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## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Ricciardone Revises Response to Senate Inquiry on Number of Churches in Turkey

### Clerics Take Him to Task for Ignorance of Ottoman History

WASHINGTON – US Ambassador to Turkey Francis Ricciardone, responding to a wave of grassroots outrage and growing Congressional concern, backed away from his most obvious and offensive misrepresentations about Turkey's destruction of Christian

churches, but sparked renewed controversy by artificially inflating the number of currently operating Christian houses of worship, and again using strained euphemisms to help Ankara escape responsibility for its crimes, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).



US Amb. to Turkey Francis Ricciardone

Following broad-based concerns expressed by Armenian-American community and religious leaders, Ricciardone amended his earlier response to Senate Foreign Relations Committee member Robert Menendez (D-NJ), in which he had argued, without any basis in fact, that a majority of Christian churches operating in the territory of present-day Turkey prior to 1915 were still functioning today.

In a correction obtained by the ANCA on August 22, Ricciardone took the "opportunity to clarify the record," suggesting that of the 2,000 churches there before 1915, they are not all still functioning. He said, "The corrected text should read as follows: Most of the Christian churches functioning prior to 1915 are no longer operating as churches. Christian community contacts in Turkey report that a total of 200-250 churches that date to 1915 and before offer see STATEMENT, page 16

### Abp. Khajag Barsamian Responds to Amb. Ricciardone's Statement

WASHINGTON – Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), sent a letter to United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, regarding assertions recently made by Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, President Barack Obama's recess appointment to serve as US ambassador to Turkey.

In an official written statement addressing an inquiry from New Jersey Sen. Robert Menendez regarding the present operational status of "the more see RESPONSE, page 16

## Armenia, Israel Review Tenuous Relationship

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Senior Armenian and Israeli diplomats discussed the sometimes uneasy relationship between their countries during two days of consultations that ended in Yerevan on Tuesday.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry said the two negotiating teams were headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Kirakossian and Pinchas Avivi, a high-level Israeli Foreign Ministry official coordinating ties with Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

"During the consultations the two sides discussed issues related to Armenia-Israel cooperation, developments taking place in the Middle East and South Caucasus regions as well as other issues of mutual interest," read a ministry statement. It gave no details of those discussions.

Although the statement described the talks as "regular," they are understood to be connected with Kirakossian's July 25 phone conversation with Israel's Deputy Foreign Ministry Danny Ayalon.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry said that Ayalon "thanked Kirakossian for the friendly relationship and mentioned the historical ties and cultural similarities between the two nations."

"Ayalon emphasized the importance Israel attaches to the continuous development of diplomatic relations and practical cooperation with Armenia," the ministry said in a statement. "He further stated that it would be his pleasure to visit Yerevan, and invited Kirakossian to visit Israel."

Ayalon also "reiterated the special sensitivity we, as Jews, feel regarding the Armenian tragedy," the statement added in

reference to the Armenian Genocide.

Successive Israeli governments have resisted calls to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Support for such recognition appears to have grown within the Israeli parliament over the past year, however.

Diplomatic sources in Yerevan say that Ayalon phoned his Armenian counterpart to address the Armenian government's



Israeli and Armenian diplomats met in Yerevan on Tuesday.

unease over Israel's growing ties with Azerbaijan, which was communicated to another Israeli diplomat earlier this summer.

One source said that Ayalon denied reports that quoted him as saying in May that Israel will not recognize the Armenian Genocide because of Azerbaijan's importance for his country.

Avivi, who served as Israel's ambassador to Turkey from 2003-2007, and other Israeli diplomats accompanying him visited Tsitsernakabert memorial on Tuesday.

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman held up the Azerbaijani-Israeli ties as a model for cooperation between the Jewish state and a Muslim nation when he visited Baku in February 2010. He also reportedly voiced support for Azerbaijan's "territorial integrity."

In what may have been an attempt to soothe Yerevan, Ayalon contradicted those remarks in his phone call with Kirakossian.

## Armenian Woman Dies in Indiana State Stage Collapse

INDIANAPOLIS (Indiana Star) – An Armenian-American woman was among those who died when a stage collapsed at the Indiana State Fair on August 13, right before the band Sugarland was to perform.

Alina BigJohnny, of Muncie, was the daughter of an Armenian immigrant. She had just turned 23, and her family was planning a belated birthday celebration for her Sunday. But instead the party turned into a prayer vigil, the Associated Press reported.

BigJohnny died Saturday when stage rigging collapsed at the Indiana State Fair.

see BIGJOHNY, page 16



Alina BigJohnny

## Estonian Company to Dig for Gold in Armenia

TALLINN, Estonia (Baltic Business News and Hetq) – Estonian businessman Marcel Vichmann has set up FIT Armenia, a company that plans to explore and mine gold and copper in Armenia.

Vichmann started the gold mining project in Armenia after GILD Arbitrage, an investment fund that had invested in Armenia in 2007 and 2008.

The investment fund had gold exploration rights for seven properties, but soon went bankrupt when it could not meet its investors' demands.

Vichmann now owns three of the seven licenses and has reportedly invested additional amounts in the exploration.

## Fortune Oil Names Director for Iron Mining Operations

YEREVAN (Hetq) – Fortune Oil PLC announced this week the appointment of Jerry Gorman as project director for its iron ore investment in Armenia, effective October 1.

Gorman will now be responsible for developing both the Hrazdan and Abovyan mines.

He will be Fortune Oil's most senior representative based in Armenia and will be the key individual liaising with all of the group's strategic alliance partners including SRK Consulting (UK), ProMet Engineers (Australia), Sinosteel Group (China), local government and other relevant authorities including the Chinese Embassy.

The largest shareholders in Fortune Oil are First Level Holdings Limited, Vitol and major Chinese state-owned corporations.

## Tateossian Jewelry Opens Store in Armenia

YEREVAN (news.am) – The Tateossian jewelry company, base in London, will open a store here.

The 700-square-foot store will be situated in a small center and will be designed by architects PLS Design of Italy – Lino Lasanno and Lorenzo Perini – who also designed the Dolce and Gabbana and Valentino stores, according to Retail Jeweler.

"It's fulfilling to be able to go back to your roots and offer a London twist to the city of Yerevan. The store opening is a reflection of the growing market of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Armenia is the perfect first opening in this part of the world," said Chief Executive Officer Robert Tateossian.

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Samvel Karapetyan: Voyage of 'Armenia' Vessel – Sport Achievement

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The vessel “Armenia” started its voyage in March 28, 2009 in Valencia, Spain, and crossing the Red Sea on August 5, and its crew stated that the “From Sea to Sea Armenia” mission has been accomplished. The vessel went to 23 countries, traveling almost 82,000 kilometers. The head of the expedition, Zori Balayan, said “From Sea to Sea” is not an exaggeration.

According to captain of the ship Samvel Karapetyan, the voyage is first of all a sport achievement for Armenia. “This is the first round-the-world navigation for Armenians, which was successfully completed. The historical meaning of the voyage is that we also visit world-spread Armenians and the churches built by them,” he noted, adding that the navigation is attractive in regard to business, too. The ties established in different countries can promote that investments are made in Armenia.

## Armenian Deputy PM Visits China

YEREVAN (news.am) – Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Armen Gevorgyan left for a working visit to China on Monday.

The delegation members are scheduled to visit the Guangdong province and will participate in the closing ceremony of the 26th international sports games in Shenzhen city, the ministry's press service reported.

The games started on August 12. Athletes from Armenia participated in five disciplines: chess, weightlifting, taekwondo, judo and tennis. Armenia's weightlifter Aghasi Aghasyan won a gold medal during the games.

Gevorgyan will meet with local authorities and Chinese high-ranking officials in Beijing.

Gevorgyan met with Deputy Prime Minister of the Chinese State Council Liu Yandun.

The speakers agreed that the development of the cooperation would assist to strengthen ties between the two friendly nations.

The sides especially welcomed cooperation in educational sphere and rated the new programs. Gevorgyan welcomed China's decision to increase the number of slots for Armenian students to 40.

## MP, Gov. Minister Debate State of Children

YEREVAN (Hetq) – Filaret Berikyan, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, stated at a press conference this week that when it comes to the protection of children's rights, Armenia is doing quite well in comparison to other post-Soviet nations and Eastern Europe as a whole.

This viewpoint was challenged by Heritage Party MP Anahit Bakhshinyan, the other conference speaker. She argued that children's rights were periodically violated in Armenia.

She presented 2010 figures regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities in Armenian special needs schools obtained from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health.

Bakhshinyan pointed to a number of irregularities in the figures.

For example, according to the list provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs there are 8,931 children with disabilities registered in Armenia. The ministry's official website says there are 8,045.

She added that 1,836 children with a variety of learning disabilities are enrolled in the country's 18 special needs schools. This deviates from the 1,036 figure given to her by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the 285 figure in the Ministry of Health list.

When asked about the discrepancies, Berikyan said that the numbers are constantly changing. She added that there are various levels of learning disability and that not all children registered as such are enrolled in special needs schools.

# Dashnak Leadership Criticizes Party Branch in United States

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – In a rare show of discord within its ranks, the opposition Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) criticized on Friday its largest branch in the United States for deciding to boycott an upcoming event in Los Angeles to be attended by President Serge Sargisian.

Sargisian is expected to visit the US in late September to address the UN General Assembly in New York and meet with representatives of the Armenian-American community. He will attend an official banquet organized by the Armenian Consulate in Los Angeles and dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Armenia's independence.

Dashnaksutyun's organization in the western US announced late on Thursday that its representatives will not take part in the celebration, in a protest against Sargisian's track record in office. It said his presence there will “cast a shadow on the idea of independence and denigrate the struggle of our people for the restoration of justice.”

In a strongly-worded statement issued late on Thursday, the party's chapter described the Armenian president as a “discredited” individual who “tramples democracy and democratic values underfoot” in order to ensure “the reproduction of the criminal regime.”

The statement went on to accuse the Sargisian government, of which Dashnaksutyun was a part until April 2009, of committing “blatant human rights violations,” controlling the judiciary and sponsoring “oligarchs that continue to relentlessly plunder our people” in Armenia. It also condemned the government's conciliatory policies towards Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Dashnaksutyun's supreme decision-making body, based in Yerevan, the Bureau, made clear the next day that it disapproves of the boycott.

“Obviously, there are numerous



President Serge Sargisian (right) and Hrant Markarian attend a concert in Yerevan organized by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

unsolved problems accumulated in the Republic of Armenia,” Giro Manoyan, the Bureau's foreign and pan-Armenian affairs spokesman, said in written comments to media. “But the 20-year [independence] anniversary testifies to our common victory and achievements. We have no right to be guided by personalized relationships and emotional steps in this kind of event. Instead, we must use this occasion to express our unity and consolidation with such events, while remaining faithful to our principles.”

Manoyan did not clarify whether the Bureau agrees with the harsh assessment of Sargisian made by one of the party's most important diaspora branches.

Dashnaksutyun leaders in Armenia have been more cautious in criticizing the current authorities in Yerevan.

The verbal attacks from the Armenian-American political structure are more in tune with characterizations of Sargisian regularly made by the Armenian National

Congress (HAK), a more radical opposition force at odds with Dashnaksutyun. They are the clearest indication yet that some Dashnaksutyun structures and individual members disagree with the party leadership's cautious stance.

Opening a Dashnaksutyun congress in Yerevan in late June, Hrant Markarian, the de facto head of the Bureau, called for a “systemic regime change” in Armenia but avoided personal attacks on Sargisian.

He made clear that Dashnaksutyun will not seek to topple the president with sustained street demonstrations and other radical actions.

A declaration adopted by the congress likewise stopped short of demanding Sargisian's resignation.

Dashnaksutyun quit Armenia's governing coalition in 2009 in protest against Sargisian's controversial policy of rapprochement with Turkey, rather than his human rights or socioeconomic records.

## Shirak Primate Urges Gov. to Help Residents Stay in Armenia

By Yeranuhi Soghoyan

YEREVAN (Hetq) – It seems that one ranking member of the Armenian Apostolic Church has joined the ranks of many raising the alarm regarding the exodus of average citizens from Armenia.

Bishop Mikayel Ajapahyan, Primate of the Shirak Diocese, noted as much when he said: “Of course there's an exodus and it has reached dangerous proportions. The



Bishop Mikayel Ajapahyan

BBC even recently aired a program about villages where you'll only find women. The men are off working overseas and have started new families.”

The Primate makes a point to visit parishes throughout the diocese and says he can see the results every time he goes. “Recently there was a Turkish tourist in Gumri and when he found out that I spoke Turkish he came to see me. Turns out the man has lived in Moscow for many years and told me about the Armenian workers there and the new

families they have started. It sickened me to think that even the Turks have changed their impressions of Armenians. The image of the Armenian family has been distorted. Turks have always regarded Armenians as a people with morals. Now, that image is being replaced. Isn't this a national tragedy?” said Ajapahyan.

The clergyman went on to say that he's been accused of washing Armenia's dirty wash in public when he raises the issue and that he should be spreading positive news.

“I am sure that some of your readers will say I am exaggerating the facts and that the migration numbers are not as bad as they seem. They forget that we representatives of the church are responsible for all our flock and that we mourn each member who leaves the country. We have an obligation to speak out,” notes the Primate.

Ajapahyan went on to note that only those with no other options are the ones that leave.

“It's hard to blame them. It's a matter of survival,” he said.

He also confessed that the Shirak Diocese employs more people than actually needed in order to prevent some from migrating.

“Many accuse me of employing extra people. I am aware of this, but I also know that these individuals have families to take care of,” he said.

The Primate says it is a matter of governance and that many see their future

life as being on the outside.

He pointed to the Come Home program launched by the Ministry of the Diaspora, noting that the government should launch a similar program to keep local residents at home.

