where change has occurred despite our desire for the status quo – "Don't give anything back" – and that change has occurred at the foundation of our whole system, the people that are supposed to populate the state and justify its existence.

Such leaders will have to answer to history for the damage they have done to the future of the last remnants of Armenian statehood.

With respect to emigration, at least one resounding difference separates the first and subsequent administrations: while we thought of emigration as a problem that had to be resolved, subsequent administrations seem to think of it as a solution to

one or more problems.

No less than the prime minister of Armenia made a statement recently which let it be known that he considers emigration as a positive process because such emigration will deplete the ranks of discontented citizens who would be potential participants in a "revolution."

Without even reaching as far back as the Second World War to take note of atrocities by so many sides against their own citizens – Jews and Gypsies in Europe, Chechens and others in the USSR, to name but a few – one cannot but remember the killing of a half million Indonesians who were considered threats to the military in that state because of their "Communist sympathies," or the two million Cambodians killed by their own Khmer Rouge government because their social standing as urbanites was inimical to the ideology of the government.

But why not speak, in this context, of the one million or so Armenians killed by the Ottoman Turkish government because they were perceived to be immediate or potential threats to the regime and to the vision these rulers had of future Turkey?

Of course I am not accusing the current leadership of Armenia of genocide. The commonality between these processes is obvious, nonetheless: if you can make your opposition disappear, you can hope to extend your rule. It appears that at least some recent leaders of Armenia are ensuring that actual or potential opponents of the regime "self-deport" as one way of neutralizing them, one by one, slowly but steadily.

Besides, emigrants will likely contribute to the remittances a good portion of the population lives by: exporting labor is also a solution it seems.

And yet quantitative change translates into a qualitative change and history is transformed accordingly, as one wise philosopher noted. Critical change that can transform history does not have to be the result of a cataclysmic event; more often it is the result of accumulating forces that end in a calamity or two; more importantly such changes end up placing severe limits on the options available to resolve problems. Or, one can refer to the popular straw that broke the camel's back. And what will then remain of "Armenia" in Armenia? What will Armenia mean, and to whom? I do not wish, at this point, to carry this logic to its logical conclusion. It is too painful.

I also hope we are not there yet. I do hope there is still time before, once again, we reduce the problem of Armenia and that of being its citizen into another existential battle where the only thing that matters is being alive, where the quality of life, the quality of collective existence do not matter, where culture and science are forgotten, where, above all, there are no real options worthy of a citizen and where the only choice to have a dignified life is to stay as a peon or pack up and leave. In other words, can we imagine an Armenia that is not just a theme park for diasporan tourists, a Disneyland style territory, run as a corporation?

My concern is not the perception of any particular president or administration. Each has had its common failings and failures. I am concerned with the more basic logic that motivates each leader and each administration and with the long-term

impact of policies that might otherwise look innocuous.

It is time for the leaders of Armenia to recognize that they are facing a problem of historic proportions, may be the last challenge to the history of Armenian statehood, and that is as serious a responsibility as any Armenian has faced. Western Armenia was lost. For its existence Karabagh depends on Armenia, notwithstanding the insistence by some that Karabagh is more essential to Armenia than Armenia is to Karabagh.

It is time for these leaders to realize that the social and economic policies of the last decade or so have failed, that the increasing monopolization of power and capital has led to an impasse, and that the critical and difficult decisions that must be made to offer Armenia a new course cannot be made without making possible the election of legitimate authorities through open and fair elections. At this time it is difficult to imagine that the problem we are facing can be resolved without freely-elected authorities that can take the difficult decisions on hand and still maintain the support of the people. It is time to give hope again to those who remain in Armenia and who would rather stay there.

Armenia is not the first and it will not be the last to face these problems, including that of emigration. The difference here is that, while others can afford delaying solutions and suffering sustained losses, Armenia and Armenians cannot afford such luxuries.

It is time for diasporans – leaders of organizations and the rest of us – to reevaluate our strategies with regard to what and how to do in Armenia. I know that many organizations are dedicated to improving life in Armenia and Karabagh and that their efforts, at the end, should make a difference and stem the tide of emigration. And yet, all the aid from the diaspora has not been able to counteract the policies and practices in place that result in the encouragement of citizens to leave.

