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NEWS IN BRIEF

Gulbenkian Foundation Reaches out to Aleppo Armenians

By Hagop Vartivarian

NEW YORK – At a recent Board of Directors meeting, in New York, Edward Gulbenkian Jr., the president of the Gullabi Gulbenkian Foundation, announced that the maternity hospital in Aleppo, which had been established by his family, will temporarily be used to help the Armenian seniors of Aleppo.

Gulbenkian also made the following announcement on October 19: "For decades, the Gullabi Gulbenkian Foundation, established in New York, in general has supported the educational needs of Syrian Armenians and especially the medical and health-related needs of the Aleppo Armenians. The Verjin Gulbenkian Maternity of Nor Kyugh turned out to be a blessing for the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, which kept its doors open until recently, when because of the civil unrest in Syria and the need of administrative reorganization, it was forced to shut down its doors temporarily. But especially, because of the ongoing fighting which now has reached to the Armenian sections of Aleppo, and to give a safe refuge to the residence of

see ALEPPO, page 4



The Verjin Gulbenkian Maternity Hospital

Catholicos Aram I: Der Zor Genocide Complex to Be Restored

ALEPPO (hetq) – It appears that damage to the Armenian Genocide Memorial and Church Complex in Der Zor, Syria, was the result of artillery clashes in the area and not from a targeted attack.

The memorial and church complex was damaged this week after sustaining heavy shelling.

Videos of the damage have been circulating on YouTube and other social media networks.

In a statement released this week by the Great House of Cilicia, Catholicos Aram I spoke to the Armenian Prelacy in Aleppo and was apprised as to the extent of the damage. Aram I said the complex was not looted.

He added that the complex would be fully restored as soon as the situation on the ground permits it.

The memorial was consecrated in 1991.

Sargisian Meets with Hollande in Paris

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – France is willing to deepen the cultural relations with Armenia French President François Hollande said after meeting with Armenian President Serge Sargisian in Élysée Palace this week.

"We also want to develop the level of economic cooperation" Hollande declared.

In his turn, Sargisian congratulated Hollande on behalf of the Armenian nation for winning the presidency. He also expressed his gratitude to Hollande and the French nation for their support regarding the Armenian Genocide.

Earlier, during a state dinner, Hollande reaffirmed his commitment to adopt the draft law criminalizing the denial of the Genocide in France.

Sargisian was in France for a three-day visit.

Iran Starts Renovation Of Armenian Church

TEHRAN (Armenpress) – Iran has started the reconstruction of the St. Hripsime Armenian Church after it was damaged by an earthquake this August in northern Iran, according to the Atrpatakan Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The church is located in the city of Tabriz and Archbishop Grigor Chifchian visited the reconstruction site. He said the Agency for Protection of Monuments of Iran will cover the expenses. According to archaeologists, the church was built in the place of another church, dating back to the third century.

Iran's Ministry of Culture included the church and the ruins of an old chapel, St. Anerevuyt, into a list of state-protected monuments and after the devastating earthquake, reconstruction efforts were immediately launched.

Letter of the NKR Foreign Minister Circulated in the UN

NEW YORK (Armenpress) – The letter of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic (NKR or Artsakh) Foreign Minister Karen Mirzoyan was circulated as a document of the General Assembly and Security Council in the United Nations Organization on November 12.

According to the letter, Azerbaijan has started a fraudulent campaign aimed at misleading the international community and justifying its policy of using force or

threat of force against the people of Artsakh.

The rehabilitation of the Stepanakert airport is the sovereign right of the NKR and pursues solely civilian and humanitarian objectives, including realization of such a basic human right as freedom of movement, he said in the letter. Freedom of movement for the civilian population of the NKR alongside with other human rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other core international instruments have already been continuously and

vehemently undermined by the ongoing Azerbaijani blockade, he said. This stance of Azerbaijan is a clear manifestation of its upright disregard for human rights and fundamental freedoms as a continuation of its policy of collective punishment of civilian population, reads the letter of the NKR foreign minister.

The threats of Azerbaijan to shoot down civil aircrafts in particular, violates the provisions of the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation and runs

see LETTER, page 3

Detroit Community Member Levon Nazoyan Dies

DETROIT – Levon Nazoyan, 76, died at home, on November 5.

He was the husband of Suzanne (nee Stevenson). He leaves his children, Maral (Keith) Edwards Jr., Steve Nazoyan and Silva Nazoyan; grandchildren Zachary and Zoie Edwards; and siblings Anahid, Armen, Varso and Ardo (Michelle). see NAZOYAN, page 6



Levon Nazoyan

Turkey Searches Armenian Aid Plane Bound for Syria

ANKARA (AFP) – An Armenian plane carrying humanitarian aid for Syria was made to land in Turkey on Thursday for what officials said was a "routine" search of its cargo.

The plane, which was carrying 15 tons of food, was ordered to land in the Erzurum airport in eastern Turkey where teams of police and troops with sniffer dogs conducted a search of the cargo.

The plane was allowed to take off for Syria after nothing suspect was found aboard, NTV television reported.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry said the landing was planned.

"It was a planned landing. The plane is carrying humanitarian cargo for Syrian Armenians in Aleppo," Armenian foreign ministry spokesman Tigran Balaian told AFP in Yerevan.

Diplomatic sources quoted by the Anatolia news agency said the crew had handed Turkey a list of the cargo ahead of the flight.

Turkish Transport Minister Binali

Yildirim called the landing "a routine practice in compliance with civil aviation rules being applied for the security of Syrian people" according to the Anatolia news agency.

It was the second time in a month that the Turkish authorities have ordered an Armenian plane heading for Syria to land for security checks.

On October 15, another Armenian plane carrying humanitarian aid to Syria's battered second city of Aleppo was forced to land at Erzurum airport but the plane was allowed to resume the journey after officials said no suspect cargo turned up during searches.

Last month, Turkish jets forced a Syrian plane flying from Russia to land at Ankara airport because of what it called "suspect cargo."

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the cargo contained military equipment for the Syrian Defense Ministry, but Russia said it was dual-purpose radar equipment which was not banned by international conventions.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Israeli Airline to Launch Tel Aviv-Yerevan Flights

TEL AVIV (ArmeniaNow) – Israeli Minister of Transportation Yisrael Katz has reportedly allowed Arkia, an Israeli airline, to operate Tel Aviv-Yerevan direct flights that so far have been carried out by Armenia's national air carrier, Armavia.

The Israeli news agency Zman.com quoted Katz as saying on Monday that Israel-Armenia flights will be operated within the framework of "air transport liberalization."

Armenia and Israel signed an agreement on air transportation in 1997. No Israeli airline has operated flights to Armenia since.

Armavia, which operated Yerevan-Tel Aviv flights from 2010, has encountered problems in the past year connected with its debts to the Yerevan airport. It is not immediately clear whether the decision by the Israeli side is connected with the Armenian company's being in dire financial straits.

Armavia reached a deal with Israeli Eshet Tours in February under which beginning in April the Israeli company began direct service between the two countries offering two flights per week, including the summer months.

ArmRosGazprom Is Largest Taxpayer

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – ArmRosGazprom CJSC was announced the largest taxpayer in Armenia in the three quarters of 2012, replenishing the state budget with over AMD 22.6 billion from January to September 2012, compared to 15.9 billion in the same period in 2011.

According to the data published by State Revenue Committee, Zangezur Copper and Molybdenum Combine CJSC, Alex Grig Company and K-Telecom CJSC (VivaCell-MTS) were included in the list of the top three taxpayers, having paid 16.4 billion drams, 13.5 billion drams and 13.3 billion drams, respectively.

Hayrikyan Pledges to Make Armenia 'Most Democratic Country'

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – If elected president of Armenia, National Self-Determination Union (NSU) leader Paruyr Hayrikyan said he will implement both internal and external reforms to Armenian government policies during a November 6 press conference.

"The priority plan is to turn Armenia into the most democratic country in the world," Hayrikyan stated, stressing the importance of promoting NKR self-determination and solving Armenia's declining population problem.

Uruguay Delegation Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The National Assembly of Armenia hosted a delegation headed by the President of the Chamber of Representatives of Uruguay Jorge Orrico. The delegation accepted the invitation of the Speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia Hovik Abrahamyan and visited Tsitsernakaberd to pay tribute to the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

Orrico emphasized that Uruguay was the first country to recognize the Armenian Genocide in 1965 and ratify a law regarding it. He stated: "There is even a museum of the Armenian Genocide in Uruguay and on April 24 each year it becomes a holy site for the commemoration of the innocent victims."

He said: "Uruguay has always been the defender of human rights. We are very anxious about the fact that the Armenian Genocide has not been recognized once [and] for all."

Orrico mentioned that Uruguay's economy has grown steadily exceeding the average level of growth even in the United States. Among more than 120 partner states, Orrico stressed that Armenia was an important partner.

Top Chess Champ Magnus Carlsen Delights in Armenia's Enthusiasm

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Norwegian Grand Master Magnus Carlsen, who is atop the World Chess Federation (FIDE) ranking, above Armenian Grand Master Levon Aronian, who is second, recently spoke about chess and Armenia.

Armenpress: What do you know about Armenia?

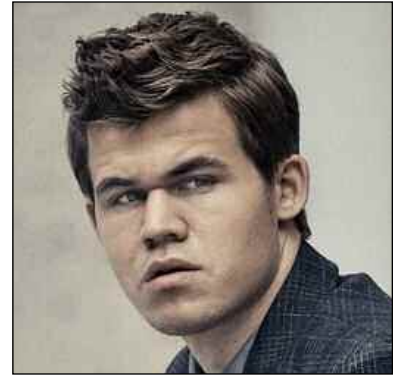
Magnus Carlsen: I know a bit about the country, even though I have not visited Armenia yet. I was amazed by the enthusiasm of the Armenian people when their team won the Chess Olympics this year. I saw a clip on Youtube, I think, of the reception the players got when they returned after their victory. I hope to visit Armenia soon, perhaps the country is ready to organize a strong tournament in the future? That would be good.

Armenpress: What do you think of Armenia's chess players and program?

Carlsen: Armenian chess is very strong. I know a lot of the players and I of course follow their games. I think the spirit among the players must be very



Levon Aronian



Magnus Carlsen

positive, since they do particularly well in team competitions.

Armenpress: What sort of opponent is Levon Aronian for you?

Carlsen: Levon is of course one of the toughest competitors, maybe the toughest. We have had many hard-fought battles with several decisive results. I think our games usually are very interesting as Levon is an incredibly creative player and a

tremendous fighter as well.

Armenpress: There was speculation that you are turning to Gary Kasparov for advice. What sort of adviser is he?

Carlsen: I had Kasparov as a coach for one year during 2009-2010. This was of course very useful, as he has tremendous experience and know-how, which I could benefit from. We have only had friendly contact since we stopped training together.

20 Years Later: Yerevan Native Returns to Put Down Roots and Make Wine

By Sona Avagyan

YEREVAN (Hetq) – After 20 years of living in the US, Varuzhan Mouradian has returned to Armenia for good.

A Yerevan native who traces his roots to Van, Mouradian has brought his wife and four children with him. He says it would be a mistake to remain in the States even though that country has given him much.

"Slowly, I have to put down roots here for good. After all, a person can only feel happier on his own soil. I am constantly surprised by people who are amazed that I have returned. Hopefully, what I have done will be regarded as natural and will be duplicated on a massive scale," says Mouradian, who was a CPA in Glendale.

He opened his own company and has left it in the hands of his partner.

Mouradian started making plans to return 10 years ago. In his recent years, the family would spend their summer vacations in Armenia so that the children could see Armenia for themselves and integrate into the local lifestyle.

Back in the US, Mouradian immersed himself in viticulture. He travelled to the wine centers of the US, France and Italy and took courses in wine making at University of California, Davis. Mouradian was thinking of buying land in Santa Barbara but changed his mind and decided to invest his money in Armenia. He's purchased land in the Sasounik village in Aragatzotn Marz.

"My aim is to change my profession and to start growing grapes. Many [people] can't understand how I could leave my warm and secure office in America, come here, and get involved in work that is quite demanding and labor intensive. My friends who knew about the project really pitied me when they saw the poor state of the land on which I would have to make my dream come true. However surprising it may sound, their troubled faces strengthened my backbone to confidently persevere," Mouradian recounts.

Wine grape varieties have been planted on six hectares of the 60 he purchased. His ultimate vision is to build a small wine taverna/ production plant.

The preliminary work is near completion. It will be a multi-functional site with a wine tasting hall, a wine cellar, so that visitors can see how the entire process from grape to wine unfolds. There'll be a parking lot, fountains and even horses. It will also serve as a club where jazz concerts and harvest festivals will be organized.

"It's not just a business but a way of life. At first, I approached it as a hobby but later I was confident enough to invest a good deal of love and work into it, knowing that in the end it would be successful. It's become the most important project in my life, something that my children can carry on."

"The first question they ask me in the diaspora is 'won't they create trouble for you in Armenia?' I tell them so far I've only been helped, not hindered. So what if one day I meet up with a troublemaker? Should I get disillusioned and leave Armenia? Of course, not. Each country has its own particular business climate. Just take the government bureaucracy in France for example. Should that make someone starting a business in France to declare that the country isn't a good business location?"