“Why is it that it is possible to change conditions in Georgia but not here in Armenia? They joke about Saakashvili chewing on his tie but this hasn't prevented him from pushing through reforms,” he says.

Ajapahyan continued by stating that there must be the desire and will to improve the situation in Armenia.

He pointed to the pressure tactics of the tax authorities in Armenia as a sector that must be addressed.

“You won't see a Soviet-produced car in Georgia. The government has made the importation of foreign cars accessible to the public. They've done away with the 30-percent tax burden. Countries usually slap importers with heavy taxes in order to protect the domestic market. But we don't produce autos in Armenia, so why all the taxes?”

The clergyman argues that 10 years ago Georgia was lagging behind Armenia but that today the situation has been reversed.

“It's not because they have an outlet to the sea or due to tourism. What I want say is that the government must not treat the people like subjects to be sheared and milked. We must take care of them without demanding any pay-back.”



## INTERNATIONAL

# Armenians Seeking Asylum In France on the Rise, Again

By Seda Grigoryan

PARIS (Hetq) – Aram, a 28-year-old graduate of the Komitas National Conservatory in Yerevan, moved to Paris in 2004.

He says he relocated to continue his musical education. Aram later confessed that the education story was just a ruse. He simply wanted to get out of Armenia.

"I had two major reasons. First, there was the work issue. Even a top graduate from the Conservatory would find it impossible to get a job in any of the orchestras in Armenia. All the spots are taken. The second issue was that I was facing military service. Had I stayed, I wouldn't have been able to play music for two years. I might have gotten frustrated and left music all together."

In the ensuing years, Aram has received a number of diplomas. But he is

still considered a student, and this allows him to stay in France. He has a residency card. To make some extra money, Aram plays in some groups and gives private lessons.

He makes enough to get by and even send some back to his parents in Armenia.

But unlike Aram, most Armenians arriving here are not legal residents. Many are obliged to return to Armenia.

It is not uncommon to read about Armenian families forced to live "rough" on the streets of Paris.

Recently the French newspaper, *La Depeche*, wrote about an Armenian family with four kids that were found sleeping on the streets.

Last March, an Armenian named Misha Shaveshyan launched a hunger strike since French authorities were planning to deport him, his wife and two children. Their asylum request had been denied.

In 2009, 3,603 individuals from the Republic of Armenia applied for asylum in France. This was the largest number of Armenian-asylum seekers ever. Armenia came in third place after

Kosovo and Sri Lanka.

In November 2009, France decided to register Armenia (as well as Turkey) in its official list of "safe countries."

Of course, the French government made this decision not because it was convinced that Armenia was on the road of stability and democratic reform. There were more practical considerations at play.

But local civic groups working with migrants pressured the French government to review its decision. As a result, Armenia and Turkey were removed from the list in July of 2010.

During those eight months, the number of asylum seekers sharply dropped off – 44 percent to be exact.

The number of Armenians seeking asylum in France sharply rose again after Armenia was no longer considered a "safe country."

Many asylum seekers claim they are persecuted in Armenia since they belong to the political opposition and took part in the March 1 events. A tiny percentage claim they are members of ethnic minorities and thus the target for discrimination in Armenia.

## Sargisian Rules Out Azeri Military Edge Over Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Azerbaijan cannot gain military advantage over Armenia despite its ongoing military buildup and will eventually come to terms with Armenian control over Nagorno-Karabagh, President Serge Sargisian insisted over the weekend.

"The Azerbaijani president [Ilham Aliyev] keeps saying that Azerbaijan has lots of money, a powerful economy, that its population is 9 million people while there is nobody left in Armenia and so on," Sargisian said during a visit to a youth camp in Lake Sevan.

"Azerbaijan has had only one president who was more or less realistic," he added in an apparent reference to Aliyev's late father and predecessor Heydar. "The rest of them were using today's rhetoric. And what happened [as a result]? Everybody knows quite well what happened."

"I am confident that military actions is a road leading nowhere. Azerbaijan is not able to gain military superiority over Armenia."

Having embarked on a major military buildup about a decade ago, Azerbaijan's leaders regularly threaten to forcibly win back Karabagh and Armenian-controlled territories surrounding the disputed enclave. Baku plans to boost military spending to \$3.3 billion this year, up from \$2.15 a year ago and just \$160 million in 2003.

The Armenian government as well as Karabagh's ethnic Armenian leadership have repeatedly dismissed those threats, saying that Azerbaijan will suffer another defeat if it attempts a military solution to the dispute. They also say that the Armenian side is responding to the Azerbaijani buildup with its own substantial arms acquisitions.

The commander of Karabagh's Armenian-backed army, Movses Hakobian, said last week that the "military potential" of his troops grew by 20 percent in the first half of this year. He said they will receive more weaponry in the coming months.

Addressing several hundred young Armenians affiliated with a pro-government political group, Sargisian claimed that Azerbaijan will eventually abandon attempts to regain control

## French MPs in 'Solidarity' Visit to Karabagh

By Lusine Musayelian

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) – Four members of France's parliament visited Nagorno Karabagh on Monday in a show of support for the disputed territory's pursuit of international recognition of its secession from Azerbaijan.

The delegation led by Guy Teissier, chairman of the French National Assembly's committee on national defense, met with local parliamentarians and was due to hold separate talks with Bako Sahakian, president of Nagorno-Karabagh Republic (NKR).

"Coming to Armenia is a gesture of friendship. Coming to Karabagh is a gesture of solidarity," Teissier said in a speech at the NKR parliament.

The senior lawmaker, who is affiliated with France's ruling Union for the Popular Movement (UMP) party, said that Karabagh had been incorporated into Soviet Azerbaijan "at the whim of a dictator" – Stalin – and that its predominantly-Armenian population should be able to determine its status.

"Why would we keep silent and not say that people very deeply rooted in this land have the right to live here?" added Teissier.

Jacques Remiller, another UMP

deputy and the mayor of the French city of Vienne, also voiced "great sympathy" for the Karabagh Armenian cause.

"Just as other nations like Kosovo and Cyprus, where they have two governments, they [the Karabagh Armenians] have the right to decide their destiny by themselves," Remiller said.

The French lawmakers were scheduled to tour on Tuesday several Karabagh villages and meet with leaders of local non-governmental organizations uniting Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan.

The visit is bound to anger the Azerbaijani government, which considers such trips an affront to its internationally-recognized sovereignty over Karabagh. It has already banned scores of foreign dignitaries, who have been to the territory without its permission, from visiting Azerbaijan.

Among those blacklisted by Baku are five other French deputies who traveled to Karabagh in June 2010. The trip was initiated by Francois Rochebloine, the pro-Armenian deputy chairman of the French parliament committee on foreign affairs.

Teissier defended the visits.

"Don't we, free people from a free country, have the right to freely visit here and see our friends?" he said.

## Cypriot FM Makes Israel Second Port of Call

NICOSIA (*Jerusalem Post*) – New Cypriot Foreign Minister Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis is scheduled to visit Israel on Wednesday, less than three weeks after taking over her new post, in what is widely viewed as a sign of the importance Cyprus now attributes to ties with Israel.

This will be only Kozakou-Marcoullis's second visit abroad since becoming foreign minister, her first being a trip to Greece some 12 days ago.

One Cypriot foreign ministry official said her visit to Israel so soon after taking office "speaks about the importance Israel and Cyprus attach to their rela-

tions. The relations of the two countries have seen a tremendous development in the last two years on the political and the economic level."

Moreover, he said, the ties are likely to get even closer in the future with the prospect of possible cooperation on the development of the countries' natural gas fields.

Kozakou-Marcoullis, a career diplomat who served as foreign minister briefly from July 2007 to March 2008, is scheduled to meet with President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman during her 36-hour visit.

## International News

### Protocols Withdrawn From Agenda of Turkish Parliament

ANKARA (Armenpress) – The Turkish National Assembly has withdrawn 898 bills from the agenda of its regular session, including the Armenian-Turkish protocols signed October 10, 2009, in Zurich.

Turkish mass media reported that according to the regulations of the National Assembly, all bills which are not ratified and not put on the agenda by the previous parliament, will be nullified in the subsequent parliament.

### Israel's Knesset to Consider Armenian Genocide Resolutions

TEL AVIV, Israel (news.am) – Discussion of two resolutions on the Armenian Genocide in Israeli parliament (Knesset) has been postponed until October, after parliamentary recess, coordinator of Jerusalem Armenian Cause Hagop Sevan said.

"We have strong support in the Knesset on behalf of the parliament speaker, leader of the ruling coalition and many of its members. Many are well aware of this issue. The damaged relations between Israel and Turkey also play an important role. In general, we hope that we will succeed and justice will prevail," he said.

The issue on recognition of the Armenian Genocide was introduced in the Knesset Committee on Education, Culture and Sports in May this year by the left-leaning party, Meretz, with the support of the Likud party, led by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Before sending it to the Commission on Education, Culture and Sports members of parliament approved the decision to continue the discussion. They stressed that the relations between Israel and Turkey should not become an obstacle to Israel's recognition of Armenian Genocide.

A resolution dealing with assigning a memorial day for the Genocide will be considered as well.

### Attacks Kill 100 Kurds

ISTANBUL, Turkey (UPI) – Turkey's air strikes into northern Iraq the past week have killed at least 100 Kurdish separatists and injured more than 80 others, Turkey's military said.

The strikes hit 132 locations around Qandil, Hakurk, Avasin-Basyan, Zap and Metina regions while heavy artillery bombed 349 targets, the *New York Times* reported Tuesday.

A statement posted on the military headquarters' Web site said the strikes would continue.

"North of Iraq and inside the country will be closely monitored for any separatists terror actions as air and land operations will continue," the statement said.

The military operations follow escalating violence by the Kurdistan Workers' Party in Turkey and Iraq.

The group is seeking autonomy in the southeastern region near the borders with Syria, Iran and Iraq.

Areas that are thought to be Kurdish Workers' Party headquarters have been subject to air attacks in response to the killing of 30 Turkish soldiers last month.

### London Royal Festival Hall to Host Recital by Armenian Composer

LONDON (news.am) – The London Royal Festival Hall will host a recital by Armenian composer Karen Grigoryan, with the participation of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor, Marius Stravinsky.

On September 1, Grigoryan will start his tour in Europe.

The concert program in the UK is devoted to the 20th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Armenia. The concert will be held under the auspices of the British Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church.



## INTERNATIONAL

# Berge Setrakian, President of AGBU Worldwide: Erasing the Damage Caused by the Genocide

By Maria Chakhtoura

BEIRUT (L'Orient Le Jour) – “I am Lebanese to the core, attached to the land where I was born, where I grew up and lived, and I have Armenia as my heritage.” These are the words of Berge Setrakian, president of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), the world's largest Armenian NGO headquartered in New York.

Our chance meeting, the result of a happy coincidence, took place in a hotel in Yerevan. Setrakian was visiting the Armenian capital to attend two important meetings: the Special Commission of the centenary of the Armenian Genocide and the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund.

He had left Lebanon in 1976 after completing his law studies at Saint Joseph University and having practiced law for some years. While on a short visit to the United States, he had met a lawyer of Lebanese origin associated with a large New York firm, who proposed that he join their team. No sooner said than done, and here he is now, a senior partner of an international firm with nearly 900 lawyers and offices in 26 cities around the world.

Since leaving Lebanon, Setrakian has kept in touch with his friends and returns regularly to the country where he still has his apartment. In the United States, he remains very active with groups working for the Lebanese cause. After relocating to the United States, Berge Setrakian also joined the Central Board of Directors of AGBU, which was established in 1906 and now has chapters in over 32 countries and 80 cities. After serving as vice president, he assumed the presidency in 2002.

It was in this capacity that Setrakian was in the Armenian capital. The Special Commission of the centenary of the genocide, chaired by Armenia's head of state, was convened with the participation of highest-ranking government officials, political party representatives, heads of the church, and AGBU, to organize the worldwide centennial commemoration of the Armenian Genocide.

The mission of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, whose annual Board of Trustees meeting was being held in Yerevan, is to raise funds from the Diaspora to finance large projects in Armenia.

## AGBU and the Diaspora

As for AGBU, with which many Lebanese are familiar through its various activities, Setrakian says, “This organization was established in Cairo in 1906 by Boghos Nubar Pasha, son of the prime minister of Egypt at the time, with the primary mission of preserving the Armenian identity in the diaspora and the national heritage in Armenia. Its headquarters are in New York and it is managed by a board of 21 members, with an annual budget of almost \$40 million. The organization first and foremost addressed the humanitarian and educational needs of the Armenian people following the Genocide. Throughout a whole century of its history and activities, AGBU has adapted itself to the needs of the Armenian people and has grown progressively, playing a significant role in the contemporary history of Armenia and Armenians. In the years immediately following the Genocide, AGBU financed and organized Armenian refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Greece and elsewhere. In the decades between 1930 and 1950, it created clinics, schools and youth camps.

Moving on to the 1960s, it constructed and organized community and youth centers in principal diaspora communities. With the advent of Armenia's independence and the reopening of the Eastern European countries following the fall of the Soviet Union, the focus turned to initiatives in the homeland. Today, in the diaspora, AGBU owns and operates more than 25 day and weekly schools, in addition to youth and cultural centers. For example, in Lebanon, AGBU operates several institutions, its main quarters cur-



AGBU President Berge Setrakian speaking at the 86th General Assembly in Buenos Aires, which took place in October 2010

rently being the Demirdjian Center in Antelias. It sponsors primary and secondary schools, and the Antranik Youth Association with its many sports, cultural and educational activities. AGBU provides college scholarships for higher education, with special attention to the field of performing arts and to students who exhibit talent in art and music.

## Initiatives in Armenia

What action has AGBU initiated in Armenia to help the country survive in face of the political problems stemming from Turkey's refusal to recognize the Genocide?

