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Sargisian Urges Turkey to 'Repent'

MARSEILLE, France (RFE/RL) – President Serge Sargisian has urged Turkey to “repent” for the World War I-era genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and expressed confidence that Ankara will eventually recognize them as genocide.

“We believe that Turkey must repent,” he said during a visit to Marseille late on Wednesday.



President Serge Sargisian address leaders and members of the Armenian community in Marseille, France.

“That is neither a precondition nor a desire to exact revenge. Turkey must come face to face with its history,” he said. “One day Turkey’s leadership will find the strength to reassess its



FULL TEXT OF PRESIDENT’S SPEECH

Below is the full text of President Serge Sargisian’s speech in Marseille:

I thank the mayor of Marseille and a great friend of the Armenian people, Jean-Claude Gaudin, for this warm reception and a wonderful gathering. Moreover, I am also thankful to him for his undying devotion to the Armenian people and Armenian cause.

During each visit to the Armenian communities abroad, I am overwhelmed with pride because I see the measure of success that our compatriots have achieved.

Marseille truly has a special role not only in the history of the Armenian Diaspora but also in the history of the Armenian nation. One of the greatest seaports of the Mediterranean, Marseille had accepted the exiles, the people who had gone through human provisions but had not lost their faith in humanity and creation.

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approaches to the Armenian Genocide,” he added, speaking at an official reception organized in his honor by Marseille’s Mayor Jean-Claude Gaudin and attended by prominent members of the local Armenian community. (See full text of

speech, starting above.)

“Sooner or later Turkey, which considers itself a European country, will have a truly European leadership that will bow its head at the Tsitsernakabert [genocide] see FRANCE, page 3



President Serge Sargisian, left, with Pope Benedict XVI

Pope Meets Sargisian, Hails ‘Good Relations’ with Armenia

ROME (RFE/RL) – Pope Benedict XVI met with President Serge Sargisian on Monday to discuss ways of deepening what the Vatican described as “good relations” existing between the Roman Catholic Church and Armenia.

Sargisian also had a separate meeting at the Vatican with Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone and visited the Armenian Catholic church of St. Nicholas in Rome during a working trip to Italy and the Holy See.

“In the course of the cordial discussions, and having expressed great pleasure at the good relations that exist between the Holy See and the Republic of Armenia, the parties exchanged views on the role that the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Catholic Church play in society, and the contribution they both make to the common good,” the official Vatican Information Service said in a statement.

“Attention also turned to the importance of the country’s Christian heritage, and of the commitment to educating the new generations in fundamental values,” read the statement.

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Lebanon, Armenia Sign New Bilateral Agreements

BEIRUT (*The Daily Star*) – Lebanese officials signed agreements with their Armenian counterparts in Yerevan Friday in an effort to bolster ties between the two countries.

Ministers from both countries signed cooperation agreements in the fields of education, environment, industry and tourism following a wide-ranging meeting between President Michel Sleiman and President Serge Sargisian at the Presidential Palace in the Armenian capital.

An official delegation of members of parliament and ministers headed by Sleiman began a three-day visit to Armenia Wednesday and returned to Beirut this weekend.

“I held a lengthy discussion with President Serge Sargisian and we discussed the means to strengthen the relations between our

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President Michel Sleiman, left, and President Serge Sargisian (*Daily Star* photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Istanbul Court Gets Phone Records in Hrant Dink Case

ISTANBUL (ArmRadio.am) – An Istanbul court finally received the phone records requested from Turkey’s Telecommunications Directorate (TIB) in the case of Hrant Dink, the Turkish-Armenian journalist assassinated in 2007, *Hurriyet Daily News* reports.

The TIB had initially refused to comply with the court’s request, claiming the demand would amount to a “violation of privacy.” In recent months, the TIB had continued dragging its feet by advancing other objections to the request to release the phone records relevant to the case.

The TIB finally agreed to the court’s request and sent the records last week.

Dink was the chief editor for the weekly *Agos*, a paper published in both Turkish and Armenian. He was shot in front of his office in January 2007.

Gunman Ogun Samast was sentenced to 22 years in prison last month for the murder.

Turkey Alarmed by French Genocide Bill

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The new bill on penalizing the denial of the Armenian Genocide will be discussed at the French Senate on December 19. The bill envisages one year of imprisonment and a 45,000 euro fine in case of denial of the Armenian Genocide in the territory of France.

