

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

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## Armenian Justice Minister Resigns

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenia’s Justice Minister Artak Zeynalian tendered his resignation on Friday, June 7, after just over a year in office.

Zeynalian gave no reason for his decision which he announced on Facebook. Instead, he thanked Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for appointing him as justice minister following last year’s Velvet Revolution. He also thanked Justice Ministry employees for the “interesting, fruitful and responsible joint work.”



Artak Zeynalian

“I’m sure that everything will be fine ... But if

it won’t be fine, it will be very fine,” wrote Zeynalian.

A spokesperson for the Justice Ministry refused to comment on his resignation.

Zeynalian, 49, is a prominent politician and former civil rights campaigner affiliated with the pro-Western Hanrapetutyun (Republic) party. He retained his post even after the party challenged Pashinyan’s My Step alliance in the December 2018 parliamentary elections.

My Step’s parliamentary leader, Lilit Makunts, suggested that his resignation is connected with sweeping judicial reforms planned by the Armenian authorities. Makunts said some My Step lawmakers are unhappy with the reform-related work of the Justice Ministry and Zeynalian in particular.

Makunts told reporters that they voiced their “concerns” after government supporters blocked the court buildings across the country at Pashinyan’s urging on May 20. She insisted, however, that none of them called for Zeynalian’s resignation.

Speaking to journalists on May 21, Zeynalian pointedly declined to comment see RESIGNATION, page 2



[RUTH SOWBY RANDS / GLENDALE NEWS-PRESS]

Glendale City Council member Zareh Sinanyan

## Zareh Sinanyan Leaves City Council To Work for Armenian Government

By Lila Seidman

GLENDALE (Glendale News-Press) – Glendale City Council member Zareh Sinanyan is stepping down from his municipal post to accept a position with the Armenian government.

Sinanyan, first elected to the local council in 2013, announced his resignation on Friday, June 7, according to a city statement.

“Zareh has had a very positive impact on City Council,” Glendale Mayor Ara Najarian said. “He’s very analytical. He reads the material and understands the issues.”

Sinanyan will be in charge of Armenia’s diaspora affairs, reporting to the country’s prime minister, according to Armenian news outlets.

see SINANYAN, page 9

## Journalist Deniz Yücel Speaks Out on Arrest in Turkey

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

FRANKFURT, Germany – Many journalists, too many, have been arrested and jailed in Turkey and for political reasons. The numbers run into the hundreds. Deniz Yücel is one of them; he was “not the first to be arrested illegally, but was the first to be freed illegally.”

This is how he summed up his special case during a meeting held on June 5 at the Literaturhaus in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Titled, “Freedom is something that one does,” the event was organized by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation. The



[DEUTSCHE WELLE PHOTO]

Deniz Yücel

moderator was Martin Wiesman, and Yücel’s dialogue partner was Doris Akrap, journalist and editor of the *Tageszeitung* (TAZ) newspaper.

see ARREST, page 5

## Armenian Museum Receives \$100,000 from Cummings Foundation



Armenian Museum Board of Trustees President Michele Kolligian, right, with recent guest Dr. Helen Evans of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York

WATERTOWN – The Armenian Museum of America is one of 100 local nonprofits to receive grants of \$100,000 each through Cummings Foundation’s “\$100K for 100” program. The Watertown-based organization was selected from a total of 574 applications during a competitive review process.

Representing the Armenian Museum, Stuart Green and Berj Chekijian joined the approximately 300 other guests at a reception at the TradeCenter 128 in Woburn to celebrate the \$10 million infusion into Greater Boston’s nonprofit sector. With the conclusion of this grant cycle, Cummings Foundation has now awarded more than \$260 million to Greater Boston’s nonprofits alone.

“The Armenian Genocide is an essential story for our Museum to tell. Our collection objects tell the tragedy of the Genocide, while often also serving as objects of sur-

vival and witness. We are extremely grateful to the Cummings Foundation and Bill and Joyce Cummings for their generosity and vision that will allow us to continue our mission to share the art, culture and history of a proud and enduring people,” said Armenian Museum Board of Trustees President Michele Kolligian.

The funding will be used to strengthen the museum’s visitor experience, particularly as it relates to exhibitions exploring the Armenian Genocide and resultant diaspora community. Dispersed over a four-year period, the grant award will allow the Museum to expand its current display that focuses on the Armenian Genocide. By showcasing unique family histories entrusted to the Museum’s care, renewed interpretation and exhibition design will articulate see GRANT, page 16

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Mirror-Spectator Annual Summer Break

WATERTOWN – The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will close for two weeks in July as part of its annual summer break.

The last issue published before the vacation will be that of June 29, and the first edition back would be that of July 20.

The office will be closed July 1 through 12.

### Morocco Ambassador Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The new ambassador of Morocco to Armenia, Faouz El Achchabi (residence in Kiev, Ukraine), presented her credentials to President Armen Sarkissian, the Presidential Office announced, on June 6.

At the meeting the Armenian president congratulated the Ambassador on assuming office and expressed hope that El Achchabi’s long experience will serve for the development and deepening of relations between the two countries.

The president said Armenia and Morocco are countries with millennia history and have a great cooperation potential which is not utilized and needs to be revealed.

Talking about the bilateral mutually beneficial partnership, Sarkissian considered technology, information management and artificial intelligence as prospective areas. The sides also highlighted the field of tourism in terms of developing the bilateral relations and raising mutual awareness.

### Armenia Facilitates Ties between EEU and Iran, FM Says

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Thanks to Armenia the development of Eurasian Economic Union’s (EEU) foreign economic component gained an additional boost, Minister of Foreign Affairs Zohrab Mnatsakanyan said during parliamentary hearings titled “Year of Armenian Presidency at EEU: Challenges and Opportunities” on June 10.

“Armenia’s political and economic ties with Iran created conditions for the union to enter the Middle East, as a result of which the interim agreement aimed at the creation of a Free Trade Zone (FTZ) between the EEU countries and Iran was signed on May 17, 2018 in Astana,” he said.

The three-year deal reduces or abolishes import customs duties for a broad range of products.

Mnatsakanyan said the implementation of agreements with Iran and China, as well as completion of negotiations with Singapore, Serbia, Egypt, Israel and India, can be an additional boost for the EEU’s integration into the global economy.

The EEU-Iran FTZ deal has been ratified by all members of the Union.

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### Yerevan’s Syrian Food Scene

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Pianists Vie for Title at Aram Khachaturian Competition

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – The semi-final round of the 15th Khachaturian International Competition is underway on June 10 at Yerevan specialized secondary music school named after Tchaikovsky. According to the Aram Khachaturian Competition Cultural Foundation, 13 participants have passed to the semi-final round for the main award and the prizes.

The final round of the competition will take place on June 12. The finalists will perform with the State Symphony Orchestra of Armenia which is the official symphony of the competition.

The Khachaturian International Competition is held in Yerevan from June 6 to June 14 every year starting from 2003. For the first time it was implemented within the framework of events, dedicated to the 100th anniversary of great composer.

In 2013 the Khachaturian competition was elected as a member of the World Federation of International Music Competitions becoming the only Armenian competition ever honored with such a privilege.

## Sevan Road to Be Renovated

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Government of Armenia has approved an upcoming renovation of the road leading to the Sevan Peninsula.

Deputy Minister of Transportation, Communication and IT Bagrat Badalyan said on May 31 at the Cabinet meeting that the asphalt layer is worn out in the area and given the fact that soon the tourism season will begin they want to reconstruct it.

The Sevan Peninsula is a major tourism attraction for visitors of Lake Sevan.

The restoration works will be completed within one month

## Defense Minister Briefs James Jones on NK Line of Contact

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Armenian Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan received on Friday, June 6, Atlantic Council Executive Chairman Emeritus Retired Gen. James L. Jones Jr. As the defense ministry reported in a press statement, Tonoyan presented the situation at the Armenian-Azerbaijani state border and at the Line of Contact between Artsakh and Azerbaijan, reflected on Armenian-American and Armenia-NATO cooperation in the defense sector.

The two sides exchanged thoughts on number of issues of regional and International security issues.

Jones is a retired United States Marine Corps general and a former United States National Security Advisor. During his military career, he served as the 32nd Commandant of the Marine Corps from July 1999 to January 2003, and Commander, United States European Command and Supreme Allied Commander Europe from 2003 to 2006. Jones retired from the Marine Corps on February 1, 2007, after 40 years of service.

## Armenia among Most Popular Destinations for Russians in 2019

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Armenia is among the top 20 countries preferred for travel by Russian tourists for 2019, analytical agency TurStat reveals.

The agency has unveiled a rating of countries popular among Russians in the first quarter of 2019.

Accordingly, tourist trips to Armenia have increased by 19 percent to 94,000 in the first three months of 2019 against the same period last year.

The remaining 19 popular destinations are Abkhazia, Finland, Kazakhstan, Thailand, China, Estonia, Ukraine, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Germany, Italy, Poland, Georgia, Vietnam, Spain, Azerbaijan, Lithuania, the Czech Republic and France.

TurStat reported earlier that Armenia is among the five best CIS destinations suitable for sightseeing holidays.

# AGBU Leadership Briefs Armenia's Prime Minister on Current Strategic Goals

YEREVAN – On June 5, on the heels of an official visit to Artsakh in support of the AGBU Fund for Artsakh, AGBU President Berge Setrakian met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at the government building. Along with AGBU Armenia's President Vasken Yacoubian and Executive Director Talar Kazanjian, Setrakian briefed the prime minister and key staffers on the Artsakh visit, presented the organization's strategy for accelerating socio-economic development in the war-torn republic, and updated them on the progress of other AGBU initiatives throughout Armenia since the first official meeting with then-interim PM Pashinyan shortly after the Velvet Revolution.

Now, a year later, with the New Armenia Agenda under way, areas of mutual interest could be explored with greater substance and specificity with an understanding that the work of AGBU in Armenia is driven by a conviction that a strong, vibrant, democratic Armenia is the key to preserving and enhancing the global Armenian identity in the 21st century.

Pashinyan expressed the Armenian government's appreciation of AGBU's growing presence in the country and its ability to address pressing needs of the people on multiple fronts, assuring AGBU leadership of its desire to cooperate and assist, where appropriate, in meeting the organization's strategic goals and programmatic needs.

After the one-hour meeting,

Setrakian noted that there are many areas of mutual alignment, citing such examples as the AGBU Women's Entrepreneurs program (W.E.), designed to uplift the status of women in Armenia through financial independence, and its efforts to build capacity

Armenia-Diaspora relations.

"Anything that AGBU can do to help the people of Armenia succeed in their personal lives and as citizens of a country with so much human potential will help keep the entire Armenian Nation moving in a positive direction,"



Prime Minister Pashinyan greets AGBU President Berge Setrakian at the Armenian government building. (Photo courtesy of the Press office of the Government of Armenia – www.gov.am)

among civil society organizations in Armenia through its Bridge for CSOs program, which can help promote an open and trusting relationship between citizens and their government. Both programs involve diaspora participation which adds another important dimension to the much-needed reset in

Setrakian observed. "In these times, what happens in Armenia, does not stay in Armenia. Its trials and triumphs, its place in the world, and its image as a distinctive living culture, has, to one degree or another, tangibly or psychologically, an impact on Armenians everywhere."



Seated Left, Front to Back: AGBU Armenia President Vasken Yacoubian; AGBU President Berge Setrakian; AGBU Armenia Executive Director Talar Kazanjian. Seated Right Front to Back: Assistant to PM Hratch Tashchyan, PM Nikol Pashinyan; PM Spokesperson Vladimir Karapetyan. (Photo courtesy of the Press office of the Government of Armenia – www.gov.am)

## Armenian President Visits Italian Embassy

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – President Armen Sarkissian of Armenia and his wife Nouneh Sarkissian visited on June 2 the Embassy of Italy in Yerevan on the country's national holiday, Republic Day.

The Armenian leader congratulated Ambassador of Italy Vincenzo Del Monaco, the entire embassy staff, and in their person the friendly people of Italy on the national holiday, the presidential press service reported.

The parties spoke about the Armenian-Italian cultural and historical ties and in this context stressed in particular the activities of the Mekhitarist Congregation in Italy.

## Armenian Justice Minister Resigns

RESIGNATION, from page 1

on the court blockade denounced by the Armenian opposition.

Artur Sakunts, a human rights activist, likewise linked the minister's resignation with the judicial crisis. Sakunts said that the Justice Ministry did not initiate "drastic changes" within the judiciary under Zeynalian.

Also resigning on Friday was Gevorg Danielyan, the acting head of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), a state body overseeing Armenia's courts. In a statement, Danielyan said the SJC needs to have a different composition in order to "really inspire trust" and be able to implement judicial reforms.

The SJC's previous chairman, Gagik Harutyunyan, stepped down on May 24. Harutyunyan attributed the move to "ongoing developments relating to the judicial authority" and his "concerns expressed in that regard."





## ARMENIA

# AGBU Redoubles Efforts to Revitalize Economy, People of Artsakh

STEPANAKERT, Artsakh — Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) announced on June 4 a major push behind its AGBU Fund for Artsakh, a four-way strategy for sustainable socio-economic growth in Artsakh centered around programs in education, culture, humanitarian relief, and socio-economic development.

AGBU President Berge Setrakian believes that a sustainable growth economy for Artsakh is as indispensable to its survival as negotiating a just peace and defending the right to self-determination, stating that, “Along with providing a better life for the people, a strong economy also means a stronger military and eventually a safer homeland.”

Building on the organization’s decades of support for humanitarian and socio-economic initiatives in the war-stricken enclave, AGBU Fund for Artsakh was officially launched in 2018 as an umbrella entity that better reflects the interdependence among programs to achieve optimal national renewal — from providing emergency medical support in response to the April 2016 four-day war, educating the next generation of innovators through its collaboration with the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies, helping advance deserving students with university scholarships, and supporting Military Officer Education for both on and off the battlefield. On the cultural front, the Fund continues to support the Artsakh Chamber Orchestra that it helped found in 2004. The orchestra has since toured the world, paving the way for a new music school in Artsakh, thanks to its global success.

Two new agriculture-based initiatives were added to the Fund in 2018 — AGBU Fields of Hope and AGBU Olive Tree Orchards. Both are designed to empower farmers, including Syrian-Armenian refugee settlers, to transform Artsakh into a cornucopia of produce to sustain the populace and open new markets for regional trade.



AGBU Fields of Hope

In concert with announcing accelerated efforts behind the Fund, AGBU introduced two new ambitious programs aimed at stimulating economic activity and reducing poverty: AGBU Women Entrepreneurs (W.E.); and AGBU Learn to Earn Artsakh Program (LEAP).

AGBU LEAP is a professional development

initiative that helps locals with different educational backgrounds and skill sets to create more sustainable and remunerative sources of income through self-employment and enhanced employability. The program also aims to support public servants in their professional development, as well as to cultivate a more supportive environment for small and medium-size enterprises in Artsakh.

Selected entrepreneurs will enroll for a course in Business Administration from the American University of Armenia Extension

Artsakh is implemented together with Fruitful Armenia Charity Foundation to boost the entrepreneurial skills of women in Stepanakert and the regions and help them succeed in the world of business. The project is part of the AGBU Women Empowerment Program which began in Armenia in 2017 to help promote human rights and equal opportunity for women in Armenia.