It is time for those in the diaspora who have the ear of the Armenian authorities – from president to ministers to judges – to argue the "case" for a sustainable Armenia with a population whose dignity remains intact, to use a terminology that has been applied to another cause.

It is particularly time for those who in the diaspora and Armenia have made the recognition of the Genocide a primary issue above all else to decide whether it is more important at this time for a president of the US or some other country to use the term Genocide or for a village in Armenia to acquire sufficient infrastructure for the villagers to create a sustainable economy that will make it possible for them to remain in their own country rather than emigrate to Siberia.

It is as simple as that.

It may not be appropriate for a historian to ask this question, but it may be permitted to a concerned Armenian: If it were possible to ask a victim of the Genocide what would constitute the more enduring and redeeming tribute to her martyrdom, a recognition by a state or the life of a village in what remains of Armenia, what would the answer be? After all, the victim knew what happened to her, to her family, how her village or town, and her people, were forced to leave and her first prior

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ity would not be expect a confirmation of these facts. I would suspect she would prefer that we focus on ensuring that a village nearing death in independent Armenia be given life support to thrive once again.

Is there any reason not to know that the Armenian emigration from Western Armenia by Armenians between the 1860s and 1914 was related to the dramatic worsening of the socio-economic conditions under which these subjects of the Ottoman Empire were living? It would be useful if the leaders of our traditional parties look at the origins of their organizations and draw the necessary conclusions.

The questions raised here are not related only to the priorities and necessities that we might be wise to reconsider but also to the relationships between our current priorities and the ability to resolve our conflicts with our neighbors and, finally, to the strategy used to bring about recognition of the Genocide by the Turkish state itself. These questions are hardly raised, our strategies are not looked at critically; they are taken for granted.

We have missed opportunities to resolve our problems with our neighbors and to become part of regional developments that would have anchored economic and social development in Armenia to the wider dynamics of the region and increased the level of independence of these states. Is there an economist worth his salt who believes that an isolated and blockaded Armenia can have sustainable development that will unleash the energies and talents developing in Armenia? Despite the conditions and despite the brain and talent drain, Armenia is capable of offering its people the opportunity to live a secure and decent life, to provide for their children's education and health, to create art, culture and science — and provide a dignified life to its senior citizens.

There were those who believed it was possible for Armenia to institute and secure sustained development because they believed Armenia was unique, that it could survive blockades and isolation because the diaspora could be counted on to invest the necessary capital for economic development; all that was needed, they argued, was to satisfy the diaspora in its yearning for the adoption of the Genocide recognition agenda by the government of Armenia, particularly important for the Diaspora. And so it was that the first president was forced to resign in 1998. In came

a new president and a new administration. They had 10 years to make their hypothesis work. And now we are in the third year of the tenure of the third president, installed by the second. Isn't it obvious that considering the long term we are in worse shape than we have been in the last 20 years?

If the third president has a different analysis, we have not seen it, although he has made some unusual moves. But what is needed now is not some moves but a whole strategy that recognizes the extent and depth of the problem the state of Armenia and, by extension, Karabagh, is facing. And to act accordingly, in the interest of the state he heads and the people he wants to lead. Beyond his personal stake, it would be horrible for Armenia and Karabagh if the third president went down into history as the leader who completed the chain of irresponsible strategizing initiated by the second president.

I know that there are those in the diaspora who have given up on Armenia as a state and reverted to a sense of a Diasporan-Armenian identity that does not require an Armenian state for its sustenance. Such an option may be inevitable, considering our long history of diasporization; if some Armenians are satisfied with constituting solely an ethnic community in some other country, that is understandable; it is also a different story; that would be story built around a self-definition that is anchored in church, some cultural institutions, and an imagined shared past that can be manipulated to fit the needs of an ethnic community according to the country, and a wonderful cuisine.