Nor Haratch newspaper writes that the Foreign Ministry of Turkey has sent a written statement to France urging not to make “an irreversible mistake” by ratifying the bill penalizing the denial of the Armenian Genocide.

On December 7 the Committee of Laws of the French Senate unanimously adopted the bill presented by the UMP party and its advocates October 21.

Aznavour Shares Concerns about Armenia

MOSCOW (ArmeniaNow) – French-Armenian singer and songwriter Charles Aznavour performed at a concert in the Kremlin on December 12. The 87-year-old was visiting Moscow as part of his farewell “Aznavour Toujours” world tour before he leaves the stage for good.

Aznavour took the occasion to lash out at conditions in Armenia. He said, “My country is now facing an internal genocide. I consider it to be politically unacceptable. Not letting Armenia breathe, the government is depriving its own country of the young, making them leave. And in that respect, the issue has stopped being only political, it has become universal. It has to be solved.”

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenia Has Received \$51 Million in Humanitarian Aid in 2011

YEREVAN (*Vestnik Kavkaza*) – From January until October 2011, Armenia received 3,858.3 tons of goods totaling \$ 51.1 million in humanitarian aid, News-Armenia quotes the National Statistical Services as saying.

Of that amount, 39.5 percent of the aid arrived from the US, China sent 22.1 percent, Switzerland 6.2 percent and France 3.8 percent. The CIS countries provided 4.3 percent of humanitarian aid in 2011, including 2.6 percent from Russia.

Russia and Armenia to Honor Each Other's Literature

YEREVAN (*Vestnik Kavkaza*) – The Armenian Writers' Union held a meeting here with its chairman, Levon Ananyan, and editor-in-chief of the *Literature of Armenia* magazine, Albert Nalbandian, with a representative of the Russian Federal Agency for the CIS and Compatriots Living Abroad, Victor Krivopuskov, the Russian ambassador to Armenia's advisor, News Armenia reports.

The participants looked back on achievements in 2011, including the fourth Russian Literature Festival in Armenia in October, in which more than half a million people were involved. They talked about prospects for cooperation in 2012 and agreed on Russia hosting the Decade of Armenian Literature and Armenia hosting the fifth Festival of Russian Literature.

Conscript Commits Suicide

STEPANAKERT, NKR (*Tert.am*) – A conscript has committed suicide at a military unit here, according to a press release by the Defense Army of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabagh.

Yurik Gevorg Nersisyan, 19, killed himself by the gun registered in his name during military service in front line outpost.

The incident took place at 12:40 p.m. on Wednesday.

An investigation is underway to find out the details of the incident.

Earlier on October 9, another Armenian conscript had committed suicide in an outpost in Armenia's north.

Armenian Children Are Disproportionately Poor

YEREVAN (*a1plus.am*) – According to official data, 41.4 percent of children in Armenia are considered poor, and 3.7 percent live in extreme poverty.

"If a person is poor and doesn't have the income for minimum living standards, then that is already a violation of a family's right," Member of Parliament Hakob Hakobyan said during a press conference this week.

The representatives from various fields related to children's issues this week gathered for a roundtable to discuss ways out of the current situation.

Hakobyan also said Armenia has achieved success in the social sphere, but the flaws are clear. "Compared to 2008, poverty has increased by 8 percent, and it is obvious that children's rights are violated."

Duryan also spoke about the recent cases of child molestation.

Minister of Education and Science Armen Ashotyan said he was concerned with the education of children of socially disadvantaged families.

"The attendance of socially vulnerable children to school is still a hot issue," Ashotyan declared. To solve that issue, the ministry and UNICEF will implement a new program to register children left out of school.

US Ambassador to Armenia Meets with Armenian Assembly Chair, Country Director

YEREVAN – Newly-appointed US Ambassador to Armenia John Heffern recently met with Armenian Assembly of America Board of Trustees Chairman Hirair Hovnanian and Country Director Armina Darbinian at the Assembly's Yerevan office.

In a broad-ranging discussion, Hovnanian underscored with the ambassador the need for ongoing US support for Armenia and Artsakh and focused in particular on the importance of economic development. Reviewing the positive and deepening US-Armenia relations, Hovnanian also expressed his concern about Turkey's decades-long blockade and its failure to live up to its commitment and establish normal relations with Armenia as envisioned in the Protocols signed between Armenia and Turkey in October of 2009.

Hovnanian and Darbinian also conveyed the importance that Armenia and the Armenian-American community attach to US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide. As part of his personal commitment to this objective, in 1996, Hovnanian founded the Armenian



Assembly Country Director Armina Darbinian, US Ambassador John Heffern and Assembly Chairman Hirair Hovnanian

National Institute, dedicated to the affirmation of the Armenian Genocide.