“The establishment of enterprises, the creation of new jobs, and the promotion of export are all key to economic development. This is



Speakers at the AGBU Fund for Artsakh press conference. From left: AGBU Armenia Executive Director Talar Kazanjian; AGBU Armenia President Vasken Yacoubian; AGBU President Berge Setrakian; and State Minister of Artsakh Grigory Martirosyan.



Artsakh Chamber Orchestra



AGBU Women Entrepreneurs (W.E.)

Program. Upon completion, they will have the opportunity to compete for mini-grants and benefit from year-long handholding from experts in relevant fields.

Other beneficiaries will also receive English-language training and a non-degree certificate in Tourism and Hospitality Management upon completion of at least five of AUA Extension’s 12-course program.

AGBU Learn to Earn Artsakh Program also commits to strengthen capabilities among officers employed in the public sector through professional development courses and exchange visits with Armenian counterparts. The program will help the Artsakh government develop action plans to resolve policy gaps and improve the business climate for small and medium enterprises.

AGBU Women Entrepreneurs (W.E.) in

why we are joining AGBU in supporting women entrepreneurs in Artsakh by helping them expand their knowledge of finance and entrepreneurship and to be more effectively involved in the development of the country’s economy,” noted Jorge Del Aguila-Eurnekian, Board Member of Fruitful Armenia Foundation and Converse Bank.

The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) is the world’s largest non-profit organization devoted to upholding the Armenian heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian programs. Each year, AGBU is committed to making a difference in the lives of 500,000 people across Armenia, Artsakh and the Armenian diaspora. Since 1906, AGBU has remained true to one overarching goal: to create a foundation for the prosperity of all Armenians. To learn more visit [www.agbu.org](http://www.agbu.org).





## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## Prague Court to Extradite Narek Sargsyan to Armenia

PRAGUE (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The Czech Republic may extradite the nephew of Armenia's third President, Serzh Sargsyan, Narek Sargsyan, to Armenia. The Prague City Court on June 4 reached the decision.

Armenian officials accused Narek Sargsyan of illegally keeping weapons and drugs in his apartment in the center of Yerevan in the summer of 2018. Moreover, this is not the full list of the charges against Sargsyan. The Armenian police also stated that when discovered, he provided a fake passport of Guatemala with the personal details of a person named Franklin Gonzales.

A criminal case has been instituted against Sargsyan for the purpose of acquiring, selling, keeping, transporting or carrying illegal weapons, ammunition or explosives as well as for selling, marketing illegal drugs or substances.

## Dutch Parliament Slams Erdogan's Comments on Armenian Genocide

THE HAGUE (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The Dutch House of Representatives on Tuesday, June 11 adopted a resolution condemning Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's April 24 comments concerning the victims of the Armenian Genocide, lawmaker Alen Simonyan said in a Facebook post.

Erdogan said back then that the deportation of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century was "appropriate at the time."

The "deportation of Armenian gangs who were massacring Muslims including women, children and elderly people in the Eastern Anatolia region was the most appropriate act at that time," Erdogan said. "No group or state has been able to prove their claims on the Armenian issue with archive documents."

The document adopted by the parliament of the Netherlands obliges the government to inform the Turkish authorities on the lawmakers stance.

## Armenian among Injured in Tourist Bus Collision

SOCHI (Panarmenia.net) – One Armenian citizen was among the injured in Sochi tourist buses collision on Sunday, June 9, the spokesperson for Armenian MFA Anna Naghdalyan said referring to Armenian consulate in Sochi.

As reported earlier, a total of 26 people have been injured as a result of a collision of two buses in Russian Sochi, RIA Novosti reported.

## Two Female Armenian Soldiers Join UN Forces in Lebanon

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Two female Armenian soldiers have for the first time been recruited in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

The Brigadier General of International Peacekeeping Forces in Lebanon, Bruno Pisciotta, and Armenian Ambassador to Lebanon Vahagn Atabekyan, met to discuss the issue.

Atabekyan was attending a ceremony of awarding Armenian peacekeepers at the headquarters of International Peacekeeping Forces in Lebanon.

The ambassador thanked the Armenian peacekeepers for implementing the mission with great responsibility.

Pisciotta also hailed the Armenian servicemen.

# In Nod to Georgia, Armenia Changes UN Vote for First Time about Right of Georgians to Return

By Ani Mejlumyan

YEREVAN (Eurasianet) – Armenia has for the first time not voted against a Georgian resolution at the United Nations about the right of return of displaced people, an apparent gesture on Yerevan's part toward better relations with Tbilisi.

On June 4, the United Nations General Assembly passed a non-binding resolution reaffirming the rights of Georgians displaced from South Ossetia and Abkhazia to return to their homes. The two territories are considered Georgian by most of the world but have been controlled by Russia-backed self-declared republics since the early 1990s.

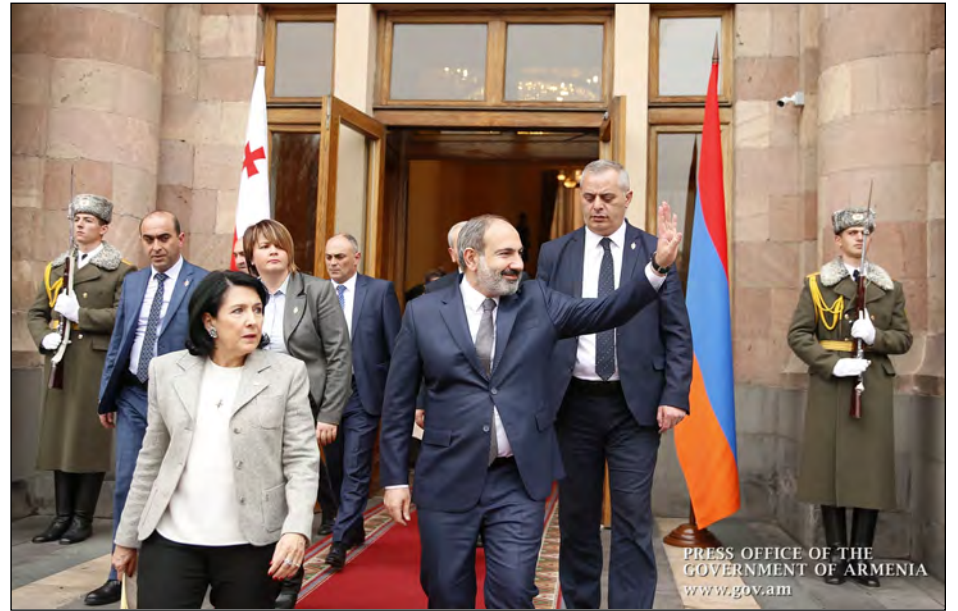
Georgia has sponsored similar resolutions every year since 2008, and until this year Armenia voted against: the situation is analogous to that of Nagorno-Karabakh, internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan but controlled by Armenian forces since 1994.

This year, however, Armenia didn't vote. It didn't explain its reasoning but Johnny Melikyan, an analyst of Armenia-Georgia relations at the Armenian government think tank Orbeli Center, told Eurasianet that the two countries appear to have reached an informal agreement that "we don't vote against each other." He said voting for the resolution would be impossible, though: Armenia "has the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, and voting for the resolution would be against Armenia's interests."

While in the past Georgia has voted for what Melikyan described as "anti-

Armenian" UN resolutions, such as those affirming the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, Yerevan wanted to take the first step toward better cooperation. "By abstaining we [Armenia] showed that we want to build a better foundation with our neighbor," he told Eurasianet. "We also spoiled Azerbaijan's propaganda against Armenia in Georgia, as this is one of the main topics they use to criticize Armenia."

Richard Giragosian, director of the Yerevan think tank Regional Studies Center, said Armenia's UN vote suggests a more "careful" diplomatic approach by the new government, which took power last spring. For Armenia, "despite expectations and perhaps pressure from Russia, the abstention may have been a compromise, aimed at no longer angering its important neighbor Georgia, while seeking more flexibility from the Moscow line in



Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili and Armenian Prime Minister in March in Yerevan.

When Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili visited Yerevan in March, Pashinyan said that there was "a historic opportunity to upgrade the relations between our countries." Nevertheless, the government has tried as well to balance relations with Russia, its traditional ally and Georgia's primary foe. Just days before the UN vote, Pashinyan told an interviewer in Kazakhstan that Armenia hoped to restore railway communications between Armenia and Russia via Georgia and Abkhazia, a project that Georgia regards with suspicion.

UN votes," Giragosian told Eurasianet.

Russia voted against the resolution, and most of the others who joined it were aligned with Russia.

Arsen Kharatayan, a Tbilisi-based former foreign policy advisor to Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, wrote on his Facebook page that the vote was a crucial step in restoring faith between the two countries: "Armenian-Georgian relations should be beyond the influence of any third party," he said, expressing hope that Georgia will take a similar approach in the future when Armenia-related votes come up.

## Armenian Diaspora Opinion Survey Results Published

LONDON – The Armenian Diaspora Survey (ADS) published the results of a first ever survey, which provides a snapshot of the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the Armenian world in the 21st century.

The 150-page Armenian Diaspora Opinion, Pilot Project 2018 includes six thematic chapters—on identity, language and culture, religion, community, politics and relations with Armenia—and the full results of the pilot survey conducted in May and June 2018 in Boston, Cairo, Marseille and Pasadena. There are sections on research methodology, profiles of the communities in the four cities and the entire questionnaire. Published by the Armenian Institute in London, the report is available to the public.

"The primary aim of this research project, which is led by a team of academics, researchers and experts, is to provide evidence-based understanding of the multilayered and diverse aspects of Armenian diasporic life," said Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian, a scholar at University of Oxford, who directs the project.

"The knowledge gained and the full survey responses presented in this new publication could be useful to institutional and community leaders in the Diaspora and policy-makers in Armenia," explained Tchilingirian, "especially, when they are taking decisions about priorities, projects and services in the communities."

The Armenian Diaspora Survey (ADS) is funded by the Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and carried out under the auspices of the Armenian Institute in London.

"We are pleased to see the publication of this report on the multi-country systematic survey of the Diaspora," said Dr. Razmik Panossian, Director of Gulbenkian Foundation's Armenian Communities Department. "The need for evidence-based understanding of Armenians around the world," he continued, "is essential not only to comprehend current realities, but also to plan for the future."

Over 1000 Armenians in four cities in the Diaspora took part in this first ever survey, which was led by a team of academics, researchers and experts. These cities were chosen to provide variety for the initial phase, as well as for their community history and characteristics.

### The Research

The overwhelming majority of the respondents consider the continuation of the Armenian diaspora as important and meaningful space—94 percent marked as "fairly" to "very" important. Along these lines, 84 percent of respondents felt it was important to help diaspora communities in the Middle East. This is significant as traditionally the Genocide and the Republic of Armenia have been the focus of funding, study or discourse in the Diaspora. The respondents showed

interest in all of these, but considered the diaspora equally important. Armenia is "fairly" and "very" important to 90 percent of respondents and 75 percent have visited the country at least once, while 93 percent intend to visit.

Respondents said that Armenian language, history and religion were important to themselves and to Armenian identity generally – but variations appeared between the cities and further questions revealed broad variations in practice.

Even as ADS respondents in the four cities seem to be more active than perhaps a broader population of Armenians, 73 percent claimed no active affiliation with any Armenian political organization. However a majority said they were active in other Armenian organizations such as the AGBU, Hamazkain and others.

Predictably, Christianity is considered an important part of Armenian identity—for Apostolic, Evangelical and Catholic respondents across the four communities. While only 14-16 percent attended church weekly or monthly, 70 percent felt it is important to be married in an Armenian church. Some 43 percent of respondents felt that women should be ordained in Armenian churches, while 30 percent had no opinion on the matter.

The full report is available on the ADS website and could be downloaded for free: <https://www.armeniandiasporasurvey.com/2018>





## INTERNATIONAL

# Pashinyan Speaks about Building Bridges at Russian Economic Conference

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (Armenpress) – Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan announced that Armenia is ready to contribute to the development of relations between Russia and the European Union (EU), during his speech at St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on June 7.

To the question of the facilitator of the session if Armenia can in the future abandon the Eurasian Economic Union if the shift towards the EU continues, Pashinyan answered that there is no shift towards any direction.

“There is no shift towards the European Union, because Armenia remains in the place it is now. This is very important to emphasize, because we cooperate with the EU over issues of our domestic reforms. The EU is very interested in improving relations with Russia. I often contact with European leaders and I want to say that all of them support Armenia in developing relations with the Russian Federation. And this is very important. We are very transparent with our Russian partners in our relations with the EU, and we are transparent with our European partners in our relations with the RF. Of course, ruling out some security-linked nuances”, Pashinyan said.

The Armenian premier said that Armenia does not plan to participate in geopolitical games. “I want to say that really many European leaders are interested in normalizing relations with Russia. I think the presence of the two European leaders here also speaks about that. I think many have understood in the world that geopolitical



From left, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin

Recently I paid a visit to the People's Republic of China, where I mentioned in my speech that I am very glad we have a positive dynamics of relations with China. I think China, the EU and Russia are all interested in universal stability and I think that our main priority in these relations is stability and security. Of course, we, as an EEU member state, understand our role and will contribute to the improvement of relations between our colleagues, not to worsening,” the Armenian

Armenia to become richer and make our country richer,” Pashinyan said.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who is in the Russian Federation on a working visit, participated in the 23rd plenary session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, titled “Forming a Sustainable Development Agenda.”

President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping, President of the Republic of Bulgaria Romen Radiev, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Peter Pellegrini and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres attended the plenary session.

One day before, Pashinyan met with Putin in the Konstantinovsky Palace.

Welcoming Pashinyan, Putin hailed relations between the two countries as special.

“I have no doubt that you will find it interesting and, hopefully, useful to take part in discussions at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum,” he said.

“It offers you a good format in which to meet your colleagues, talk with them and discuss current issues on the economic agenda, as well as to talk about political issues, so I would call it a useful and important event.

“There is no need to characterize our bilateral relations as we do this regularly: we met quite recently and discussed many issues and had the opportunity to talk about everything on the sidelines of the EEU summit in Kazakhstan.

“Let me remind you that Russia is Armenia's leading trade and economic partner, which accounts for 26 percent of Armenia's foreign trade, plus direct investment worth \$2 billion and many other things that show that we maintain special relations of two allies. I am glad to have the opportunity to meet with you today and discuss the entire range of issues.”

Pashinyan said bilateral relations are developing harmoniously.

“As you mentioned, our countries are bound by strategic relations of allied partnership. And this

concerns not only bilateral relations: we are actively cooperating in the frame of the Eurasian Economic Union, the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States], and the CSTO [Collective Security Treaty Organization]. And I believe that all these areas are of strategic importance to our countries,” he said.

During the meeting, the interlocutors discussed a broad range of issues on the Armenian-Russian cooperation agenda. In particular, they touched upon the activities of the intergovernmental commission.

The parties stressed the importance of continued high-level contacts and expressed readiness to discuss ways of ensuring progress in this area. The need for continued discussions in the framework of working groups was noted on both sides. (PanArmenian.net contributed to this report.)

## Karabakh Security Chief Sacked After Row With Yerevan

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) – Vitaly Balasanyan, one of Nagorno-Karabakh's top security officials, was relieved of his duties on Tuesday, June 11, one month after criticizing Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and bitterly arguing with his press secretary.

Bako Sahakyan, the Karabakh president, dismissed Balasanyan as secretary of his national security council in a series of decrees that also named another retired army general, Levon Mnatsakanyan, as chief of the Karabakh police.