Mouradian says that wines produced in Armenia are looked down upon in Los Angeles. Most of the wine exported from Armenia is purchased by the Armenian market there. It's really not up to American standards. Armenia, he says, isn't even marked on the maps showing international wine making nations.

He says that things are slowly changing for the better in terms of crafting quality Armenian wines.

Tracing his family tree back to Van, Mouradian wants to study the grape varieties and wine making techniques the Vasbourakan region was once famous for under the Armenian rulers of the day.

Four years ago, when Mouradian served as president of the Vasbourakan Compatriotic Union in Los Angeles, he and several members travelled to Western Armenia, including Van. Next year, he wants to visit the villages of Van to see if any old grape varieties are still grown.

"Sadly, there isn't much available lit-

erature about wine making in Van, but being a grandson of Van I have set out to do more research. Let's see what happens," Mouradian says.

Mouradian says that there are many positive aspects of American life he'd like to see here in Armenia. He mentions the comfortable roads first of all. He'd also like to see more smiles on the faces of people in Armenia rather than scowls, and for people to be a bit more tolerant and good-natured towards others.

"I'm not a newcomer and am fully aware of everything here. If need be, I could count off more complaints and negative things than the complainers I met. Can you name a country where corruption and monopolies don't exist? They will not disappear on their own. We have to work together to remove them," he says.

While he accepts the important role the Armenian Apostolic Church plays in the diaspora, at the same time he can't understand why millions of dollars are being spent to build churches in foreign lands. Mouradian believes that the spiritual needs of Diaspora Armenians could be satisfied with more modest means and the vast savings directed towards Armenia. A million dollars could be invested in each of the border villages to build or renovate a school or small factory.

"The fact remains that in three or four generations Armenians in the diaspora will cease being Armenian. They're only kidding themselves when they talk about preserving Armenian identity in the diaspora. Tragically, the diaspora is already on the road of extinction," Mouradian says, noting the diaspora communities that already have assimilated.

When I commented that Armenians from the diaspora don't come to Armenia due to a lack of jobs, while at the same time local Armenians are leaving, Mouradian said those moving to the States won't find many offering them jobs right off the bat in these troubled economic times.

Ending on a positive note, Mouradian believes there are many in Los Angeles who want to relocate to Armenia. What's preventing them from making the move is the lack of social justice in Armenia and their own tight financial resources.



ARMENIA

AGBU Gala Concert Showcases Armenia's Top Talent During 87th General Assembly Celebrations

YEREVAN – On the eve of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) General Assembly, more than 1,300 guests filled Yerevan's Karen Demirchyan Sports and Concerts Complex. The date was Friday, October 19, and the occasion was the AGBU Gala Concert, one of the numerous events organized throughout the week in celebration of AGBU's 87th General Assembly.

The gala concert was attended by Armenian President Serge Sargsian, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and National Assembly Speaker Hovik Abrahamyan, among many other dignitaries, government officials, heads of diplomatic missions, leading academics and AGBU delegates. Before they took their seats in the concert hall, the crowd made their way through a special exhibit highlighting AGBU's 100-plus year history. Displayed throughout the venue's lobby were rare photos with text detailing the organization's ever-expanding presence both in Armenia and Karabagh and across the diaspora. They offered a sweeping overview of AGBU's exponential growth throughout the decades, profiles of the strong leaders who have brought the organization to prominence today and a glimpse into an even brighter future.



Armenian President Serge Sargsian, who was one of the many distinguished guests to attend the AGBU General Assembly Gala Concert, addresses the event's audience.

Creating a promising future that builds on AGBU's rich past was a central theme of the General Assembly, one that AGBU President Berge Setrakian emphasized at the Gala Concert. In his welcoming remarks, Setrakian stated, "We have gathered in this beautiful hall, filled with pride and patriotism, to listen



Youth from the AGBU Children's Centers share the stage with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra during the General Assembly Gala Concert in Yerevan.

to and be inspired by the performances of our most talented artists. During the past two days of meetings and discussions, we have reaffirmed AGBU's century-long mission of serving with faith and devotion the Armenian people, homeland and the Armenian Church. Proud of the prosperity and progress that we have witnessed, firm in our belief in joining our forces for the prosperity and strengthening of Armenia, Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin and Artsakh, ready to meet all the demands and challenges the future presents toward the 100th anniversary of the Genocide and the future. We dedicate this concert to AGBU's 87th General Assembly, which once again has united us in our homeland." Following Setrakian's words, both Sargsian and the catholicos addressed the audience before the stage was opened to the artists.

Throughout the rest of the evening, the guests enjoyed one dramatic performance after another by world renowned dancers, musicians and singers. The concert featured the Armenian State Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Eduard Topchjan, the AGBU

and Holy Echmiadzin Children's Center Choir, composer Ara Gevorgyan and his band, the Barekamutyun Dance Ensemble, singer Shushan Petrossian and soprano Irina Zakyian. Short video clips on AGBU's history

and present-day activities were also screened. To see footage from the event, watch this YouTube video: youtube.com/watch?v=Uwd900_SPV8&feature=youtu.be.



AGBU President Berge Setrakian reaffirms AGBU's commitment to strengthening Armenia-diasporas ties as he welcomes the audience to the General Assembly Gala Concert.

Letter of the NKR Foreign Minister Circulated in the UN

LETTER, from page 1

counter to the commitments undertaken in the framework of the negotiation process mediated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chair states, to reject any threat or use of force against civil aircraft, pursue the matter through diplomatic steps, and refrain from politicizing the issue, the letter suggested.

Such threats, along with the statements on the highest level declaring all Armenians of the world as enemy number one of Azerbaijan are a vivid example of the long-established anti-Armenian hysteria and xenophobia of the Azeri state policy, Mirzoyan said. The pardon and nationwide glorification of Ramil Safarov, the Azerbaijani officer who was convicted to life imprisonment in Hungary for perpetu-

ating a brutal hate crime, is the most shocking yet just another recent manifestation of this policy.

Mirzoyan called upon the UN Secretary General, the UN and its specialized agencies, as well as member states to assist in the rehabilitation of the Stepanakert airport in order to ensure that the people of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic are able to exercise their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The NKR Foreign Minister expressed strong belief that the rehabilitation of the Stepanakert airport will contribute to the realization of aims and objectives of the Convention on International Civil Aviation and may also serve as a confidence building measure contributing towards progress in the negotiation process under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.



AGBU delegates and dignitaries fill the hall of the Karen Demirchyan Sports and Concerts Complex for the AGBU General Assembly Gala Concert in Yerevan.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Film about Tjeknavorian Wins First Prize in Tehran Film Fest

TEHRAN (Armenpress) – In the sixth Tehran Documentary Film Festival, the movie “October 13, 1937,” about Armenian composer and conductor Loris Tjeknavorian won the first prize.

The movie has been directed by Iranian filmmaker Baktash Abtin.

Tjeknavorian in an interview stated that the film was interesting for the audience.

“I liked the film very much, as it was telling about me and my family, the Armenian people and the past of Armenia,” he said.

As to the choice of the title of the film the famous composer stated that it is the date of his birth.

Tjeknavorian gained international recognition. He has made a number of records, that received positive appreciation from the critics. He conducted a number of leading orchestras. Among them are London Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Halle Orchestra, the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, the American Symphony Orchestra in New York, the Tehran Symphony Orchestra, the Johannesburg Symphony Orchestra, the Haifa Symphony Orchestra, the Mexico Symphony Orchestra, the London Percussion Virtuosi, the Strasbourg Percussion Ensemble, English Chamber Orchestra, among others.

Tjeknavorian noted: “The new film also tells about my pilgrimage to Gumri, after the earthquake, as well as the first stage of independence of Armenia.”

The film will be shown at the Golden Apricot International Film Festival in Armenia.

Husband, Wife Win Gold Medal for Art

BEIRUT (*Daily Star*) – It is not rare for artists to marry. It is unusual for the lightning bolt of artistic success to strike twice. That is exactly what happened at the competition around the Creative Cities Collection, the fine arts exhibition staged around the London 2012 Olympics, which saw Lebanese artist Lena Kelekian and architect/artist Hagop Sulahian (her husband) both win gold medals for their respective work.

One of the several fine arts and cultural activities staged to run in parallel with the London Olympiad, the Creative Cities Collection gathered more than 500 international works, selected from some 15,000 entries.

This year's event, which ran August 1-7 at London's Barbican Center, was organized around the theme “The Great Wall of China and the River Thames Embrace the World.”

This was Sulahian's first Olympic-related gold medal. For Kelekian, however, it was the second. She also took gold and the Olympic Torch at Beijing for her painting “Planet Earth in the 21st Century.”

This makes Kelekian the only artist from the Arab world to win gold for her art at two consecutive Olympiads.

Metropolitan Dionysius Visits Armenian College

CALCUTTA, India – On November 10, pastor of Armenians in India and manager of the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy, Very Rev. Father Khoren Hovhannisyian, received Dr. Joseph Mar Dionysius, the Metropolitan of Diocese of Calcutta of Indian Orthodox Church, along with his entourage, in his office at Armenian College.

Hovhannisyian welcomed the guest and congratulated him and the members of Indian Orthodox Malankara Church.

Dionysius expressed his joy at the meeting and enquired about the structure and functioning of Armenian Church of India and Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy.

He invited Hovhannisyian to visit their spiritual headquarter in Kerala and showed his willingness to visit Armenia and in particular, Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin on a suitable occasion.

Sargisian Addresses French-Turkish Relations in Interview

PARIS (Armenpress) – President Serge Sargisian recently gave the following interview to *Le Figaro* during a recent visit to the French capital.

Le Figaro (LF): How would you describe Armenian-French relations?

Sargisian (SS): I qualify Armenian-French friendship with an attribute unique. France is the country that willingly gave shelter those who fled Armenian Genocide. Currently French Armenian community, dating back the days of Genocide has a pivotal role in uniting two countries. 2012 is a symbolic year for two countries. This year we are celebrating [the] 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations establishment. Those 20 years have been marked by a series of events. Our cultural and trade ties are developing actively. France is the second largest investor to Armenia. Namely enterprises of primary importance as Orange, Credit Agricole, Pernod Ricard, Alcatel and Carrefour are operating in our country.

LF: What will happen to the bill crim-

inalizing the denial of Armenian Genocide if recognized as unconstitutional?

SS: Policy perused by France over Armenian Genocide issue was not imposed by Armenia. France has publicly recognized Armenian Genocide. The denying of Genocide is the continuation of the crime. We honestly consider the nations reviewing other nation genocide history explicitly share the responsibility of committed crimes. It is difficult for me to predict the decision of the bill. I welcome President Olland's clear stance, which has been expressed both during his election campaign and after assuming the leadership of the country.

LF: There are suspicions that Armenia supports the Syrian regime applied by Bashar Assad. Is that true?

SS: We just cannot be indifferent towards the privations of Syrian nation. Syrian community which has been founded after the Armenian Genocide and is one of the “first Armenian centers” today is moving to other countries.

Civil war is a serious grief for every nation. There is not any ready solution for that. It is hard to say when the external interference can be helpful or vice versa. Actions which in other cases may operate, in Syria can bring to disastrous results, leaving irreversible changes for region. Armenian Republic will spare no effort for establishing peace and stability in that country.

LF: Did the Armenian-Azerbaijani Foreign Affairs ministers meeting held in Paris meet your expectations regarding the Nagorno Karabagh (NKR) conflict settlement process?

SS: This meeting started and ended with envisaging current negotiation format of Nagorno Karabagh conflict peaceful settlement. However this meeting is far from arising new hopes. Official Baku refuses to accept international mediators' suggestions, and considers negotiation over peaceful agreement can be started immediately without coordinating with fundamental principles. Yet the peace negotiation cannot be viable if not based on clear principles acceptable for all. Regardless of the stance of Baku, that honored with the title of “hero” an Azerbaijani officer committing an atrocious crime, axe murdering a sleeping Armenian officer in Europe, Armenia [does not care] to keep the peaceful settlement process.

LF: Are you concerned by rapprochement of ties between France and Turkey?

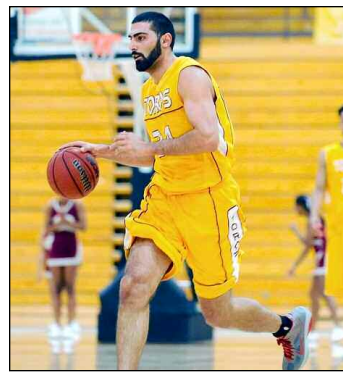
SS: Definitely not. Our policy is not based on damag[ing] Turkey. It is based on clear principles. We want the ties between France, Turkey and other European states be multiplied [so that] Turkey would be capable of accept[ing] European values thanks to those relations. French presidents have found enough strength in them to confront [Turkey] with its history. I welcome that agreement. I am going to ask President Olland to tell Turkish authorities how France criminalized the deportation of Jews and keeping them in camps. It can serve as a lesson to Turkish authorities.

Armenia National Basketball Team to Open Training Camp in Yerevan in 2013

YEREVAN (BallinEurope) – Armenia's nascent basketball federation announced the first official training camp for the newly-established men's national team, set for the 2013 off-season in Yerevan. It is the first step on the path to the 2014 FIBA Europe Division C Men's Basketball Championship, Team Armenia's first-ever appearance in the tournament.