"I very much appreciate the ambassador's readiness to work with the Armenian Assembly and other like-minded organizations, especially his receptivity for ways in which America can assist Armenia's economic development," stated Assembly Chairman

Hirair Hovnanian. "This is critically important for the betterment of all Armenians."

Darbinian expressed her confidence that "Ambassador Heffern will greatly contribute to strengthening relations between Armenia and the United States through mutual cooperation in all important spheres."

US-Armenian Businessman Arrested for Tax Fraud

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A US businessman of Armenian descent and two of his local employees were arrested over the weekend on charges of "malevolently" evading 111 million drams (\$290,000) in taxes which their lawyers

State Revenue Committee (SRC). The SRC's investigative department questioned them as witnesses until recently.

The investigators claim that GH Storage Enterprise, which is owned by Hartounian's extended family, has engaged in tax evasion since 2009. A Yerevan court promptly allowed them on Saturday to keep the three suspects under pre-trial arrest for up to two months. They were released on Tuesday, December 13, with the charges still pending.

Their lawyers dismissed the charges as baseless at a news conference on Monday. One of them, Gevorg Chakmishian, noted that the arrests came shortly after Hartounian challenged the SRC allegations at Armenia's Administrative Court.

"Nareg Hartounian has repeatedly

stated that if the Administrative Court rules that the tax liabilities attributed to the company are legitimate and founded, he will pay those taxes in full," said Chakmishian.

He said his client could not have deliberately resorted to tax fraud.

Another attorney, Lernik Hovannisian, claimed that the businessman was arrested because the Hartounian family refused to sell a 34-percent share in a Yerevan company manufacturing watches to a group of government-linked individuals. He did not name the individuals.

The SRC could not be reached for further comment on Monday.

The high-profile arrests were condemned by some opposition figures in Yerevan and by many Diaspora Armenians. They emphasized the fact that Hartounian has for years financed charity projects in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh and promoted Armenian culture through his Yerevan-based Naregatsi Art Institute.

Hartounian's sympathizers also set up a Facebook group demanding his immediate release. More than 1,400 people had signed it by Monday evening.



Nareg Hartounian

strongly deny.

Nareg Hartounian and senior executives of his food-importing company GH Storage Enterprise, Ani Mnatsakanian and Artur Galstian, were charged after an inquiry conducted by Armenia's

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Sargisian's press office, for its part, said the president and the pope discussed "the large role in the society" played by the two churches. "They stressed the importance of bringing up generations in the spirit of Christian

values," it said in a statement.

The statement added that Sargisian and Bertone agreed on "the need to deepen bilateral high-level relations." It quoted the Armenian leader as thanking the Vatican for "preserving Armenian cultural heritage abroad."

There was no word on the 84-year-old pontiff's response to an official invitation to visit Armenia extended to him by Sargisian and Catholicos Karekin II, the supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, in 2008.

Benedict's predecessor, John Paul II, visited Armenia in 2001, paying tribute to "the glorious history of Christianity" in a country that was the first to adopt it as a state religion in 301. He also signed a joint declaration with Karekin that referred to the World War I-era mass killings of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire as "the first genocide

of the 20th century."

Unlike John Paul, Benedict has refrained from using the word "genocide" with respect to the deaths of some 1.5 million Ottoman Armenians. Receiving Karekin in the Vatican in 2008, he spoke instead of the "martyrdom" of the Armenian Church, one of the oldest in the world.

Incidentally, the pontiff, previously known as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger of Germany, chose the name of Pope Benedict XV who famously raised his voice in 1915 in defense of "the sorely afflicted Armenian people brought to the brink of annihilation" in Ottoman Turkey. John Paul presented the Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan with a picture of Benedict XV when he visited the adjacent memorial to the massacre victims in September 2001.

Omission

The name of the author of a piece on TEDx Yerevan from *National Geographic* Online, which was reprinted in the November 5 edition of the *Mirror-Spectator* was inadvertently left out. The story was written by Kara (Setian)Marston.



ARMENIA

Sargisian Urges Turkey to 'Repent'

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memorial in Yerevan,]" claimed the Armenian leader. "The sooner the better, but that is up to the Turkish people."

There was no immediate reaction to the remarks from Ankara, which vehemently denies that some 1.5 million Armenians were massacred by the Ottoman Turks in 1915-1918.