Mnatsakanyan is the former commander of Karabakh's Armenian-backed army. He was sacked in December after Pashinyan accused Karabakh leaders of “meddling” in Armenian parliamentary elections.

Sahakyan's spokesman, Davit Babayan, insisted that Balasanyan himself decided to resign because he wants to be “involved” in a presidential election which is due to be held in Karabakh next year. “He decided to enter the political scene and more actively participate in that electoral process,” Babayan told RFE/RL's Armenian service.

Balasanyan is expected to be one of the main candidates in that election. He had already been Sahakyan's main challenger in a presidential ballot held in 2012.

Earlier this month, Balasanyan publicly scoffed at Pashinyan's confidence-building understandings reached with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. He also criticized Armenian authorities for not heeding the current and former Karabakh leaders' calls for the release of Armenia's indicted former President Robert Kocharyan from prison.

Those remarks sparked a war of words between Balasanyan and Pashinyan's press secretary, Vladimir Karapetyan. An Armenian newspaper report claimed on Monday that Pashinyan has since been pressing Sahakyan to sack his security chief.

The Armenian prime minister last week accused unnamed Karabakh leaders of spreading false claims about significant territorial concessions to Azerbaijan planned by his government.

Babayan denied, however, any connection between Pashinyan's statements and Balasanyan's dismissal. “Please do not link [the two things,] do not look for an intrigue,” said the Karabakh official.

Balasanyan, 60, is a retired army general who had played a major role during the 1991-1994 war with Azerbaijan. He announced on May 30 that he has set up a “pan-Armenian” political movement called For Artsakh.



Vitaly Balasanyan



Prime Minister Pashinyan is interviewed by a Chinese television reporter.

games do not lead to any good thing, and this particularly refers to the countries and peoples which become a platform for such geopolitical games. For that reason Armenia's position is very clear – we do not plan to become part of geopolitical games. We have to establish normal relations with the European Union and the Russian Federation. We are an EEU member state, holding the chairmanship of this year.

prime minister said.

Pashinyan urges international partners to invest in Armenia.

“The value added tax increase in the first half of this year was 7.1 percent in Armenia, while economic activity index amounted to 9.2 percent in April, so I invite the international business to make investments in Armenia. We even have a slogan for potential investors: We invite them to

bookstores, petitions and open letters. As Akrap noted, the moment was propitious, since Turkey was at the center of attention, and the case was a lead item in major press for weeks on end.

The German government intervened, in the person of then-Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, and when in summer 2017 Berlin threatened to block Hermes export credits, the potential economic danger convinced Ankara to let him out. Eager to maintain access to the European Union (and even join one day), Turkey couldn't risk such a conflict with Germany, Yücel said.

On the personal level, he stressed the importance of the solidarity campaign, which gave him the moral support to resist (even when tortured) and to smuggle articles out of jail. Although, he reported, some colleagues feared that publication would do more damage than good, he reasoned, “The reason I'm here is that I am a journalist, because of my articles. If their aim is to silence me, then all the more important to break the silence and publish.”

What will emerge from the elections Erdogan has decided to repeat? The real question, in Yücel's view, is: how much will Erdogan take with him when he goes under? In 2005, when Erdogan was on a reform course, he understood from German Chancellor Angela Merkel and others in Europe that Turkey would not be let into the EU. Then in 2015 after the refugee crisis, Merkel made a deal with Erdogan. The position the EU takes, Yücel said, will depend on what happens in Turkey after Erdogan. The AKP ideology was initially Islamist but, since the failed coup attempt, it has turned increasingly nationalist. Erdogan and his clique (who are hated, he said), will seek allies anywhere, as long as this keeps them in power.

Yücel's new book, which tells the whole story, is titled, *Terrorist Agent: How I Caused a Serious Diplomatic Crisis and Why Being Concerned Is not Enough* (Agentterrorist: Wie ich eine schwere diplomatische Krise ausgelöst habe und warum es nicht reicht, besorgt zu sein).

## Journalist Deniz Yücel Speaks Out on Arrest in Turkey

ARREST, from page 1

Indeed, the case was in many ways unique. Yücel is a German citizen of Turkish descent and was working as a correspondent for the German paper *Die Welt* when he was arrested in February 2017. He was kept in prison for one year, 290 days of those in solitary confinement; he was released on February 16, 2018. The state attorney had just presented formal charges, accusing him of spreading propaganda for a terrorist organization (the Kurdish PKK) and of incitement to hatred. If convicted, he could be sentenced to 4-18 years. A date for the trial was set for June, but there was no condition set that he must stay in Turkey. He immediately left for Germany. He would not return for the trial.

In this sense, he was the first to be released illegally. His freedom came not as a result of an orderly trial and acquittal, but in response to an international campaign, #FreeDeniz, launched by Akrap, who grew up with Yücel near Frankfurt. The campaign organized demonstrations, car rallies, concerts, readings in local



# Community News

## USC Institute of Armenian Studies Appoints Dr. Shushan Karapetian as Deputy Director

LOS ANGELES – The University of Southern California (USC) Institute of Armenian Studies announced this spring that Dr. Shushan Karapetian is the new deputy director. The 15-year-old institute has grown to become one of USC's most visible and active academic centers.

The position of deputy director has been made possible by the Turpanjian Family Foundation, whose support to USC generally and Armenian Studies at USC in particular has been at the core of the Institute's growth.

Karapetian's interdisciplinary research and academic accomplishments will propel and expand the depth and scope of the Institute's research and academic programs.

"With Dr. Shushan Karapetian's joining the Institute, we will now be entering a new phase. She shares our commitment to do the work necessary to shape and positively impact global discourse on Armenia and the Diaspora. And she brings knowledge and experience that is solidly grounded in academia even as she puts great importance on the process of making academic



Dr. Shushan Karapetian

research and scholarship available and accessible," said Salpi Ghazarian, director of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies.

In her previous position at the University of California, Los Angeles, where she completed both her undergraduate and graduate education, Dr. Karapetian held a dual position as Associate Director of the National Heritage Language Resource Center and Lecturer of Armenian Studies in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures.

Karapetian's research focuses on the role of Armenian as a pluricentric heritage language, particularly on the juncture of language and identity in the transnational context of the Armenian people. Her dissertation, "How Do I Teach My Kids My Broken Armenian?: A Study of Eastern Armenian Heritage Language Speakers in Los Angeles," was awarded the Distinguished Dissertation Award by the Society for Armenian Studies in 2015.

Her postdoctoral research shifts to the situation of Western Armenian and its sole existence as a stateless diasporic language by examining the development of language ideologies that project its status as both threatened and valued. Her corresponding studies on Eastern and Western Armenian in their diasporic expression demonstrate how linguistic and (trans)national boundaries are constantly stretched, blurred, and tested, bringing to light disruptive spaces of contact and how those map on to constructs of belonging in the Armenian experience.

Most recently, she was the recipient of the Russ Campbell Young Scholar Award in Heritage Language Education at the Third International Heritage/Community Languages Conference hosted by the National Heritage Language Resource Center at UCLA.

see APPOINTMENT, page 8



Richard and Dottie Demirjian

## Hundreds Gather in Oakland to Honor Lifelong Athletic Visionary and Leader, Richard Demirjian

OAKLAND, Calif. – On Sunday, June 2, at St. Vartan Armenian Church, hundreds of former and current athletes gathered from near and far to honor Richard Demirjian for his decades of service. With Richard in attendance, the tribute luncheon was a great opportunity for former teammates and friends to reminisce about their fond memories all under the leadership and guidance of Demirjian.

By Kim Bardakian

For nearly six decades, Demirjian was the catalyst for participation throughout California by Armenian youth in athletic competition, including track and field, men's and women's basketball and volleyball, softball, tennis and soccer. The gathering provided an opportunity to show Richard how much he personally meant to everyone in the room and beyond.

In 1969, Demirjian, along with Ben Morjig, spearheaded the Western Armenian Athletic Association (WAAA) Games, which was first held in the San Francisco Bay Area and then in Fresno. The games ran for 46 years with thousands of talented Armenian athlete participants. Dermirjian was also instrumental in the St. Vartan Armenian Church athletic team's participation in various tournaments throughout the Western Diocese.



Jack Papazian speaks with master of ceremonies Steve Donikian looking on.

The luncheon began with a surprise – 85-year-old Ed Baker ran into the church hall as a torch bearer. Olympic-themed music played in the background as Baker ran a lap around all the guest tables replicating the Opening Ceremonies during the WAAA Games. Baker ran for St. Vartan Armenian Church for more than three decades, and in 1979 set the record for the Master's Mile, which still stands today.

Throughout the afternoon, many former athletes spoke with deep gratitude and appreciation for what Richard meant to them. Steven Donikian served as event emcee and provided great commentary as a former athlete himself.

The first speaker was Jack Papazian, who, along with his brother George, were instrumental in encouraging Demirjian to start a basketball program and competition back in the 1960's. Jack paid tribute to Richard and expressed how much of an impact he made on his life.

Other speakers included Judy Rejebian, who held the world record for the pentathlon at age 13; David Madajian spoke about his year's running track and reflecting on fond memories spending holidays with the Dermirjians; Van Der Mugrdechian, who traveled from Fresno with lots of photos and memorabilia in tow from past competitions; and Brian Babayans from Los Angeles, who let Richard know how much he impacted the lives of him and his brother, and how Richard was instrumental in getting them both involved in the Armenian community. Ken Thompson, a sharp-shooter on the basketball court, reminisced about his years of playing under Demirjian and lifelong friendships he created through competition.

A special video tribute was played from St. Vartan's own, Matt Vasgersian, who offered well wishes to Dermirjian. Matt is currently a commentator with

see DEMIRJIAN, page 7

## Stewart Goff Appointed New CEO of Armenian Women's Welfare Association, Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center

BOSTON – The Board of Directors of the Armenian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) and the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (ANRC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Stewart R. Goff, RN, MS as the new CEO of AWWA and ANRC. He assumed this position on May 8.

Goff brings his significant administrative experience and clinical background to leadership of these important non-profit institutions. Trained as a registered nurse and nursing home administrator, for the past 14 years Goff worked with Covenant Health as executive director of the 231-bed Mary Immaculate Nursing/Restorative Center in Lawrence and as administrator of Campion Health & Wellness, a 70-bed skilled nursing facility and rest home for infirm and senior members of the Society of Jesus. Both sites provide services across multiple levels of care. Previously he served as executive director of Goddard House in Jamaica Plain from 1999-2004.

Goff said, "I am so honored to be part of an organization with such history of service to a community which has come to mean so much to me on a personal level. I look forward to applying my many years of experience to the provision of eldercare services in the Armenian tradition." Goff is at home with the



Stewart Goff

Armenian community as his wife is of Armenian descent; her grandmother appears in a 1948 photo of AWWA members.

"The Board of Directors welcomes the exemplary skills and experience that Stewart brings to our projects. We are excited to have his leadership as we look forward to expanding our services," says ANRC/AWWA Board President Susan Deranian.

Founded in 1915, the AWWA supports the ANRC, the Elderly Project of the Hanganak Clinic, an NGO in Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh, and other initiatives that benefit the Armenian community in the greater Boston area and beyond. The ANRC is an 83-bed non-profit skilled nursing facility that offers the highest quality long-term care for elderly Armenian and non-Armenian residents as well as outstanding short-term care for residents of all ages and backgrounds who require rehabilitation before returning to their homes.





COMMUNITY NEWS

# Hundreds Gather to Honor Lifelong Athletic Visionary and Leader, Richard Demirjian

DEMIRJIAN, from page 6

ESPN's Sunday Night Baseball and the MLB Network and was a neighbor to Demirjian as a child.

Janet Demirjian Schmid, Richard's daughter, presented a poignant tribute to both her parents and provided heartwarming anecdotes about growing up in a household surrounded by Armenian athletics.

Richard, along with his wife Dottie, took in all the accolades happily and gracefully. The afternoon ended with remarks from Richard

Demirjian, who held back tears as he looked into the room and was filled with much pride, joy and gratitude.

Before the program concluded, Father Hovel Ohanyan, Parish Priest at St. Vartan Armenian Church, and Nazar Jindoian, Parish Council Chairman, presented Richard with a certificate announcing the newly established, Richard Demirjian Athletic Fund. All donations will go toward the athletic program at St. Vartan Church to ensure his legacy continues.

The members of the organizing committee included Kim Bardakian, Yeghia Apkarian, Janet Demirjian Schmid, Annette Boyd Kevranian, Steven Donikian and Hagop Hakimian. The St. Vartan Ladies Society prepared lunch for the guests.

Demirjian's vision to bring Armenian athletes together to compete was successful. However, he accomplished so much more. He connected Armenians from the Bay Area and beyond, cultivating lifelong friendships and memories that will last for generations, as witnessed in the overflowing hall on June 2 in Oakland.

Donations can be made out to St. Vartan Armenian Church with the memo: "Richard Demirjian Athletic Fund," and can be mailed to St. Vartan Church, 650 Spruce Street, Oakland, CA 94610.

Richard Demirjian was born on a farm outside Byron, Mich. to Sarkis and Kaden



Former St Vartan Church Men's Basketball team members pose with the Demirjians.



Judy Rejebian, a former athlete

Demirjian, along with his two brothers and sister. He served in the U.S. Army and was headquartered in Paris, France. After his time in the Army, he attended Wayne State University in Detroit, graduating in 1951 with a degree in Business Administration.

Upon graduation, he worked at his brother's shop, learning the precision, hard-chrome plating trade, which he eventually brought to California, where he opened a similar business in Oakland.

He had always known Dottie Vahratian from the Detroit Armenian community, where she was also a stand-out track star at Commerce High School. They married in 1952 and later moved to Oakland in 1960. Richard's love of sports has always been deeply embedded in him. He was a freestyle swimmer in high school and college and also ran the mile in track.

To see more photos of the event, visit <https://eagarcia photography.pixieset.com/richarddemirjiantribute/>

## Movses Abelian Named UN Under-Secretary-General

NEW YORK – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres this week announced the appointment of Movses Abelian of Armenia (as well as a national of Georgia), as the next Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management.

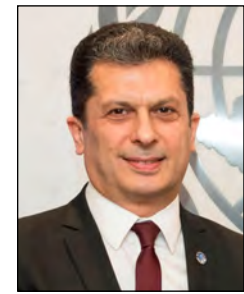
He will succeed Catherine Pollard of Guyana who has been appointed as the Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance.

Abelian is currently assistant secretary-general for General Assembly and Conference Management. Prior to assuming this position in 2016, he was director of the Security Council Affairs Division in the Department of Political Affairs.

He brings to the position over 25 years of experience in conference and management affairs, coupled with experience in peace and security issues, conflict resolution as well as extensive expertise leading, supporting and managing complex portfolios and intergovernmental processes in the United Nations system. Abelian also has extensive experience in management, including program planning and budget, having previously worked as Secretary of the Administrative and Budgetary Committee of the General Assembly (Fifth Committee) and the Committee on Program and Coordination at the United Nations.

Prior to joining the United Nations, Abelian was the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations (1998-2003) and Deputy Permanent Representative (1996 to 1998). Prior to joining the Foreign Service of Armenia in 1992, Abelian worked in academia as an Associate Professor at Yerevan State University.

Abelian was educated in Armenia, the Russian Federation and the United States. He is married and has two children.