Zareh Zargaryan, of California State at Dominguez Hills, said, “It's truly an honor to be able to play for Armenia. I have been dreaming of this since my childhood days.”

Team Armenia coach Carl Bardakian echoed the sentiments in saying that “Our coaching staff and players are fully aware of the significance and responsibility of competing under the tri-colored flag of Armenia.”



Zareh Zargaryan

Israel to Renew Spy Plane Deal with Turkey

TEL AVIV (*Haaretz*) – Elta, a subsidiary of Israel Aerospace Industries, has agreed to resume the production of the airborne warning and control systems for Turkish spy planes, the Turkish newspaper *Hurriyet* reported on Friday.

According to the report, this would allow the long-delayed transfer of four Boeing 737 AWACS planes, that were built for a total of \$1.6 billion, to be completed. More importantly, the decision, which would have to be approved by the Defense Ministry, may indicate that the government is softening its stance on defense exports to Turkey, the report said.

Turkey had ordered the 737-700 AWACS plane from Boeing in 2002, and Elta had committed to equip them with early warning systems for about \$100 million. Elta is the only producer of such systems for the Boeing 737. The four planes were to be delivered in 2006, but the systems integration took longer than expected, and only two were delivered before the deterioration in Turkish-Israeli relations began.

After the rift with Turkey erupted following the Israeli raid on the Gaza-bound Mavi Marmara in May 2010, the Defense Ministry forbade Israel's defense industries to export products to Turkey, going so far as to cancel contracts that had been signed with Turkey by Elbit and IAI.

However, because the AWACS contract involved Boeing, it was only suspended, not canceled. According to the *Hurriyet* report, the Elta decision followed Boeing's efforts to urge the Israeli company to complete the production of the systems for Turkey. The newspaper *Defense News*, reporting in March on the issue, quoted an Elta spokesman as saying that Boeing and

Elta were making efforts to complete delivery of the systems.

According to foreign reports, these early-warning systems are designed to detect aircraft, ships and vehicles at long ranges. The radars on the aircraft allow operators to distinguish between friendly and hostile aircraft from a distance of thousands of kilometers, and aid in managing air and ground operations.

Gulbenkian Foundation Reaches Out to Aleppo Armenians

ALEPPO, from page 1
the Armenian Old Age Home, we kept the doors of our maternity hospital [open.]”

“In this way, the Gullabi Gulbenkian Foundation commits to reach out to our elderly Aleppo Armenians and joins its efforts to the pan-Armenian efforts, which are coming from Armenia and from each corner of the Armenian Diaspora, to help our Syrian Armenian community.

It is our prayer that the interior political crisis end soon and the country once again finds its peace and the Syrian Armenians return to their exemplary glorious past, so that we in our turn, con-

tinue our mission by reopening the maternity hospital for our expecting mothers.”

Gulbenkian noted that henceforth, the director of the maternity hospital will be Hovhanes Hovhanessian, from Aleppo.

Gullabi Gulbenkian, being impacted by the loss of his daughter during childbirth, decided to establish the Verjin Gulbenkian Maternity Hospital in 1935 to help other Armenian families avoid similar suffering and loss. He also established two schools in Syria to meet the demands of the Armenian community there.



Community News

Fifty Marathons In 50 States for Goolkasian

By Tom Vartabedian

IPSWICH, Mass. — They call Michael Goolkasian the “marathon maniac” and it is easy to see why.

How else would one describe someone who has completed 164 marathons, including one in each of the 50 states? What else could one say about a guy who has competed in more than 350 races throughout a storied career dating back three-plus decades?

The feathers in his crown, no doubt, are his nine Iron Man Triathlons — the ultimate endurance challenge — consisting of a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride and finally a 26.2-mile marathon, raced in that order without a break.

Most Iron Man events are superhuman feats of brawn and have a strict time limit of 17 hours, starting at 7 a.m. and finishing at midnight. His final marathon state happened to be Idaho and it was an Iron Man.

In each of the nine times Goolkasian has answered this Iron Man call, he has gone the distance. The word “quit” is not in his dictionary. And don’t get the idea he is some sort of laggard out for a lark. Quite the contrary.

He placed first in the Montreal Iron Man competition and in Arizona’s Grand



Michael Goolkasian is the unequivocal marathon maniac.

Canyon Marathon. What is more, he has done four ultra-marathons of distances up to 100 kilometers.

A recent presentation at St. James Armenian Church Men’s Club acknowledged his efforts. His subject was most appropriate, “Health & Healthy Lifestyles,” where he has become a true ambassador for people of his kind.

He credits his success to a good work ethic, a solid core of training partners, proper nutrition and supplements.

“I experience more energy while training and notice quicker recovery time,” see MARATHON, page 7



Prof. Anna Ohanyan

Stonehill Prof. Anna Ohanyan Awarded Fulbright Fellowship to Armenia

YEREVAN and EASTON, Mass. — Anna Ohanyan, an assistant professor of political science at Stonehill College, is currently participating in a one-year Fulbright Fellowship to Armenia, teaching Contemporary Global Issues and International Organizations to Armenian university students. Her goal has not only been to impart knowledge to her students, but more importantly, to change the way they learn and give them the necessary skills to succeed in the world outside the classroom.

By Gabriella Gage

Mirror-Spectator Staff

Ohanyan explains, “My primary objective has been to help the local University in diversifying the teaching methodologies. Lecturing remains a dominant form of teaching in most public Universities in Armenia, and students have gotten accustomed to it [...]. This method simply prevents the development of soft skills among students, such as critical thinking, analytical skills, leadership and problem solving. Studies conducted in Armenia show that employers are looking precisely for these skills, which scores and scores of University graduates simply do not possess because they have not had an opportunity to practice and enhance these skills within the lecturing mode of teaching.”

Introducing her methodology to Armenian universities has had its own challenges, including rethinking how students prepare for class, exposing students to new ways of learning and finding interactive ways of handling materials. There are also students that still prefer the passive lecturing style they have grown accustomed to, as well as battles with the administration, overloaded classroom sizes and a shortage on material supplies. Ohanyan even met with discouragement from embassy officials who warned that students would likely not respond well to more demanding workloads and new teaching philosophies.

Despite these challenges, Ohanyan has seen hopeful results

among her students using her new methodology. “I have many students who [...] embraced the interactive, experiential teaching method that I utilize in my classes. It was thrilling to see how one student used a highlighter and color-coded the entire chapter, which may not be anything special in the US, but in Armenia that signaled a real hunger for learning. [...] I utilize debates as a form of experiential teaching. Usually students just would [continue] debating, even after the class was over!”

A native of Yerevan, Ohanyan graduated from Yerevan State University in Armenia, received a master’s degree in conflict resolution from the School of Social and Systemic Studies at Nova Southeastern University in Florida and earned her doctorate in political science from the Maxwell School of Citizenship see FULBRIGHT, page 8



Isabelle, Elise and Helen, Ohanyan’s daughters, in Armenia, with their grandfather, Suren Ohanyan

US Government Responds to Attorneys Calling On US to Issue Syria Visa Waivers

LOS ANGELES — The US Government has responded to the request of Four Prominent Armenian-American Lawyers to issue visa waivers for Syrian-Armenians.

Currently, there is no American diplomatic presence in Syria. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the Department of Homeland Security has assigned a case number to the request stating: “Due to the violent upheaval and deteriorating situation in (Syria) USCIS announced that eligible Syrian nationals in the United States may apply for Temporary Protected Status (TPS.)”

Citing the recent burning of St. Kevork Armenian Church in Aleppo and the kidnapping of Armenians on a Beirut-Aleppo bus, Vartkes Yeghiayan, former assistant director of ACTION/Peace Corps, and William Paparian, former mayor of Pasadena, replied to the letter from USCIS: “Through our letter of October 12, 2012, which was directed to State Secretary Hillary Clinton and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, we wished to express our deep concern for the fate of the beleaguered Christian citizens [of Syria]. The fighting there has engulfed large portions of the country and has made the already precarious position of Christians even more untenable. It is precisely because we feel the current legislation, including the extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Syrian nationals, is insufficient in addressing the deteriorating humanitarian situation that we turned to the United States government.”

“It is with deep regret that we conveyed our extreme displeasure with the response of the US Government to our request,” said Yeghiayan. After the initial announcement of the request for Visa Waivers for Syrian Armenians, countless friends and family of Syrian Armenians in the United States and elsewhere have expressed their support for the US government taking favorable action to allow Syrian Armenians to come to the United States. “We will continue to press the US Government to take immediate action to alleviate the suffering of Christians in Syria and will immediately advise the Syrian Armenian community and their family and friends of further developments,” said Paparian.

Milwaukee’s Armenian Community Celebrates Anniversary

By David Luhrssen

GREENFIELD, Wisc. — The members and friends of St. John the Baptist Armenian Church in suburban Milwaukee marked the parish’s 72nd anniversary on November 11. The diocesan vicar of the Armenian Church’s Eastern Diocese, Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian, celebrated liturgy that Sunday and offered a requiem for the godfathers and their wives of the parish. A banquet and program in the church’s cultural hall followed the conclusion of services.

Included in the program was a presentation by Chris Flieller, artistic director of Milwaukee’s In Tandem Theatre company. In Tandem will present Richard Kalinoski’s award-winning play on survivors of the Armenian Genocide, “A Beast on the Moon,” in March 2013. Flieller pointed out that the play is set in Milwaukee see ANNIVERSARY, page 7



OBITUARY

Ara Zerounian, Longtime Detroit-Area Violin Teacher

RIDGEFIELD, Conn. (*Detroit Free Press*) — The violin teachers who get all the glory are those at top conservatories blessed with gifted students and prodigies. But the unsung heroes of the trade are those who work with beginners, the teachers who hear more clunkers than cadenzas but can ignite a lifelong love for music — and sometimes inspire greatness.

There was never anyone better at this than Ara Zerounian, who died Monday, November 5, at 86 at home in Ridgefield, where he had relocated from Troy in May. Zerounian had a Midas touch with young string players, leaving a deep impression not only on music in Detroit but the broad sweep of classical music in America. A striking number of his former students became world-class musicians.

Zerounian, who taught for decades in the Detroit Public Schools, filled his afternoons and Saturdays with private teaching, imparting unimpeachable technical fundamentals and nurturing a passion for the joy of music. He wrapped it all together with a kindly uncle's repertoire of hugs, jokes and gold-star stickers.

"He was so patient and had such love for his students," said violinist Ida Kavafian, his stepdaughter, whose first teacher was Zerounian. "Between the patience, the solid technical command and his love for kids and music, he

gave students an incredible foundation."

Sisters Ida and Ani Kavafian (also a violinist) enjoy major careers as chamber musicians, soloists and teachers. But they are far from Zerounian's only star pupils. The honor roll also includes the incomparable violist Kim Kashkashian; former Minnesota Orchestra concertmaster Jorja Fleezanis (who now teaches at Indiana University); Cleveland Orchestra principal violist Robert Vernon; Metropolitan Opera Orchestra principal violist Michael Ouzounian and Utah Symphony concertmaster Ralph Matson.

Ida Kavafian said that Zerounian had been in declining health for the past year and died after a short illness. Zerounian had married the Kavafian sisters' mother, Peruz, in the late 1960s.

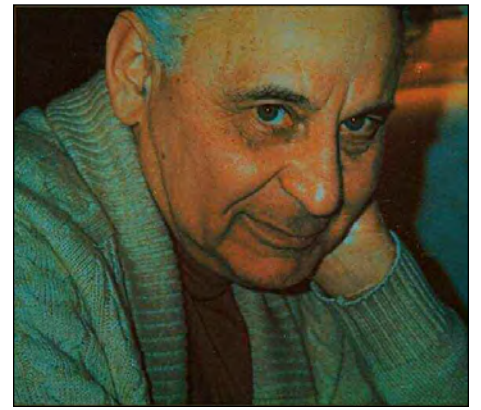
Born in Detroit, Zerounian began playing violin as a child and later switched to the viola. He was inspired to a career in music at Cass Tech by the school's legendary orchestra conductor Michael Bistrizky. After serving in the army in World War II, Zerounian attended Northwestern University on the GI Bill and earned a master's degree in music at the Eastman Conservatory.

He returned home to Detroit to start teaching in the public schools in 1952 at an annual salary of \$2,900. "It's a special responsibility

and a privilege to be in a position to introduce children to music," Zerounian told the Free Press in 2001. "They're so eager and enthusiastic. It's inspiring to see their reaction when they're able to do something. When a conductor leads a Mozart symphony, that's very gratifying, but I'm happy if they play *Mary Had a Little Lamb* in tune.

Zerounian also taught summers at the Interlochen Center for the Arts. After retiring from the public schools, he served as principal violist of the Warren Symphony from 1976-92 and the Pontiac-Oakland Symphony from 1979-1992. His wife, a violinist who died in 1996, was often concertmaster of these ensembles.

Zerounian is survived by his stepdaughters; a brother and a grandson. Services were at



Ara Zerounian

the Armenian Congregational Church, 26210 W. 12 Mile, Southfield. Arrangements were made by the Edward Korkoian Funeral Home, 836 North Main St., Royal Oak, Mich.

Armena Pearl Marderosian

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Armena Marderosian, wife of Ronald Grigor Suny and mother of Grikor Martiros Suni (1978-1980), Sevan Siranoush Suni and Anoush Tamar Suni, died at home on November 3 after struggling for seven and a half months with breast cancer. She was 63.