Successive Turkish governments have said that Armenians died in much smaller numbers and as a result of civil strife, rather than a premeditated government effort to exterminate a key Christian minority in the crumbling Ottoman Empire.

Turkish leaders reacted angrily after French President Nicolas Sarkozy urged them to stop denying the Genocide during an October visit to Armenia. "Collective denial is even worse than individual denial," Sarkozy said after laying flowers at the Tsitsernakabert memorial. He also implicitly threatened to enact a law that would make Armenian genocide denial a crime in France.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused Sarkozy of playing the anti-Turkish card to secure reelection next year and warned of serious damage to relations between France and Turkey.

By contrast, Sargisian was full of praise for the French leader. "We must simply be grateful to the wise president of this beautiful country," he said.

In his speech, Sargisian did not mention the future of the Turkish-Armenian normalization agreements signed two years ago. Earlier this year, he threatened to withdraw Yerevan's signature from the agreements if Ankara continues to make their parliamentary ratification contingent on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

FULL TEXT OF PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

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Many of those who had survived the Genocide established themselves in Marseille. Today, their descendants live here. Lives of your parents and ancestors were documented and presented artistically by Henri Verneuil in his movie, "Mother." The first episode of the movie shows how destitute Armenians, who didn't have shelter above their heads, follow in Marseille the court proceedings of Soghomon Tehlirian. Every piece of news from the process in Berlin reverberated with the Armenians gathered at the Marseille port. And those people rejoiced when the news of Tehlirian's acquittal reached them. It was not the rapture of revenge but the rapture of justice.

Every Armenian, not matter where he or she is – Armenia, Artsakh or Spyurk [diaspora], demands justice. We preach neither hatred nor revenge regardless of how those who deny the Armenian Genocide have been trying to lead us toward and compel us to do that. They simply underestimate us.

We were strong enough to survive the Great Yeghern, and now, we are strong enough to demand justice. After the elimination of our ancestors in their homeland, elimination of the memories of the Armenian Genocide is the last phase of that horrendous crime. But we are united, and we will never allow that.

The progressive world is with us and the mayor's speech, as well as the most recent events, has demonstrated quite clearly the position of France and her people regarding this issue. I would like to assure my compatriots that the recent visit of President Nicolas Sarkozy to Yerevan was as historic visit indeed, and not other state leader have spoken the words about our nation's pains, related to the Armenian-Turkish relations and the Genocide, and we should be grateful to the wise president of this glorious country.

We have no doubt that Turkey will repent. It is neither a precondition, nor an attempt to fire revenge. Turkey must face its own history. Sometime, the Turkish leadership will find strength and will reevaluate its approaches

toward the Armenian Genocide.

Our position had not altered and it is precise: We are ready to have normal relations with Turkey as it befits neighboring states.

working. In fact, a psychological barrier, which was impeding many in the diaspora, has been eliminated. I am stating with pleasure that many of the Diaspora Armenians are having an

already said, the honor of success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to share joyous



An overhead shot of President Serge Sargisian and members of the Armenian community in Marseille.

Neighboring states such as, for instance, Poland and Germany, whose Chancellor Willi Brandt, realizing the crimes of his own country, went down on his knees in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Sooner or later, Turkey, which views itself as a European country, will have a leadership which will be worthy of being called European and which will bow head at the Tsitsernakabert Memorial. The sooner, the better, however it's the prerogative of the people of Turkey. We don't force them; they should do it for the benefit of the Turkish people, just as Willi Brandt did for the German people.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As Mr. Mayor has said, my delegation has arrived to Marseille to participate at the convention of the European People's Party. Regardless of the anticipated and attained results, this is a considerable achievement on Armenia's road toward Europe. I would like to tell my compatriots that today the president of the European People's Party in the Great Hall, while handing me a EPP badge, said that we are members of the European family. It is a substantial achievement for us. It is also important for us that such a momentous event has taken place in Marseille – a city which is very dear to us.

We have stated that a move toward Europe is our priority. In recent years, we have registered considerable success in that area. The European Union has not only become one of our most important partners in the world but also plays a significant role inside Armenia, assisting us in the implementation of the reforms and in strengthening economic and overall stability of the country.

We are also working hard to ensure Armenia's worthy place and role in the pan-European structures, and it is true from the viewpoint of the entire political structure. Today, the political field of Armenia also becomes European, adopting European values, and I hope, the work style too.