Ambassador Movses Abelian



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## USC Institute of Armenian Studies Appoints Dr. Shushan Karapetian as Deputy Director

APPOINTMENT, from page 6

Karapetian's achievements extend beyond academic institutions and into communities. In the City of Glendale, she leads a new cutting-edge research partnership with the city's school district on their Dual Language Immersion Programs in seven languages. She has developed and delivered workshops for heritage language instructors in communities across the country.

She is currently serving on multiple committees both in the local Los Angeles and global diasporic Armenian communities aimed at reforming Armenian language instruction and promoting the use of the Armenian language. This includes collaborations with the Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on Armenian Language Revitalization initiatives.

"I am thrilled to share in and contribute to the pioneering vision and reach of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies. I look forward to partnering with the dynamic team at USC in expanding the Institute's research and scholarship initiatives, deepening the integration with entities both on and off campus, and initiating programming, all with the goal of understanding the trajectory of the Armenian experience and shaping current and future developments," the new deputy director said.

Karapetian is the newest addition to a growing Institute. Together with Salpi Ghazarian, the director, the Institute has two associate directors – Silva Sevlian and Syuzanna Petrosyan, both holding Master's degrees from USC Annenberg School of Communications and Journalism. Gegham Mughnetsyan has also recently been appointed Chitjian Researcher Archivist. Dr. Lilit Keshishyan and Sareen Habeshian are part time Research Associates. Asik Yekikan is the Institute's financial officer. Additionally, roughly a dozen undergraduate and graduate students are an integral part of the institute staff.

## California Moves to Divest from Turkey over Armenian Genocide Despite Pension Fund Objections

By Wes Venteicher

FRESNO (*Fresno Bee*) – California's two major public pension funds could be prohibited from investing in Turkey under a proposal the state Assembly passed despite opposition from the funds.

The legislation would require the funds to halt new investments and unload existing ones if the federal government imposes sanctions on the country over the systematic killing of about 1.5 million Armenians starting in 1915, known as the Armenian Genocide.

The \$360 billion California Public Employees' Retirement System opposes the bill on grounds that divesting from Turkey could diminish investment returns.

"Every dollar in investment returns that is forgone, or expended on transaction costs and fees, must be offset by employer and employee contributions," fund staff wrote in a memo. "If CalPERS were to divest from Turkish investment vehicles and the companies performed well, employers and employees would bear the investment loss and transaction costs to maintain divestment through increased contribution rates."

The fund typically opposes divestment bills, preferring to consult its own policy on sustainable investments rather than outside restraints.

CalPERS has divested from Sudan, Iran, manufacturers of guns that are illegal in California, thermal coal and certain companies that don't meet its environment, social and governance standards.

Since 2001, the divestments have cost the fund about \$2.5 billion, primarily driven by tobacco, although some divestments have saved the fund money, an analyst told the board in March.

The \$234 billion California State Teachers Retirement System also opposes the measure, in accordance with its policy against supporting legislation "that infringes on the investment authority of the board."

The bill passed the Assembly unanimously in a May 23 vote, with 17 members not voting, and proceeded to the Senate. Similar legislation passed both chambers last year but was vetoed by former Gov. Jerry Brown.

Adrin Nazarian, D-Los Angeles, authored the bill. In a statement, Nazarian said its passage in the Assembly sends a "clear message to Turkey to stop their deceitful campaign of genocide denial."

## OBITUARY

### Leon Redbone (Dickran Gobalian), Idiosyncratic Throwback Singer, Is Dead at 69

By Neil Genzlinger

NEW HOPE, Penn. (*New York Times*) – Leon Redbone, who burst onto the pop-music scene in the mid-1970s with a startlingly throwback singing style and a look to go with it, favoring songs from bygone eras drolly delivered, died on Thursday, May 30 in Bucks County, Pa. He was 69.

His family announced the death on his website. A specific cause of death was not given, but Redbone had retired from performing in 2015 because of ill health.

Toting an acoustic guitar, his face generally half-hidden by a Panama hat and dark glasses, Redbone channeled performers and songwrit-

The album earned Redbone two appearances on "Saturday Night Live" in 1976, during the show's first season. Fifteen more albums followed, most recently "Flying By" in 2014. Redbone also sang the theme songs for the television series "Mr. Belvedere" and "Harry and the Hendersons," was heard on various commercials, and provided the voice of an animated snowman in the 2003 movie "Elf."

His stage persona remained consistent for his entire career, as did his determination to reveal little about his personal life or background. The announcement of his death said he "crossed the delta for that beautiful shore at the age of 127."

He was actually born on August 26, 1949, in Cyprus. An authoritative article in the *Oxford American* this year said his parents had relocat-

"Leon interests me," he said. "I've heard he's anywhere from 25 to 60, I've been this close" – Dylan here held his hands a foot and a half apart – "and I can't tell. But you gotta see him. He does old Jimmie Rodgers, then turns around and does a Robert Johnson."

Redbone was by that time playing at larger halls and festivals and was being paired on bills with Tom Rush, John Prine, Wainwright and others.

"Mr. Redbone does amusing, funky old blues songs with a sly gentleness that almost amounts to parody," John Rockwell wrote in the *Times* in 1974, reviewing a performance at the Bottom Line in Manhattan, "but so lovingly and exactly that he can only invite affection."

His other albums included "Double Time" (1977), "No Regrets" (1988) and "Up a Lazy River" (1992).

Redbone, who lived in New Hope, is survived by his wife, Beryl Handler, who acted as his manager; two daughters, Blake and Ashley; and three grandchildren.

In a 1996 interview with the *Las Vegas Sun*, Redbone spoke of what he was trying to achieve with his performances and his eclectic song selections.

"It's painting something, it's you creating a mood," he said. "You can create a mood anywhere you want, with colors, noise, yelling and screaming. I myself prefer serenity, calm, peace and quiet."



Leon Redbone

ers from ragtime, Delta blues, Tin Pan Alley and more, material not generally heard by the rock generation. His music defied easy categorization; he was sometimes described as a jazz singer, other times as a folk or pop or blues artist. He sang in a deep, gravelly voice that combined singing and mumbling, but he also deployed a falsetto of sorts on occasion.

He began turning up on the coffeehouse circuit in Toronto in the 1960s and developed a cult following. He broke through to a larger audience in late 1975 with his first album, "On the Track," which included songs like *My Walking Stick*, by Irving Berlin, and *Lazybones*, by Hoagy Carmichael and Johnny Mercer. His sound was unique for the era, as the *New York Times* noted in a January 1976 article about the record and its producer, Joel Dorn: "Redbone, who in his nightclub appearances plays the role of a grinning, almost catatonic folkie, will undoubtedly confound many, but Dorn has certainly given him his due in a completely un gimmicked musical setting."

ed there from the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem after the new Israeli government seized their property. His father was an orphan refugee from the Armenian Genocide. Redbone's birth name, the article said, was Dickran Gobalian, though he always remained elusive about that and other details of his life.

"When he broke onto the scene in the early '70s, no one knew where the hell he came from, and he liked it that way," Loudon Wainwright III, who was paired with him on bills back then and again more recently, said by email. "Somebody once saw a Canadian passport, I think, but Redbone refused to be pinned down."

By the mid-1960s Redbone was living in Toronto, and, self-taught on the guitar, he began performing at folk clubs and coffeehouses. A pivotal moment came in 1972, when Bob Dylan noticed him at the Mariposa Folk Festival in Ontario and was so impressed that he talked of producing his first album. That didn't happen, but Dylan did commend Redbone to *Rolling Stone* in a 1974 interview.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

# Detroit TCA Hosts Two Astronomy Talks

DETROIT – The Detroit Chapter of the Tekeyan Cultural Association on May 24 sponsored two talks by local journalist Clifford Marko.

Marko spoke in the morning and later in the evening at the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) High School library. The morning talk was for students at the school during which he spoke about the solar system and space, whereas the evening talk was on black holes.

Marko was born in Detroit, and raised in the Birmingham-Bloomfield area, from Bloomfield Hills Lahser High School. He received his degree in journalism from Arizona State University, and later earned a law degree from the University of Miami. He is a practicing attorney admitted to the bar in Michigan and Washington DC.

He started his career in journalism and covered the US space program from Project Apollo and on from there. Later in life, Marko was a docent at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum where, among other things, he gave tours.

Marko holds a private pilot's license with an instrument rating.



Students listen to the lecture by Clifford Marko



Students at the Clifford Marko lecture



Diana Alexanian and Clifford Marko



Diana Alexanian



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## Zareh Sinanyan Leaves City Council To Work for Armenian government

SINANYAN, from page 1

In the role, he will be a liaison between Armenia and its communities around the world, according to Najarian, citing conversations he had with Sinanyan, who could not be reached for comment.

While council members have left their posts for higher positions in the past, it's the first time Najarian can recall someone leaving to work for a foreign government.

Glendale's four remaining council members can either appoint someone directly to Sinanyan's vacant seat or hold a special election, as outlined in the city's charter.

If council members decide to make an appointment, it must happen within 30 days. Otherwise, members must call for a special election, which will likely be held in November, Najarian said.

"There's pros and cons to each decision," said Najarian, adding that council members have not decided which route to take.

If someone is appointed, they will serve until

the next election in March 2020.

An appointed candidate cannot be barred from running in the upcoming election, Najarian said.

If an election is held, the winner will serve until 2022, or until what would have been the end of Sinanyan's term.

Sinanyan's replacement was due to be discussed at the next City Council meeting on June 11 (after Mirror-Spectator press time) city spokesman Dan Bell said.

Sinanyan was the second most senior member on the council, after Najarian. Sinanyan was reelected to a second term in 2017, and served as mayor twice during his time on the council.

Currently, Sinanyan is also the president of the Hollywood Burbank Airport Authority.

(To read his interview with Aram Arkun of the Mirror-Spectator visit <https://mirrorspectator.com/2018/08/23/mayor-zareh-sinanyan-working-to-improve-glendale-while-strengthening-ties-with-armenia/>)

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Tekeyan Comedy Club in New Jersey

ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS/CRESS-KILL N. J. - For the second year in a row, the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group's Comedy Club presented performances on May 18 and 19 at the TCA center in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey with seven actors. The subject material touched upon both daily human circumstances and woes particular to Armenian life. Harout Chatmajian prepared the comedy materials and the performance, while Talar Zokian ran the program. Harout Barsoumian organized the lights and music. Mrs. Marie Zokian was responsi-



A scene from the TCA Lobster Night and Comedy at Jack's Lobster Shack



The seven TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group comedians at the Tekeyan center



A scene from the comedy night at the Tekeyan center

ble for preparing the hall and the reception.

A third new performance was given on June 2 at Jack's Lobster Shack in Cresskill under the title Lobster Night and

Comedy directed by Harout Chatmajian. The owners of the restaurant are Armenians, Jack and Aline Tabibian, who are supportive of Tekeyan's activities.

## AAHPO President Receives Ellis Island Medal of Honor

NEW YORK - Dr. Lawrence V. Najarian, a physician and humanitarian, received the 2019 Ellis Island Medal of Honor this spring. He has been President of the Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) since 2006.

Awarded annually to a group of distinguished American citizens who exemplify a life dedicated to community service and extraordinary accomplishments in their field, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor ranks among the nation's most renowned awards. The Ellis Island Award of Honor recognizes the contribution of Americans of all backgrounds to strengthen the country and represent the diversity found in the immigrant experience of Ellis Island. The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives have officially recognized the Ellis Island Medals of Honor, and each year the recipients are listed in the Congressional Record.

Najarian is not the first member of the AAHPO family to receive this prestigious award. The following AAHPO board members, officers and honorees have received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in previous years for their work on behalf of AAHPO and other highly respected organizations:

- \* Harout Mekhjian, MD, (AAHPO Honoree)
- \* Raffy Hovanessian, MD (AAHPO Honoree)
- \* Vicki Shoghag Hovanessian (AAHPO Service Award)
- \* John Bilezikian, MD, PhD (AAHPO Honoree)
- \* John Nercessian, MD (AAHPO Founder, First President)
- \* Annette Choolfaian (deceased, AAHPO Honoree)
- \* Roger Ohanessian (AAHPO Honoree)
- \* Edgar Housepian, MD (deceased, AAHPO Honoree)
- \* Louise Simone (deceased, AAHPO Honoree)

\* Nazar Nazarian (AAHPO Honoree)

Sponsored by the Ellis Island Honors Society (EIHS), the organization's 34th awards ceremony medal presentation was held May 11, in the historic Great Hall, the original registry room and the gateway for 12 million immigrants to the US, and where guests celebrated the evening in front of the iconic view of the Statue of Liberty.

"Tonight, we celebrate an extraordinary group of Americans. They are educators, healers, scientists, artists, thinkers and leaders of industry - all of whom are free to follow their passions and dreams to benefit America and the world," said Nasser Kazeminy, chairman of the Ellis Island Honors Society.

Najarian accepted the Ellis Island Medal on behalf of his grandparents who came through Ellis Island in 1921. Like other survivors of the Armenian Diaspora, they were forever grateful for the opportunity to flourish in a new country and were honored to become American citizens, a fact that is gratefully acknowledged by every succeeding generation.

Commenting on his award, Najarian said, "I am humbled by this recognition. I am deeply grateful and accept this award on behalf of so many people. For my grandparents who came to this country through Ellis Island with the hope of opportunities creating a new life for their family and community. And, for the many volunteers I am privileged to work with who have committed themselves and use their talents to do so much for so many people. I truly believe when people work together, we can accomplish so much more than we would accomplish individually."



Dr. Lawrence V. Najarian with his medal





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Jorge Sampaio and Vartan Gregorian Honored by Refugees International

WASHINGTON – “At a time when bitterness and disaffection are on the rise, we have to come together to speak up against intolerance, xenophobia, and racism,” began Jorge Sampaio, former president of Portugal and a distinguished former trustee of Carnegie Corporation of New York. He was addressing some 500 guests who gathered on April 30 in Washington, DC, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Refugees International organization.

Sampaio and Vartan Gregorian, president of Carnegie Corporation of New York, were awarded the organization’s highest honor, the McCall-Pierpaoli Humanitarian Award, for their steadfast leadership in the international community and for their work to ensure funding for displaced Syrian students and scholars through the Global Platform for Syrian Students and through Carnegie Corporation of New York’s support.

“This year’s awardees have demonstrated incredible willingness to take on the most difficult challenges and push the international community to do better in pursuit of justice and human rights,” said Eric Schwartz, president of Refugees International.

As the founder and chairman of the Global Platform for Syrian Students, President Sampaio has managed the impossible task of gathering an emergency consortium of governments, regional and international organizations, donor agencies, foundations, universities, faith-based organizations, and various ethnic and cultural NGOs, along with the private sector and individuals. President Sampaio’s agenda has been and continues to be the rescue of as many students as possible, providing them with a home and the opportunity to be educated, so that they might serve as future resources for their societies.

“To stand up with the most vulnerable, with men, women, and young people around the world, and join efforts to live up to their aspirations for a life of dignity and respect, this is what Refugees International has been doing for

the last 40 years,” said Sampaio via a video recording addressed to guests at the gala. He concluded with an appeal: “Let’s all together step up our shared responsibility for fostering peaceful, just, and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence.”