“Since its inception, the organization has always followed a policy of supporting Armenia, regardless of existing political regimes. For example, in 1928, AGBU created a medical center in Yerevan. In 1931, with donations from its president at the time, it established the village of Nubarashen, which now has 11,000 residents. In

1946, I funded the repatriation of thousands of Armenians in the diaspora to Armenia. In 1971, its then president Alex Manoogian donated the museum bearing his name at the Holy See of Echmiadzin.

Nothing is permanent in politics; regimes change but heritage remains. Since the independence, our activity has become even more diversified, and the organization has invested more than \$150 million in various projects in Armenia. After the fall of communism,

AGBU funded the creation of the American University of Armenia to enable young people to embrace the educational system of the West. On the other hand, they provide scholarships to the French University in Armenia and subsidies to the State University. AGBU supports the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra and has funded many activities in the field of art and music to save the artistic and cultural heritage of the past regime, as the young state, still in its inception, has not been able to take upon itself the financing of these activities.

Working with the Holy See of Echmiadzin, AGBU took over what once were youth centers of the Soviet era and transformed them into artistic and cultural centers for young people. Since 1990, these centers have been serving nearly 4,000 youths daily and providing them the means to engage in after-school leisure activities, rather than stay home.

The performance of these young people, in

their respective capacities, is breathtaking. The children's center programs discover and cultivate young talents, sometimes even prodigies. It suffices to watch these very, very young children in their high-quality performances, in order to understand the commitment of supporters, as well as the instructors who are driven by the purpose of this enterprise. AGBU also operates senior dining centers, where more than 1,500 retirees with paltry pensions receive daily meals.

At another level, we have focused on the development efforts of the Armenian Apostolic Church by funding, through donations from our members, the construction of new churches and organizing existing parishes and initiating new ones after 80 years of communism. We supported the construction of a new seminary by Lake Sevan. Thus, we are helping Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, in his mission to reconstruct “the church” by providing funding to train seminarians and theological education abroad through scholarships. We are convinced that the church will continue to play an important role in preserving our identity in the diaspora.

AGBU has also established a scout camp in Armenia and excursion trips for youth to the homeland, where more than 500 young Diasporan Armenians visit every summer. We have created the Armenian Virtual College to teach language, history and culture through the Internet to Diasporan Armenians. Our efforts are increasing in Armenia, on the one hand, because we are convinced that it will be difficult to maintain our identity in a diaspora scattered around the world, without the inspiration of the motherland and the church. On the other hand, since the fall of communism, we have resumed our activities in Eastern Europe, namely Bulgaria, Romania and elsewhere, and we are developing programs in Russia, where more than 2 million Armenians live. Unfortunately, our means are limited in light of the actual needs of the communities.”

(The article was translated by the AGBU Press Office.)

## Iran's Covert War with Israel in the Caspian

BAKU Azerbaijan (UPI) – A senior Iranian general has warned Azerbaijan about getting too close to Israel, underlining fears in Tehran that the Jewish state could use Iran's northern neighbor to launch pre-emptive strikes against Iran's nuclear program.

Israel has been quietly building intelligence and military links with oil rich Azerbaijan, a largely secular Muslim state, since the collapse of the Soviet Union two decades ago.

The Israelis sell significant amounts of weapons and unmanned aerial vehicles to the government in Baku, on the Caspian Sea, as its intelligence services dig in along the border with Iran.

That gives Israel a forward operating base to monitor Iran, particularly its contentious nuclear program, which Jerusalem views as a major existential threat.

Over the last two years, tensions have escalated as Azerbaijan has become part of the shadowy intelligence war between Iran and Israel. It has become even more important to Israel since its May 2010 rift with former ally Turkey, which also borders Iran.

Even so, the unusually aggressive outburst by Gen. Hassan Firouzabadi, chief of Iran's armed forces Joint Staff Command, August 9 struck a particularly jarring note and brought into sharp focus a little-known aspect of Israel's deepening intelligence war with Iran.

It also reflected Tehran's growing alarm at Israel's penetration of Iran's northern neighbor.

In what was perceived as thinly veiled threat, Firouzabadi accused Baku of mistreating religious Shiites in southern Azerbaijan who lean toward the Islamic Republic and allowing “Zionists” access to Azerbaijani territory right

on Iran's doorstep.

“If this policy continues, it will end in darkness and it will not be possible to suppress a revolt by the people of Aran,” or Azerbaijan, the general declared in an interview with Iran's semi-official Mehr news agency.

Relations between Iran and Azerbaijan have been under strain in recent years, largely through Iranian covert operations.

In 2007, Azerbaijan convicted 15 Iranians and Azeris for spying on Israeli, US and British interests, including oil facilities, for Tehran and plotting to seize power.

In 2008, Azeri authorities, aided by Israel's Mossad spy agency, thwarted a plot involving operatives of Hezbollah, Iran's powerful Lebanese proxy, to blow up the Israeli Embassy in Baku.

That plot was intended to avenge the assassination of Hezbollah's iconic security chief, Imad Mughniyeh, in Damascus earlier that year. Tehran blamed Mossad for that killing.

Firouzabadi's statement jolted the Iranian leadership as much as it did the Azeri government. Senior Iranian figures publicly chastised the general and sought to distance Tehran from his remarks.

“It is important to note that the ongoing power struggle in Iran” between President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the clerical establishment led by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, “has been having the unintended effect of creating more political space for the military leadership to assert its views,” the US global security consultancy Stratfor observed.

It said “the tense exchange between Tehran and Baku ... underscores the growing conflict of interests between the two neighbors as

Azerbaijan works on strengthening its relationship with the West.”

Around 85 percent of the population of Azerbaijan, ringed by key regional players Iran, Turkey and Russia, is Shiite. That gives Tehran the opportunity to make sectarian mischief in the Caucasus and the energy-rich Caspian Basin.

However, Azerbaijan is overwhelmingly secular, except for the religious conservatives on its southern flank. The government of President Ilham Aliyev suspects Tehran is them to bolster its claims to Azerbaijan's Caspian energy reserves.

Iran fears Aliyev, backed by Israel and even the United States, could support a revolt by its Azeris, who comprise about one-quarter of the population.

So it supports Azerbaijan's regional rival, Armenia, in its deadlocked dispute with Baku over Nagorno-Karabagh, currently held by Armenia.

“Given that Azerbaijan's relations with Iran have long been fraught, the Azerbaijani government has not had any qualms in developing a strategic relationship with Israel,” Stratfor noted.

Expanding that military and intelligence relationship to upgrade Azerbaijan's capabilities and develop a military industrial complex there is one of Tehran's greatest concerns.

Aliyev is looking toward Israel and NATO to help modernize its forces, despite a US arms embargo in place since 1992.

Israel is Azerbaijan's fourth largest trading partner. The Jewish state has also been making inroads into the former Soviet republics of Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. It's negotiating with Kazakhstan to upgrade its military.

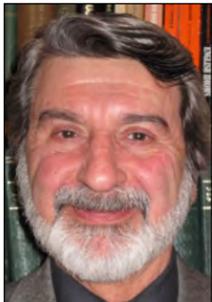
# Community News

## Prof. Kevork Bardakjian Honored with Ellis Island Medal of Honor

By Aram Arkun  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

NEW YORK CITY – Dr. Kevork Bardakjian was a recipient of the Ellis Island Medal of Honor on May 7 here. Sponsored by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations (NECO), the award recognizes the immigrant experience as well as individual achievement. This year, Bardakjian was one of seven Armenian winners of the award. There is an Armenian on the NECO Board, Irma Der Stepanian, and a number of Armenian-American organizations are part of the NECO coalition, including the Armenian Assembly of America, the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the Armenian National Committee of America, the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research.

There were various members of ethnic groups singing or dancing at the entrance to Ellis Island hall, including Armenians and a sumptuous dinner was followed later by fireworks. One hundred awardees from many fields



Dr. Kevork Bardakjian

of work were recognized in the presence of several hundred people, including family and friends of the awardees. The event finished late, with many returning to their hotels or homes around midnight.

Bardakjian gave his impressions from that weekend: "It was a very dazzling ceremony.

It was pomp and circumstance. The army, navy and air force were all represented with bands. Several people made speeches. Jerry Lewis popped in and said a few words. It was very well organized and you truly felt that you were being honored. It made you think back about the path you have traveled in your career."

Indeed, Bardakjian has had a long and active career in Armenian studies. Born in Aleppo and raised in Damascus, he became interested in Armenian topics in part because of the influence of his father, an Armenian priest who was a classmate of Simon Simonian. As a youth, Bardakjian had a great interest in Soviet Armenia and was a self-described "lefty." He said, "I felt I needed to know more about myself as well as to learn more about my culture. That is how I ended up in Armenian Studies."

After graduating Grtasirats, an Armenian school in Aleppo, and the Greek Catholic high school of Damascus, he spent one year at Damascus State University before going to Yerevan State University (YSU) and studying with the leading Soviet Armenian scholars of the time, from 1964 to 1969. With bachelor's and master's degrees in hand, he went to Oxford University to study with Albert Hourani and Charles Dowsett from 1970 to 1979. He obtained his doctorate in Armenology there, though he also was awarded an honorary one from YSU in 2006.

Bardakjian began teaching at Harvard University as an instructor in 1974 and remained a senior lecturer there until 1987, see BARDAKJIAN, page 7



The AWWA auction will feature a David Yerman Channel Cable Bracelet.

## AWWA Annual Luncheon/Auction

BURLINGTON, Mass. – The Armenian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) will be hosting its annual Luncheon/Auction on Saturday, November 12, at the Burlington Marriott Hotel.

The Silent Auction tables where bidders will be competing for gifts include children's toys, home-made pastries, items from Armenia, boutique gifts, holiday decorations, games and many more.

Mistress of Ceremonies Janet Joghlian will begin the Live Auction. Back by popular demand are auctioneers Jordan Rich, WBZ News Radio, and Cindy Fitzgibbon, FOX 25 News, who will take the guests on a bidding spree where they can vie for hotel stays, sports tickets, jewelry and many other items.

The grand finale of the day will be the drawing of the Super Raffle with: a grand prize of a David Yurman 10-milimeter Channel Cable Bracelet, Silver/18K gold, Blue Chalcedony and Iolite; a second prize of an Apple iPad 2, 64GB with Wi-Fi and 3g; a third prize of a \$500 Nordstrom Gift Certificate and several other prizes. This year AWWA is having a kick-off raffle of two deluxe tickets to a Boston Red Sox/New York Yankees game on August 30. These special raffle tickets are \$2 each and can be obtained by contacting AWWAAuction@gmail.com.

The Luncheon/Auction is AWWA's major fundraiser and supports its mission of caring for the Armenian community. AWWA owns and operates the Armenian Nursing & Rehabilitation Center (ANRC) in Jamaica Plain and supports a program in Stepanakert, Karabagh, where 200 elderly living alone receive medical and social care, as well as food.

To learn more about the ANRC and the AWWA, visit [www.ArmenianHome.org](http://www.ArmenianHome.org).



Auctioneers Jordan Rich and Cindy Fitzgibbon

## Milestone for Jacksonville Parish

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The mission parish of Jacksonville realized a long-held dream this summer when it purchased a new property to serve as a community center to be used for worship, as well as cultural and social programs.

Plans are made to renovate the two-story, 3,600-square-foot building, located on two acres of land, in the coming year. When completed, the second floor will be used for liturgical celebrations and performing sacraments, while the first floor will be for Sunday School classrooms, Bible study sessions and other activities.

"We're very pleased to see the Armenian faithful of Jacksonville take this important step forward towards a more vibrant community life," said Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern).

The local Armenian community began to coalesce in the 1980s, when the few Armenians who had settled there began searching the phone book for other Armenian families. The community grew in 1991 when a wave of immigrants from Azerbaijan arrived in the area and soon a mission parish was formed.

For years, the parish held services at a local Greek Orthodox Church, with Diocesan clergy visiting about once a month for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. But with the increase of young families, the community saw a need for a place they could call their own.

"This mission parish is a great group of people," said Parish Council member Carl Bazarian, who also serves as the vice chair on the Board of the Fund for Armenian Relief. "We have a new generation now that we have to keep together."

Bazarian added that the community worked hard to raise funds for the project. In addition to a large donation from the late Mabel Altoonian, the parish hosted picnics, garage sales, dinners and other events to raise money.

"Through donations, hard work and commitment of time, the seeds of hope were planted," said Jacksonville's Parish Council Vice Chair John Brooks. "Our community waited a long time for this day."

The purchase of the property was finalized on July 26. Community members say that through continued perseverance and the assistance of the Diocese and other parishes, they hope to acquire the necessary liturgical items and other materials needed to furnish the building.

Elmira Grigoryan, who moved to the United States from Azerbaijan and became involved in the Jacksonville community in the last decade, serves as the Parish Council chair. She stressed the importance of having a physical place to gather for regular church-related activities.

"It was a dream for the whole community to have a place of our own," she said of the new building, but added that a lot remains to be done. She said she hoped more people would be inspired to get involved in renovating the building and strengthening parish outreach.

"For this community of families – who had overcome the hardships of the pogroms in Baku and Artsakh, and the difficulties in establishing themselves in this country – purchasing this property is a remarkable accomplishment," said the Rev. Tateos Abdalian, director of the Diocese's Mission Parish Department. "They are an example of determination, character and dedication to their church."

Bazarian said the mission parish hopes to welcome Barsamian soon for a celebratory event. For more information, visit [www.armenianchurchjacksonville.com](http://www.armenianchurchjacksonville.com).



## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Kara (Setian) Marston Awarded Fulbright Scholarship to Armenia

By Betty Apigian Kessel

DETROIT – Kara Marston is on her way to Armenia in September for 10 months as a result of being awarded a Fulbright Scholarship. Kara was featured in a Hye Beat column a couple of years ago.

The long awaited good news finally arrived and the young lady who had a great position working for *The National Geographic* on-line relayed the message to me, knowing how much I was pulling and praying for her.