She was a renowned piano teacher, who for 40 years taught students and other teachers by the Suzuki method. She was a graduate of Oberlin College and a member of the International Suzuki Association. Her many



Armena Pearl Marderosian

articles appeared in piano teaching journals. Her crowning achievement was the foundation and direction of the Suni Project: Music Preservation, a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and publishing of the music and writings of the Armenian ethnomusicologist and composer, Grikor Mirzaian Suni (1876-1939), her husband's grandfather [www.suniproject.org].

She grew up in the loving family of Diran and

Vanouhi Mardirossian with her older sister, Arax, and brother, Ara. Born in Providence, RI, she moved with her family to the suburban Philadelphia town of Fairless Hills and graduated from Pennsbury High School in 1966.

As a teenager, she performed at the Philadelphia Academy of Music and auditioned at Carnegie Hall in New York. She entered the Oberlin Conservatory of Music to study piano but soon transferred to the college as her interests broadened to history, political science, literature and anthropology. But even after her graduation in 1970, she continued to study piano pedagogy and ultimately settled with whole-hearted conviction upon the Suzuki method to which she dedicated her entire life.

She married Oberlin professor of history, Ron Suny, on August 14, 1971, and they began a life together that featured family, travel and a deep intellectual companionship. She became strongly interested in nutrition and health, becoming first a vegetarian, then a vegan and finally a raw food vegan.

In the words of a friend, Marderosian was a "sovereign woman," who walked her own distinct path.

She is survived by her husband, Ronald Suny, the Charles Tilly Collegiate Professor of Social and Political History at the University of Michigan and Emeritus Professor of Political Science and History at the University of Chicago; her daughters, Sevan Suni, PhD in biology from Stanford University and currently the Darwin Fellow at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Anoush Suni, a doctoral student in anthropology at UCLA who received her master's degree at Sabanci University, Istanbul; her sister Arax Kendikian; and her brother, Ara Marderosian.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be sent to The Suni Project, 1723 Wells Street, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48104-3601. Commemorations of her life will be held in December in Ann Arbor and Philadelphia.

dren, Maral, Steve and Silva.

He was an entrepreneur who operated a dry-cleaning business for 30 years.

He enjoyed educating others about history, politics and religion.

Funeral services were held at St. John's Armenian Church, Southfield, on Thursday, November 8. Interment followed at Pine Lake Cemetery in West Bloomfield.

Memorial donations in his memory may be sent to St. John's Armenian Church, Angela Hospice or ALS of Michigan.

Arrangements were made by the Edward Korkoian Funeral Home.

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Levon Nazoyan Dies

NAZOYAN, from page 1

Nazoyan was born in Aleppo, Syria. He moved to Lebanon at age 2. In his early 20s he joined the Lebanese national dance group with his brother and sister, and toured the Middle East as well as Europe. He moved to Montreal, Canada in his early 30s, where he represented the Armenian dance group at the Olympics.

Eventually, he came to Detroit, where he met his future wife at a convention of the Tekeyan Cultural Association/ADL and he swept her off her feet. Together the couple raised three chil-

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Milwaukee Armenian Celebrate Anniversary

ANNIVERSARY, from page 5
during the 1920s and follows the travails of a young married couple, Aram and Seta Tomasian. "A Beast on the Moon" has been translated into many languages and, Flieller added, is currently playing on stages in Spain, Italy and Estonia.

The keynote speaker, St. John's parish priest, Rev. Nareg Keutelian, addressed several topics, among them the plight of Armenians in Syria and the destruction of the Genocide Memorial Complex at Der Zor, Syria. Keutelian also spoke of the importance of church as "a sacred space set aside for our encounter with God." Many Christians have lost touch with the sacredness of worship "when they abandoned traditions meant to remind us that we

are in God's presence. The loss of the sense of the sacred might be one reason many people are not eager for church attendance. When we realize church is a holy place, a place of encounter with God, one another and ourselves, worship becomes an uplifting

experience."

Odabashian concluded the program with memories of his connection to the Milwaukee Armenian community, including his presence as a seminarian at the conse-



Some of the altar servers with Fr. Nareg Keutelian, Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian and Fr. Sahag Kaishian

cration of St. John in 1986, and remarks on the local community as an extended family whose members include Armenians born in the US, the Soviet Union and the Middle East along with non-ethnic Armenians who have assumed leading roles.

Fifty Marathons in 50 States for Goolkasian

MARATHONER, from page 5

says the Ipswich resident, who relies on Natural Vitality products for his stamina. "Glory lasts longer than pain and you get through it, not to mention the beauty of each course you travel."

Must be a method to his mania, if you want to call it that. Goolkasian completed the Disney Marathon last January, then followed that up three months later by running the Boston Marathon for the 22nd time.

This feat might pale in comparison to another he accomplished. Goolkasian was among an elite class of 370 athletes who ran separate marathons back-to-back 3,000 miles apart on two different coasts. He completed Boston on Patriots Day. Eight days later, he was in California running the Big Sur Marathon in Carmel.

His best marathon time was two hours and 55 minutes in Burlington, Vt.

In his sights are marathons in South Africa, Asia and another in logistically the toughest and coldest continent, Antarctica. He also plans to do one in Iceland and another along the Great Wall of China.

A look at his stats gives one an idea about his tremendous love for and dedication to the sport. Goolkasian was recently inducted as a "Gold Maniac," that is, someone who has run 12 marathons in 12 states in one year.

The next level was an "Iridium Maniac," appropriately named after a very hard and resistant metal.

As he approaches 50, there seems to be no letup in his swagger, no bump in his road. The road less traveled turns into a personal roadmap for this Armenian-American dynamo, known throughout the circuit as a true bicentennial man.

As the Marathon Maniacs credo suggests: To qualify does not require specific times – just that you finish your races and have fun. Although Goolkasian's times are impressive, the real "victory" is enjoying the lifestyle.

"The glory days are over – the speed is gone," he admits. "Just being able to get out there and doing it is part of my life. It's all about the camaraderie – the people I can sit and enjoy a couple beers with after a race who have reached some pretty remarkable achievements."

Who is Michael Goolkasian? And how did he

become such a methodical running machine?

He grew up in nearby Methuen and attended Lawrence Central Catholic High School where he played hockey and now coaches. His parents belonged to the former Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church, which has since combined with St. Gregory the Illuminator Church in Haverhill to form Armenian Church at Hye Pointe.

He recalls attending Armenian School there and later taking language classes at St. James Church in Watertown. Hockey was his sport. His father's death forced him to abandon high school as a junior to help support his family.

He did not leave education for long however, as he enrolled at Northern Essex Community



Michael Goolkasian

College and from there, proceeded to Bentley College where he took up running.

"I was just an extra – a heavy kid looking for some direction," he remembered. "I gravitated toward running because it was flexible and I could do it anywhere at any time. It gave me the confidence to hit the road, slow or fast. My attitude was to keep going and I never stopped."

Goolkasian lettered in cross country at Bentley and ran for the Falcons as a sophomore, junior and senior while attending classes, working full-time and serving on the school's Newspaper Committee.

Goolkasian's biggest fans are his 98-year-old aunt Ann, and another aunt Germaine, along with his cousin Michelle. A godchild named Emily collects all his medals.

Goolkasian said his most memorable run was the Grand Canyon Marathon, where he toured the South Rim. He placed first in his age class. Up next will be the Montreal Marathon, another in Vermont City Marathon in Burlington, Vt., and then a 50-miler along the Stone Cat Trail held in his hometown of Ipswich.

"The Fifty States Marathon Club started a few years back," Goolkasian says. "Some guys have run 800 to 900 marathons. When you're in this group, you're just another weenie. People think I'm crazy but then you meet some of these other guys."

His weekly training regimen includes 11 miles swimming, 190 miles on the bike and 33 miles of roadwork. His favorite quote is but three words: "Livin' the dream."

"I've met many great people, including Bill Rodgers [winner of 22 marathons] and the Hoyts [wheelchair icons]," he confirms. "But some of the best people are the unsung heroes of road-running who are family men and work full-time jobs. They're my inspiration. I lost a good friend while training for the Iron Man in 2008 and think of him during every run."

Goolkasian's ultimate goal is in Istanbul where his grandfather was born. He is also looking forward to the Stockholm Marathon this year and another in Athens.

A year ago, he was in Haiti with a church youth group on yet another mission, building homes and working inside a clinic. Goolkasian is also a guidance coach for the Big Brother Association, a role equal in stature as endurance running.

While in Haiti, he ran every day in the heat and by week's end, was joined by nine Haitian boys leading the way.

"I have a deep respect for those staging races to benefit charities and communities," he notes. "Some of the most gratifying moments are at the end of a race when you see someone finish after everyone else is gone. My motto is simple. Never give up. You can always walk and get it done."

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Stonehill Prof. Anna Ohanyan Awarded Fulbright Fellowship to Armenia

FULBRIGHT, from page 5

and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, New York. Before joining Stonehill College as a faculty member, Ohanyan received pre-doctoral and a post-doctoral fellowships from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

Ohanyan was selected for the Fulbright program after an intensive application process and approval by the US Embassy in Armenia. Ohanyan was chosen as a 2012-2013 recipient to conduct her research and teach in Armenia. Ohanyan explains her goals for this fellowship year: "My proposal entails teaching two courses at a local University while also researching regional integration in politically divided areas, such as the Balkans and South Caucasus. At the end, this research will result in my second book, and I am hoping to produce a first draft by the end of my Fulbright tenure here in Armenia."

Together with her three daughters, Isabelle Ani, Elise Mariam and Helen Susanna, Ohanyan made the move from Massachusetts. According to Ohanyan, the only drawback to her fellowship experience has been being away from her husband Aram Adourian, who first encouraged Ohanyan to apply to Fulbright but was unable to make the move. Despite the distance, Ohanyan notes that Adourian visits frequently and remains supportive of her goals during this year abroad.

As part of her return to the Yerevan community, Ohanyan has noted the juxtaposition of progress and the need for improvements in the city. "The downtown is beautiful, and some of the big retail chains, particularly the luxury stores, have firmly planted their 'flags' in Armenia. At the same time, in relative terms, Armenia is lagging behind when compared to its immediate neighbor – Georgia. Georgia has managed to create a much better business environment than Armenia, which even attracts some Armenian businesses. In

political terms, Georgia made a giant step towards consolidating its democracy by holding free and fair elections which produced a peaceful transfer of power in the Parliament. Georgia seems to be emerging as a regional leader, and unless Armenian government accelerates its reform efforts, Armenia is in danger of becoming marginal in the Caucasus."

Ohanyan has witnessed firsthand the political and economic challenges facing Armenia.

She remains optimistic about European reform efforts in Armenia, and cites the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the European Union (EU) as one step towards achieving economic stability, though she believes that Armenia should carefully assess economic integration models like those implemented in Russia before adopting them wholeheartedly. Ohanyan is hopeful that Armenia can make the necessary changes to strengthen the economy and create new opportunities. She believes that many of the larger hindrances to economic growth – poverty and unemployment – are political in nature. She adds, "The reform processes in various areas are slow and in some cases inefficient. The rule of law is applied unevenly, and access to economic opportunities is politicized." Likewise, Ohanyan says that Armenian universities need to attract more foreign students to aid the economy, but that they are deterred by the government requirement that students take a year to learn Armenian prior to attending university in Armenia.

When asked whether she sees any similarities between Armenia's challenges and those observed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ohanyan noted that "corruption and high administrative hurdles in starting up businesses are common in both countries. Armenia is fortunate relative to Bosnia and Herzegovina in terms of not having the multi-

tiered administrative system and internal divisions along ethnic lines, which literally divides the economic space in the country [...]. However, in sharp contrast to the Caucasus, there are numerous and systematic outlets of cooperation between the states in the region, despite the deep political tensions between them."

Ohanyan likened the problem in Karabagh to fundamental differences in narratives and domestic policies. These essential differences are largely to blame for the current dead-end in peace process negotiations, with Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group producing little progress. Ohanyan explains, "There is a desperate need for confidence-building measures between the two countries and societies, but Azerbaijan refuses to take part in such cases unless the Nagorno Karabagh conflict is solved. This is a very destructive position for the regional security. Unless new frontlines of engagement are open between various professional communities, any settlement would be hard to achieve." As to differences in domestic policies, Ohanyan notes, "Azerbaijan is an authoritarian state, and as such it is not very amenable to peaceful solution of the conflict. War is a tougher sell in genuinely democratic polities because in such cases the people will have to have a say over the decision to go to war. Currently there are no checks on Azerbaijan's bellicose stance and very little international control over its military build-up."

Another factor to consider is that "Azerbaijan is emerging as a 'rentier state' – the government is not reliant neither on its people nor on outside foreign aid for revenue collection. As a result, it is not very responsive to external pressures on the resolution of the conflict and/or the format of engagement with Armenian government and its society," Ohanyan explains.