The audience responded enthusiastically. Sampaio’s remarks were followed by a message from Eileen Shields-West, Refugees International board chair, explaining how she came to know and be impressed by the Global Platform: “President Sampaio offered how he envisioned a time when these students, armed and emboldened with their degrees, would return one day to Syria to become contributing members of their society. He practically moved us to tears with his passion for this cause and the value of scholarship in tearing down borders and building communities of people who value learning and scholarship.”

Sampaio launched the Global Platform with just 100 euros – and within six months the first group of 45 Syrian students arrived in Portugal to resume their studies, which had been disrupted by war, under an emergency scholarship program. Since 2015 Carnegie Corporation of New York has given three grants totaling \$1 million dollars to the initiative. In accepting the McCall-Pierpaoli Award on behalf of Sampaio and himself, Gregorian praised his fellow honoree for maintaining the ideals of European humanism and enlightenment, saying: “For me, President Sampaio embodies the conscience of Europe. We Americans should be grateful that there are still people in Europe who believe in enduring values that transcend cultures and civilizations, values that unite all of us. Such men and women believe that humanity is one; and that every fragment of humanity is God’s creation, deserving of respect and care.”

Gregorian made a point of emphasizing that President Sampaio is the real hero. He is the brainchild behind the Global Platform for which the two of them were being honored. “Giving money is easy, investing money is hard, and it was the vision of President Sampaio that led

this humanitarian campaign,” he added.

The McCall-Pierpaoli Humanitarian Award was also given to Louise Arbour, former special representative of the United Nations secretary-general for international migration, for her lifetime of work in the pursuit of justice and human rights. At the UN, Arbour led advocacy efforts on international migration, provided policy advice, and coordinated United Nations entities on migration issues. Her work on the Global Compact for Migration helped to estab-

humanitarian aid group in Puerto Rico, which provided critical services and unwavering support in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria; U.S. Representative Will Hurd of Texas, for his commitment to the resolution of challenging migration issues through civil discourse based on facts and not fear; and Mayor Wilmot Collins of Helena, Montana, for effectively championing the importance of the U.S. refugee resettlement program while reminding the public about the enormous positive contributions of refugees to



Carnegie Corporation of New York’s Vartan Gregorian (left) and his chief of staff, Jeanne D’Onofrio (right), with Refugees International board members Marianne Gimon D’Ansembourg and Matt Dillon

lish an important global framework to manage the migration crisis.

Refugees International does not accept any government or United Nations funding, ensuring the independence and credibility of the nonprofit’s work and allowing its advocacy to be both independent and fearless. The annual gala seeks to honor those who have made a commitment to meeting the needs of the displaced and, in particular, those who work to find solutions to the migration and refugee crises.

Others recognized included Taller Salud, a

our society.

Since 1979 Refugees International has advocated for lifesaving assistance and protection for displaced people who have been deeply affected by conflict, social upheavals, and natural disasters. For many years it has been the leading U.S. advocacy organization committed to voicing the struggles faced by the most vulnerable populations. In the past year, Refugees International’s work occurred in part on field missions to Bangladesh, Colombia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Turkey, Central African Republic, and other focus countries.

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# Arts & Living

## Evening of Laughs Raises \$20,000 for Armenian Cultural Center

HAVERHILL, Mass. — On Friday, May 10, the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe hosted a comedy night with nationally known comedians Lenny Clarke and Friends to support the Family Life and Culture Center at the church.

The new church and cultural center are the result of a merger between two local churches in the Merrimack Valley, Holy Cross Apostolic Church of Lawrence and St. Gregory's Apostolic Church of Haverhill, creating a new unified church named The Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe. Parishioners of both churches represent the unification of two Merrimack Valley church communities who have worked tirelessly over the past 20+ years to acquire land and construct a new Family Life & Cultural Center and Sanctuary.

Many community members had been seeking a non-traditional event that would appeal to family and friends who are not part of the community, and the committee thought laughter would be a great start. Over 250 people attended this event which was billed as "Just Laugh," so that people could come, have fun and laugh.

Lenny Clarke has also supported other Armenian organizations like the Knights of Vartan, to support local Armenian projects. His continued support really shows the commitment to helping people.

All three comedians are from Massachusetts. The night opened with



Comedian Lenny Clarke, fourth from right, with the organizers of the Hye Pointe comedy night

Clarke and friends intermingling with pre-show fans!

Johnny Pizzi, a comedian and master magician, was also the master of ceremonies and kicked off the event keeping everyone in stitches while also entertaining in between the sets. Kelly MacFarland entertained the crowd by sharing her life experiences in a unique and playful way. Johnny Pizzi followed with his comedic charm and magician skills. Lenny was the headliner and had the crowd rolling in the aisles!

Clarke's material and his perspective is very much old-school, while being delivered in the vein of the modern-day comics. Using his ability to relate to the day to day life while creating laughter for everyone! Lenny & his friends were also very respectful of the church environment they were speaking in, showing an understanding and respect for various cultures.

In addition to ticket sales and raffle items there was a silent auction which showcased Armenian and non-Armenian auction items for people to bid on!

For more information about the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe visit <https://www.hypeointearmenianchurch.org/>.



Dr. Naira Babayan

## Celebrating Komitas' 150th Anniversary In Washington

WASHINGTON — On Saturday, June 1, Dr. Naira Babayan and Vasily Popov presented a concert celebrating the legacy of one of the founders of Armenian music, Komitas, at the Mansion at Strathmore. The sold-out event included patrons of the Armenian-American community of the greater Washington, DC area, as well as other music enthusiasts.

Babayan, an accomplished concert pianist and professor at the Levine Music School, was joined by cellist, Popov on stage for a musical program with works by Komitas, Sayat-Nova, and Aram Khachaturian. Following the opening pieces, *Elegie* and *Kemancha* by Sayat-Nova, the audience was enlivened by sacred pieces of Komitas, as well as Aram Khachaturian's well-known compositions from "Gayane" ballet - *Uzundara*, *Lullaby* and *Sabre Dance*.

Active as a soloist, and chamber musician, Babayan has appeared in concert halls around the world. She has established an international reputation of a magnetic and passionate performer. She has performed in venues such as Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall in Yerevan, Armenia, State Conservatory Concert Hall, Ministry of Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and Chamber concert halls with the State Chamber Orchestra in Yerevan, Armenia. She was a guest performer of the Union of Armenia in Moscow, and she won the first prize at the Moscow Music Festival in 2005, performing a program by Rachmaninoff and Scriabin. Other performances include an invitation from the Concert Committee of Dubai at the Music Theatre Amadeus and Royal Concert Hall of the American University Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates as well as performances at the San-Lazzaro Hall of Mirrors in Venice, Italy, Armenian communities in San Diego and Los Angeles, and others.

Naira was awarded a full scholarship to the Tchaikovsky Music School for talented students in Yerevan, Armenia. She holds her Master's of Arts Degree in Piano Performance from the Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory, and a second Masters of Arts from Gnessin Music Academy in Moscow, Russia, where she studied under Professor Gambaryan. Naira earned her Doctorate degree from the International Academy of Science and Art in Yerevan, Armenia.

Babayan is considered among many composers and musicologists to be the most famous living interpreter of piano performances of Armenian folkloric and classical repertoire. Her mentors were Edward Mirzoyan and Konstantin Orbelian.

see KOMITAS, page 16

## BOOKS

### *Proverbs and Expressions* by Susan Kadian Gopigian Captures Diasporan Experience

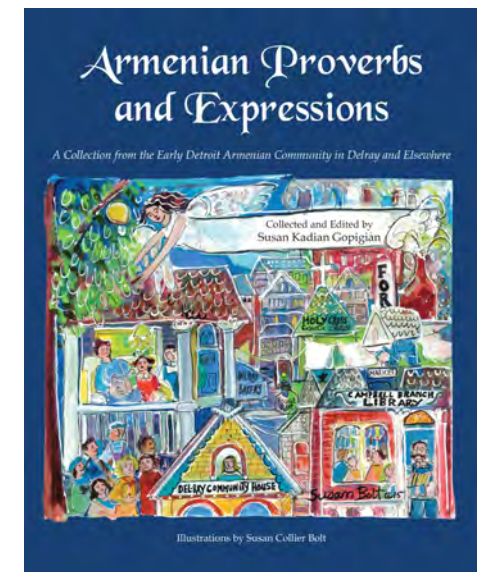
By Mitch Kehetian

DETROIT — Susan Kadian Gopigian was born and raised in Delray, a sprawling "neighborhood" of European immigrants with a large Armenian community. It was the new home for Armenians who survived the Armenian Genocide and the forced marches through Der Zor.

When asked what motivated her to dedicating a lifetime at writing and collecting an anthology of Armenian folklore and culture published this year in a 207-page hardcover masterpiece accurately titled *Armenian Proverbs and Expressions* smiled and answered, "my love for being an Armenian."

And encouraged with the love of her late husband, Archie Gopigian, who supported her lifetime at fulfilling a project that came to life in Delray.

Kadian Gopigian spent 60 years collecting the Armenian proverbs starting in her early childhood and continued as a student at the University of Michigan and Wayne State



University. Many of the proverbs were heard on the porches of Cottrell, Harrington, Gould and Solvay streets. It was no easy project, but expressed the folklore history of Armenia and it was a child's wish.

Why would a Detroit public school teacher dedicate nearly a lifetime to a project that grew from its roots in Delray?

Kadian Gopigian's answer needs to be shared with every Armenian from Delray to early Armenian neighborhoods in Fresno, Boston, Chicago, Racine, Granite City, Cleveland, Worcester, Watertown and New York. What unfolded in Delray, Kadian Gopigian etched into her gift to future generations in tracing their family history from the ancestral homeland to the New World.

In words which pertain to every living Armenian across North America, a teary-eyed Kadian Gopigian said "I'm haunted by the experiences of my family members who lived through this and those who perished as victims of the 1915 genocide. We the children and grandchildren are their voices that though buried in the desert sand of Der Zor Desert. . . It's as if their soundless voices rise up and remind me never to forget."

Kadian Gopigian warmly said that "my love for Armenian folklore stems from my exposure to those immigrants."

She also describes how West Jefferson was the hub of Delray — like Main Street USA. And Armenians toiled at Ford's Rouge Plant, GM's Ternstedt-Fleetwood plants, and Solvay Process

see BOOKS, page 15



# Syrian Restaurants In Armenia

## A Pinch of Home, a Taste of Exile

By Ugur Ümit Üngör

### Yerevan: From Culinary Desert to Oasis

The first time I visited Yerevan was for the fieldwork for my Ph.D. research in the summer of 2006, when I took the tantalizingly slow Soviet night train from Tbilisi. Back then, the choice of restaurants was so limited that I distinctly remember going to bed some nights with a bag of soggy Russian crackers. Fortunately, those days are over, and nowadays, Yerevan must be considered a culinary destination, for it boasts a very wide range of cuisines: Russian, Iranian, Lebanese, French, Georgian, Caucasian, Italian, Iraqi, Mexican, American, Chinese, Japanese, etc. Once, I even spotted a tiny Indian mom-and-pop curry house on Komitas Avenue. Indeed, this time around, as I came to stay in Yerevan for a writing retreat of two months, I was ready to let the city surprise me.

Due to the Syrian conflict, the latest addition to Yerevan cuisine is Syrian food, especially the rich cuisine of Aleppo. The number of Syrian restaurants has grown so much, that in downtown Yerevan, one is really never more than two blocks away from a very decent plate of *hummus* and *shawarma*. Syrian cuisine is not new to Armenia though:

Hayastantsi.

### A Disclaimer

But how good is Syrian food really in Armenia? With all this new gastronomic buzz in town, I decided to spend my time not only writing my next book, but also reviewing the new Syrian restaurants. Now, I need to offer a disclaimer: this is not an exhaustive list of every single place that offers Syrian-Armenian dishes. Nor does it properly tackle two distinct categories that are slightly special, but for which the Syrian connoisseur will rightly forgive me: Syrian fast-food snackbars, and the unmistakably Lebanese places. For example, **Adzoukh**, **Tumanyan Shaurma**, and **Abu Hagop Sandwich** are examples of the first category: they offer delicious, folksy snacks in fresh Arabic bread in a no-frills environment, just like in the streets of Damascus.

The second are places that explicitly present themselves as Lebanese, such as **Beirut**, **Lebanon Tavern**, or **Chez Hratch**. A good example is **Bourj Hammoud**, named after the historically Armenian neighbourhood in Beirut. It might have the best *kibbeh nayye* in the city, lush and velvety, although the lights in the place are set a little too bright. Or **Taboulé**, apparently one of the earliest Lebanese restaurants in Yerevan, which serves simply great food, including – unsurprisingly – amazing *tabbouleh*. As a carnivore, I never thought that a simple chopped salad could be so tasty.

place in the South Caucasus offer me that I hadn't tasted yet? Well, was I wrong about that! The *lahmajoon* is hands down the best I have ever tasted in my life: crispy and crunchy, but generously topped with well-spiced minced meat – there's a great butcher shop next door, so that might have something to do with it. Another staple of the Aintab region is *ichli kofta*, which at Antep is cooked very correctly, but without the liberties that Syrians would take by adding allspice or cinnamon to the mince. The excellent meat dishes, including liver and heart kebab, and very reasonable prices make Antep one of Yerevan's top restaurants. Oh, and did I mention the unbelievable *baklava*?

### A Panorama of Syrian Restaurants

But let us now turn to the Syrian scene, and the below discussion is in alphabetical order for impartiality.

**Abu Hagop**: let us start with this ambitious restaurant, established in 1957 by Syrian repatriate Antranig, better known by Syrian custom as Abu Hagop. It has a good varied menu, serves *fattoush* with cute little serrated pieces of Arabic bread, and creamy chicken liver that is finger-licking good. The *tarator* chicken has got real pizzazz, stringy and smooth, and so is the well-presented *mutabbal*, which is thoroughly pureed. At Abu Hagop, the overall presentation is great, with white tablecloths, and generous portions, even if the dishes are a bit oily and a touch underseasoned. I lived next door to this restaurant, and noticed that it was either totally empty or totally full.

**Araks** is set in a typical Yerevan basement with generic office lights, a basic but good menu, and decent prices. The atmosphere is cozy, and a 50-something with a ponytail is enjoying himself in the corner, elevator music bubbling away in the background with a panoramic photo of Republic Square on the wall. Araks serves two types of bread (*lavash* and Arabic), the *mutabbal* is chunky and heavy on the olive oil, but good. The *sujukh* is garlicky and roasted well, the *fattoush* is faultless with

rich pomegranate juice, even if a bit too runny. But the key dish here is the *falafel*: it has not only a grainy texture, but also tastes like some of the best I have eaten in Yerevan. We are offered a free semolina pastry after the dinner; delicious, but needs a tea to go with it.

Derian is a veritable institution in Armenia with two restaurants in Yerevan, both with a wide selection of delicious foods on their menu. We order a very creamy *hummus* with minced meat, the *yalanji* is smooth and voluptuous, and the fried *kibbe* is cone-shaped and crunchy, with distinctly refreshing tones of allspice and pine nuts. The

*muhammara* is very solid, and the amazing *mutabbal* made from eggplants clearly charred on an open fire – illegal in most EU countries. We also try the *chi kofta*, which gives the right smooth sensation, like Turkish delight (can I say that?), although I did feel some grinding between my teeth from the bulgur... Anyway, all praise here is reserved for the well-seasoned kebabs: we dig into a most juicy set of skewers, and it is obvious that Derian grills with the sheep's tail fat. The *shish tawuk* was really something else, simply scrumptious alongside a tasty home-made *tan* (yoghurt drink). Critique? Well, they serve *lavash* bread instead of Arabic bread, but otherwise I can't consistently excel. When I mentioned Derian to a well-informed friend, he leaned over and whispered in my ear: "The one on Teryan Street is even

better, because there, it's 'mama' cooking..."