Kara, like author Lucine Kasbarian, who recently released *The Greedy Sparrow*, a popular Armenian folktale, has become very special to me. I have no qualms saying if I had a daughter, I would hope she possessed the character qualities of these two young women dedicated to Armenian issues.

Both women are extremely intelligent as well as beautiful – a desirable combination in anyone's world. Their parents are to be congratulated for raising such remarkable children.

While Lucine was born to Armenian parents and raised in an ethnically-oriented atmosphere, Kara is the product of an Armenian mother and a non-Hye father who always encouraged her to research and learn about her Armenian roots.

Marston graduated from the University of Maryland with honors and in preparation for her third trip in her young life to Armenia, has taught herself to speak Armenian and writes to me phonetically in that language. I love it. Our future holds great hope with the involvement in

Armenian activities with the likes of Marston and Kasbarian.

During her stay in Yerevan, Kara will be studying the role media plays in improving the socio-economic status of women in Armenia. "I am excited for the new journey and will stay in touch with you while I am in Hyastan," she promises.

The Fulbright Program offers grants to study, teach and conduct research for US citizens to go abroad and non-US citizens to come to the US and is sponsored by the Department of State. Kara says, "I will be completing a research grant. For this type of grant, applicants propose their own research and/or graduate study project and find their own host affiliation. I hope to gain a deeper understanding of how the Republic of Armenia Action Plan was developed; how the media has portrayed women since the start of the plan and whether broadcast and print media have fostered a growing awareness of women's rights."

Most of her time will be spent in Yerevan studying at the American University of Armenia and volunteering at the Women's Resource Center (WRCA). WRCA is working in the area of women's human rights, reproductive and sexual rights, sexual violence and women's roles in the conflict resolution and peace building in the region of South Caucasus.

It is because of this area of study I have put her in touch with Olya Azatian, another recent Hye Beat column subject and activist in Yerevan,

It is an amazing coincidence that the newlywed daughter and son-in-law of my writer friend from Glendale, Calif., have just moved to their

apartment in Yerevan. I wrote to Catherine about Kara and we found out that she had rented Raffi Kojian's apartment back in 2007 and already knows Tina Yesayan and her husband Raffi, and that the couple and all three of them look forward to meeting up in Yerevan. What a small world.

In addition, I sent the Fulbright news to Lucine Kasbarian, who also got in touch with Kara so that when she arrives in Armenia she will contact Lucine's friend, journalist Maria Titizian, vice president of Socialist Women International who works on women's initiatives.

Kasbarian also suggested Kara contact her brother, Antranig, who is the executive director of the Tufenkian Foundation, which also undertakes women's initiatives in Armenia.

Join me in wishing Kara Marston "Pari Janabarh" on her new adventure. There is a lesson to be learned here: If all Armenians cooperated in like manner the world would become our oyster.



Kara (Setian) Marston

## St. James Sunday School in Watertown Graduates 14 Students

WATERTOWN, Mass. – For 20 young adults, formal religious education classes came to an end on Sunday, June 5. After nearly 12 years of Sunday School for most of the students, they

as they go forward.

Aljalian advised them to make good choices based on all that they have learned in the Sunday School as they go out into the world.

Following Divine Liturgy, the graduation program continued in Keljik Hall, where Aram Soukiasian (salutatorian) and Deanna Minasian (valedictorian) spoke of lessons learned, friendships made and warm memories. Both challenged their classmates to be good role models, give back and make good choices. Graduating class teacher Paul Abdalian reminisced about the graduating class and the strengths and abilities of the fine group of graduates.

A reception honoring the graduates was hosted by the Sunday School parents.

The 2011 St. James Sunday School graduates are: Allen Ackan, Aram Andonian, Silva Ayvazyan, Alexis Cheney, Berj Chilingirian, Kevin Eskici, Varteni Jamakorjian, Ari Kazanjian, Nicholas Kazizian, Julia Metjian, Deanna Minasian, William Musserian, Siobhan O'Sullivan, Lorig Purutyan, Alec Seferian, Leanne Santorsola, Aram Soukiasian, Simon Tacvorian, Rachel Talanian and Melissa Trimble.



Rev. Arakel Aljalian with the members of the Sunday School graduating class

assembled in the St. James Armenian Church sanctuary to renew their baptismal vows and graduate from Sunday School. Fr. Arakel Aljalian, pastor of St. James, and Marsha Alabachian, superintendent, presented to them their diplomas/certificates, following which Aljalian gave a heartfelt and sincere message to the graduates, reminding them that St. James was their spiritual home and family, today and

## Siyahian Awarded Marilyn Arshagouni Scholarship

LOS ANGELES – Aida Siyahian, on August 19, accepted her check for \$2,000 as the winner of the Marilyn Arshagouni Scholarship. The scholarship is designed to assist Armenian students who are juniors at the very least at an accredited university in the United States. Preference is given to Ferrahian graduates pursuing careers in the humanities, fine and performing arts, social sciences and education. Siyahian, a senior at UCLA, hopes to enter a master's program in public health next year. At right, she is shown receiving the check from Marilyn Arshagouni.



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Prof. Kevork Bardakjian Honored with Ellis Island Medal of Honor

BARDAKJIAN, from page 5

when he transferred to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. He continues to teach at Ann Arbor as the Marie Manoogian Professor of Armenian Language and Literature. Bardakjian explained, "The chair was basically established for me. Mr. Manoogian wanted me to get it and Edmond Azadian's role in organizing this was important. My chair was initially in the Slavic Department but I moved it to the Near Eastern Department because I felt that even though we were part of the Slavic world in recent times, we were essentially a Near Eastern culture."

Bardakjian instituted a major and a minor in Armenian Studies and as director of the Armenian Studies Program from 1995 to 2007, organized conferences and gatherings and managed money for fellowships and academic projects. In 1987 he initiated an Armenian Language Institute. Through it, hundreds have studied Western or Eastern Armenian in Armenia. There were also a few courses in Classical Armenian. Alex Manoogian initially helped the Institute financially and the Armenian General Benevolent Union and its Presidents' Club, with Rita Balian in a leadership role, also played a role. The Soviet Armenian government funded all expenses in Armenia, so that only travel funds had to be

paid. Later, especially after Alex Manoogian's death, Bardakjian himself did fundraising for the institute. Financial difficulties, a decline in the number of students, competing new programs in post-independence Armenia and perhaps a desire to turn to new projects after so many years on the part of Bardakjian led to the termination of the Institute.

Bardakjian's academic work involves a variety of fields. For example, he said, "Willy-nilly, we were drawn into genocide studies. I did that initially and still do it, but not as intensely as before. I read Ottoman Turkish. There was a program prepared by Ted Bogosian for Nova, 'An Armenian Journey,' and he got me more of the Ottoman court-martial copies. That really catapulted me into it and I was engaged. I was working on only Turkish evidence."

At one point, there were plans for inclusion of Armenians in the Holocaust Museum and though this eventually was not allowed, Bardakjian served as one of the experts who met with museum people with some regularity. He also prepared a confidential report on the Armenian Genocide and what could become part of the Museum. This led him to write his book, *Hitler and the Armenian Genocide* (1986), which provides documentation of the famous Hitler quote pertaining to the Armenians. It has since been translated into

Armenian and Turkish.

Bardakjian was forced to prepare language textbooks, since when he entered the field, these were scant. In 1977 he published *A Textbook of Modern Western Armenian*, with Robert Thomson. In 1999, he and Bert Vaux published *Eastern Armenian: A Textbook*.

In 2000, he published *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920* (2000). It is now out of print and as he is unable to continue it to the present period. Bardakjian suggested, "Maybe it should be put online and people could contribute, with supervision, sending in at the least bibliographies."

While still at Harvard, Bardakjian prepared a concise overview of the work of the Mkhitarist Catholic Armenian brotherhood, titled *The Mkhitarist Contributions to Armenian Culture and Scholarship* (1976).

His thesis was on the political and social satire of the Ottoman Armenian writer Hagop Baronian and he published a related work, an Armenian-language volume titled *The Historical Figures and Events in Some of Hagop Baronian's Allegorical Works*, in 1980. Bardakjian may eventually turn his thesis itself into a book.

Bardakjian at present is supervising the work of seven graduate students on topics that range as widely as his own research interests. He

stresses their learning various empirical research tools such as languages. He is also the language coordinator for the Department of Near Eastern studies and president of the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS).

Bardakjian was involved in SAS from its inception and has served in various high-level positions over the years. His goals as president include the creation of a permanent endowment, broadening the participation of its membership in conferences in various fields, creating an online encyclopedia of the diaspora on the Wikipedia model, an online page for posting translations relevant for Armenology that would allow comments and review and an Internet site for members to respond to Armenological questions from the public. He wants to recruit as many supporting members as possible who do not vote in the society but have an interest in learning more about Armenology.

An independent biannual SAS conference or workshop and the funding of the participation of promising PhD students from Armenia in the Middle Eastern Studies Association annual conference are two other SAS projects for which Bardakjian needs funding. One of the main reasons funding has been so difficult, Bardakjian feels, "is the old tradition that the community rallies around the church, not secular institutions." However, his efforts have already been crowned with some success and he hopes to continue to improve SAS's finances.

Perhaps the most ambitious of Bardakjian's administrative projects is the creation of an institute of Armenian studies, which would create employment for new doctoral students in Armenology and aid in the development of the field. If any new chairs are created in Armenian studies, Bardakjian feels that the agreements or contracts for these chairs should very clearly define the purpose for which they are being established, so that the donated money will only be used for the promotion of Armenian studies and not other fields, unlike at some programs at present. Bardakjian also wishes to support the teaching of Armenian in the US, especially of Western and Classical Armenian, which recently seems to be deteriorating. SAS might be able to find federal support for this.

When asked about attacks by some scholars in Armenia on the motivations and scholarship of academics outside of the homeland, Bardakjian replied, "I'm against having public arguments with them. I want to ignore them and continue to work with scholars in Armenia. There are so many good scholars that don't share the views that these people have expressed and secondly, we have to come to terms with the fact that there will always be people like this. We should not let the atmosphere be contaminated and should avoid engaging in public polemics."

Aside from participating in various lectures and conferences, Bardakjian is busy with multiple academic projects at present. He is editing a volume from a conference on the Armenian apocalyptic tradition together with Sergio La Porta and burnishing the first draft of his translation of the lengthy *Chronology of Grigor Daranaghtsi (Kemakhtsi)*. Bardakjian chose it because, he said, "it tells us of Armenian peasants, their relations with Turks, their daily routines and problems. It gives us insights into the daily life of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and how things actually worked in the Empire, as well as the difficulties the various nationalities therein faced. He covered the period from 1596 to 1638 or 1639." Bardakjian has been working on this daily for the last four or five years.

He is preparing a history of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, which he started about eight years ago. Bardakjian has been interested in this topic for an even longer time, having published a book chapter on it in 1982. He waited 25 years but finally obtained permission to delve into the Ottoman Prime Ministry Archives in Istanbul. Bardakjian gave a series of lectures on Armenian identity at Columbia University as part of the Takakjian Lectures, which he wants to revise into a book, and some lectures on the post-Cilician period, as well as his thesis on Baronian, that may also turn into separate volumes. If he is able to accomplish even a small part of what he has on his plate now, he will be enriching Armenology in English greatly.



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Flagship Ventures' Afeyan Is a 'Four-Seasons' Athlete

By Kyle Alspach

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (*Boston Business Journal*) – Noubar Afeyan has had a hand in founding 22 companies to date.

Scientist, entrepreneur, public company executive and venture capitalist – many people spend a lifetime on just one (or maybe two) of these roles. But Afeyan has been all four, and he has found success in every one of them, says Ed Kania, who co-founded Cambridge-based Flagship Ventures with Afeyan.

"I see him as a four-seasons athlete across those dimensions," said Kania, who has known Afeyan ever since leading an investment into Afeyan's first company, PerSeptive Biosystems.

Afeyan founded the company in 1987 after earning his doctorate from MIT. The bioinstrumentation company – which achieved \$100 million in revenue and was ultimately acquired by PerkinElmer – would be the first of the 22 companies co-founded by Afeyan to date.

Underpinning all of it is a passion for experimentation. Afeyan brings the scien-

tific method not just to the technologies his companies develop, but also to the process of creating new companies. Flagship Ventures itself – and especially its start-up-founding arm, Venture Labs – has been "an experiment in institutional entrepreneurship" from the start, Afeyan said. The firm that would become Flagship Ventures was founded in 2000. "We started with an experiment, as to whether we could systematically conceive, optimize, launch and develop new ventures," Afeyan said.

What that has meant is that Flagship does not operate like the vast majority of venture capitals, which support entrepreneurs who come up with an idea and then seek funding. The majority of the ideas for the Venture Labs companies are conceived by Afeyan and the firm's other partners, most of whom are also scientists and inventors. "We tend to start what we



Noubar Afeyan

call proto-companies," he said. "These are not companies, but they are, if you will, hypotheses that we are testing."

Among the companies most closely asso-

ciated with Afeyan are Waltham-based software company Affinova, which applies genetic algorithms to the world of consumer product marketing; Waltham-based BG Medicine, a developer of cardiac diagnostic tests that went public in February, and Joule Unlimited of Cambridge, which says it has developed a method for creating renewable fuels through combining sunlight, waste carbon dioxide, water and specialty microorganisms.

Afeyan, Kania said, is "insatiably drawn to newness, to better ways of doing things, to new ways of solving problems."

On top of it all, Afeyan – who is ethnically Armenian but was born in Lebanon and grew up in Canada – is also a co-founder and board member of Armenia 2020 and the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia, two economic development projects in the Republic of Armenia. Afeyan said he is seeking to take his venture expertise into a new realm through the projects.