And with this regard also, I would like to express special thanks to our European partners and, particularly, to the president of France – a great friend of the Armenian people, for supporting our efforts.

Who, if not the Armenians of Europe, can help us, the Motherland in fulfilling this task? Today, the institute of dual citizenship is really

active and direct participation in Armenia's life. I have a little problem in articulating this word – Diaspora Armenian – because it sounds uncanny to me. You see, Armenians are Armenians, no matter where they live.

Of course, it is not easy. It is not easy to leave familiar places and start something new in the native but also unfamiliar Motherland. Thus, it is necessary to freely and openly discuss the existing problems so that European rules of the game prevail in Armenia. To point out the faults is only half the job. We have registered considerable progress but we also have well-known problems, issues. It is necessary to look jointly for the ways to solve them and to share the honor of success and responsibility.

We invite you all to participate in the noble work of solving Armenia's problems. We address our relatives in Spyurk as our family members. And by the right of blood we should discuss the existing problems together. We should discuss the problems and not shy away from our share of responsibility. And I am, of course, the first person, who's responsible for these faults. But I want you to take part, to share with us the responsibility and, as I have

news with you. I am sure many of you know, but maybe not all of you: on the eve of this visit, I signed a decree on the establishment of the Consulate General of the Republic of Armenia in Marseille. From now on, Yerevan and Marseille will be linked by another strong brotherly bond and along with the traditional Armenian establishments you will have also the Consulate General of our country. And, I certainly thank Mr. Sirmakes for his participation.

Establishment of the Consulate General in the context of close Armenian-French relations and versatile cooperation will make rendering of consular services more efficient. I would like to conclude by once again expressing gratitude to France and the Armenian-French community, residents of Marseille and, particularly, to the Armenians of Marseille for their attitude, their fervor and for their success because any Armenian, anywhere in the world, who has become successful makes Armenia even more recognizable. Thank you very much. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Mr. Jean-Claude Gaudin for everything he has done and I am truly pleased to invite him to conduct a visit to Yerevan.

Lebanon, Armenia Sign New Bilateral Agreements

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countries and our people in different areas," said Sleiman during a joint news conference with Sargisian, who presented Sleiman with the country's Medal of Honor.

"We also discussed the current regional and international developments," Sleiman added.

Speaking at the conference, Sleiman reiterated Lebanon's full support for stability in Armenia and the South Caucasus region, which has seen sporadic military conflict among Armenian and Azeri troops in the past 17 years.

"I also reiterated to President Sargisian that on the 20th anniversary of Armenia's independence, Lebanon would continue to stand by Armenia and would support finding diplomatic solutions to conflicts that persist with some of its neighbors ... especially the ongoing conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh," said Sleiman.

In a question-and-answer session with reporters, Sleiman said that the Lebanese government would stand in support of the people in Nagorno-Karabagh. "We hope that this conflict will be solved based on international law and based on the right of the people to self-determination," Sleiman said.

Earlier last Friday Sleiman and the delegation, accompanied by Armenian Foreign Affairs Minister Eduard Nalbanian, visited the Tsitsernakabert Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan to honor the victims of 1915 Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire.



ARMENIA

Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry Makes History by Hosting First European Federation of Immunogenetics Meeting in Armenia

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles-based Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) reached a new milestone this month when it hosted the first-ever European Federation of Immunogenetics (EFI) Training and Educational Meeting to be held in Armenia.

The high-profile symposium took place in Yerevan during November 18-19 at the Ani Plaza Hotel. Featuring world-renowned speakers from Europe and elsewhere, it brought together close to 150 doctors and experts in the fields of immunogenetics and bone marrow transplantation. The meeting was attended by participants representing more than 15 countries from Europe, the region, and the CIS including Armenia, Iran, Georgia, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine and others.

With sessions dedicated to recent advances in HLA (human leukocyte antigen) immunogenetics, stem cell and organ transplantation, and HLA-disease associations, the conference functioned as a global forum for sharing scientific expertise and expanding the knowledge base of participants. As importantly, the event fostered international medical cooperation and helped pave the way for the advancement of immunogenetics in various countries. The conference was organized by ABMDR, under the auspices and major sponsorship of EFI. Other top sponsors of the event included Fruitful Armenia, Dr. Arpenik Avagyan and Dr. Evgeni Sokurenko.

The selection of Armenia as the host country of the EFI meeting was made in January of this year. As announced by the EFI leadership, the main factors in selecting Armenia were the scope and quality of ABMDR's work. Specifically, the federation cited ABMDR's HLA tissue typing laboratory in Yerevan as the only, and EFI-accredited, facility of its kind in the entire region.