**Gaidz Lahmajun** is another institution in Yerevan, but for a different reason. Sure, the *ichli kofta* here is not as good as in other places, they were out of *samsak* both times when I visited, the *mutabbal* is very smoky and chunky but a bit runny, the *hummus* nicely thick but a touch heavy on the cumin. But hey, rule #1 in gastronomy is: when eating somewhere, order their speciality. Indeed, we're really here for the *lahmajun*, and rightly so. Gaidz serves them as crispy as a potato chip, flour dusting off it like snow, and bursting with flavour. Delicious. Gaidz is on top of the *lahmajun* game.

**Jano** is one of the few restaurants that is not situated in Kentron (much like **Haleb** restaurant on Komitas Avenue), and perhaps therefore is spacious, with comfortable tables and high ceilings. Jano offers basic grub, with some nice surprises such as the *sujukh* rolls, an excellent smoky, stringy, garlicky *mutabbal*, and good *muhammara* which had pepper paste in it, all in all a deeply sympathetic place with old photos of Aleppo on the wall. The waiter was pleasantly surprised to welcome an Arabic-speaking customer, and the UAE embassy seemed to be hosting an *iftaar* that evening. All in all, fairly pleasant, but the *lahmajun* and *shish tawouk* seems to be cooked in a toaster.

**Lagonid** on Nalbandyan has been in Yerevan for 20 years now, and offers a very rich menu with variations on staples like *hummus* or *mutabbal*, which, by the way, cannot be prepared any better than the absolutely perfect version I ate here. Then the *yalanji*, up to par, with hints of sumac coming through the taste of quality olive oil. The *ichli kofta* is legit and very filling, and the *shish tawouk* is by the book: charred, well-seasoned, rich, and chewy, with exactly the right garnishes on the side: toasted Arabic bread toasted with chopped parsley and onions, sprinkled with sumac. The Lebanese pop music adds to the great experience, so we ask for dessert. "We only have *kunafa*," the waitress tells us, to our delight, because it's exactly what we need now: a hot, sweet plate of that oozing goodness with a glass of tea on the side. Therefore, we were the more disappointed when we were brought a plate of *kadaif*. Really not the same thing.

**Maza**, located on Pushkin Street, has cosy ambience, and one of the places where I frequently saw Arabs dining. Sofas are set up along the walls as chairs, so you sink into them when you sit, which makes feel like a little boy sitting at the grown ups' dinner table. European sports channels on the muted TVs. The food then: the chicken is delicious and well-spiced, the *chi kofta* is great: spicy and the bulgur has been thoroughly kneaded into the tartar. The "Lebanese *hummus*" with parsley is very creamy, the chicken *tarator* is smooth with hints of tahini, and the *toshka* sandwich is exactly what I ate in Damascus in the old days. All in all, the flavors are good, the prices are affordable, but the dishes are not warm enough. Maza also specializes in sandwiches, including chicken heart and beef tongue – not easy to pull off. A very decent place.

**Yasmine** is a very well-kept, somewhat upscale place with nicely presented food. On the wall is a huge poster of the Aleppo Castle. A busload of elderly Dutch tourists are seated in the corner and get louder with each glass of Armenian wine. Yasmine also serves two types of bread with the starters, *lavash* and Arabic bread. The *ichli kofta* is fried to perfection: crunchy on the outside, and heart-warming on the inside. The *chi kofta* is very smooth and almost smearable on bread, difficult to distinguish in color and texture from the equally appetizing *muhammara*. The *hummus* is trufflike: a thick, pleasant paste with three cute chickpeas swimming in a mini-bath of olive oil. The eggplant salad gave off the right charred flavour and smell, the *batata harra* was cubed up a little small, but still excellent, and the *shish tawouk* was warm, spicy, and chewy in a good way. I'm not sure why *fattoush* needs feta cheese in it though. All in all lovely experience, with free clove tea on the house.

**Zatar** is an unassuming place near Republic Square, with thousands of social media followers, and waiters with impressive tattoos. The *lahmajun* here was flavorful but not as crispy as elsewhere because they are folded into two. The

continued on next page



waves of Middle Eastern, including Syrian, Armenians had already arrived from 1946 on as part of the Soviet policy of "repatriation." Locals mocked their food as *akhparakan* dishes, a little too Arabian for the Soviet palates. But the food that they brought were fundamentally Western Armenian dishes that in Aleppo had melted into a unique blend of Anatolian and Syrian cuisine. Now that hybrid cuisine had come to Yerevan, it was changing the city for the better. It inserted the best of Syrian cuisine into Armenia, and the locals claim that it also brought middle-class affordability and flair to the Yerevan food scene. At the same time, this last migration wave also offered employment, and when my Arabic fell on deaf ears, I realized that lots of waiting staff in Syrian restaurants are

Another one is **Al-Mayass**, whose presentation is awesome, service professional, kebabs lovely, and ingredients fresh. But I caught a bit of a hard crust on the *ichli kofta*, and its allegedly "special" *hummus* and *mutabbal* are not more special than simply having added pomegranate seeds and molasses on the regular versions. Everything is forgiven with its *zaatar*, its crust so thin and crispy that you can hold a slice into the air as and it will stay as straight as a pencil.

A special honorable mention must be given for restaurants that are not strictly Syrian but broadly speaking Western Armenian, such as **Anteb**. On a Thursday evening, hungry, we walk into this simple but professionally-kept place with low expectations; after all, in the past years, I had spent lots of time doing research in the actual city of Antep, so what could this



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

from previous page

*fattoush* was decent, the *mutabbal* heavy on the tahini, which perfumed through heavily, but drizzled originally with red pepper flakes fried in butter. The *loshik* bread was lovely: hot and puffed up, like you want to slice it open sideways and take a warm nap in it. The *falafel* was a little too thick (almost round), which made it doughy and not as crispy as it should have been. The real tastes here are reserved for the *kibbeh*, which was with plain meat (no nuts or exotic spices) and had a deep meaty flavor to it – the most surprising dish here.

**Zeituna** is an upscale restaurant frequented a lot by *Bolsohay* families and friend groups, and serves a wonderful set of very well-prepared dishes in a street that has more Middle Eastern restaurants than many Middle Eastern cities. Well, where to start, really? I ordered a couple of dishes, but when the mouth-watering *kibbeh* showed up first, and I tasted it, I forgot about the rest and ordered another portion. They are truly delectable, both the large ones and the cute miniature versions. The *labneh* is as thick as toothpaste, the *fattoush* a true harmony of textures, colors, and flavors. The *yalanji* almost gave me a jaw cramp from the explosion of flavors. **Zeituna** also makes a good effort at diversifying its menu with a special version, but the *Kuftah Zeitunah* looks like a flat *falafel* and is not that special. Nevertheless, **Zeituna** deserves its self-attributed motto of “the home of food.”

#### Food and exile

Displacement, migration, and food are phenomena that exercise a deep influence on each other. Whether it's Italian restaurants in New York, Indian curry houses in London, or Cantonese dim sum in Vancouver, it is not merely plates of necessary calories that these cuisines present. Food is an intensely emotional experience. Therefore, I feel that it is the Hrabarag Metro area that truly epitomizes Syrian Armenia. This area is truly little Aleppo: its one-room shops offer the same spice mixes, bars of Aleppo soap, and *tahinov hats* as in the now defunct Aleppo *souq*. The old *kamancha* player fiddling his melancholic tunes, the bar-



ber shop owner sitting on his plastic chair chatting away in Arabic (and yes, also Turkish) with fellow Aleppines, and the very, very symbolic sight of a flock of teeny tiny sparrows struggling tooth and nail for a piece of bread on the ground.

Also situated in this area is **Spidag**, literally a hole-in-the-wall, snuggled in a corner of Hrabarag metro station, to which I feel compelled to give the “most authentic Syrian restaurant” award. Because few eateries in Armenia symbolize the Syrian experience better than this kiosk. **Spidag** specializes in sandwiches: exactly the right type of buns, filled with exactly the right toppings, and toasted in exactly the right fashion. There is nothing more satisfying in this three-dimensional way than a beef *sujukh* or lamb tongue sandwich with typ-

ically Syrian *mukhallal* (pickles) stuffed in a long, warm, subway bun. The sensation of spicy and sour is mind-blowing and soul-warming at the same time. **Ustaad** Vahram prepares his sandwiches with a seriousness and care, full of muted passion for this simple but pleasing Syrian-Armenian soul food. I am dead serious in stating that **Spidag's** sandwiches gave me FOMO (for the non-millennials: ‘Fear Of Missing Out’) while I was eating them. The *sujukh* sandwich was definitely one of them: after taking only my first bite, I already wanted to order my next one. And I did, again and again.

#### So, Which One Is ‘the Best’?

Alright, let us do away with the current-day obsession with having “the best” of everything. What does this type of inflated use of superla-

tives even mean? Instead, I would like to dish out some pointers but also give some compliments to all of these restaurants.

First, I don't know who comes up with the idea of using frozen fries, but it's wrong on many levels. Armenia has good potatoes, so show the earth apple the respect it deserves: peel them or wash them thoroughly, slice them up, and double-fry them in an appropriate oil or duck fat. Some places even had the *batata harra* microwaved, with potato nuggets shriveled like a mushroom in the sun. Another venal sin I encountered here and there was microwaved *ichli kofta*, bottom burnt and filling dried. “Ya weelee!” they would exclaim in Syria: woe! To treat such a delicacy in this way is outright criminal; either put it on your menu and treat it properly, or don't serve it at all. Then, the *labneh* is good in most places, but often a touch on the sour side, which is not exactly how it should be. I'm not sure why this happens but it seems to be a systemic malfunction. Finally: pay your staff better. There are very credible rumors that the owners pocket the waiters' tips, and judging from some of their facial expressions, that might well be the case.

But there is a lot that all of these restaurants in Yerevan do a great job at. All of them are very good in preparing one particular dish, but none of them succeed in consistently maintaining top quality of all dishes, in an overall way. The *falafel* is best at Araks, kebab is best eaten at Derian and Lagomid, Antep dominates the *lahmajun* game, for *chi kofta* definitely hit Bourj Hammoud, and **Zeituna** is *kibbeh* heaven. However, the Syrian-Armenian restaurants unabashedly offer two amazing dishes that are borderline illegal in the European Union: *chi kofta* or *kibbeh nayyeh* with meat, and the charring of eggplants on an open fire. The former wouldn't pass food security regulations (instead we are stuck with the dull and palate-numbing *Çigköftem*), and the latter would be met with a veto from your friendly local fire department. Try the *chi kofta* and *mutabbal* in any Yerevan restaurant and tell me with a straight face that you're going back to eating the grout in Europe again. Not me.

# Recipe Corner

## Guest Recipe



by Christine Vartanian Datian

### Baked Spinach and Eggs (Havgitov Spanach)

Contributed by Akaby Yaylaian

#### INGREDIENTS

3 boxes frozen chopped spinach, drained  
4 large eggs, well beaten  
2 large onions, finely minced  
1 stick melted butter (reserve 2 tablespoons)  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
Black pepper and cayenne pepper to taste

#### PREPARATION

Melt butter in large frying pan and sauté onions until soft. Add spinach, salt and

Pepper, and toss.

Cook together for 5-8 minutes, stirring constantly.

Remove from heat. Add 1/2 of beaten eggs. Put this into a well buttered pan (9" round cake pan).

Pour remainder of beaten eggs evenly over top. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of reserved melted butter over top.

Bake at 375 degrees for 15-20 minutes until eggs are cooked.

Serves 4-6.



<http://hguywilliams.net/images/Recipes/EBooks/Adventures%20in%20Armenian%20Cooking.pdf>

### Susan Kadian Gopigian Captures Diasporan Experience

BOOKS, from page 13

and Zug Island in raising their families. In her opening prologue on the Delray community, she informs readers that the old Village of Delray was annexed to Detroit in 1905 after being named Delray. In 1930 the southwest section of Detroit boasted a population of 23,000 residents according to the federal census. In 2016 it was down to 2,763.

In addition to the hundreds of Armenian proverbs and expressions, Kadian Gopigian seeped into her masterpiece some folklore and oral Armenian history. It has been said proverbs are part of a people's social glue.

The top quality book also features pictorial scenes of Delray landmarks from the Armenian Zavarian Hall, Delray Community Center to McMillan and Cary schools and a host of other scenes including Southwestern High School.

As you walk into Kadian Gopigian's lifetime you are also taken back to the days Delray was also home for newcomers from Poland, Hungary, Slovenia and Germany. She opens the Armenian Community Prologue with an inspiring Armenian proverb: “A tree stands taller when it knows its roots.” And followed by hundreds of proverbs from genocide survivors from Sepasta, Keghi, Erzeroom, Mush, Van, Bitlis, Kharpet, Malatya and Cilicia.

But Detroiters called the southwest portion “Delray Armenia . . . Like so many other ethnic conclaves.

Delray has become forgotten. In a few years, Delray will get a new chapter in history – the new Gordy Howe Detroit-Windsor International Bridge.

Hopefully a bronze marker will be attached to advise that its American side is anchored in old Delray – or as Susan Kadian Gopigian says her Armenian Delray.

(Mitch Kehetian is a retired editor of the *Macomb Daily* and former board trustee at Central Michigan University. The book is being distributed by Michigan State University Press with a Special Offer if ordered by December 31.)



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Celebrating Komitas' 150th Anniversary In Washington

KOMITAS, from page 7

Most recently Babayan has performed at the Steinway and Sons gallery on the famous Van Cliburn piano and she has two CD recordings of solo piano by Chopin, Debussy and Armenian composers. She has worked as a deputy director and chair of the Music Department of the Sebastian Cultural Center in Yerevan, Armenia. She also taught at the Trinity College of London in Dubai, UAE. Babayan is currently a full-time faculty member of the piano department at Levine Music in Washington.

Cellist Vasily Popov maintains an active concert schedule including appearances as a soloist, recitalist and member of chamber ensembles in the concert halls in Europe, Japan, Russia and U.S.A. His CD's are produced by Arte Nova Records, BMR, Excelsior, Intercout Music,

Madacy Records, and Melodia labels. Born in St. Petersburg, Russia into a musical family, Popov started playing the cello at the age of seven. His teachers included cellists Natalia Gutman, Valentin Elin, Konstantin Kucherov, Anatoly Nikitin, Walter Nothas and Daniil Shafran. His performance style was influenced by the chamber music collaborations and studies with pianists Tamara Fidler and Elisso Virsaladze and flutist Andras Adorjan.

Popov serves on the cello and chamber music faculties at Levine Music in Washington, D.C. where he is also an associate chair of Chamber Music and Artistic Director and conductor of the Levine Chamber Orchestras. He leads various workshops and master classes, adjudicates national and international competitions.

-Mariam Khaloyan



Dr. Naira Babayan and Vasily Popov perform.



Naira Babayan, 4th from the right, with Knights and Daughters of Vartan attending the concert.

## Armenian Museum Receives \$100,000 From Cummings Foundation

GRANT, from page 1

these histories through deeply personal objects that tell this important historical narrative.