Amidst these challenges, Ohanyan is doing her part to change the tides in Armenia. She sees the greatest signs of hope in the aspiring younger generation. "Interacting with my students in Armenia, I see such drive and ambi-

tion, which, if directed correctly and if nurtured patiently, can yield enormous results down the road." She adds, "I do believe that teaching is the most powerful tool of social change, and I am excited to have this opportunity in Armenia. My primary goal in my teaching in Armenia is to enhance the critical thinking among students who are also citizens of the country." Not only is Ohanyan inspiring students, she herself is inspired by the experience of teaching her students. "I am learning how to enhance the civic dimension of my teaching. I have a refrigerator magnet in my kitchen back in Concord. It reads 'Teaching Today Touches Tomorrow.' I deeply and passionately believe that by teaching and through education social change will transpire one day."

Even Ohanyan's children are taking full advantage of the experience. In addition to becoming fluent in Armenian, Ohanyan's twin daughters have established an English club at the Ohanyan School in Armenia, which was established by her family in the 1990s. "They are appreciating the warmth of the Armenian culture. With their little minds, they have grasped the core value of this experience – learning from the communal sense of the Armenian people," she adds.

Upon her return to the US, Ohanyan plans to finalize her manuscript, tentatively titled *Networked Peace: Regionalism in Politically Divided Areas*, which hopes to contribute towards finding a solution to the "frozen" conflicts in South Caucasus. As to other goals, Ohanyan said, "I will try to figure out how to go back to Armenia! Currently I am cultivating professional networks with local Universities, particularly American University in Armenia."

For Ohanyan, applying to the Fulbright program to teach in Armenia was one of the best decisions she had ever made. She is not daunted by the challenges ahead; rather, she is excited to continue her professional and cultural journey. "In my life, I have always thrown myself into new and challenging situations, and that's how I have been learning and growing as a professional," she says.



From left, ATP Director Jeff Masarjian, Southern California representative Anahit Gharibyan, Education Manager Alla Sahakyan, event host Armine Meghrouni, Adrienne Iagjian, event host Vahe Meghrouni, Krikor Mahdessian and Varujan Iagjian.

Vahe and Armine Meghrouni Host Reception for ATP

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. – Armenia Tree Project (ATP) Director Jeff Masarjian and Environmental Education Manager Alla Sahakyan spoke at a recent parlor meeting in the Newport Beach home of longtime supporters Vahe and Armine Meghrouni. Masarjian and Sahakyan provided a briefing on current programs in Armenia as well as the Building Bridges educational program to connect diasporan students with Armenia's rich environmental heritage.

"We're so pleased that everyone in attendance was enthusiastic and supportive of ATP's efforts to green Armenia, educate the youth and advocate for sustainable economic development that would prohibit environmentally destructive mining practices," noted Masarjian after the event.

ATP's mission is to assist the Armenian people in using trees to improve their standard of living and protect the environment, guided by the desire to promote self-sufficiency, aid those with the fewest resources first and conserve the indigenous ecosystem. ATP's three major programs are tree planting, environmental education and sustainable development initiatives. For more information, visit the web site www.armeniatree.org.



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**New York
METRO**

Fr. Chevian Named New Dean of St. Nersess Seminary

NEW ROCHELLE, N.Y. – When Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), invited Fr. Mardiros Chevian to return to St. Nersess Armenian Seminary as its new dean, he accepted the invitation after much consideration.

“Although I have enjoyed immensely being the Dean of St. Vartan Cathedral for the past 19

years, I am excited to return to St. Nersess and direct the expanded mission of the seminary at its new campus in Armonk,” stated Chevian recently.

This is not the first time he has answered the call to serve at St. Nersess. In 1978, after returning from his studies in Holy Echmiadzin, he went to St. George Armenian Church in Waukegan, Ill.,

as the deacon-in-charge, where he was very happy to start his ministry. But not soon after, in 1981, he received a call from the recently-deceased Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate of the Diocese then, to be the director of recruitment and programs at the newly-purchased St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in New Rochelle. Chevian later became the rector of the seminary, where he served until 1991.

The “pull to meet a new challenge,” according to Chevian, appears to have a continuous theme in his life. As the new dean, he plans to direct the expanded mission of St. Nersess when it moves to its new campus in 2014.

“The expanded mission of St. Nersess will serve Armenian priests, both in America and abroad,” stated Chevian. Some of the new initiatives and programs of the seminary will include the following:

Continuing education of current priests, through planned educational and training work-

shops; offering support and training for Armenian priests from abroad who need assistance with acclimation and acculturation if they are destined to serve in the North American dioceses; transforming St. Nersess into a center for theological research for exchange faculty and students from the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin and the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem; strengthening the Armenian education of American-born seminarians through longer study in seminaries in Armenia and Jerusalem; introducing an undergraduate program that would combine local college study and courses, worship and residence at St. Nersess Seminary and expanding the 50-year tradition of summer youth programs, retreats and altar server programs.

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Also important is that he will reside on the new campus, just as he did when he directed St. Nersess throughout the 1980s.

But for now, as he takes the helm on November 15, his primary mission is to oversee the training of young men to become parish priests – what Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan envisioned when St.

2012 Trinity Christmas BAZAAR



Friday, November 30, 3 pm-9 pm
Saturday, December 1, 10 am-7 pm

Delicious Armenian Dinners

Lamb Shish, Losh, Chicken Kebab, and Combo;
*Kheyma (Saturday lunch only)
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Friday, 4:00 pm-7:30 pm

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Saturday, December 1
10:30 am-12:30 pm
Peter Adamian Hall

for children ages 4-12
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Decorating Sugar Cookies
and more...

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by Jo-Jo

Carnival Games
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3 for \$1
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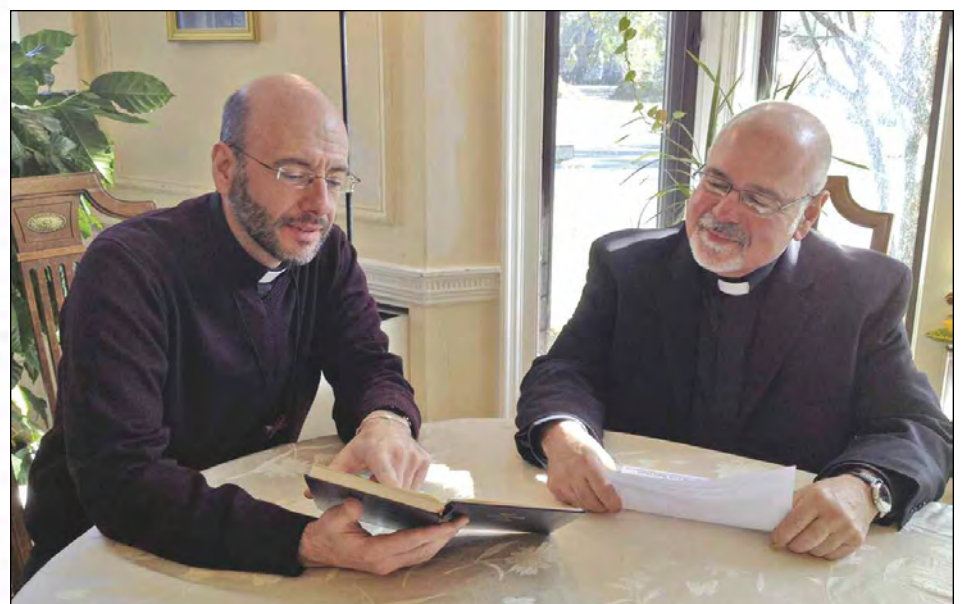
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And have your photo
taken too!

Saturday, December 1
1:30 pm-2:30 pm

Charles and Nevart Talanian
Cultural Hall

Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston
145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA • 617.354.0632



Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan (left) and Fr. Mardiros Chevian will continue working closely to ensure the mission of the Fr. Mardiros Chevian Assumes Role as Dean of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

shops; offering support and training for Armenian priests from abroad who need assistance with acclimation and acculturation if they are destined to serve in the North American dioceses; transforming St. Nersess into a center for theological research for exchange faculty and students from the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin and the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem; strengthening the Armenian education of American-born seminarians through longer study in seminaries in Armenia and Jerusalem; introducing an undergraduate program that would combine local college study and courses, worship and residence at St. Nersess Seminary and expanding the 50-year tradition of summer youth programs, retreats and altar server programs.

Chevian will have the services of Fr. Daniel Findikyan, the previous dean of St. Nersess, at the new location. “I give a lot of credit to Fr. Daniel, who has done an outstanding job as the dean for

Nersess was founded in 1961.

“I want to challenge and inspire students who want to pursue the Armenian priesthood. Even if a young American-born Armenian does not have a good command of the Armenian language, he will learn it. Most importantly, he must be confident and comfortable in his ministry as an Armenian priest,” said Chevian. “In addition to academics, it is important for a priest to be able to transmit what he knows and demonstrate strong leadership skills.”

Currently, a fundraising campaign is underway for the renovation of buildings on the new campus. The three existing structures will be renovated and expanded to include housing for single and married students and faculty, a Dean's residence, youth center, and a small workout and exercise facility, with an anticipated completion date of 2014.

To learn more about St. Nersess, visit www.stnersess.edu.

Armenian Flavors to Be Featured at St. Peter's Bazaar

WATERVLIET, N.Y. – The Women's Guild of St. Peter Armenian Church has been working for weeks to prepare gourmet flavors to feast on during their annual Holiday Bazaar the weekend of December 1 and 2.

This two-day event will feature a variety of popular Armenian foods, as well as vendors selling an array of items and raffle and auction items.

A clown will keep children laughing on Saturday, while a caricaturist will capture happy faces in unique form. In the mid-afternoon, Will Martin, author of the newly-published book, *Benedict Arnold: Legacy Lost*, will address the crowd. Shortly after, guests will dine while enjoying musical entertainment through the remainder of the evening.

On Sunday, the children of St. Peter Armenian Church will proudly express their Armenian culture through poems, songs and traditional Armenian dance routines. Plus, Talene Dadian-White will capture the attention of all with readings from her classic fairy tale books retold with an Armenian twist! She will continue to be on

hand throughout the afternoon to sign her five-book fairy tale series.

Another highlight of the weekend involves a silent auction of themed gift baskets featuring items donated by corporations and local businesses. And finally, numerous local vendors will be lining the church hall to sell items such as jewelry, clothing, crafts and more. St. Peter's own Armenian Bookstore will be set up to sell an array of items.

St. Nick will make an appearance late Sunday afternoon.

“This two-day event is the perfect opportunity to start or even finish off your Christmas shopping while also stocking up your freezer for your holiday guests,” shared pastor, Rev. Stepanos Doudoukjian. “Our entire parish is energized to host this Bazaar, which will showcase our faith and culture to the general community.” He will also offer tours of the church sanctuary and a history of the Armenian Church throughout the weekend.

The event is open to the public with free parking and admission.

Arts & Living

Hovsepian to Perform in North Andover

By Tom Vartabedian

NORTH ANDOVER, Mass. – The mother-and-son team of Ani and Haig Hovsepian will perform at the 117th anniversary celebration of the Lowell ARF Committee Saturday, December 8, at 6 p.m. with a combined program at St. Gregory Armenian Church, 158 Main St.

The Hovsepian family are both known for their musical virtuosity throughout the Greater Boston community. This will mark their first public appearance in North Andover where they have strong family ties.

Those attending last April's Genocide commemoration at the Statehouse in Boston would have seen young Haig dazzle an unsuspecting audience with his violin talent. His mom accompanies him on piano while dad Jirair takes care of the photography.

"We're very proud of how far Haig has come on his instrument," his parents agree. "He enjoys performing before crowds and looks to continue his music on a higher level."

At 13, this young teen has already built up quite a resume. He's an eighth-grader at Cherry Middle School in Belmont. He started his violin studies at age 4. In 2009, he received his first award at the Statewide Music Teachers Association competition.

The year 2010 turned into an extravaganza for the youth. On April 24, he won a gold medal at the Classified Music Competition in Canada. Two months later, Haig became a winner of the Young Promise International Competition.

In spite of his young age, Haig has performed extensively at various community and charity events, churches and nursing homes. He appeared as a soloist with the Belmont All-Town Elementary Chorus and on Belmont and Needham television featuring talented young musicians.



Haig and Ani Hovsepian

He also participated in the Belmont Telethon to help raise funds for the town's food pantry and in a production benefiting the Joslin Diabetes Center.

He is a former member of the Abaka Dance Ensemble, St. Stephen's Armenian Saturday School and a first-prize winner in the Armenian Relief Society's annual essay contest.

He also plays the *sh'vi* (Armenian recorder), saxophone and piano.

Ani Hovsepian studied music at the Komitas Conservatory in Armenia; St. Petersburg Conservatory (Russia) and at Brandeis University (Waltham). She holds separate graduate degrees in performance, education, music history and art criticism.

Throughout her burgeoning career, she appeared in piano and ensemble performances with various soloists and groups in Armenia, the former Soviet Union and United States, including Komitas Choral Society of Greater Boston and Cantata Singers.

Prior to immigrating here in 1991, she taught at the Yerevan State Conservatory, conducted research on Armenian-American composer Alan Hovhanness and worked as a freelance correspondent for newspapers in Armenia, reporting on musical events around the country.

She is currently employed at Brandeis University and running a private Music Studio (ACH) in Belmont.

The concert will be preceded by dinner and a brief program, updating guests on a genocide memorial currently in progress in Lowell.

Tickets are available at the door.