But that is the story of ethnic communities, not of a nation or of a state. If it had been possible to sustain identity through the strategy of ethnic identification, the size of the Armenian Diaspora today should have been possible a hundred times what it is today. May be nation and state do not matter to some; that, too, is an accumulation of choices by individuals. It is possible to understand that the underlying reluctance of some — conscious or otherwise — to see the problem of depopulation as a critical one is related to the process of diasporization; diasporans, by definition, are those who left the homeland at some point or their progenies, who are in a state of transition in their self-definition as Armenians, who are not likely ready to return. This is possible to understand; but that

kind of attitude is not justifiable, if one is engaged in a discussion of issues on an Armenian national and state level.

Can anyone forget how strong our "community" institutions were in Istanbul, at least for two centuries, in Aleppo and in Beirut, without forgetting Paris and Boston, and now Los Angeles? I would not even dare mention our diaspora in medieval Eastern Europe and later southern Russia, where we even had our constitutions in some cities.

For those who consider the state of Armenia an important dimension, if not an anchor, of their Armenian identity beyond an ethnic dimension, then there should not be a question as to the urgency of the problem of depopulation of that last remnants of Armenian statehood.

At the end, when the history of Armenia and Armenians is written in another century, we will all be responsible for what we said when we had a chance not say it, not to and did not say, when we had a chance to say it; for what we did

and we should not have done it, and did not do when we could have done it.

At that time the next group of lauders of community institutions, the troubadours of diasporan institutions and historians who feel obligated to justify the results can twist and distort facts and figures, argue and counter argue. The result will remain the same, as stark as the result of the Genocide. The only task left for the future will be, then, to designate a new date representing the latest tragedy, the one to come, a date to be remembered annually; and then to play the blame game: who lost the last remnants of Armenia? But such anniversaries will not change the result: the result will depend on question: what we inject into the situation today.

The rest then becomes irrelevant.

(Dr. Jirair Libaridian is a resident of Ann Arbor, Mich. He previously served as an advisor to former president, Levon Ter-Petrosian.)

Owners Protest Kiosk Closures in Yerevan

PROTESTS, from page 1

"I received a license just a few days ago," complained one woman. "Why didn't they tell me about this?"

"A supermarket and a four square-meter kiosk pay the same amount of money for the license," explained another kiosk owner. "That's 245,000 drams (\$668) a year."

Armenia's leading opposition forces have condemned both the kiosk closures and the earlier ban on street trade.

Three parliament deputies representing the

opposition Zharangutyun (Heritage) party on Monday met with Karapetian to demand that the authorities at least suspend the dismantling process for now. One of the lawmakers, Stepan Safarian, said the mayor rejected the demand.

Safarian said that the Zharangutyun representatives have requested an urgent meeting on the issue with Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian.

Both the central and municipal governments ignored similar street protests that were staged by street trades and attended by some Zharangutyun parliamentarians last spring.

Medvedev, Aliyev in Crunch Talks on Karabagh

TALKS, from page 1

"I would like have an extremely frank conversation with you about what to do next, about how events could develop considering our last trilateral meeting [on June 24 with Armenian President Serge Sargsian] that was held in Kazan and previous meetings held in the same format," he said.

Contrary to high international expectations, the Kazan meeting did not yield an agreement on the basic principles of resolving the Karabagh settlement proposed by Russia and the two other mediating powers, the United States and France.

Medvedev subsequently presented Aliyev and Sargsian with a set of unpublicized proposals aimed at salvaging the peace process. The content of their replies sent to the Russian president last month remains unknown.

Aliyev on Tuesday praised Medvedev's active involvement in the search for Karabagh peace. He said the nearly one dozen Armenian-Azerbaijani summits organized by Medvedev in the last three years "have very much made the parties' positions closer to each other."

"This is the main problem of regional securi-

ty and, of course, Azerbaijan is interested in a quick resolution of the conflict more than anyone else," added Aliyev.

It is not yet clear whether Medvedev plans to hold soon similar talks with Sargsian as well.

Food Prices in Armenia Rising Three Times Faster Than Salaries

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The consumer price index from January-July 2011 compared to a similar period in 2010, amounted to 109.4 percent (9.4 percent inflation). Moreover, food prices totaled 15.4 percent, according to Gurgen Martirosyan, head of Price Statistics and International Comparisons Division at the National Statistics Service.

Martirosyan stressed that the growth of salaries in June 2011 compared to June 2010 stood at 4.9 percent.

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