The \$100k for 100 program supports nonprofits that are based in and primarily serve Middlesex, Essex, and Suffolk counties. Through this place-based initiative, Cummings Foundation aims to give back in the area where it owns commercial buildings, all of which are managed, at no cost to the Foundation, but its affiliate Cummings Properties. Founded in 1970 by Bill Cummings, the Woburn-based commercial real estate firm leases and manages 10 million square feet of space, the majority of which exclusively benefits the Foundation.

"By having such a local focus, we aim to make a meaningful positive difference in communities where our colleagues and leasing clients live and work," said Joel Swets, Cummings Foundation's executive director. "We

are most grateful for the nonprofit organizations that assist and empower our neighbors, and we are proud to support their efforts."

This year's diverse group of grant recipients represent a variety of causes, including homelessness prevention, affordable housing, education, violence prevention, and food security. Most of the grants will be paid for over five years.

The complete list of 100 grant winners is available at [www.CummingsFoundation.org](http://www.CummingsFoundation.org).

Cummings Foundation announced an additional \$15 million in early May through its Sustaining Grants program. Through these awards, 50 local nonprofits will receive ongoing funding of \$20,000 - \$50,000 for 10 years.

The Armenian Museum of America houses and preserves objects of art and culture collected from Armenian families and donors from around the world. Visit [www.armenianmuseum.org](http://www.armenianmuseum.org) to find out more about the museum.



Ruth Thomasian at St. John Gararabed Church

## Project Save Founder Ruth Thomasian Speaks at Genocide Commemorations in San Diego

SAN DIEGO, Calif. – Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives founder and president Ruth Thomasian visited San Diego to speak at two Armenian Genocide Commemoration events: "Armenians Through the Camera's Eye" at The Village Church in Rancho Santa Fe on Wednesday, April 24, and "Getting to Know Project SAVE" at the Joint Armenian Genocide Commemoration at St. John Garabed Armenian Apostolic Church, Sunday, April 28. Both events were very well attended.

From Project SAVE's collections of more than 45,000 photographs, Thomasian shared rare, vintage photographs dating from 1860 to the 1980's. These images were of people and places in various regions of the homeland and diaspora – along with the special family stories behind them. And just as importantly, Ruth shared many of the methods and clues that enable her to piece together the history of a photograph when all of the information is not available, leading the fascinated audiences to a greater understanding of how a social historian and archivist works.

During her visit to San Diego, she also met privately with individual families to receive donations of photos for the archives. (Interested families can contact Project SAVE to arrange donations of original photos (no digital): 617-923-4542 and [archives@projectsave.org](mailto:archives@projectsave.org). Project SAVE's staff will work directly with donors to gather as much information about their photos as possible.)

Thomasian's visit to San Diego was organized by Ani Zadikian Oney. She received support from the San Diego chapters of Triple X Fraternity, and Knights and Daughters of Vartan.




To have a look at many Project SAVE photos, visit [www.projectsave.org](http://www.projectsave.org).



From left, St. John Garabed Parish Council members Berge Minasyan and his wife Terry; past Parish Council member Gary Takesian, Ms. Ruth Thomasian, Guest Speaker; Scout Leader Nishan Gassian, Hayr Pakrad Berjekian, ACYO Chair Isabel Mkrdechian, Emcee Vahe Manoushagian, Student Choir Director Sona Bagdasaryan, Parish Council member Harry Krikorian

TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF GREATER BOSTON & ARMENIAN CULTURAL FOUNDATION PRESENT

## Armenian Book Signing

JOIN US FOR A FUN NIGHT FULL OF ARMENIAN LITERATURE,  
APPETIZERS & WINE AS WE INTRODUCE

**“THE TALES OF BEARDO”**

BY AUTHOR & POET

*Sarkis Gavlakian*

SATURDAY, JUNE 15<sup>TH</sup> 2019  
6:00 P.M. SHARP

ARMENIAN CULTURAL FOUNDATION  
441 MYSTIC STREET, ARLINGTON, MA 02474

RSVP TO (595) 801-3392  
OR  
Email: [tekeyanboston@gmail.com](mailto:tekeyanboston@gmail.com)

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE PROGRAM WILL BE IN ARMENIAN





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## CALENDAR

## ARIZONA

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

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

## MASSACHUSETTS

**JUNE 15 — Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater Boston and the Armenian Cultural Association** present an Armenian book singing. The Tales of Beardo by author and poet Sarkis Gavlakian. 6 p.m. Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic Street, Arlington. RSVP 559-801-3392. The program will be in Armenian.

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

**JUNE 17 — Gregory Hintlian Memorial Golf Tournament, sponsored by Holy Trinity Armenian Church** of Greater Boston at the Marlborough Country Club, Marlborough. Monday. 9:30 a.m., registration; 11 a.m., "Shot Gun." Join us for a day of golf — two player fee options: \$180 (includes hospitality, lunch, dinner, green & cart fees, prizes and gifts), and \$200 (also includes \$40 worth of raffle tickets) — or just for dinner and a social evening (\$50 per person). Limited to 128 players. Tournament and tee sponsorships available. RSVP deadline, June 10. To register or for further information, call the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632, log onto [www.htaac.org/calendar/event/653/](http://www.htaac.org/calendar/event/653/), or email [office@htaac.org](mailto:office@htaac.org).

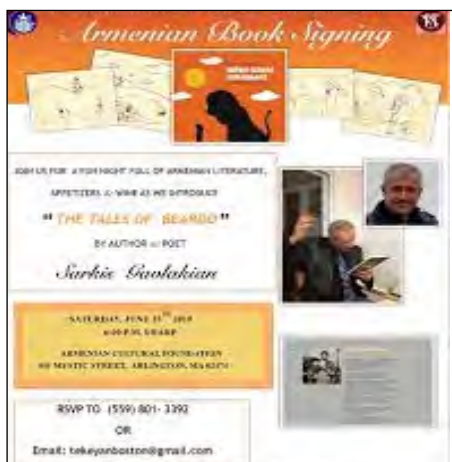
**JUNE 27 — Under a Strawberry Moon. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston.** Thursday at 8:30 p.m. Meet & Greet. Moonlit Labyrinth Walk. Luscious Chocolate Dipped Strawberries, hosted by vickilee's and refreshing Ice Teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports and the fabulous Berklee Jazz Trio. RSVP appreciated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

**JUNE 22 —Armenian Food Fair, 11 a.m. -7 p.m., St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church Ladies Guild.** Jaffarian Hall, 158 Main Street, No. Andover. Serving all day. Lamb Shish Kebab, Chicken & Losh Kebab, Kheyma, Vegetarian plates. Pastry, Boregs, Choreg, Khadaif, Paklava, Gift Table, Country Kitchen, White Elephant, 50/50 Raffles and much more.... Take out available. Call the Church @ 978-685-5038 Ann @978-521-2245 or Sossy @ 978-256-2538

**JUNE 27 — Reading of "Zabel in Exile."** 6 pm reception followed by 7 pm reading in the Armenian Museum of America Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor. Reading of a new play "Zabel in Exile" based on the life and writings of early 20th century Armenian writer and political activist Zabel Yessayan. The play, written by R. N. Sandberg and directed by Megan Sandberg-Zakian, will feature six actors live in the Museum's newly renovated Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor. Tickets are free, email or call to reserve a seat (Email or call to reserve a free seat: [info@armenianmuseum.org](mailto:info@armenianmuseum.org), 617.926.2562 ext. 101). Co-sponsored by the Armenian Museum of America, Armenian International Women's Association, and National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, also supported by Project SAVE.

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

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



**The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater Boston and the Armenian Cultural Association will present a book signing of Tales of Beardo by author and poet Sarkis Gavlakian, at 6 p.m. at the Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington, Mass. To RSVP, call 559-801-3392. The program will be in Armenian.**

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

**AUGUST 6 — Book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian editor of her father's memoir** Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier In the Ottoman Turkish Army, 7 p.m. Falmouth Public Library, Herman Foundation Meeting Room, 300 Main Street, Falmouth. Book sale/signing following the presentation. For information: Sue Henken (508) 457-2555 ext. 7 or [www.falmouthpubliclibrary.org](http://www.falmouthpubliclibrary.org)

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

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

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

**SEPTEMBER 18 — Celebrating Contributions of Our Nation's Immigrants – Gala Benefit for the Endowed Fund for Care of Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway** Honoring Dr. Noubar Afeyan, Leader & Philanthropist Recognizing Organizations Serving Immigrants & Refugees InterContinental Hotel Boston. Advance Reservations only. For information, [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

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

**OCTOBER 3 — Cigar Night sponsored by Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston,** 6 p.m., Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Save the date; details to follow. For further information, contact the Church Office, 617.354.0632.

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

**NOVEMBER 1,2 — NAASR Grand Opening and Gala.** Friday, November 1 – Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting, NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, at NAASR's new world headquarters, 395 Concord Avenue, Belmont, MA. Saturday, November 2 – NAASR 65th Anniversary Gala, at the Royal Sonesta Hotel, Cambridge. 6 pm Reception, 7 pm Dinner and Program. Honoree Dr. Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York; Master of Ceremonies David Ignatius, columnist for the Washington Post and novelist; Featuring renowned soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian, accompanied by the Borromeo String Quartet, performing a program of songs by Komitas. Further details to follow.

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

**DECEMBER 6 and 7 — Friday and Saturday, Trinity Christmas Bazaar, Friday, 12 noon-9 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.;** Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. For further information, contact the Church Office, 617.354.0632.

**DECEMBER 15 — Christmas Holiday Concert – Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra, Church Sanctuary,** Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA. Save the date; details to follow. For further information, call the Church Office, 617.354.0632, or email [office@htaac.org](mailto:office@htaac.org).

## MICHIGAN

**NOVEMBER 16 — The Knights of Vartan, Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge #6 and the Daughters of Vartan,** Zabelle Otyag #12 will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Knights of Vartan & the 70th anniversary of the Daughters of Vartan. St. Mary's Cultural Hall. 18100 Merriman Rd, Livonia. This is a fundraiser Dinner/Kef Dance to celebrate Knights and Daughters as well as a chance for future members to observe how our community puts our heritage on display. All proceeds to fund renovation project of school 106, located in Armenia.

## NEW JERSEY

**JUNE 23 — Summer Picnic, Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to ??? St. Stepanos Armenian Apostolic Church,** 1184 Ocean Avenue, Long Branch. Chicken, Lamb Kebab, Dolma Dinners. Armenian Cuisine featuring Cheese Beoreg Pastries, Paklava and more. Armenian Music and Children's Games.

**OCTOBER 25 — Banquet Honoring Dr. Taner Akcam** Abajian Hall St. Leon complex Fair Lawn, NJ Sponsored by Knights & Daughters of Vartan- Under the Auspices of His Grace Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate. For Reservations please call Sona Manuelian 551-427-8763. \$125 p.p. early reservations recommended.

## PENNSYLVANIA

**JULY 21 — Special viewing of the award-winning "The Stateless Diplomat," a film about Diana Apar,** a 19th century Armenian writer living in Japan who became the de facto ambassador of a lost nation. Historical documentary done by her great-granddaughter Mimi Malayan. 2-4.30 p.m., at the Phillips Mill Theater, a mile outside of New Hope, Penn.

## RHODE ISLAND

**JUNE 23 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church (Providence) will present the first in a series of talks, "Meet with Armenian Doctors,"** on Sunday, June 23, at 12 noon, in Hanoian Hall of the church complex. ( 70 Jefferson St., Providence, RI ). Dr. Stephen S. Kasparian, obstetrician-gynecologist will speak and take questions. Admission is free and open to the public.



## COMMENTARY

# Pashinyan Faces Traps In and Out of Armenia

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Spending a few weeks in Armenia gives one the benefit of access to the ongoing processes that generate the news. But ironically, that news is not always true.

In Armenia, one is caught in the jungle of politics where news outlets chase fake news and where polemicists take over the role of commentators and one is at a loss to find a sober, impartial voice which would provide objective information and rational commentary.

After returning from Armenia, time and distance have filtered all the facts afforded me to have a better perspective on the politics that have gripped the country.

The Velvet Revolution has not run its course yet. It is to everyone's advantage to consolidate the gains of that revolution. There is no returning to the past, yet moving forward has become a tremendous challenge for the young administration. Forces in and out of Armenia are trying to push back the achievements of the revolution.

Just last week, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's candidate lost his bid to become mayor of the city of Abovyan. When asked about this defeat, the prime minister answered: "We brought the revolution to allow people to have a choice. Thus, the revolution won." Of course, some members of the ancient regime would have liked to interpret that single defeat as a sign of dwindling influence of the current administration.

It is hard to see how Prime Minister Pashinyan will navigate through domestic and foreign obstacles to achieve the goals of the revolution.

At this time, several trends are developing. In the first place, the solid leadership of the revolution is splintering as it happens in all revolutions; the resignation of Artak Zeynalyan as the head of the judiciary was an unpleasant surprise. Similarly, a cloud hanging over the head of another powerful member, former head of the State Oversight Service of Armenia Davit Sanasaryan, is another blow.

On the other hand, Pashinyan had expeditiously assigned to ministerial and deputy ministerial positions people who had marched in the streets during the revolution and chanted slogans, without any vetting or even background checks. That expediency cost Pashinyan a high political price, especially in one case where Deputy Minister of Culture Nazeny Gharibyan fired celebrated opera director Constantine Orbelian. The embarrassment resulted in mass firings. Pashinyan announced the resignation of 27 deputy ministers, including Gharibyan, who had rendered the Orbelian case into a cause celebre.

To add insult to injury, there is currently a standoff between Yerevan and Stepanakert; Pashinyan has accused some unnamed forces in Karabakh of being engaged in treasonous activities. And these accusations are flying back and forth while the enemy is at the gate. The casualty from that fallout seems to be the resignation of a strongman and presidential candidate Vitaly Balasanyan who was serving as the secretary of National Council in Karabakh. It is purported that Pashinyan had sought that resignation.

Through all these diversion and distractions, the leaders of the old regime and their dependents are realigning for a comeback; new parties are emerging and new coalitions are being forged. There is a frenzy of buying media outlets by Kocharyan himself as well as the son-in-law of Serzh Sargsyan, Mikhail (Mishik) Minasyan, and of course all cannons are directed at the prime minister. What other sensitive subject can the opposition media find other than the Karabakh issue?

A sharp-tongued commentator, Levon Shirinyan, noted in a recent interview: "Who are those people who are blaming the prime minister for contemplating territorial concessions in Karabakh other than people who are vying to return to the past? They are the members of the Republican Party."

Coming out of the domestic quagmire, one has to concentrate on foreign policy challenges that Armenia faces today. President Vladimir Putin is restrained but his docile media is not. In one of the Putin-backed newspapers, Robert Kocharyan was charac-

terized as the "first political prisoner in the post-Soviet era."

At a recent gathering of Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) members in Kazakhstan an embarrassing situation was created for Pashinyan, who was supposed to be awarded a medal along the leaders of the other member countries, but was bypassed. Also, a meeting was expected to take place with President Putin, but it was called off.

No matter how hard Pashinyan tries to ingratiate himself to Putin, the latter stays demonstrably aloof.

Pashinyan already paid dearly for his rash decision for calling for the head of General Yuri Khachaturov, who was serving as the secretary general of the Collective Security Alliance.

As Armenia tries to improve its relations with the West, it is risking further aloofness from the Kremlin leadership.