Dr. Frieda Jordan addresses the conference.

At the opening ceremony of the conference, welcome remarks were delivered by Dr. Ara Babloyan, chairman of the Armenian National Assembly's Committee on Social Affairs, Healthcare, and Environmental Protection; Dr. Sergey Khachatryan, deputy minister of health; Dr. Ilias Doxiadis, president of EFI; Dr. Bella Kocharyan, honorary chair of ABMDR; Dr. Frieda Jordan, president of ABMDR; and Dr. Sevak Avagyan, executive director of ABMDR.

As Dr. Avagyan spoke of ABMDR's accomplishments and goals, he stated: "Our tissue typing operation has had the challenge of responding to a tremendous influx in prospective bone marrow stem cell donors due to the great success of our efforts, both in the US and throughout the diaspora. Last year, which marked our registry's 10th anniversary, recruitment teams registered an astounding 5,000 donors within a short span. This is, of course, a good challenge to have, as we currently have more than 1,500 patient families seeking a donor match from our registry."

Avagyan's aim of reaching out to larger numbers of patients struck by life-threatening blood-related diseases was echoed by Dr. Bella Kocharian. "We view the EFI meeting in Yerevan as a stepping stone toward the establishment of a bone marrow transplantation center in Armenia," she said.

Jordan addressed conference participants, underscoring the significance of the EFI meeting in Armenia. "Six

years ago," she said, "we welcomed our first EFI colleagues to Yerevan, when they came to inspect our laboratory operations. A few months after their visit, we learned that ABMDR was granted EFI accreditation – ours was the first laboratory of its kind in the CIS to receive it. Now we experience another first for the registry, and for Armenia: hosting an international scientific symposium of this caliber is an honor, and – we hope – an opportunity to continue to 'surprise' our colleagues with the quality of our work and the progress we have made."

"We owe much of our success to plain hard work and the dedication of the ABMDR staff and volunteers," Jordan continued. "But we also owe it to colleagues such as yourselves who, for many years before us, have created the models for success and set the standards for our work. And now, perhaps, we are in a position to 'give back' to our colleagues."

Speaking on behalf of EFI, Doxiadis had praise for ABMDR as he addressed the attendees. Citing ABMDR's global efforts in the past several months to launch the EFI meeting in Yerevan, Doxiadis applauded the registry's success in helping provide an international platform where foremost immunogenetics specialists could share their expertise with colleagues from a diversity of countries. Doxiadis expressed hope that the meeting would lead to new avenues of cooperation between current EFI members such as ABMDR and other conference participants.

Following the conclusion of the meeting, EFI Region 8 chair Dr. Chryssa Papasteriades congratulated ABMDR for hosting the event. "This has been a fantastic symposium," she said. "The top-notch scientific program, the excellent coordination, the memorable social events that complemented the various sessions, and, above all, the wonderful diversity of participants as well as the friendly, infinitely supportive atmosphere resulted in an extraordinary success."

Ruling Party Sees Election 'Cooperation' With Partners

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A top representative of President Serge Sargisian's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) said on Friday that it expects to work together with its two junior partners in the governing coalition during the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

Galust Sahakian said the HHK, the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) and the Orinats Yerkir Party are now looking for concrete ways of that cooperation.

"The political coalition is an alliance," he said. "We just need to determine the form of that strategy. So we are now cooperating and will be cooperating in the forthcoming elections."

Vartan Bostanjian, a senior BHK parliamentarian, gave more weight to this announcement. "I can see that possibility," he said.

The remarks came after weeks of reports of tensions between the HHK and the BHK stemming from the latter's apparent reluctance to reaffirm support for Sargisian's reelection in 2013. BHK leader Gagik Tsarukian has reportedly been under strong pressure from the presidential administration.

Some Yerevan newspapers claimed this week that Tsarukian is now ready to not only endorse Sargisian but also contest the May 2012 elections jointly with the HHK and Orinats Yerkir.

Sahakian, who leads the HHK's parliamentary faction, and Heghine Bisharian, deputy chairwoman of Orinats Yerkir, did not rule out the possibility of the three governing parties fielding a joint list of candidates. Sahakian said the decision would be made "after January."

In a joint declaration issued in February, the three parties already pledged not to undercut each other in the parliamentary elections.

A possible pre-election deal among them would preclude any cooperation between the BHK and the main opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK). HAK leader Levon Ter-Petrosian suggested last month his bloc should consider joining forces with Tsarukian's party if it leaves the government.