Sabiha Gökçen (Hatun Sebilciyan)

Turkey: Hidden Truths or True Lies

ISTANBUL – In 1915, an entire people was physically wiped out in a couple of years from its homeland of several thousand years, but how can you wipe out the remnants of this people, its creations, its assets, its traces, its very existence from the collective memory of the rest of the citizens within the country, or for that matter, from the collective memory of the rest of the

By Raffi Bedrosyan

world? This has been an immense challenge for successive governments of Turkey, a mission mostly successful for almost four generations, and yet, here and there the true lies or the hidden truths keep coming out with increasing frequency, especially in recent years. Hiding the truth and historic facts about 1915 from its own people has been the government policy since the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923, through indoctrination of the education system, control of the media and academia, destruction of the Armenian buildings and monuments and so on. But the facts, perhaps still secret within Turkey though widely known in the outside world, are now being revealed to the masses in Turkey, thanks to increased liberalization, the Internet and pioneering academicians and media "opinion makers" daring to speak the truth in Turkey. As a result, the citizens of Turkey, who have not been exposed to these facts for four generations, are now amazed to learn that there existed a people called Armenians who lived in Anatolia for several millennia, but who somehow all suddenly disappeared in 1915. In this article, I will try to give a few paradoxical



Sign at Ani, with the spelling changed to the Turkish "I" without a period above

examples of the attempts in hiding the truth, versus the ones uncovering the truths.

The second largest and most modern airport in Turkey is called the Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, named after the adopted daughter of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the first female pilot in Turkey, a heroine who helped put down the Alevi/Kurdish rebellion in Dersim in 1936-38 by bombing the rebels from her plane. Her photos and accomplishments are prominently displayed on billboards at the airport seen by millions of passengers.

And yet, there is another side to her story: Her real name is Hatun Sebilciyan, an Armenian girl from Bursa, orphaned in 1915, adopted by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, given the sky related Gökçen surname by him after completing the pilot training. Ağos editor Hrant Dink became a marked man by the deep state in Turkey when he

see TRUTHS, page 12

NAASR Open House to Feature Lecture by Lerna Ekmekcioglu on Early Turkish Republic

BELMONT, Mass. – Dr. Lerna Ekmekcioglu, McMillan-Stewart Career Development Assistant Professor of History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), will give a lecture titled "Wishful Thinking or Insidious Camouflage? Armenians Responding to the New Turkey (1923-1933)," highlighting NAASR's 2012 Christmas Open House on Thursday, December 6. The open house will begin at 6 p.m. and conclude at 11 p.m., with Ekmekcioglu's talk set for 8 p.m. The evening's events will take place at the NAASR Center, 395 Concord Ave.

Both before and after the lecture, NAASR's bookstore will be open and feature a one night only, 20-percent-off sale, with additional discounts of 40 percent or more on selected titles. Numerous recently published titles will be available.

Ruth Thomasian, founder and executive director of Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, will be on hand with the 2013 calendar "Armenians a Century Ago: in the Homeland and Diaspora." The calendar, as always featuring remarkable photographs from Project SAVE's enormous archival collection, provides a glimpse of the diversity of Armenian life during the pre-genocide years.

Ekmekcioglu will speak at NAASR for the first time. Her lecture will examine the previously understudied Armenian community in Turkey in the first decade of the Turkish Republic. How did Armenians respond to the establishment of the new Turkey in 1923? Was this republic really "new" for them? What can we learn about the early Turkish Republic when we look at it from the perspective of its Armenian citizens?



Dr. Lerna Ekmekcioglu

Focusing on 1920s and '30s Armenian spokespeople, intellectuals and lay and religious leadership, Ekmekcioglu will demonstrate that Armenian responses to the state's policies (homogenization, secularization, Westernization) included cooperation, accommodation, and camouflaging, as well as certain forms of more overt resistance that took the shape of calls to preserve Armenianness inside those spaces in which the state did not care or dare to interfere. She argues that neither the Turkish Republic's policies nor the Armenian responses were completely new. The Ottoman past mattered much more than either group would admit.

Ekmekcioglu joined MIT in 2011 after a post-doctoral year at the University of Michigan's Armenian Studies Program. The holder of a doctorate from New York University, she teaches courses related to the modern Middle East, with a focus on its ethnic diversity and majority-minority relations. She is also affiliated with the Women and Gender Studies Program and teaches courses on gender in the Middle East and North Africa. As the holder of the McMillan-Stewart Chair, she organizes lectures that pertain to women in the developing world.

She is currently working on a monograph titled *Surviving the New Turkey: Armenians in Post-Ottoman Istanbul*, which analyzes the ways in which survivors of the Armenian Genocide who continued living inside Turkish borders crafted themselves a new presence to be able to co-habit peacefully with the perpetrator society.

More information may be had by e-mailing hq@naasr.org, or writing to NAASR, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont, MA 02478.



ARTS & LIVING

Author Adam Raffi Kevorkian Discusses New Book

MISSION HILLS, Calif. — Adam Raffi Kevorkian will present his new book, *Masis*, on Sunday, November 18, at 4 p.m. at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, 15105 Mission Hills Road.

Masis offers a glimpse into present-day Armenia, a dynamic metropolis rich with luxury cars, outdoor markets, and medieval churches nestled alongside high-rise apartment complexes. In Armenia's capital, Yerevan, an ancient culture is coping with remnants of communism and now an unquenchable desire for a western lifestyle. At its heart, *Masis* is a heart-warming tale of love, tragedy, humor and greed and the decisions one makes when few choices exist.

Kevorkian has published in the *LA Review* and the *Ararat Quarterly* among other journals.



Adam Raffi Kevorkian

Originally from Richmond, Va., he currently lives in Los Angeles. *Masis* is his first novel.

Admission is free. A reception will follow the program and book signing.



The KOHAR performers were greeted by enthusiastic audiences.

KOHAR Enchants Cordoba, Argentina

CORDOBA, Argentina — Following resoundingly popular concerts in Buenos Aires, KOHAR traveled to Córdoba, and en route, it was bestowed with flowers, a symbolic present and a plaque by the Armenians of Rosario. Upon arrival in Córdoba, the members of KOHAR were greeted by a group of Armenians who were waving the Armenian flag along the highway that leads to the city.

KOHAR's one-night performance in Córdoba was another success. The warmth and the enthusiasm were obvious in the audience who could not hold back their emotions, and rushed to the front of the

hall to join in the impromptu dance and sing-alongs with almost every song after the first interval. KOHAR had to perform for at least an additional half-an-hour as the hall erupted with demands for encores.

The Córdoba Armenians, although a small community in South America, proved to be true to their Armenian cause and heritage with their enthusiastic support throughout KOHAR's memorable stay there.

KOHAR continues its last leg of the tour with three performances in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Arpa International Film Festival to Fete Frances Fisher, Shoah Foundation, Lusine Sahakyan and Hratch Titizian

LOS ANGELES — The 15th Annual Arpa International Film Festival announced this week it will honor stage and film actress Frances Fisher with their Career Achievement Award, the USC Shoah Foundation - The Institute for Visual History and Education with the Festival's Foundation Award, and Lusine Sahakyan with their Armin T. Wegner Award at its Awards Gala at the Sheraton Universal in Universal City, on Sunday, December 2.

The awards are the final event of the 2012 Arpa International Film Festival which will screen more than 32 films, documentaries and shorts from throughout the world

November 29 to December 2 at the Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood. The event's master of ceremonies will be actress Marla Maples.

Award winning actress Frances Fisher ("Unforgiven," "Titanic," "House of Sand and Fog") will receive Arpa's 2012 Career Achievement Award. Fisher receives this honor for her past commitment to the festival and to honor her expansive body of work. Fisher appears in the festival's centerpiece documentary film, the North American premiere of "Awakening World," directed by Sebastian Siegel.

Lusine Sahakyan will receive the festival's Armin T. Wegner Humanitarian Award for the

documentary

"Hamshen at the Crossroads of Past and Present." The film will be recognized in honor of the German author and human rights activist Armin Theophil Wegner (October 16, 1886 - May 17, 1978), whose life and

human rights activism reflects the spirit in which the award was founded on in 2002.



Frances Fisher

Festival founder Sylvia Minassian said, "This is the first time in the festival's history that the award will be given to recipients from Armenia. This award is given to filmmakers throughout the world whose work reflects commitment to championing human rights causes and we are honored to recognize Lusine's work this year."

Past recipients include Bryan Single ("Children of War"), Ted Braun ("Darfur Now") and Carla Garapedian ("Screamers").

USC Shoah Foundation - The Institute for Visual History and Education is the 2012 recipient of the Arpa International Film Festival Foundation Award. Inspired by his experience making "Schindler's List," Steven Spielberg established the Shoah Foundation in 1994 to gather video testimonies from survivors and other witnesses of the Holocaust. Currently, the Institute's Visual History Archive (VHA) holds nearly 52,000 video testimonies that were recorded in 56 countries and in 32 languages. The VHA is the largest digital collection of its kind in the world and is accessible worldwide for research and education at sfi.usc.edu.

Stage, screen and television actor Hratch Titizian ("The Men Who Stare at Goats," "Homeland," "24,") will receive the festival's Breakthrough Actor of the Year Award.

"We first recognized Titizian in 2008 as a gifted actor as well as filmmaker, in 'Float,' which premiered at the festival," says Kalognomos. "He moves deftly from project to project across the genre lines, from producing 'Float' to starring opposite Robin Williams on Broadway in 'Bengal Tiger,' to the recurring television roles on such programs as the Emmy-award-winning, 'Homeland.' For our 15th anniversary, we wanted to celebrate one of the most exciting actors coming up in Hollywood."

For more information, including the schedule of films, visit (<http://affma.org>).



Hratch Titizian

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ARTS & LIVING

Turkey: Hidden Truths or True Lies

TRUTHS, from page 10

first uncovered this truth after interviewing surviving relatives of Sebilciyan from Lebanon in 2001. This fact was deemed an insult to Turkishness by the military, the media and the government. Another recently uncovered fact is that the people being bombed in Dersim were not rebels but mostly women and children as the leaders were already hanged the previous year, a fact acknowledged and apologized for by prime minister Erdogan, mostly to score political points against the governing party at the time and the current opposition party. To add more to the irony, these women and children were mostly remnants of the 25,000 Armenians who had sought refuge and found shelter with the Dersim Alevi Kurds in 1915. It is not certain whether Sebilciyan/Gokçen knew that she was Armenian, nor if she knew that the women and children that she bombed were Armenian.

The ancient city of Ani near Kars, right on the Armenian border separated by the Akhurian River, is known as the “city with 1001 churches.” It is a former capital of the Armenian Bagratid kingdom, with continuous Armenian presence from the fifth to the 17th century. It had reached its glory days in the 10th and 11th centuries, when it became a central gateway on the Silk Route and its growing population of 100,000 even exceeded Constantinople at the time. Most of the buildings and churches are now destroyed, but the main Ani cathedral, Dikran Honents Church, the Surp Prgitch Church and the city walls are still standing, with clearly visible Armenian writings carved in stone on most walls. After years of neglect and/or target practice by the Turkish military on the remaining Ani buildings, the current Turkish government has opened up Ani



Sabiha Gokçen (Hatun Sebilciyan), left, with her adoptive father, Mustafa Kamal Ataturk, right

destroyed by the Turkish army from the 1920s to 1950s, and only through the intervention of renowned Kurdish author Yashar Kemal, the Holy Cross Church building was spared.

The current Turkish government decided to restore the church as a state museum in 2007. There are beautiful Armenian writings carved on all the church walls, both inside and outside the building, and yet, there is not a single word in the descriptive plaques or guidebooks indicating that this is an Armenian church. Even the name of the island is changed to Akdamar, meaning ‘white vein’ in Turkish, so that the Armenian Akhtamar connection will disappear. Why this fear, this paranoia? How can this convince anybody in Turkey or the outside world that this is not an Armenian church?

In Istanbul, almost all prominent historic buildings dating from the 17th to 20th cen-

government from the early 1800s until 1915, in charge of key ministries such as treasury, armaments, mint, public works, customs and post office departments, as well as tens of thousands of Armenians working in the bureaucracy, army and state hospitals. Not only their positive contributions, but their very existence have been hidden by the government and as a result, the general Turkish population has only recently started to realize the important role played by the Armenians in the Ottoman public sector. Obviously, the contributions of the Armenians in the private sector are completely and forcefully hidden, because all Armenian assets and properties such as farms, factories, mines, warehouses, businesses, orchards, buildings had been plundered and taken over by the Turkish/Kurdish leaders and the general public in 1915. In fact, the very foundation of the Turkish private and public sector economy and industry, the start-up of wealthy individuals and corporations is entirely based on the seized Armenian assets; therefore, this is an understandable aspect of the denial policy.