Armenia is beholden to Russia, which is its largest trading partner. It does not have too much to sell to the US and the West, and all that Armenia can expect from the West is some investment in its economic infrastructure. The US's largess is not moving that fast in order not to indicate to Russia that Armenia is moving outside of the Kremlin's zone of influence. Pashinyan was planning to catch up with Putin and mend fences at the 19th international economic forum which took place in St. Petersburg last week. Pashinyan made a convincing presentation at the forum but his meeting with Putin was curt yet courteous. Putin immediately reminded Pashinyan that Russia was the primary business partner of Armenia and had invested \$2 billion. Pashinyan, in turn, stated that this year Armenia had a favorable growth figure of 7.1 percent through the year and that the April figures have been even higher – 9.2 percent. Pashinyan has ascribed this economic success to the process that Armenia cooperates with Russia through the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).



But the undertone of this courteous encounter was another trap by the Kremlin, as we read on Iragir.am. "Pashinyan had announced that he expects new ammunition from Russia. Not the Iskandar, because we have a lot of it, but also something not smaller. He said that they spoke about this during his meeting with President Vladimir Putin. Apparently, this statement was the reason why the spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova tried to push past Nikol Pashinyan's speech at the forum in St. Petersburg, turning the subject into mockery. Later, of course, Lavrov's spokesperson corrected the mistake but it was impossible to hide the 'plot.'"

Putin is a master politician. Pashinyan cannot win this game of cat and mouse with Putin.

As we can see in all domestic squabbling and international intrigues Pashinyan's task is cut out for him.

Armenia needs political focus and consolidation of powers to meet the challenges and place the country on the path to recovery.

No one should rejoice over Pashinyan's failure. Because that failure will turn out to be Armenia's failure.

# Mirror Spectator

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## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Institute of Turkish Studies To Close Down in 2020: Good Riddance

The Institute of Turkish Studies (ITS), a non-profit organization, was founded in 1983 with \$3 million donated by the Government of Turkey in Washington, D.C. ITS issued a press release on May 31, 2019 announcing that it will cease its operations on September 30, 2020.

This was a surprising announcement for two reasons:

1) The sum of \$3 million is a relatively small amount for the Turkish government having spent tens of millions of dollars to hire public relations and lobbying firms in the United States for many years. Returning the \$3 million or whatever is left of it to Turkey will not make a major difference in the country's financial condition. Turkey needs several hundred billion dollars to recover from its economic collapse.

2) Despite the boastful press release by the institute's leadership about its accomplishments, the withdrawal of the funds by the Turkish government implies that the Institute had failed to meet its propaganda goals. The Turkish government stopped funding ITS in 2015. To make matters worse, the Institute's leaders acknowledge in their press release that

they have not been successful in raising sufficient funds from outside sources to continue the Institute's operations. In recent years, the ITS received partial financial support from Georgetown University, Koç Holding, FIBA Holding, and Mr. and Mrs. Muhtar Kent (former Board chairman of the Coca-Cola Company), and other individual donors.

The ITS press release claims that its grants since 1983 have promoted Turkey and Turkish studies "in 45 US states plus the District of Columbia. Over 130 dissertation writing grants translated into 70-plus professorial positions at American institutions of higher education, and language and research awards helped prepare at least 235 others who took up teaching and research positions in the United States and elsewhere. Awards to several dozen developing scholars over the last five years will pay further dividends in the future. Nearly 80 US institutions established library/research collections relating to Turkey, or added significantly to existing resources, thanks to ITS funding, and 19 American universities received seed money to support the establishment of new, Turkey-related teaching positions."

In recent years, the ITS was located at the offices of the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service on the campus of Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. The Honorary Chairman of the Institute was the Turkish Ambassador in the US, confirming the close supervision of ITS grants by the Turkish government.

The Institute of Turkish Studies has been embroiled in a number of scandals, starting with Heath Lowry who was the founder and executive director of the Institute from 1983 to 1993. Lowry was instrumental in preparing and publishing full-page ads in the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Times* on May 19, 1985, signed by 69 "scholars" who denied the occurrence of the Armenian Genocide. Lowry subsequently became the Atatürk Professor

of Ottoman & Modern Turkish Studies at Princeton University, funded by a \$750,000 Turkish government grant.

I was the first target of a legal confrontation with the Turkish Institute, after I wrote an editorial in 1985 in the *California Courier* listing the names of the US scholars and the amount of money they had each received from the Turkish Institute. Interestingly, many of these scholars were the same ones who were given grants by the Turkish Institute. I received a letter from the attorneys of ITS stating that they will sue me for libel unless I published a lengthy retraction which I refused to do. My attorneys informed the Turkish Institute lawyers that their allegation of libel had no merit and informed them that we will file a counter lawsuit. In response, the ITS dropped its threatened lawsuit.

Then in 1995, an article titled "Professional Ethics and the Denial of Armenian Genocide," was published in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* exposing a letter sent to Prof. Robert Jay Lifton, drafted by ITS Executive Director Heath Lowry in 1990 on behalf of the Turkish Ambassador Nuzhet Kandemir, denying the facts of the Armenian Genocide. Lowry's draft letter in the name Ambassador was inadvertently sent to Prof. Lifton, causing a major academic scandal.

In 2006, American Prof. Donald Quataert resigned from the chairmanship of ITS Board after refusing to obey the Turkish Ambassador's orders that Turkey would revoke the ITS funding unless Professor Quataert retracted a scholarly book review in which he had written "what happened to the Armenians readily satisfies the U.N. definition of genocide." Several other ITS Board members resigned shortly in protest.

With the announced closing of the Institute of Turkish Studies, there will be one less outlet for Turkish propaganda in the United States distorting the tragic truths of the Armenian Genocide.

# Think Autocracy Is 'Impossible' Here? Look at Turkey

By Ece Temelkuran

"No, that can't happen here."

How well I remember Americans saying this three years ago, when Donald Trump rode down the Trump Tower escalator and landed in the midst of US history with a resounding thud. I tried to explain to my American friends that what had happened to us in Turkey was just as possible in their

what Turkey has been through, multiply Trump's political skills by at least 100 and then imagine having him in power for almost 17 years. Picture the *Post* being owned by the family of Trump's son-in-law. Oh, sorry, I forgot – it's impossible.)

These painful years started with a movement of real people, creating automatic polarization and excluding anyone who didn't support the movement by labeling them the cor-

IT TOOK THE PEOPLE OF TURKEY SOME TIME TO REALIZE THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SPEAK WITH POPULIST SPIN DOCTORS — NOT BECAUSE THEY HAVE BRILLIANT DEBATING SKILLS BUT BECAUSE THEY USE A CERTAIN SCHIZOPHRENIC LOGIC THAT PARALYZES HUMAN REASON.

own country. Conventional political tools, I told them, wouldn't be enough to stop this new type of political insanity.

So here we are. Now even highly respected observers are considering a possibility they had once dismissed: "What if Trump doesn't leave the White House even if he loses the election?" Well, maybe now it's time to realize that we're living in the age of the impossible and that we're all in this together.

In the local elections in Turkey in March, the opposition won in several big cities despite President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's infamously oppressive regime. (To have an idea

rupt elite. As the political debate grew increasingly confused, Erdogan and his circle became respected political actors increasingly more effective in using their political power.

What came next was a massive operation to disrupt rationality and distort language. It took the people of Turkey some time to realize that it is impossible to speak with populist spin doctors – not because they have brilliant debating skills but because they use a certain schizophrenic logic that paralyzes human reason. While this was going on, we perfected our political humor skills to calm our anxieties by making fun of the leader, just as the Americans have been doing for the past two and a half years.

Meanwhile the anger and fear generated by the leader's absurd statements invaded not only the political sphere but also our most intimate relations. That's when the most maddening part began: The minions of the leader started to multiply and haunt us in our daily lives. Imagine little Trumps proliferating in your workplace, saying things such as, "I don't believe in climate change," or "The world is flat" – and then finding yourself trying to explain why science matters without being condescending toward real people.

In the course of those 17 years, all the old political and judicial mechanisms were steadily taken apart by a ruthless government and party machine, leaving the people of Turkey to struggle to keep what is left of their democracy. The entire nation began studying our extremely complicated election law. Today you can ask any opposition member in Turkey and even the least educated will be able to recite the election laws by heart. Losing democracy has reminded us all how much blood, sweat and tears are needed to rebuild it. Now we know that no abstract institution, no legal investigation and certainly no call for shame can bring down right-wing populism once it seizes power.

It should be clear by now that something that was considered impossible in the United States or Turkey 17 years ago is happening now, and it is happening in the exact same way. It's time to acknowledge that this is a global political and moral phenomenon that should also be dealt with on a global basis. If Steve Bannon is smart enough to organize right-wing populist leaders in Europe, and if these leaders are in touch, then the people of the world should be talking to each other, too, creating a global conversation and a network of solidarity. There's no time for national arrogance – of the kind that has caused three years of Brexit insanity in Britain, or that prompted students in the Netherlands to report their teachers to a populist-party hotline for their leftist views.

Nor do we have the luxury of feeling appalled, of being shocked, of becoming paralyzed with anger. We have to see through the noisy insanity and figure out how this political malady works – with patterns strikingly similar in each country regardless of the maturity of democracy, the strength of state institutions or the stamina of conventional political parties. This is the biggest global crisis of representative democracy in recent memory, and right-wing populism will exploit the current vacuum until the power opposing it becomes strong enough to resist.

So let's get to work! We've got to come together and start joining forces before it's too late.



(Ece Temelkuran is a Turkish journalist and writer. She is the author, most recently, of *How to Lose a Country: The 7 Steps from Democracy to Dictatorship*. This commentary originally appeared in the *Washington Post* on June 10.)





# 'Three Armenian Manuscripts from Toscana' Exhibition Has Opened at Matenadaran

YEREVAN – President Armen Sarkissian participated on June 11 at the opening of the “Three Armenian Manuscripts from Toscana” exhibition at the Foundation of the Mesrop Mashtots Scientific and Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, also known as the Matenadaran.

Three out of the 14 Armenian manuscripts preserved at the Laurentian Library in Florence, Italy – the 13th century Priesthood Book from the Cilician Armenia, the 14th Century Psalms and the Book of Commons are on display for the visitors of the Matenadaran until the end of this year.

The interactive format allows viewers to observe the digital pages of the manuscripts.

Present at the opening of the exhibition were also President of the Italian National Research Council Massimo Inguscio, director for Innovations and Technological Issues at IMB Fabrizio Renzi, and Ambassador of Italy in Armenia Vincenzo del Monaco.

Opening the exhibition, Director of Matenadaran Vahan Ter-Ghevondyan assessed it as a unique event, as this is the first time that the Matenadaran is hosting ancient treasures housed elsewhere.

The President of the Italian National Research Council Massimo Inguscio underscored that this exhibition was a result of the reciprocal visits of the Presidents of Armenia and Italy Armen Sarkissian and Sergio Mattarella and the undertaking to develop the bilateral cultural ties. “We have come here from Dilijan, from the Summit of Minds where we spoke about the power of artificial intelligence, he said. “But this small exhibition, I believe, proves how deep natural intelligence can be. This exhibition proves that relations formed in the course of centuries do not wither. We have these manuscripts thanks to the priests who had reached Italy by the Silk Road. My message is the following: Italy, the



President Armen Sarkissian at the Matenadaran exhibit speaks with President of the Italian National Research Council Massimo Inguscio.



President Armen Sarkissian at the Matenadaran exhibit.

..Italian culture, and Italian technologies stand ready to develop the relations between the two countries.”

President Armen Sarkissian noted that the three Armenian manuscripts, which for centuries have been retained out of Armenia, have come back home. “But not only Armenia and the Matenadaran are their homes but also Italy and the magnificent Medici Library. These ancient manuscripts prove the friendly relations between Armenia and Italy have been forming for centuries,” he underscored.

Sarkissian hailed the great interest of Mattarella towards the Armenian culture and asked to convey to him the assurances of his highest consideration and readiness to deepen the cooperation and carry out joint works.

Sarkissian thanked del Monaco for his efforts in organizing the exhibition and expressed hope that other similar events would come soon. “I am proud to be here today and to open this exhibition. I hope that the next one will not be late and it doesn’t matter whether it will be here or in Rome because we are linked not only historically but also technologically.”

## US Grounds Turkish F-35 Pilots

By Lara Seligman

ISTANBUL (*Foreign Policy*) – The US military has grounded the Turkish pilots training on the F-35 fighter jet in the United States and cut off their access to the aircraft’s restricted information in anticipation of Turkey’s expulsion from the program over its plans to purchase a contentious Russian missile system.

The US Defense Department last week formally gave Turkey a deadline of July 31 to scrap the deal for Russia’s S-400 missile system before cutting the NATO ally out of the F-35 program altogether. At that point, if Ankara does not change course, all Turkish Air Force personnel involved in the program must leave the United States.

But for the six Turkish pilots at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona – two instructors and four students – their access to the new American-made jet has already been cut off. Last week, Brig. Gen. Todd Canterbury, the wing commander, made the decision to

immediately ground the pilots and restrict their access to the “vault,” which holds state secrets and classified materials, according to two US defense officials.

Canterbury’s main concern was that continuing to allow the Turkish pilots access to the F-35’s most sensitive data – instruction manuals, for example – after the July 31 deadline was imposed would provide them an opportunity to take classified information out of the secure space, one official said.

Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Mike Andrews confirmed that the Turkish pilots at Luke Air Force Base are no longer flying despite the July 31 deadline.

“Without a change in Turkish policy, we will continue to work closely with our Turkish ally on winding down their participation in the F-35 program,” he said.

The grounding was billed as an “operational pause” so that if Turkey decides to scrap the S-400 at the last minute, the pilots could resume their training.

But that outcome does not look likely. The grounding is the latest sign of increasingly strained ties between Washington and

Ankara amid ongoing tension over US support for the Kurds in the fight in Syria and Turkey’s growing friendship with Russia. The US government has signaled the spat over the S-400 could lead to sanctions, which experts say would have a dire effect on Turkey’s already fragile economy and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s popularity as he faces the prospect of his party losing the Istanbul mayoral election for a second time in a rerun later this month.

US officials say the S-400, which is slated to arrive in the country as soon as this month, poses a threat to the F-35 itself, and the integration of the two systems could provide Moscow insight into closely guarded US military secrets.

The decision to begin “unwinding” Turkey from the F-35 program was prompted in part by the discovery that Turkey had sent personnel to Russia to begin training on the S-400, said Andrew Winternitz, acting deputy assistant secretary of defense for Europe and NATO.

The Pentagon is in discussions with Turkey’s defense ministry over reimbursing

Ankara for the cost of the aircraft it has already bought, said Ellen Lord, the undersecretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment.

Defense Department officials stressed that they want to keep the F-35 versus S-400 dispute separate from broader cooperation on a range of issues with a key NATO ally. Turkey’s Incirlik Air Base is a critical launching point for the US-led campaign against terrorism in the Middle East, and it’s home to US nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, Turkey is also NATO’s southern flank against a threat from Russia.

However, experts note that Erdogan’s move to acquire the S-400 despite such strong opposition from Washington may signal the country’s broader pivot away from the trans-Atlantic alliance – toward Moscow.

“This sets Turkey on a dangerous trajectory, and it will make the Turkish military more prone to Russian meddling,” said Aykan Erdemir, a former member of the Turkish parliament and a senior fellow with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.