The BHK has still not commented on that statement which was made during Tsarukian's absence from Armenia. Tsarukian's spokesman, Khachik Galstian, said on Friday that the party received no formal offers from Ter-Petrosian and therefore only "took note" of what he said.



From left: ABMDR executive director Dr. Sevak Avagyan, ABMDR President Dr. Frieda Jordan and ABMDR Honorary Chair Dr. Bella Kocharian



Conference participants with EFI Board members and ABMDR staff



INTERNATIONAL

Armenians in India Celebrate 20th Anniversary of Karabagh Independence

KOLKATA – On December 10, the day of Independence Referendum of the Republic of Nagorno Karabagh, the Armenian Community of India and Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy, Kolkata celebrated the 20th Anniversary of Artaskh through a special program titled, “I Love You Karabagh.”

The students of the college expressed their love for Artsakh through patriotic literary works in a program held in the school auditorium. The children recited “Karabkh” and “My Karabagh” written by Gurgen Gabrielian. Thereafter “Karabaghi Barbare”, “Hayots Bardin” by Silva Kaputikian and other poems dedicated to Artsakh were recited. The choir presented Aravot Lusaber by Komitas, Getashen by S. Sahakyan, Karabaghtsin by A. Hekimian, Yerkir Hayreni by R. Amirkhanian, Hayastan by A. Smbatian and other patriotic songs. The students also staged a beautiful victory dance to the music of Artsakh by A. Gevorkian.

The program concluded with the bless-



Cutting the cake in honor of the Karabagh anniversary

ings and benediction of Very Rev. Khoren Hovhannisyan, Ppastor of Armenians in India and Manager of Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy. Father Khoren congratulated the students, teachers and the community members on the occasion and remarked that the independence of Artsakh is invaluable for the entire Armenian nation and in particular com-

mented, “The victory of Karabagh and the declaration of independence bear absolute importance and significance for the Armenians worldwide - the stereotype of a genocide victim was obliterated, the embedded image of a martyr Armenian disappeared and the victorious Armenian emerged as a beacon-light ushering in a new hope of United Armenia. It is still early to be carried away by the delight of the victory. The dark clouds over the homeland are still looming large. The military victory gained with blood must be strengthened by the war of industry - in the war of economic development where every Armenian in the world is responsible...”

After the program, the Church Committee of Holy Nazareth hosted a grand lunch for everyone present.

Turkish Border Businesses Miss the Syrian Neighbors

By Dan Bilefsy

GAZIANTEP, Turkey (*New York Times*) – In the old bazaar of this ancient city, long entwined with Syria, the loud chatter of Syrians’ bartering in Arabic has given way to unfamiliar silence. In the old bazaar of this ancient city, long entwined with Syria, the loud chatter of Syrians’ bartering in Arabic has given way to unfamiliar silence.

There is no sign of the 40,000 Syrians who trekked each month to the gleaming Sanko Park shopping mall here to buy designer headscarves or discounted Gucci shoes. There is no more need for public announcements in both Turkish and Arabic. Many came from Syria’s largest city, Aleppo, just 60 miles away.

“We miss the Syrians,” said Ercan Nacaroglu, surveying his empty jewelry store, and adding, “We hope the crisis will stop, because it is killing the local economy.”

Only a year ago, Turkey and Syria were close allies, as Turkey’s governing Muslim-inspired Justice and Development Party sought to expand the country’s economic influence and grow into a regional power. Their 500-mile border is Turkey’s longest; during the Ottoman Empire, Gaziantep was part of Aleppo Province. For its part, Syria remains suffused with Turkish influence, from Ottoman architecture to the continuing popularity of Turkish soap operas. Trade between the two countries had more than tripled since 2006, to \$2.5 billion in 2010.

Turkish officials tried for months to persuade President Bashar al-Assad to halt the violent crackdown against a civilian uprising that began in March, but finally, and emphatically, turned against the Syrian government.

In combination with sanctions imposed by the Arab League, the European Union and the United States, Turkey’s own tough measures – including freezing the Syrian government’s assets – are slowly beginning to choke Assad’s rule.

But businesspeople here complain that the rupture cuts both ways.

On Monday, more than 150 Turkish truck drivers protested after they were forced to leave their vehicles in Syria and walk to the Turkish border; Damascus had closed down its crossing near Urfa, in eastern Turkey. The drivers told Turkey’s NTV news channel that Syrian looters

had stolen their tires and batteries. Turkish companies, which relied on Syria as a transit route to the Middle East, have begun bypassing Syria, shipping goods via Iraq and the Mediterranean instead.