"If you think of an emerging country as a startup, you start thinking in the same processes – what's my core competency, what markets do I go after, where do I get capital," Afeyan said

## International Banker, Investor to Speak at St. James Men's Club

WATERTOWN, Mass. – On Monday, September 12, Jacob (Hagop) Yahiayan, founder and managing member of Continental Advisory Services, LLC, will be the speaker at the dinner meeting of the St. James Armenian Church Men's Club. The topic will be "Creating Economic Value in an Age of Diminishing Returns."

During his 20 years in corporate banking,



Jacob Yahiayan

Yahiayan has successfully structured more than \$5 billion in corporate financing in North American and international markets. In his last management role, Yahiayan was the assistant

general manager and head of corporate banking at a subsidiary of Standard Chartered Bank, Plc. Previously, Yahiayan was the vice president of the Corporate and Institutional Group for Standard Chartered Bank's New York branch and head of Credit and Business Development for the New York branch of Bank Bumiputra Malaysia Berhad.

Yahiayan received his bachelor's degree from New York University, his MBA from New York Institute of Technology, International Management Certification from INSEAD, Fontainebleau-France, and a master's degree from CUNY.

Yahiayan is also a licensed registered investment advisor in New York, California, Florida and Texas and holds a New York state Real Estate Brokers License.

Yahiayan has served on the advisory boards at NYU, American University of Beirut and NYIT's School of Management.

The social hour starts with *mezza* at 6:15 p.m., followed by a *losh kebab* and *kheyma* dinner at 7 p.m. The dinner meeting will be at the St. James Armenian Church Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, Keljik Hall, 465 Mount Auburn St. As always, women are welcome.

## Charkoudian Joins New York City's Community Board 1

NEW YORK (*Downtown Express*) – Deron Charkoudian, 34, who lives and works in the Financial District, is the newest member of Community Board 1 (CB 1). Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer appointed Charkoudian to fill a vacancy created when board member Rebecca Skinner resigned because she was moving away.

Since 1999, Charkoudian has lived in an office building converted to residential use.

"I've seen a lot of changes here," he said of the Financial District, noting how the neighborhood used to close down on weekends and no longer does. "I want to help keep the transformation going."

Specifically, Charkoudian would like to work on creating more green space and opening more schools. He also would like to see safer conditions for pedestrians.

"There's no such thing as a stop sign down here," Charkoudian said. "I can't tell you the num-

ber of times I've almost been hit by cars."

Charkoudian added that he believed narrow streets, many of them clogged with vendors, have exacerbated danger to pedestrians.

Charkoudian, who comes from Newton, Mass., received his bachelor's degree in applied mathematics from Johns Hopkins University and a master's degree in finance and accounting from Carnegie Mellon. He worked for Goldman Sachs for several years before joining the Federal Reserve Bank of New York a year ago as a bank examiner.

"I wanted to get involved in a public service role using my skill set from the street and my formal education," said Charkoudian. "Public service is part of my background. My parents were in public service for much of their careers."

The desire to serve the community was what prompted Charkoudian to apply for a seat on CB 1. He hopes to serve on the board's Financial District and Seaport/Civic Center Committees.

## 20th Anniversary of Armenia's Independence

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Feast of Assumption, Grand Reopening of Sanctuary and Blessing of Grapes

BOCA RATON, Fla. – On Sunday, August 14, St. David Armenian Church reopened the sanctuary after a six-week-and-a-half renovation. More than 100 people gathered for the celebration of the Feast of Assumption and to see the newly-remodeled sanctuary of St. David Armenian Church.

The service started at the church hall with the participation of 15 young sub-deacons of the church. At the end of the service, Very Rev. Nareg Berberian, along with the young altar servers and choir, led the congregation to the

Prior to his sermon Berberian said, "For the first time we are gathered in our magnificently renovated sanctuary and narthex on the celebration of the Feast of Assumption. As you are marveling at the beauty of our sanctuary, I am certain that the founding fathers of our community are rejoicing with you from heaven. This church was built by their vision for the enrichment of our faith and culture. They successfully passed their vision to our present generation. Today, it is your responsibility to continue enriching their vision."

tions," he said.

He also thanked Andrew Merjian, a member of the Parish Council who is responsible for building the two candle boxes. One candle box already has a sponsor, Drs. Andy and Rosemary Mencia. The other candle box is waiting for sponsorship.

He also thanked the members of the Women's Guild headed by Carol Norigian and the members of choir headed by Nina Stapan, as well as George Stapan and Hagop Alikhanian.

During his sermon, Berberian spoke about the greatness of Mary in the New Testament and in church history, in particular in the life of the Armenian people. He emphasized that Mary revolutionized the role of womanhood in the society. Following the sermon, a Blessing of Grapes ceremony followed. With a great enthusiasm, people gathered at the Mardigian Church Hall for a special luncheon to celebrate both the Feast of Assumption and the Grand Reopening of our Sanctuary.

Melkonian, the chairman of the Parish Council, raised his cup of wine and gave a toast to the people,

"Thank you for your support and encouragement. We truly are fortunate to have such a beautiful sanctuary. We are thankful to Father Nareg for his vision, guidance and leadership in our parish. We are grateful to Andrew for making two candle boxes in the sanctuary, which was designed with marble and for installing the decorative wainscot in the narthex of the church."

At the conclusion of the program, Berberian thanked Melkonian for closely overseeing and sharing his input in the project.



The new sanctuary of St. David Armenian Church

entrance of the church.

The opening of gates ceremony, *Ternpatsek*, followed. As the doors of the sanctuary opened, 200 people stood in awe of the newly-remodeled St. David Sanctuary. Their eyes sparkled and their spirits were energized as they stepped into the sanctuary following Berberian, the altar servers and choir, singing *Voghormoutiamp ko tourn patz mez Der*, which means, "With your Mercy, open the door for us, O Lord."

Berberian ascended on the Holy Altar with the altar servers to continue the Holy *Badarak*.

He thanked Sita Ohanessian for her donation of \$42,000 towards this project in memory of her parents, Ohannes and Sirpouhi Ohanessian. He also thanked all the parishioners who have supported the undertaking.

He also thanked Parish Council Chairman Armen Melkonian, who oversaw this project on a daily basis, spending days and nights and even providing food for the workers.

"Armen is a wonderful leader and a great chairman. During his chairmanship, we have accomplished major constructions and renova-

## Armenian Church Picnic Unites Different Faiths

NORTH ANDOVER, Mass. – After a successful collaboration the past two years, churches representing two different faiths will join together for the third time in co-sponsoring a joint picnic.

St. Gregory Armenian Church will unite with St. Michael's Catholic Church in the spirit of unity Sunday, September 11, for what has turned into an idyllic spiritual fellowship.

The festival will take place along 158 Main St., from 1 to 6 p.m., featuring Armenian and American food, family activities and Armenian and American music for dancing. Such a partnership proved so successful in the past that officials from both churches decided to repeat the gesture.

Activities such as tug-o-war, rock painting, pitch burst and soccer kick, will add to the festivities of the day. A special presentation will take place that afternoon.

Both churches have been next-door neighbors over the past four decades but only recently decided to merge for a summer extravaganza such as this. Each congregation will hold a separate food court and collaborate in other ways. Ample on-site parking is a huge benefit.

"Both churches have been very supportive of one another," said Vartkes Hovsepian, St. Gregory's picnic chairman. "The joint picnic is a way of sharing our different faiths in the true spirit of Christian harmony. It's also an ideal way of passing our rich culinary heritage on to others. It has been a real pleasure working with Earline Tweedie, St. Michael's picnic chairwoman, and her outstanding team."

For further details and directions, visit [www.saintgregory.org](http://www.saintgregory.org).

## Blessing of Grapes Brings Friends and Family Together in Faith

By Bethany Clough

FRESNO (*Fresno Bee*) – The blessing of the grapes, an Armenian tradition that mixes faith, family and friends, drew crowds from as far away as Los Angeles and the Bay Area to the California Armenian Home here on Sunday.

Church leaders from the Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church in downtown Fresno led a traditional Divine Liturgy, followed by the blessing of the grapes.

"Even though the vine is one of the lowly plants ... it is very mighty," Deacon Mark Shirin explained later. "It is the source of wine, which symbolizes the blood of Christ."

The celebration is deeply religious, a praying for the grape harvest while celebrating the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, one of the most important holidays of the Armenian Church.

The blessing is followed by a picnic, music and dancing. Shirin estimated about 2,000 people attended the daylong event.

Many Armenians do not eat grapes in the months before the event, preferring to wait until the grapes are blessed, he said.

Immediately after the blessing, participants grabbed hundreds of bags of grapes and then headed to tables in the shade for lunch.

In addition to the spiritual aspect, the event is a time for people to visit with friends and family from across the state.

Cheryl Rodden from the Bay Area city of Pinole brought her 90-year-old mother, Alice Berberian, to the event. Berberian used to live in Fresno.

"We bring her back every year, mostly to see a lot of friends," Rodden said, adding that they are joined by family from Fresno at their table.

The family dined on traditional Armenian food. Busloads of people come from churches in the Los Angeles area, Anahit Gevorkyan of Fresno said.

"It's spiritual, then it's fun," she said.

## Sponsor a Teacher in Armenia and Karabagh 2011



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# Arts & Living

## Varteni Came to Istanbul

By Ayse Günaysu

ISTANBUL (*Taraf*) – There came the sky blues, rosy pinks, poppy reds, sun whites, dreams and memories. There came drawers, family photos, old letters on papers turning yellow with time. This is because Varteni Mosditchian came to Istanbul.

At Pera Art Gallery in Taksim, then later at Pera Fine Arts Exhibition Hall in Kadikoy, there she was, a slender, tall, elegant, shining woman with wide eyes searching and willing to understand, opening her inner self to us, bringing her love, her belief in the beauties of life and showing us her wound to see and feel.

I see her paintings passing one after other before my eyes. Illuminated, almost transparent, as if painted on glass, such that you think you can see through them, see what is beyond, deep into what they withhold from the viewer. Yes, there are shadowy figures, hardly discernible from the texture of shades and colors, just like memories that become part of one's being.

Mosditchian's exhibition is called "Palimpsest-History In Drawers." Here is what she says she wanted to do with this exhibition: "...to become part of live experience of the moment. To connect the internal and external worlds of day-to-day life! To scrape away the solitude and alienation of the human condition (in art) and give the observer/participant a totally lived life. Where palimpsest is rejuvenated! (A palimpsest is a manuscript that has been re-used by writing over the original writing, and sometimes more than once. Frequently it's impossible to say which layer was first inscribed; and in any case any development and all the layers are transparent, translucent.) The very act of creating/painting cannot develop without destruction. The very notion of bringing new beauty into being implies an old ugliness has been swept away. Beauty defines itself by destroying the ill, the ugliness which is not itself."

She did what she wanted. Beauty in her paintings resists with all its might against the ill and the ugly.

I look at her painting named "Pari Luys" (Good morning in Armenian): The sun is rising. But it's more like a living being, spinning around, radiating sending intense beams of light to the viewer. There, do I see a woman standing with her back turned to us, looking at the sun? Am I right? Are her hands tied at the see VARTENI, page 12

## Kerkorian Cuts His Stake in MGM

LOS ANGELES (Associated Press) – Billionaire investor Kirk Kerkorian is selling 20 million shares of MGM Resorts International for about \$214.9 million, cutting his stake in the casino operator to 22.8 percent.

MGM Resorts said Kerkorian's Tracinda Corporation investment firm sold about 15 percent of its shares in the company for about \$10.74 each on Wednesday.

The transaction is expected to be completed August 23.

Kerkorian was the company's majority owner as recently as 2009 and remains its largest shareholder, with 111.2 million shares. Tracinda said it continues to believe MGM Resorts is a good investment.



An Armenian student shows her painting

## OneWorld Classrooms to Present International Children's Art Exhibit at ALMA

WATERTOWN, Mass. – OneWorld Classrooms, a nonprofit dedicated to building bridges between local and global classrooms through art and technology, will be presenting a free exhibit to showcase children's art from Armenia and the rest of the world.

The exhibit will be on display at the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) at 65 Main St., from September 24 until December 31.

There will be an opening ceremony on September 24 from 2 to 5 p.m., which will include refreshments and a student art raffle/auction.

"The International Art Exchange is really a unique way to get students to interact and connect with other children from different cultures around the world, through art. When we saw the talent that some of these kids have and the uniqueness of the art work, we decided to display it for a larger audience to see it," according to OneWorld Classrooms Board member and exhibit organizer Zela Astarjian.

OneWorld Classrooms is presenting this exhibit as part of its ongoing mission to give students in the US the ability to share, collaborate and explore with their global peers, as well as gain the skills, knowledge and cultural awareness they need to improve their academic achievements.



One of the paintings by the young artists

## Carzou Exhibit to Be Held at the Zorayan Museum

BURBANK, Calif. – Born Karnik Zouloumian on January 1, 1907 in Syria to an Armenian family, Carzou later created his name from the first syllables of his first name and surname. Becoming a world traveler at an early age, Carzou was educated in Cairo, Egypt before moving to Paris in 1924 at the age of 17 to study art and architecture in earnest.

Carzou mastered a number of mediums, though his line drawings and engravings would become well known as illustrations for some of the 20th century's most revered writers, including Hemingway, Albert Camus, Ionesco and Rimbaud. Carzou produced stunning work of painted glass and porcelain, in pencils, gauche and pastels as well as oils, often choosing to work on textured or irregular fabrics and papers rather than traditional canvas.

In July 1977, Jacques Chirac, the French prime minister, presided over Carzou's retrospective exhibition at the Château de Val in Corrèze. There were also retrospective exhibitions in Switzerland, Luxembourg, Rochecheouart, the Château des Hayes and Péruges, near Lyons. Carzou was awarded the National Order of Merit by the president of the republic. In December of the same year, he was made a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, where he replaced Jean Bouchaud. On April 4, 1979, he became a member of the Institut de France.