The positive contributions of Armenians during the Turkish republic era are also kept hidden. The introduction of the Latin alphabet and conversion from Ottoman Turkish to modern Turkish was implemented by an Armenian linguistics expert, Prof. Agop Martayan. In gratitude, Kemal Ataturk gave him the surname of Dilacar, meaning “the one who unlocks the language.” In all textbooks, he is referred to as A. Dilacar, with his first name Agop never spelled out. When he passed away in 1978, the Turkish

version of official history? Rather than speculate about answers to these questions, I would like to refer to the remarks made by the recent recipient of the Hrant Dink Foundation Peace Award, prominent Kurdish professor, Ismail Besikçi, who said the following:

“The Ittihadists [Committee of Union and Progress] had devised a plan to reorganize the Ottoman Empire on the basis of Turkish ethnic identity. The nationalization of the Ottoman economy was a further significant target. But Greeks, Armenians and other Christian people, as well as Islamic but non-Turkish people such as Kurds, non-Muslim Turkish and Kurdish people such as Alevis, presented significant obstacles for the execution of this Turkification project. They would get rid of the Greeks by forcing them into exile to Greece. The Armenian population would be eliminated under the guise of forced deportation into the desert. Then, the Kurds would be assimilated into Turkishness, and the Alevis into Islam. The wealth and immovable properties of the Greeks forced into exile and the Armenians perished through genocide, would be confiscated by Muslim Turkish notables. A huge, widespread looting operation took place of the assets left behind by the Armenians and Greeks, helping the Ottoman economy, and then the Turkish economy to be nationalized. Today, the source of the wealth of the haute bourgeoisie is the Armenian and Greek assets. In Kurdish areas of Turkey, the source of wealth of the Kurdish tribe leaders is again the Armenian and Syriac assets.”

As Besikçi has said, it has now become apparent that the experiment of trying to convert a multiethnic, multireligious, multicultural Anatolian society into a monolithic, mono-ethnic, single religious, Turkish nation, and then denying this fact, has failed. The hidden truths about the fate of the Armenian and Greek people and their assets, can no longer be denied within and outside Turkey, despite all Turkish state efforts. The assimilation of the Kurds did not succeed, despite all Turkish state efforts. As another Kurdish intellectual has very appropriately remarked, for many years the Turks denied that Armenians were ever killed in these lands and also denied that Kurds ever lived in these lands. If not the Turkish government, increasingly larger number of opinion makers in the Turkish media and the academia have started to reveal the hidden truths, and sooner or later, the people of Turkey will also start realiz-



The Istanbul airport bears her name.

to tourists and has started some preliminary restoration efforts. However, there is not a single word about Armenians in the Turkish historic descriptions and guidebooks on Ani. The standing churches and buildings are referred to as belonging to the Georgians or the Seljuks. Even the name Ani is now spelled with an “I” without the dot, meaning “memory” in Turkish, so that the Armenian Ani connection to this city will disappear. The denial policy and the paranoia linked to the 1915 facts has stretched so far that even the Armenian presence in Ani is being denied.

The museum in Kars exhibits historical artifacts collected from the region. There are wood-carved church doors, stone tombstones, carpets and dowry chests. There are descriptions explaining that the ancient ones are from the Urartus, the more recent ones from the Russians or Georgians. And yet, all these artifacts have clearly visible Armenian writings carved in the wood or stone or woven into the fabric. Again the denialist paranoia has gone to extreme limits, but it can only fool a few Turks who cannot recognize the Armenian alphabet.

The Holy Cross Church on Akhtamar Island near Van dates back from 921 AD, built by the Armenian King Gagik, together with a palace and other buildings on the island. Armenian priests lived there continuously until 1915. All the buildings on the island were willfully

tury such as Ottoman imperial palaces, mosques, military barracks, universities, schools or fountains were built by Armenians. Led by the renowned Balyan family, royal architects for several generations, teams of Armenian tradesmen and craftsmen were involved in all aspects of the royal construction projects, including stone masonry, tile and mosaic manufacturing and setting, plumbing, foundations, glassworks and metal works. And yet, until ten years ago, official guides in the palaces would tell tourists that Italian contractors named Balianis were involved in the construction of these buildings. Similarly, at least a quarter of the buildings in the historic Pera district along the main thoroughfare called Istiklal Caddesi, were either built by Armenian architects or owned by Armenians. Millions of Istanbul citizens and tourists live, work and play in these buildings, without realizing the historic Armenian connection. Two years ago, when a book on Armenian architects of Istanbul was published by the Hrant Dink Foundation followed by an exhibition displaying photos of the Armenian created buildings, it was like a revelation, causing uproar and amazement in the media and the general public.

The government policy of forced amnesia of the Armenian presence prior to 1915 extends beyond architects and builders. There were Armenians posted as ministers in the Ottoman



Armenian writing a stone in an Ani church

media gave his obituary as Adil Acar, further Turkifying his given name.

Another example of hidden truth is the case of Armenian musician Edgar Manas, the composer of the Turkish national anthem, a fact only known by a few Armenians and completely covered up by the Turks.

Why this fear, this paranoia resulting in total denial? It goes beyond denial of the historical facts of 1915. It is denial of existence of an entire people in these lands. Is it fear about the Armenian assets and properties left behind? Is it the simplistic argument that if Armenians never lived here, there could not have been a genocide? But then, if Armenians never lived here, how come the Armenians massacred the Turkish population, as claimed by the Turkish

ing that historic facts are different than what they are told by the state. As it becomes apparent that the hidden truths cannot be hidden any longer, the challenge for the Turkish government will be how to revise its stance from denial to acceptance of the truths, and how to deal with these truths, vis-a-vis its own citizens as well as the outside world. It is hoped that this process will proceed within the norms of dialogue, the establishment of a common body of knowledge and the mutual understanding of all parties involved.

(Raffi Bedrosyan is a resident of Toronto. He returned recently from a visit to Turkey, where he performed in the newly-renovated Sourp Giragos Church in Diyarbakir.)



ARTS & LIVING

ALMA's Annual Volunteer Luncheon Celebrated its Dedicated Volunteers

WATERTOWN – The Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) held a volunteer appreciation luncheon on November 3 to thank its outstanding team of volunteers for their hard work and dedication. The staff paid a special tribute to volunteer Ed Brewster, who was presented with a plaque inscribed “Keeping the Flame Alive” thanking him for his numerous contributions over the last decade. Watertown High School junior Arsen Patvakanian was also given an award for being the current youngest volunteer. Patvakanian, an avid soccer fan, has already served ALMA for more than five years.

Volunteers and other guests enjoyed a tasty spread and met new ALMA director, Dr. Susan



ALMA Volunteers 2012



Arsen Patvakanian, ALMA's youngest current volunteer

educator, they always bring enthusiasm and expertise to the exhibits, projects and programs they are working on. ALMA is grateful to all for the support they provide to its staff and for helping the institution achieve the goals and mission set forth by the Board of Trustees. ALMA's volunteers are, in many ways, the backbone of the organization.

ALMA welcomes new volunteers to assist in curatorial, archival, digitizing, library tasks and collecting oral histories. If interested in learning about volunteering opportunities, call the museum or visit http://www.almainc.org/about_volunteer.html.

ALMA is located at 65 Main St.



Ed Brewster receives his award from Curator Gary Lind Sinanian.

Pattie. The museum's volunteers are an integral part of the organization. They range in age from 16 to 89 and whether a student, retiree, stay-at-home mother, lawyer, business owner or

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C A L E N D A R

MASSACHUSETTS

NOVEMBER 30 and DECEMBER 1 – “Trinity Christmas Bazaar,” Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge, Friday, 3-9 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Delicious Armenian cuisine; farmer's market, country store, candy, gourmet foods, pastries, wreaths & poinsettias, jewelry, second time around, silent auction, sports silent auction and more. Santa's Playland, Saturday 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

DECEMBER 8 – Mother-son duo of Ani & Haig Hovsepian perform on piano and violin 6 p.m., at Jaffarian Hall, St. Gregory Church, 158 Main St., North Andover, sponsored by Lowell “Aharonian” Gomideh, dinner and program; donation, \$20 adults, \$10 students.

NEW JERSEY

NOVEMBER 17-18 – Musical theater presentation by TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group, Yervant Odian's “Love and Laughter” (Ser yev Dzidzagh), directed by Krikor Satamian, with more than 20 actors participating. Dwight Englewood High School, Englewood Cliffs, 8 p.m. on Saturday and 4 p.m. on Sunday. \$25, \$35, \$50. For tickets, call Marie Zokian or Noushig Atamian.

NOVEMBER 18 – Join the TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group Cast Party to celebrate “Love and Laughter.” Special honoree, Karnig Nercessian, one of the founding members of the TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group. St. Thomas Armenian Church, East Clinton Ave. & 9W, Tenafly. 8 p.m. Donation: \$30. BYOB. For tickets, call Marie Zokian (201) 745-8850, Maro Hajakian (201) 934-3427 or Noushig Atamian (718) 344-5582.

RHODE ISLAND

NOVEMBER 24 – Christmas with Onnik Dance hosted by the Providence ACYOA. 70 Jefferson St., Providence, RI. Doors open at 8 p.m. Adults \$30 and Students \$20. Mezza, cash bar and raffle. Contact Kevork Vartanian for details: kevorkvartanian@gmail.com.



Holy Trinity Armenian Church will host its annual Christmas Bazaar Friday, November 30, 3-9 p.m. and Saturday, December 1, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., at the church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge, and will include delicious Armenian cuisine; farmer's market, country store, candy, gourmet foods, pastries, wreaths & poinsettias, jewelry, second time around, silent auction, sports silent auction and more. There will also be a Santa's Playland, Saturday 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN Mirror- Spectator

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COMMENTARY

Unity, Disunity, Power and Destiny

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Armenians have talked and worried about unity throughout their history because they have suffered much as a consequence of disunity. It is ironic that the more they talk about the need for unity, the less unified and more fragmented they become.

However, we are united in pain and suffering but divided when we face leadership and the pursuit of future goals. Today we are united in helping our brothers and sisters caught in the crossfire in the Syrian civil strife. Yet, we are divided in most spheres of Armenian life. We finally were blessed in having a free and independent Armenia, and we are at a loss as to what to do about it. People who aspired to independence are now abandoning independent Armenia. The leadership at home and abroad is divided. We are witnessing a leadership crisis.

Our church is still divided for no reason. It seems as though a people who had emancipated themselves from centuries of foreign domination would seize the historic opportunity and rebuild Armenia and unify the church. But there is general apathy throughout the diaspora and Armenia and people are no longer alarmed when confronted with existential dangers.

There is too much talk about the depopulation of Armenia, but almost no movement to reverse it. Turkey and Azerbaijan have deliberately blockaded Armenia to strangle the last historic portion of Armenian existence.

Armenians are individualists, born out of centuries of oppression which have shaped our individual will for survival. Yet we are individualists at the expense of our collective goals and a common future. As we try to broaden individualism, the most we can achieve is partisan pride, countering our universal goals.

Many "deeds of valor" have been recorded in our church, in the words of our historian Moses of Khoren. But it seems that those achievements are intended to outdo other levels of hierarchy in the church. For example, under His Holiness Catholicos Aram I, crucial projects are being developed at the Catholicosate of Antelias, like the publication of scholarly books, symposia to preserve the Western Armenian language and prizes to encourage writers, etc. But all these endeavors seem to be intended to bring credit to Antelias, rather than to the overall church, since the leadership in Antelias is in competition with the Mother See of Echmiadzin, determined to challenge its authority.

In Istanbul, the Turkish government has been holding the Armenian Patriarchate hostage to use it for its own political ends. The authorities used and abused whatever authority Patriarch Mutafian had by sending him to European capitals to lobby for Turkey's admission into the European Union. While they were using his credibility, they cynically terrorized him as well, driving him into near catatonia. Indeed, bombs falling in the Patriarchate's neighborhood and Hrant Dink's assassination proved to be the straws that broke the camel's back. And today, by forbidding the election of a new patriarch, their goal is to keep the status of the patriarchate in limbo.

A different scenario has been playing out in Jerusalem, one of the political nerve centers of the world. After the loss of Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, the Brotherhood of St. James convened and elected Archbishop Aris Shirvanian as Locum Tenens. The aging and frail cleric knows as well as the other members of the brother-

hood that the burdens of the Patriarchate are too heavy a responsibility. Yet the Brotherhood could not manage its responsibilities properly with a wisdom commensurate to the awesome challenge that the Patriarchate is facing. Hopefully, come January 2013, a more circumspect outlook will enlighten the brotherhood in order to bring the most capable spiritual leader to the throne.

Here again, the Supreme Patriarch of the Armenian Church as well as the government of Armenia were kept in an observer position, in deference to the independence and the legal authority of the brotherhood, while all the powers in the region have been exerting their influence to bring an outcome in line with their political interests.

The Israeli and Jordanian governments as well as the Palestinian Authority have more to say than the heads of the Armenian Church and the Armenian government. To demonstrate how deeply the above parties are involved in defining the fate of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem it suffices to say that one of the sticking points in the failure of the Camp David accord was the status of the Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem. Israel demanded to have the Armenian Quarter under its jurisdiction and Yasser Arafat refused.

This outside meddling, barring Armenian authorities from intervening, is encouraged by the very by-laws and disposition of the Jerusalem brotherhood.

Thanks to their creative talents, Armenians deserved to become a great nation, yet we have ended up with a miniscule homeland. At one time, during the reign of Tigranes the Great, the Armenians built an empire. Unfortunately that empire fell victim to Tigranes' arrogance; indeed, it is recorded that when the Armenian king saw the Roman army advance under Lucullus, he said: "If these are the delegates, they are too many; if they are the troops, they are too few." Yet the Romans arrived and defeated his empire, with the help of his own son, a story of betrayal that has been a familiar refrain in Armenian history.