One of the artist's master works, completed in his 80s, was the Apocalypse of Saint Joan in the Chapel at Manosque in Vaucluse, France, which depicted not merely the passion of the saint and national hero, but the ravages of war. Carzou, like his contemporaries Hemingway, Dali



Carzou in his atelier

and Picasso (though in an interview the artist criticized Picasso for being "vulgar"), was part of a generation that witnessed many wars. Haunted to the point of obsession by the horrors he had witnessed, Carzou's work went through a period where the artist seemed to be desperate to remind the world of the holocausts past, perhaps in warning. His work on the Chapel de Manosque, one of the oldest churches in France, became his own fitting tribute when it was dedicated as the Museum de Jean Carzou in 1995.

Under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian and patronage of Diocesan benefactors Antranik and Virginia Zorayan, the Zorayan Museum will honor Carzou with an exhibition. The opening reception will be held on September 15 at 7 p.m. at the Zorayan Museum of the Western Diocese. For more information, visit [www.armenianchurchwd.com](http://www.armenianchurchwd.com).



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Armenia Issues Silver Coin Commemorating Noah's Ark

By Levon A. Saryan

YEREVAN — A new one-ounce silver coin commemorating Noah's Ark and Mt. Ararat, issued by the Republic of Armenia, was announced on July 4 by the London firm CoinInvestDirect.

The attractively designed coin depicts Noah's Ark floating upon the waters with the twin peaks of Ararat in the background and a dove bearing an olive branch. The reference is to the great deluge that engulfed the world as described in the book of Genesis (Chapters 7-8). The coat-of-arms of Armenia is depicted on the obverse.

The coin has a nominal value of 500 drams (equivalent to about \$1.40 or 1 Euro) and is dated 2011. Each coin contains one troy ounce (31.1 grams) of 999 fine (essentially pure) silver and is about 38.6 millimeters in diameter.

According to a press release from coininvest-direct.com, the Noah's Ark coin is produced by a private mint in Germany. The coin obverse carries the hallmark LEV of the Leipziger Edelmetall Verarbeitung (Leipzig Precious Metals Factory). LEV and CoinInvestDirect certify that the metal used to mint the coin has met standards established by the London Bullion Market Association.

The new coin is available in wholesale quantities of 20 and 500 coins. Orders for the latter quantity are supplied with a sturdy and convenient wooden storage box. According to CoinInvestDirect, other sizes of the new bullion coin are planned to be released in the near future. Coins in 1/4 and 1/2 ounce sizes will be available at the end of 2011, and large coins (5 oz., 10 oz., 1 and 5 kilograms) will be available in 2012.

Unlike other limited issue commemorative coins that have been issued by Armenia since declaring independence in 1991, the Noah's Ark coin is being produced and marketed as a bullion investment. Thus, it is intended to compete with the United States Silver Eagle, the Canadian Maple Leaf, the Austrian Philharmonic and other popular silver bullion coins marketed worldwide.

Recent economic turmoil affecting the United States and Europe has fueled an upward spurt in the market value of gold and silver. In the past two years, silver has surged about three-fold, from about \$14 to about \$40 per ounce, as investors and speculators attempt to profit from the uncertain economic and political climate. Precious metal coins have thus become popular vehicles for those who wish to shelter assets from the vagaries of the stock and bond markets.

The Central Bank of Armenia has the sole authority to authorize coinage on behalf of the Armenian government. Modern Armenian coins are struck mostly by mints affiliated with various European governments, under contract with the Central Bank. Within Armenia, new commemorative releases are typically available for sale at the "Numismatist" salon of the Central Bank headquarters in Yerevan.

In a departure from the usual arrangement, the Noah's Ark coin will apparently be available



The coins recently minted in Armenia

only from distributors in Europe. I contacted a collector in Yerevan who informed me that the Noah's Ark coin will not be sold in Armenia. "These coins are not available in Armenia," he told me, "because they are just investment coins, and there is no mechanism to sell and purchase these coins from the Central Bank."

Unlike the great majority of coins issued by Armenia to date, the Noah's Ark coin carries the hallmark of the manufacturing mint. Also, unlike most others new issues, this coin does not appear to be accompanied by a certificate

of authenticity. If this coin is in fact officially sanctioned by the Central Bank of Armenia, its image and technical specifications should eventually be registered on the bank's website. As of mid-August, this had not occurred.

Examples of the Noah's Ark coin are presently available from internet dealers in Germany and other European countries. The cost for individual examples varies between \$50 and \$65 each, plus shipping.

(Dr. Levon Saryan has been researching Armenian coins for more than 30 years.)

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## Atom Egoyan to Direct Movie Based on 'West Memphis'

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Atom Egoyan, the Egyptian-born Canadian director, plans to start shooting a movie based on convicted murderers the "West Memphis Three" — the subjects of the 1996 documentary "Paradise Lost" — in early spring 2012.

As reported last week, the Weinstein Company's Dimension Films has been developing the project for years.

But on Friday, the story got an ending when a judge ordered the three men released from prison.

Dimension acquired the rights to journalist Mara Leveritt's book, *Devil's Knot: The True Story of the West Memphis Three* in 2006, and hired Scott Derrickson and Paul Harris Boardman to write the script. Egoyan will direct the adaptation.

"The West Memphis Three" are Damien Echols, Jason Baldwin and Jessie Misskelley Jr., who were convicted of killing three 8-year-old boys in West Memphis, Ark., in 1993.

Their guilt has been questioned ever since.

Filmmakers Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky made three documentaries about irregularities in the case. The third, HBO's "Paradise Lost: Purgatory," is scheduled to be released this January.

In addition to securing the rights to the book, Dimension has acquired Leveritt's life

rights and private investigator Ron Lax's life rights. Lax has worked pro bono for the three men for years.

Richard Saperstein, Elizabeth Fowler, Boardman and Clark Peterson will produce Dimension's movie.

On Friday — the day the three men were released from prison — Berlinger said that they deserve full exoneration.



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## ARTS &amp; LIVING

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Pablo Picasso, 1954



Georgia O'Keeffe, 1956



Norman Rockwell, 1956

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ARMENIAN LIBRARY  
AND MUSEUM OF AMERICA

## Varteni Came to Istanbul

VARTENI, from page 10

back? What do all these tell us – the dark reds so close to black that even the bright sun is unable to enlighten, those dark blues, intense dark yellows? Will the sun ever reach the woman to embrace her, cuddle her, soothe her?

These colors, these visions, moments of remembrance and these dream-like, almost unreal figures, almost invisible, merged in the texture of colors and patches of shadows and light seem to be the rejection of the ugliness, the evil, the destructive force inherent in humankind, by a woman whose personal history is full of deportation and exile, massacres

“Nevertheless to fuse and to feel the dichotomy between the physical and non physical I am going to choreograph an event in which every observer will be invited to participate by bringing their letters new or old, written material – to leave something behind and reminiscent of the stacks of envelopes in the drawer – a labyrinth type of drawer where the individual can go in and leave behind its own trace by painting drawing or writing in private. The history in drawers will connect those – us – who are destined to meet regardless of time and space... It can transform and travel.”



“Pari Luys” by Varteni Mosditchian

and plunder suffered by her grandparents.

Mosditchian is originally from Istanbul, but her grandparents' roots go back to Kayseri (Caesarea) in Central Anatolia and Bafra (Black Sea). She moved to Massachusetts at the age of 16. Then she was graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Central Florida. Her works were exhibited in various parts of the world including New York, Boston, Washington and Paris.

And this year Mosditchian came to Istanbul at last, bringing her grandfather's locked drawer with its metal key, which had always been at his disposal only a drawer containing large envelopes carefully piled together. It is a call to us to bring our own drawers to her and to others to share. She said:

Now the exhibition is over. Mosditchian is leaving with her letters, photographs and paintings. How many of us saw these? How many of us touched her, brought to her our own drawers and showed our wounds like she did to us, to touch and to feel? Moreover, were we aware that she was with us?

And Mosditchian will come again, pursuing her memories, reaching out to us to show how she translates into colors her questions, assertions and challenges – some asking “why not?” some insisting “yes we can,” some sadly saying “if only we wanted.” She will ask us to touch them, to penetrate and wander about inside them to see and to understand.

The remaining is up to us, to what we are and to what we aspire to be.

## Album Reviews: ‘To What Strange Place’

“To What Strange Place: The Music of the Ottoman-American Diaspora 1916-1929,” Thompkins Square, £29.99

By Michael Church

The story of this fascinating triple-CD begins and ends with tears. It begins with the flight of Turkish-Armenians from Turkey in 1915, when hundreds of thousands were murdered or driven into exile; it ends when the 1929 Wall Street crash threw most of America's new immigrants onto the scrap-heap. In between, a remarkable musical culture flourished wherever Armenians, Turks and Greeks were clustered together: here we encounter the unmistakable sounds of all three cultures, fundamentally one and the same.

Almost everything here was recorded in Manhattan. These musicians moved among the cafes of New York's Little Armenia and its Sephardic quarter, playing with and listening to

each other, surrounded by men wearing fezes and smoking water pipes. Many were also peddlers, or engravers or waiters or fruit-sellers; they played to recover their sense of identity and to accompany their traditional dances.

“Ah, I wish I had never gone, / Ah, I wish I had never seen / Darling you, America,” sings Achilleas Poulos from Anatolia in 1926: this was a very strong love-hate relationship. One of these CDs consists of American releases for Ottoman émigrés of music by their compatriots back home: record companies made a killing this way, trading on the nostalgia market. The other two are of the genuine thing – émigré stars performing for their communities.

Some of the recordings are very rough in quality, others surprisingly good, but two tracks stand out. The first is by the Greek singer Marika Papagika (1890-1943), one of the most popular immigrant singers in America. The other is by Armenag Chah-Mouradian, a blacksmith's son whose sweet rendition of a Komitas song literally tugs the heart.

(This review was originally published in the *Scotsman*.)

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## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Ara Oshagan to Speak about His Book, *Father Land*

FRESNO – Ara Oshagan will present a talk on his new book, *Father Land*, at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 14, in the University Business Center, Peters Auditorium, Room 191, on the Fresno State campus.

Oshagan's presentation is the first of the Fall 2011 Armenian Studies Program Lecture Series and is sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State.

Oshagan will be presenting photographs and text excerpts from *Father Land*, a book that is a collaboration with his father, Vahé Oshagan, and published by Powerhouse Books of New York. *Father Land* is a poetic and personal journey through the rugged, human-and-history-laden landscape of Nagorno Karabagh, a unique collaboration between a photographer son and his well-known, writer father.

A family steeped in Armenian literature and art, Vahé and Ara Oshagan's work is the result of an intensely-felt connection to their heritage and homeland, but also rooted in their shared history of the Armenian Diaspora. *Father Land* is a literary and visual contemplation of Nagorno Karabagh's present-day, its history and its culture, as well as a meditation on transnational identity, land and paternal bonds.

Ara Oshagan is a photographer whose work revolves around the intersecting themes of identity, community and memory. His first series, *iwitness*, joined portraits of witnesses of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 with their stories of horror, survival and redemption. Exploring his identity through his own diasporan community, Oshagan photographed the Armenians of Los Angeles in a body of work titled "Traces of Identity" that was exhibited at the LA Municipal Art Gallery and the Downey Museum of Art.

Oshagan's work is in the permanent collection of the Southeast Museum of Photography, Florida, the Downey Museum of Art, California, the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena, Calif., and the Museum of Modern Art in Armenia.

Admission is free to the lecture.

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# CALENDAR

## MASSACHUSETTS

**SEPTEMBER 16 and 17 – "A Weekend of Art and Renewal" by the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA), featuring the works of Yousuf Karsh.**

- **September 16** – Friday, ALMA will host a gala celebration at the Fairmont Copley Plaza, Boston, honoring the life and works of Yousuf Karsh, and the permanent collection of his portraits gifted by his wife, Estrellita Karsh. Reservations can be made online by visiting ALMA's website, [www.almainc.org](http://www.almainc.org), or by phone (617) 926-2562, ext. 31 or 4.

- **September 17** – Saturday, 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. For more details visit ALMA's website, [www.almainc.org](http://www.almainc.org), or call the administrative office at ALMA (617) 926-2562, ext. 31 or 4.

**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](mailto:office@htaac.org) or visit [www.htaac.org](http://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](mailto:office@htaac.org) or visit [www.htaac.org](http://www.htaac.org).**

## Meet the British Actor behind Film's CGI-Created Ape, Caesar

LONDON (*Hollywood Reporter*) – Even if you don't recognize Andy Serkis' face, you've probably seen his work.

Andy Serkis: 5 Things to Know

Before checking out his new film "Rise of the Planet of the Apes," get to know Serkis in *The Hollywood Reporter's* crash course below.

1. No stranger to CGI projects, Serkis earned critical acclaim for his portrayal of Smeagol/Gollum in "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy. Receiving significant recognition during award season, his performance sparked a debate over whether CGI-assisted acting could be worthy of an Academy Award. He's previously embraced his inner ape as the title character in 2005's "King Kong" and worked with video game developers on 2007's "Heavenly

(SAMIR HUSSEIN/GETTY IMAGES)



Andy Serkis

Sword" and 2010's "Enslaved."

2. Serkis attended Lancaster University in Lancashire, England, where he was a member of The County College. He studied visual art and became involved in a student radio station on campus, as well as stage design and set building for theatrical productions.

3. Born to an English mother and an Iraqi-born father with an Armenian background, Serkis' name was shortened from "Serkisian." He reportedly split a large amount of time between London and Baghdad in childhood.

4. Serkis got his start in touring theater pro-



Andy Serkis as Caesar, as he appears in "Rise of the Planet of the Apes"



Andy Serkis and "Gollum" from "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy

ductions throughout England in the '80s. He later made the switch to television in the '90s, appearing on several British TV miniseries before landing the role of Gollum in "The Lord of the Rings."

5. He can be seen in 2006's "The Prestige," opposite Jennifer Garner in "13 Going on 30"

and as the lead role in the 2010 Ian Dury biography, "Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll."

Serkis is set to reprise his role of Gollum in Peter Jackson's upcoming "The Hobbit," for which he will also serve as a second unit director. Other projects on the horizon include "The Adventures of Tintin" and "The Spider."



## COMMENTARY

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror- Spectator

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## COMMENTARY

## Unpleasant 'Welcome' Mat For Armenia's President

By Edmond Y. Azadian

If the ARF branch on the US West Coast was looking for an altercation, it certainly got it when it released to the press its bombshell.

Indeed, as the community was preparing to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Armenia's independence, the ARF on the West Coast decided to boycott the celebratory banquet, which will also be honoring President Serge Sargsian, the man who "has driven Armenia into the mire of corruption," according to the ARF statement.

This rebellious stand received a mild rebuke from the ARF Central Bureau, through its representative, Giro Manoyan. This is not the first time that the ARF is extending the unpleasant "welcome" mat for Armenia's president. We cannot rule out also a political posturing by the West Coast ARF, coordinated with the Bureau, to extract maximum concessions from the president during the upcoming elections.

There is no love lost in Washington towards Armenia, compared to the despotic ruler in Azerbaijan and the frivolous ruler in Georgia.

The Dashnag statement will certainly play into the hands of the same quarters in Washington, which recently terminated the Millennium Challenge contract with Armenia, leaving rural renovation programs there flailing and unfinished.

President Sargsian "enjoyed" a similar reception when he visited different countries to personally present the Protocols. The reception was worst in Lebanon, where the ARF youth stoned the presidential procession to the amazement of the local Lebanese people who were wondering what kind of hostility people were harboring towards the representative of a country which had recently gained independence after 70 years of Soviet rule.

No one can claim that there is no corruption in Armenia. Also no one can claim that any one's hand in the power structure may be clean, but the irony is that the Dashnag party itself was part of the coalition headed by President Sargsian. Therefore, the ARF was a partner in crime in corrupting Armenia.

When the going got tough, the ARF jumped ship, trying to play to the opposition. But that position was already occupied by the real opposition coalition headed by Levon Ter-Petrosian, and consequently the Dashnag party ended in a no-man's-land, with limited popularity and unlimited static.

What actually is happening in California is that the West Coast ARF is playing up to the popular sentiments of an expatriate community where opposition to Armenia's current regime is fashionable, which in turn can be explained in psychological terms. Most of those immigrants had real and objective reasons to move to California, chief among them economic ones. In addition, many families were worried about their children serving in the army, in a very volatile region of the world which is an actual powder keg, not to mention hazing incidents within the Armenian armed forces. And above all, they did not see any promising future for the younger generation. Considering that every individual has only one life to live, the above reasons outweigh patriotism, which demands only sacrifice.

Yet despite all these legitimate reasons listed above, those who have abandoned Armenia have feelings of guilt and look for subterfuge. Thus, the first self-redeeming act is to blame Armenia, denigrate the regime and thus receive psychological relief. That relief is being translated into politics, making opposition to Armenia's regime a very popular slogan and a cop-out for the entire group. Of course, no one is countering these arm-

chair opposition politicians with blame, saying, "if you cared so much about your homeland, your place was Armenia, where you could stay and improve the lot of your compatriots, and for that matter, also yours."

All these analyses are academic. The fact on the ground is that Armenia's current administration has more vocal opposition in California than any other place. Previous administrations did not fare any better. And the ARF seems to be riding on the tide for some political dividends.

Even a dissident ADL group, which has severed its ties with ADL traditions and principles, has bought into this trend, hanging on the coattails of their Dashnag overlords. Indeed, this group, published in ADL's *Nor Or* weekly an editorial recently comparing Serge Sargsian's administration with that of General Pinochet's brutal regime in Chile.

In the past, the ARF's hegemonic instincts in the diaspora were checked by a unified ADL stand, thereby creating a balance of power across the communities outside Armenia. It was a windfall for the ARF to see a split and weakened ADL, and that party's leaders began boasting that the ARF controls the diaspora and can claim to speak on its behalf.

The ADL split was engineered initially by the first president, Levon Ter-Petrosian, who announced, during his first visit to the US, that traditional political parties were "anachronistic." The current administration is no less responsible in the ADL split, perhaps inadvertently.

This cavalier attitude towards the traditional parties was occasioned by domestic considerations, with parochial political myopia. By weakening the ADL, Armenia's leaders were cutting the branch on which they were sitting.

History demonstrated that by dislocating traditional political parties, Armenia could not develop real political parties in order to nurture democracy in the country. The best that Armenia could come up was to create a semblance of political parties, or, caricatures of them, if you will, based on the resources of some oligarchs.

History has its revenge. The party that Ter Petrosian created – Pan Armenian National Movement (HHSH) – after steering Armenia to independence, fizzled out. It met its doom before its bloom, because it was a movement which was not able to become a political party and because it had rallied around political opportunists. Recently, two prominent leaders, namely Ararat Zourabian and Alexander Arzoumanian, resigned from that moribund party, which became anachronistic faster than the traditional political parties.

When it comes to diaspora's evaluation, there are some very unrealistic expectations. For example, some political leaders would boast that "if Azerbaijan has oil, we have a diaspora."

The truth of the matter is that no government since independence was able to harness the full power of the diaspora in terms of resources to benefit the homeland. At best, they were able to manipulate the diaspora's weaknesses and internal contradictions for temporary relief.

Now they have to pay for the consequences. The West Coast ARF is extending the "unwelcoming" red carpet to Armenia's president. That perhaps may be only the tip of the iceberg. It is not improbable that some other groups, inspired by the arrogant stand of ARF may run to the streets with hostile banners to further embarrass the president.

That will be the icing on the cake of Armenia's Independence Day celebration.

Armenians seem to have lost focus of their history. So much so that they are willing to waste opportunities which could unite them and propel them into a more promising future.

Let us join, therefore, and celebrate Armenia's 20 years of independence, the way we deserve to celebrate.

## Is English Answer to Armenian Church's Survival in US?

By Rev. Arnak Kasparian

What is going to happen to our Armenian existence in America? Can we survive? We count about almost one million Armenians in the US. What is their destiny? The record show that eight out of ten marriages in Armenian churches are with non-Armenians. Of course those who choose to marry outside of the Armenian church altogether are not marrying Armenians at all.

In America, the Armenian Apostolic Church besides her main function of serving Christ, as

His body, also has a secondary function of preserving the Armenian nationality. Therefore, if there is to be a continuing Armenian presence in America, our effort must be to keep the Armenian Church alive and strong. Those who live outside of the church are certainly the first to assimilate. The Armenian Church is the only hope for Armenian preservation.

Is there a contradiction between being a church, which serves Christ and at the same time supports ethnicity? I don't think so. Everyone has a culture as well as a religion, or a culture of no religion. There is no such thing as a person without a culture.

We bandy about terms like American cul-

ture, but there are many cultures in America, rural, small-town, large town, city and megalopolis. There are Italians, Germans, Greeks, Hungarians, Jews, Arabs, Hindus and so forth. Each of these groups has their own culture within the predominant culture.

There's also a culture experience by the very rich, the rich, the middle class, lower middle class, the poor and the downtrodden. All of these live in different styles with different cultures.

Consequently, since there really is no "American" culture; Armenians have every right to maintain their culture as anyone else.

continued on next page



## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Ambassador Ricciardone Finally Admits Most Churches not Operating in Turkey

After facing harsh criticism for covering up Turkey's desecration and destruction of thousands of Christian churches, Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, President Obama's appointee as Ambassador to Turkey, reversed himself last week, acknowledging that most churches functioning in Turkey prior to 1915 are no longer operating today.

Ambassador Ricciardone disavowed the Turkish misinformation he had recently spewed, after realizing that his nomination was about to be rejected by Senators for the second time in 12 months.

A year ago, when President Obama nominated Ricciardone as ambassador to Turkey, Sen. Sam Brownback (R-KS) placed a hold on his nomination, accusing him of being too cozy with President Mubarak's despotic regime during his posting in Egypt. Obama then circumvented the Senate's confirmation process and appointed him as ambassador to Turkey, while Congress was in recess. Should the Senate not confirm him by year's end, his assignment would be cut short and he would be forced to return to Washington.

During his August 2 appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Ambassador Ricciardone repeatedly made excuses for the Turkish government's domestic and foreign policies, acting as the spokesman of

yet another autocratic regime.

To make matters worse, in response to a written question from Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Ambassador Ricciardone falsely claimed that most Christian churches existing in Turkey before 1915 are still functioning today.

The ambassador's gaffe triggered a massive outcry from the Armenian-American community. Church leaders wrote irate letters to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, sharply criticizing Ambassador Ricciardone's erroneous assertion. The Armenian National Committee of America demanded that he issue a retraction, correction, and apology for his false statement. In my last week's column, I called on the Senators to reject his nomination.

Fearing that his confirmation is in serious jeopardy, Ambassador Ricciardone issued a revised statement last week, partially reversing his earlier misrepresentation.

Here is the question that Senator Menendez had asked: "To the best of your knowledge, approximately how many of the more than 2,000 Christian churches functioning prior to 1915 on the territory of present-day Turkey are still operating today as churches?"

Ambassador Ricciardone's initial answer: "Most of the Christian churches functioning prior to 1915 are still operating as churches. Some churches of significance operate as museums. The remaining have fallen into disrepair or were converted to mosques for lack of use."

Ambassador Ricciardone's revised answer: "With your permission, I would appreciate the opportunity to clarify the record. The corrected text should read as follows: Most of the Christian churches functioning prior to 1915 are no longer operating as churches. Christian community contacts in Turkey report that a total of 200-250 churches that date to 1915 and before offer Christian worship services at least once a year. Many churches do not offer services every week due to insufficient clergy or local Christian populations. Some churches of significance operate as museums, others have been converted into mosques or put to other uses. Still others have fallen into disrepair or may have been totally destroyed."

While Ambassador Ricciardone's revised answer is somewhat more accurate, it is still far from representing the full truth. Here is why:

- His figure of "200-250 churches" operating today in Turkey is inflated.
- His claim that "many churches do not offer services every week due to insufficient clergy or local Christian populations" is misleading. The real reason most churches do not offer services is that they have been converted to mosques, museums, stables or warehouses, if not outright destroyed.
- Our own research indicates more than 4,000 Christian churches were operating in Turkey prior to 1915:
  - More than 2,000 Armenian churches of all denominations (around 2,000 Armenian Apostolic churches, 200 Armenian Catholic churches and 150 Armenian Evangelical churches);
  - More than 2,000 Greek Orthodox churches;
  - More than 100 Assyrian churches; and
  - A small number of Bulgarian, Russian, Georgian and Coptic churches.

Only 178 of these 4,000 churches (less than 5 percent) are still operating today in Turkey, mostly located in Istanbul:

- 52 Armenian churches: 40 affiliated with the Armenian Patriarchate (34 in Istanbul, 6 in other regions); 2 Armenian Evangelical churches in Istanbul and 10 Armenian Catholic churches in Istanbul;
- 87 Greek Orthodox churches (74 in Istanbul, 13 in other regions);
- 20 Roman Catholic churches (12 in Istanbul, 8 in other regions);
- 14 Assyrian churches; and
- five churches affiliated with other denominations.

Ambassador Ricciardone's shameful attempt to minimize the destruction of thousands of Christian churches by the Ottoman authorities and Republic of Turkey is reprehensible. Given his false and evasive answers on this and many other issues, he should not be allowed to represent the United States in Turkey.

from previous page

The real binding power in America is the English language, and even that is being challenged from some quarters.

If all Americans have their unique culture, how can we keep the Armenian Church alive and strong so that we can enjoy Armenian culture?

The only way is for the Armenian Church to continue to nourish its members. If people do not feel the benefit of belonging to the church community, then they will quit and float into another lifestyle typical of their surroundings. This need also applies to the non-Armenian bride or groom who married an Armenian. If the non-Armenian spouse does not feel nurtured in the church, he or she will leave it and take the family away.

As I said, the only real binding force in America is the English language. For better or for worse, Americans rarely learn foreign languages. Consequently, the use of the English language is essential if the Armenian Church is to nurture its members. I am not suggesting that we go so far as to perform the Holy Liturgy, the Badarak, in English. If we did that, there would be little of Armenian culture remaining in the church.

Yet, in order to reach the people, most Armenian churches in America have sermons in both Armenian and English, some read the prophets and the epistles in English, but reserve the gospel for Armenian. Many churches have public confession in English, or do it in both languages. In some Armenian churches, they even recite the Nicene Creed in English. So, it is common practice to express the teaching portions of the Divine Liturgy in English.

That leaves most of the ritual in Armenian. Since very few people, even Armenians, understand classical Armenian, the Diocese has printed liturgy books with translations and transliterations. Most churches have a "number board" where the lighted numbers show which page of the liturgy is being recited, thus making the words intelligible to those who make an effort.

Nevertheless, many people do not find following the Divine Liturgy in translation very satisfying. Perhaps they are too lazy, perhaps they just get confused and perhaps some do not want to be distracted as they follow the liturgy. This means, we have to find special ways of accommodating their needs.

Some priests after saying their prayer in Armenian, do the Translation, for example after saying *Khaghaghootune amenetsoon*, they say

"Peace unto all." This should make English speakers feel at home while not alienating Armenian speakers.

Once Koreans were using our church for a wedding and I was sitting in the balcony with Joanne Torigian, our non-Armenian Parish Council chairperson. After half an hour I could not take the Korean language anymore and turned to Joanne and said, "How do you take it when we use Armenian?" Joanne replied, "Every Sunday it is Korean for me." No wonder people stay away from church and get bored. Answers have to be found. Some ballots must be brought into the church.