The Armenian kingdom in Cilicia, which lasted from the 11th to the 14th centuries, was the setting of rivalries and betrayals among the Armenian princes, until the Mamluks overran the kingdom in 1375.

As we study Ottoman history, we find that the Turks were able to preserve a united state by upholding the absolute power of the ruler.

However, the sultans themselves have been able to maintain that absolute power not only through ruthless elimination of any dissent by subject nations, but also by eradicating any political challenge to authority within their own circles.

Recently a Turkish historian published the history of the Ottoman rulers, revealing that each and every Ottoman sultan, from Fatih Sultan Muhammad to Abdul Hamid, had murdered his own children upon ascending the throne, to forestall any challenge to their rule. The first sultan who murdered both his son and his brother was Sultan Murat. The historian has mentioned only one sultan who had spared his progenies, Orhan Ghazi (1288-1359).

It is said that Suleiman the Magnificent had his children killed before his own eyes by throwing them into boiling water. Incidentally Suleiman the Magnificent is much admired in the West for his conquests and his patronage of the arts.

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli defined the prerequisites and parameters of power in the most cynical terms.

We Armenians have always lacked that cynicism, to our own detriment. That has been our destiny.

An Armenian Thanksgiving for the Ages

By Tom Vartabedian

Like a good football rivalry, Thanksgiving around my house was always predicated around teamwork.

As children, our job was to stay out of the way, keep the living room orderly, bring our appetites to the dinner table and show some manners.

Growing older, our roles included the "Hayr Mer," and giving thanks to the less fortunate. As conscientious Armenians, we had much to be grateful for in this world, more specifically, surviving the Genocide.

Both my parents escaped the pogroms. So did my grandmother. Somewhere in our prayer, we would thank the Good Lord for his bounty as well as our survival and success as a family.

My folks operated a luncheonette in Somerville back in the '40s, '50s and '60s and it was usually a seven-days-a-week ordeal. So, it was not uncommon to work the morn-

ing of Thanksgiving and depart just after the noonday rush.

To close for the day would have been irreverent to dad's faithful clientele. What didn't get eaten that morning was quickly transported to a nearby church for the less fortunate. And if it meant some assistance on the serving line, that's where you found my parents. Our appetites could wait.

Back then, our family resembled a small army. Three generations would gather under one roof and enjoy the spirit of companionship. Cousins. Grandparents. Aunts and uncles. The table sagged with food, much of it my grandmother's doing. She left no stone unturned, from lentil soup to baklava at the end.

Never a recipe for anything. It was all mind over matter. Her pilaf always came out the best, especially after all the butter she used.

Well, one day, the unexpected occurred around our cozy Thanksgiving table. Guests arrived unannounced from out-of-town and there were more people than food to feed them this particular holiday.

To leave anyone hungry on such a day would be a cardinal sin.

Old Armenian ingenuity kicked in.

My mother took us aside with some words of desperation for my brother and me.

"Look," she said. "We don't have enough turkey for everyone. Most people will go straight for the white meat and leave the dark. Wait until the very end before helping yourselves. Let our guests serve themselves first."

Good old-fashioned Armenian mentality if I ever should say.

Dig right in and take what you want. We watched as one diner after another pored over food like a starving nation. A 20-pound bird was quickly reduced to a torso. When it came our turn, we had been duly warned not to indulge.

"We don't like the dark meat," I said, speaking for my younger sibling as well. "We'll just take a little extra pilaf and corn. That should do it."

All eyes at the dinner table turned to us in

continued on next page



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Armenian-Americans Score Major Gains in US Elections

After long months of hectic campaigning, a constant barrage of e-mails and ads, and billions of dollars spent by the candidates and their supporters, the US presidential and congressional elections did not change the American political landscape. The United States will have the same president for another four years and the same majorities in the House and Senate. The House remains in the hands of Republicans, and the Senate in the hands of Democrats.

This means that President Obama's foreign and domestic policies will remain more or less unchanged and Congress will continue to be deadlocked for two or more years, negatively impacting the prospects of a quick economic recovery. House Republicans will probably not support President Obama's social and economic agenda, particularly on healthcare and taxes.

Even though there were no great political changes resulting from the Nov. 6 elections, Armenian-Americans scored important gains in congressional and local elections. Armenian voters were not instrumental in the outcome of the presidential race, since President Obama received over three million more votes than his Republican rival. It was therefore politically astute to concentrate the Armenian community's resources and votes on congressional and local races.

A whopping 90 percent of the 145 congressional candidates backed by the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) won reelection. In Senatorial races, 12 out of 15 ANCA-endorsed candidates were victorious: Dianne Feinstein (California), Chris Murphy (Connecticut), Mazie Hirono (Hawaii), Ben Cardin (Maryland), Debbie Stabenow (Michigan), Amy Klobuchar (Minnesota), Bob Menendez (New Jersey), Martin Heinrich (New Mexico), Sherrod Brown (Ohio), Sheldon Whitehouse (Rhode Island), Bernard Sanders (Vermont) and Tammy Baldwin (Wisconsin).

In House races, 118 of 130 ANCA-endorsed candidates were reelected, including Lois Capps (California), Jeff Denham (California), Janice Hahn (California), Ed Royce (California), Adam Schiff (California), Brad Sherman (California), David Valadao (California), Cory Gardner (Colorado), Dina Titus (Nevada), Frank Pallone (New Jersey), Michael Grimm (New York), David Cicilline (Rhode Island), House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (Virginia) and Frank Wolf (Virginia).

The November 6 elections may result in an unexpectedly favorable development in Congress for the Armenian-American community. Rep. Ed Royce, co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, has a good chance of being elected by his colleagues as next chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. A strong supporter of Armenian causes, Royce would replace outgoing Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Republican of Florida, a staunchly pro-Turkish House member.

A similar highly favorable development may take place in the Senate when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton retires shortly at the end of President Obama's first term. Most political analysts believe that Sen. John Kerry, currently chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and a close friend of the Armenian community, may assume a cabinet position as secretary of state or defense, in which case Senator Menendez, a staunch supporter of Armenian

issues, may become next chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The possible simultaneous selection of Representative Royce and Senator Menendez as chairs of these two powerful committees would give Armenian-Americans unprecedented access to key foreign policy decision-makers.

More important than the election of friends of the Armenian community was the success of at least 16 Armenian-Americans who were either elected for the first time or reelected to continue serving their constituencies. Armenian-American members of Congress, Anna Eshoo and Jackie Speier, both from California, were overwhelmingly reelected. Other Armenian-American winners in state and local races were: Linda Arzoumanian, superintendent, Pima County School Superintendent, Arizona; Khacho Achadjian (incumbent), State Assembly, California; Adrin Nazarian, State Assembly, California; Tim Kapucian (incumbent), State Senate, Idaho; Mary Lou Marzian (incumbent), State House, Kentucky; Peter Koutoujian (incumbent), Middlesex County Sheriff, Massachusetts; James Miceli, State House, Massachusetts; John Fresolo, State House, Massachusetts; Gary Azarian (incumbent), State House, New Hampshire; Charlene Takesian, State House, New Hampshire; Brad Avakian, State Labor Commissioner, Oregon; Scott Avedisian (incumbent), Mayor of Warwick, Rhode Island; Jared Nunes, State House, Rhode Island; and Katherine Kazarian, State House, Rhode Island.

Congratulations to all those who were either elected for the first time or reelected. It is particularly pleasing to see a record number of Armenian-Americans running for political office, most of whom won their respective races. These victories bode well for the future of Armenian-American political activism. The community should support and encourage these public servants so that in a few years they would seek even higher office, running for Congress or president.

An Armenian Thanksgiving for The Ages

from previous page

angst. Two youngsters with no turkey? Quicker than you could say "cornucopia," people were offering us turkey they had already taken. Who would want food off another's plate?

Maybe our guests didn't exercise proper protocol by serving themselves more than they could possibly consume, then trying to pass it off to others who didn't get enough.

"No, that's quite all right," I said. "Don't care much for turkey, especially the dark meat."

I glanced over to my mother and could see a rather coy smile cross her face. For someone who was emotionally scarred by the Genocide, the woman was always so full of life. Little did I realize at the time that she would wind up as the last remaining survivor in my city after nearly reaching the ripe age of 99.

To tell you the truth, I was left a little hungry and deprived on this Thanksgiving Day. Who invited these extra people? I certainly didn't. They invited themselves.

After the table had been cleared, on came the desserts. We Armenians always save the best for last. There they were: pies, cakes, fancy rolls. And my favorites, baklava and khorabia drizzled with corn syrup. Just stand aside and let me feast.

But no, mom's word was law and she laid it down, right then and there.

"All those who didn't eat the turkey get no dessert," she said, giving my brother and me an unfair reprimand. By depriving us, they nourished the others and saved face.

It was a Thanksgiving that never lost its meaning, much less an appetite.

Government Shutting Eyes on Prison Problem

By Gayane Abrahamyan

Self-mutilation by hunger-striking prisoners is raising a public clamor in Armenia about treatment of the country's roughly 4,800 inmates.

In an attempt to attract greater attention to demands for improved living conditions behind bars, one prisoner sewed his eyes shut; two others sewed their mouths. A third cut off his little finger.

As Armenia's northern neighbor, Georgia, demonstrated last month, prison problems can have serious ramifications for incumbent authorities: experts say the distribution of video images of prison abuse in Georgia was a major factor in the defeat of President Mikheil Saakashvili's United National Movement in the October parliamentary elections. Although Armenia itself faces a presidential vote in roughly four months, Justice Minister Hrayr Tovmasian's initial response to the hunger strike, now into their third week without food, was dismissive.

"Some of them who sew up their mouths already have the holes for it. It has become something very common," said Tovmasian at an October 31 press briefing. "Just like girls pierce their ears and wear earrings, they sew up their mouths."

Outraged, some civil society activists sent thread and needle to Tovmasian, demanding the minister's resignation, and that he try sewing his own eyes and mouth shut. Human rights activist Avetik Ishkhanian, head of the Helsinki Committee, which monitors Armenia's 11 penitentiaries, stressed that "if [prisoners] are now talking and resorting to extremes, that means they have hit the bottom."

Unofficial "[p]rison rules are so strict that convicts usually keep silent not to become outcasts," Ishkhanian added.

Ombudsman Karen Andreasian agreed. "People resort to self-harm as an act of ultimate despair and the minister should be seriously

worried not to let such things become common," Andreasian told EurasiaNet.org.

In a 2011 report, a group of 10 prison observers cited "lawlessness and prison overcrowding" as critical problems confronting Armenia's prisons. [Editor's Note: The observer group was financed by the Open Society Foundation Armenia, part of the Open Society Foundations network. EurasiaNet.org operates under the auspices of the New-York-City-based Open Society Foundations, a separate part of that network.]

The report describes conditions as "humiliat-

Human rights activist Avetik Ishkhanian, head of the Helsinki Committee, which monitors Armenia's 11 penitentiaries, stressed that "if [prisoners] are now talking and resorting to extremes, that means they have hit the bottom."

ing" at Nubarashen, Armenia's largest prison, located outside Yerevan, where four of the hunger-strikers are confined. The prison is designed to hold a maximum of 1,200 detainees, but currently contains an estimated 1,400 people. "The conditions are really intolerable: 20 inmates live in 30-40 square meters [of space], with not enough bedding, so that people sleep in shifts," said human-rights lawyer Robert Revazian, a member of the monitoring group.

A 2011 amnesty by President Serge Sargsian freed 400 of Armenia's prisoners, "but it was a short-term solution because soon the pardoned got replaced by new prisoners," said human-rights advocate Artur Sakunts, director of the Helsinki Citizen Association's office in the northern city of Vanadzor.

"Some 90 percent of defendants get sent to prison before a court ruling," said Sakunts, referring to a practice prevalent in neighboring

Georgia and Azerbaijan as well.

Armenia's government says it is prioritizing the issue of prison conditions, and officials contend that a four-year strategy will solve the prison-overpopulation problem by 2017. But rights activists are skeptical. Armenia has carried out prison reforms repeatedly since 1991, when it declared independence from the Soviet Union, with few tangible results, they say.

First Deputy Justice Minister Grigor Muradian asserts that the coming reforms will take "structural steps embracing all directions." For example, to tackle overcrowding and "help convicts reintegrate" back into society, probation will be introduced as an alternative to incarceration, Muradian said. In addition, the practice of pre-trial detention will be implemented only in cases of extreme necessity, the ministry says.

Parliament, in turn, is working on a package of reform proposals, but details are not yet available. The reform ideas are scheduled to be publicly presented November 20.

Prosperous Armenia Party MP Naira Zohrabian, chair of parliament's Committee on European Integration, one of the bodies meeting with European monitors, agrees that "the prisons are in a sad and deplorable state." Zohrabian also asserts that parliament is determined to "take the necessary steps to fix" matters. While problems with sanitation, food supplies and adequate medical care can be resolved relatively quickly, "structural" issues will require more time, she added, without elaboration.

Human-rights activists aren't necessarily cheered by such comments. Ishkhanian and Sakunts both suggested that resolute statements about addressing issues could just be electoral cycle rhetoric, adding that "lawmaker's" proactive approach is only temporary."

Editor's note:

(Gayane Abrahamyan is a reporter for ArmeniaNow.com in Yerevan. This piece was written for Eurasia.net.)



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