We must not be afraid of marrying non-Armenians. We have blue eyed and blond Armenians from Cilician region. That is from the time of Crusaders. Even some early Armenians were blond haired and blue-eyed, and those recessive genes appear even today. Furthermore, not all prominent "Armenians" were Armenians by birth. Even our first Christian king Drtad and the first catholicos, St. Gregory, who were distant cousins, were of Persian origin who became Armenian nobility. We sing in the *sharagan* (hymn) dedicated to St. Gregory: "Glorified God, You granted us the Illuminator from the sinful nation of Persia," (*Hrashapar Asdvadz ee Bartevegan meghabard azken Lousavorich mez shnorhetser*). So many great "Armenians," were not Armenian by birth, but in a sense became naturalized Armenians.

Today, we have many non-Armenians very active in various positions in our Armenian churches: parish council members, diocesan delegate, choir member, and Sunday school teachers. Without their dedication and service, our churches would be weaker.

Yeretsgin Violet had an interesting experience, which she relates: "On Sunday, June 4, 1991, Der Arnak celebrated his last official Badarak as Pastor of St. Thomas Armenian Church. Following the service a reception was held in Saddler Hall for all members and guests to bid him fond farewell. At one point in that afternoon, I was conversing with three long-time members of the parish. As is my habit, I intersperse Armenian words within my conversation. At one point, one of the women said, "Yeretsgin, we don't understand Armenian. All three of us have been active members of this parish since we married our Armenian husbands many years ago. But in fact, we are not Armenians by birth, we are all Italians, we are all Sicilian Armenians!" I was truly dumbfounded and was silent for a

moment. I had worked with each of these women over the years. They were all very active members of the parish and the Women's Guild, each holding executive office and many leadership positions. I never for a moment thought of them as non-Armenians."

This kind of situation exists in many of our parishes in America. We have many mixed marriages and, fortunately, the non-Armenian spouse becomes an active member of the parish. We must accept them and also serve them in their spiritual needs.

I cannot help but think of a report written 91 years ago by Bishop Papken Guleserian (later Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia). On October 8, 1920 he wrote a letter from Worcester, Mass., to Catholicos Kevork V. This letter has since become famous. He stated that the Armenian community in the United States is very important and needs special attention. He wrote: "Armenians are here to stay and are not going back to their homeland; now that we have an independent Armenia [first republic of 1918], they are and they will play a very essential role in the future." These were prophetic words.

He continued: "In America, the Armenian clergy must be trained with an American education. The members of the new generation of Armenian Americans hardly speak Armenian. They are American with American ideas, education and lifestyle. So that they do not get lost as Armenians, they must be active in the Mother Church, understanding her and, for that they must hear the sermons in English." He goes on to write, "For the spiritual administration of the Armenian Church in America, a new system must be created with wide jurisdiction and authority (*untartsag iravasootune*) [the emphasis is his], for example, similar to that of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, so that the Armenian people of America can govern the church according to the needs of the country and for its immediate necessities."

In an ACYOA meeting, the young people were talking about the need for some changes in the church. The consensus among the ACYOA members was that if there is no accommodation in the church, they will just leave quietly. When they were told that if they wanted changes, they would have to fight for them. They said that it is not their style to protest and argue, and prefer to leave quietly.

We have also a number of mission parishes with their own special needs. They are small groups that do not have their own church build-

ing but once in a while have a visiting priest who offers *Badarak* in the afternoon in a host church and who may perform a baptism or a wedding. If they cannot support a full-time priest, other arrangements should be made. They need a local person for emergency needs: sick people who need prayer or Holy Communion, or need of a funeral service.

As we have lay deacons, we can have lay priests also. Like the deacons, they keep their business or employment but serve as priest during *Badarak*. In Tenafly, the Greek Church has a dentist as a lay priest who helps as assistant pastor and who serves at the Altar when the pastor is visiting Sunday School or is on vacation. I introduced him to our then Primate Torkom Manoogian. These lay priests, like the deacons, have no executive function but are able to visit the sick and perform priestly functions.

How these positive actions can be taken to resolve some of these problems? The Diocesan Assemblies represent the churches of the Diocese. It is the responsibility of the delegates to elect the proper Diocesan Council and Primate. Presently our Primate is Archbishop Khajag Barsamian. He is well educated, dedicated and good person, but never has served as a pastor. I don't think he understands their special needs. He is traveling most of the time, often to Armenia, and his priority is to follow the wishes of the Catholicos at the expense of devising imaginative ways to serve the Armenian people in America.

Since a priest cannot be elected as Primate under the present system, let us change the bylaws. We can divide the responsibilities into two parts. We can elect an dedicated and experienced priest to manage the executive functions of the Primate while at the same time electing a presiding Bishop to ordain clergy, consecrate churches, and presiding at Diocesan gatherings.

Jesus came into a religious community not unlike our own. He was accused of disregarding His religious traditions and practices, and neglecting the age-old rituals of His Jewish faith. He answered His critics, "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." In other words, it is a rule of life that preserving life itself is the most important thing. We cannot say, "The operation was successful, but the patient died" about the Armenian Church. We must be audacious and find new solutions.

(Rev. Arnak Kasparian resides in New Milford, NJ.)



## Ricciardone Revises Response to Senate Inquiry on Number of Churches in Turkey

STATEMENT, from page 1

Christian worship services at least once a year. Many churches do not offer services every week due to insufficient clergy or local Christian populations. Some churches of significance operate as museums, others have been converted into mosques or put to other uses. Still others have fallen into disrepair or may have been totally destroyed."

"It took Ambassador Ricciardone, with the help of his many State Department colleagues, over a week to submit in writing a patently false misrepresentation about the destruction of Christian churches in Turkey, and another 10 days and a full wave of Senate and citizen pressure for him to finally take half a step back from the most offensive and obviously incorrect aspects of his response," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian.

"He just keeps digging himself into a deeper hole as an apologist for Ankara. His use of false figures and euphemisms to try to twist his way out of his misrepresentation — while somehow still trying to stick to Turkey's genocide denial narrative — clearly confirms that Ambassador Ricciardone is not the right representative of US values and interests in Turkey."

Last week, in a strongly-worded letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, ANCA Chairman Ken Hachikian demanded a retraction, correction and apology for Ambassador Ricciardone's statement covering-up Ottoman and Republican Turkey's systematic destruction of thousands of Christian churches.

"We have been troubled by his eagerness to embrace the government of Turkey's false and hateful genocide denial narrative, at lengths

beyond even the Administration's longstanding and shameful complicity in Turkey's denials of the Armenian Genocide," stated Hachikian in his August 15 letter. "His verbal and written responses to questions during his Senate confirmation process, regarding the Armenian Genocide and other issues, ranged from evasive to deeply offensive."

Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan and Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian, prelates of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America Eastern and Western United States, respectively, and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Eastern United States, each issued powerfully-worded spiritual messages in response to the ambassador's statement.

In an August 15 statement, Choloyan stressed that the ambassador's assertion was "so blatantly false that it cannot remain unchallenged." Setting the record straight, he noted that: "The facts are quite clear. From the massacres of Armenians in 1895-96 and the Armenian Genocide in 1915, to the decades following the establishment of the Turkish republic, Christian houses of worship were systematically destroyed or confiscated. My own church's hierarchal see, the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, was a victim of this process, and today is exiled in Lebanon. The archives of the Catholicosate contain hundreds of original deeds and other documentation of churches and church owned property that was confiscated."

Mardirossian concurred, stating, "The presence of an Ambassador in Ankara who is unaware of or uninterested in the truth and the

**"It took Ambassador Ricciardone, with the help of his many State Department colleagues, over a week to submit in writing a patently false misrepresentation about the destruction of Christian churches in Turkey."**

—Aram Hamparian

consequences of the Ottoman and Republican Turkish government's genocide of Armenians, Assyrians, Syrians, Greeks and other Christians materially undermines US interests, compromises American values and weakens international efforts to defend religious freedom for peoples of all faiths. Sadly, but unmistakably, with this hateful and hurtful statement, Ambassador Ricciardone has demonstrated that he is not the right candidate to effectively and responsibly represent the United States in Turkey."

On August 19, Barsamian noted that Ricciardone's response had "deeply offended

Armenian-Americans," explaining that "the loss of these many hundreds of churches, their neglect and outright destruction, and the conversion of many of our sanctuaries into mosques, is a matter of intense pain to Armenians: an ongoing reminder of the loss of life and the destruction that we suffered as a result of the 1915 Genocide... In all charity, perhaps the Ambassador is simply unaware of certain facts. But mastery of the history of a country, its dark as well as bright chapters, is essential to serving the United States effectively and diplomatically in this important and complex region." (See the full text of his statement on this page.)

According to Armenian Church experts, of the more than 2,000 churches serving the Armenian community prior to 1915, less than 40 are functioning as churches today.

Reservations about the ambassador's readiness to placate his foreign hosts willingness to accept the Turkish government's talking points on religious tolerance at face value echo concerns expressed last fall by then Sen. Sam Brownback (R-KS), who, during the last session of Congress, placed a hold on Ricciardone's nomination to serve as US ambassador to Turkey. In an August 16, 2010, letter to Clinton, Brownback voiced disapproval of Ricciardone's tenure as US ambassador to Egypt, noting, among other things, that "he quickly adopted the positions and arguments of his Egyptian diplomatic counterparts."

In the wake of Brownback's hold, President Barack Obama circumvented Senate objections by issuing a "recess appointment" of Ricciardone. The Senate must approve his nomination in the upcoming months, if Ricciardone is to continue to serve in Turkey for more than one year, of the usual three-year ambassadorial term. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will likely take up his nomination upon their return from the August Congressional recess.

## Abp. Barsamian Responds to Ricciardone's Statement

RESPONSE, from page 1

than 2,000 Christian churches functioning prior to 1915 on the territory of present-day Turkey," Ricciardone had asserted: "Most of the Christian churches functioning prior to 1915 are still operating as churches. Some churches of significance operate as museums. The remaining have fallen into disrepair or were converted to mosques for lack of use."

The full text of Barsamian's letter to Clinton, in response to that assertion, appears below:

Dear Madame Secretary:

My kind greetings and blessings you, as you continue your service to our nation.

As Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, I write regarding the statements made by Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, President Obama's appointment as US ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, during his confirmation hearing.

Please know that we have been generally supportive of the efforts of the US government to promote a more normal relationship between the republics of Turkey and Armenia. Likewise, we greatly respect and appreciate the productive role you personally have played in such initiatives.

With those efforts in mind, it is difficult to understand Ambassador Ricciardone's assertions about the status of historic Armenian churches, and other Christian churches, in Turkey. The loss of these many hundreds of

churches, their neglect and outright destruction and the conversion of many of our sanctuaries into mosques, is a matter of intense pain to Armenians: an ongoing reminder of the loss of life and the destruction that we suffered as a result of the 1915 Genocide.

Ambassador Ricciardone deeply offended Armenian-Americans with his remarks, opening sensitive wounds and potentially setting back the gradual process of healing. In all charity, perhaps the ambassador is simply unaware of certain facts. But mastery of the history of a country, its dark as well as bright chapters, is essential to serving the United States effectively and diplomatically in this important and complex region.

Again, it is our general support for your efforts, Madame Secretary, as well as our desire to see genuine progress made to benefit the entire region that prompts this letter to you. I am confident that you will give these thoughts all due consideration, as you make decisions about the vital role America plays in Turkey, in Armenia and throughout the world.

Madame Secretary, you have our great respect and support in all your undertakings. May our Lord strengthen and guide you in your service to our beloved country.

With prayers,  
Archbishop Khajag Barsamian  
Primate

## Armenian Woman Dies in Indiana State Stage Collapse

BIGJOHNY, from page 1

"She was excited about this concert," said her brother-in-law, Terry Collins. "She had the tickets for a while, and she's been talking about it all summer."

It was a busy time. After graduating in May with high honors from Manchester College, she had landed a job teaching middle school English in Muncie.

And her father, Robert BigJohny, was visiting from Arkansas. BigJohny's parents had divorced, and her father, an Armenian immigrant, had planned to return to that country later this month and wanted to say goodbye.

BigJohny was born August 4, 1988 in Fort Wayne. She was a 2007 graduate of Wayne High School and was the salutatorian of her class. She was also the captain of gymnastics team, editor-in-chief of the school paper and

senior class president at Wayne High School. She graduated in May 2011 with honors from Manchester College. She was planning on teaching seventh grade this fall at Wilson Middle School, Muncie.

She is survived by her father, Robert (spouse Gohar Hakobyan) BigJohny, of Sherwood, Ark.; mother, Polly A. BigJohny, of Fort Wayne; sister, Christy (spouse Terry Collins) BigJohny, of Fort Wayne; brother, Antonio Guerrero, of Fort Wayne; grandfather, Stepan BigJohny, of Armenia; great-grandmother, Margaret Baghoomian, of Glendale, Calif.; nephew, TJ Collins of Fort Wayne; and several aunts, uncles and cousins.

Funeral Services were held on Friday, August 19. In lieu of flowers, memorials to TJ Collins Education Fund c/o Christy BigJohny. [www.klaehnfahmeltonfunerals.com](http://www.klaehnfahmeltonfunerals.com)

## KOHAR All Time Armenian Favorites 3

After much anticipation, HAYASA Productions LTD releases KOHAR's, "All Time Armenian Favorites 3." The three DVD's feature over six hours of live concert at the Opea Theater of Damascus and the citadel amphitheater of Aleppo.



The documentary material portrays the built up process of the stages in Damascus and the Citadel of Aleppo with some interview with conductor Sebouh Abcarian, who depicts the heroic past associated with his father and the citadel.

The "must own" KOHAR — All Time Armenian Favorites three package comes with a 128-page song booklet that includes the lyrics of the songs in Armenian and transliterated.

For more information, go to

<http://hayasashop.com/>