Syria last week unilaterally suspended its free trade agreement with Turkey, retaliating to the Turkish sanctions by introducing taxes of up to 30 cents on Turkish goods entering Syria. Turkey did the same.

Here in this large industrial center of 1.7 million people, everyone from olive vendors to owners of large textile conglomerates complained that the shifting geopolitics was proving bad for business, even if, as Turkey’s economy minister, Zafer Caglayan, said last week, Syria suffers more than Turkey, which is its second-largest export market after China.

Turkish sellers are harder hit than buyers: imports from Syria amounted to just 0.3 percent of Turkey’s total last year, while 10.6 percent of Syria’s came from Turkey.

Turkey’s decision to become the voice of regional outrage against the Assad government has also divided the identities of some in a city where Turkish and Arab culture have commingled for centuries.

Emre Hadimogullari, 22, an electrical engineering student in Gaziantep, is so irate at the Turkish government’s policy in Syria that he has grown a long beard in protest. Hadimogullari is an Alawite whose grandparents found themselves Turkish citizens when his hometown, Samandag, formerly part of Syria, was ceded to Turkey in 1923. Hadimogullari expressed a kinship with Assad, also an Alawite, and said he believed that the reports of atrocities in Syria were exaggerated. Turkey, he insisted, should stop playing the part of regional police officer.

“Turkey should mind its own business and stop interfering in another country’s affairs,” he said.

Huseyin Qebed, a marketing analyst from Aleppo and one of few Syrians remaining in Gaziantep, said the crisis had not harmed his relationship with his Turkish friends, though these days he avoided talking about politics. The Turkish sanctions, he added, were harming all Syrians, including the demonstrators whom Turkey purported to support. “The sanctions won’t solve anything,” he said. “Costs are rising for everyone.”

Turkish businesspeople here also questioned the wisdom of sanctions, even as they acknowledged that Mr. Assad’s bru-

ality could not go unanswered.

Cengiz Akinal, vice president of Akinal Bella, a large shoe manufacturer that imports bows for its shoes from artisans in Syria, said that the Turkish tax increase on goods from Syria was forcing him to import bows from China. On the upside, he said, Arab League countries boycotting Syrian shoe companies were turning to his.

Akinal, whose ancestors imported leather from Syria during the Ottoman Empire and produced shoes for the sultans, said that Akinal Bella, which exports about 70 percent of its shoes to Middle Eastern countries, had benefited handsomely from Turkey’s courtship of the Arab world. But he warned that Turkey’s newly assertive stance could backfire.

“I want the rebellion in Syria to be over,” he said. “Bad relations with Middle East countries are bad for business.”

Some businesspeople said they expected to wait years before Syria and other countries upended in the Arab Spring, like Egypt and Libya, would stop being buffeted by unrest, rebuild their economies and become attractive markets.

Mehmet Ali Mutafoğlu is vice president of the Akteks Group, a large textile company that has two factories in Syria making products such as synthetic yarn and cotton. He sells to the Syrian market as well as to Europe and the Middle East. Syria’s unstable economy had depressed demand there by 40 percent since March, when the uprising began.

Mr. Mutafoğlu, who still travels regularly to his Syrian factories, said he had noticed a conspicuous cooling of many Syrians’ ardor for Turkey, which had been intense just months ago, as Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan presented a modern Muslim face to the world. “Before the crisis, Syrians loved us,” he said. “If Erdogan had run for election in Syria, he would have won 99 percent of the vote. Now he would get 1 percent.”

Fetullah Askin, general manager of Altinoluk, a travel agency here that used to run four buses daily between Gaziantep and Aleppo, said that now there were none, due to security concerns. To offset the decline, Askin is promoting trips to Mecca.

Despite the economic sacrifices, Askin said that the repression of the Assad regime justified the Turkish government’s taking action. “Syrians are our brothers,” he said. “When one brother makes a mistake, we have to try and help him fix it.”

International News

Armenian Khachkar Unveiled in Rome

ROME (PanARMENIAN.Net) – On December 13, as part of his visit to Italy, Armenian President Serge Sargsian met with Rome Mayor Gianni Alemanno.

During the meeting, Sargsian stressed the friendly ties and productive cooperation between the two states.

He added that Rome will host an opening ceremony of 13th-century Khachkar exhibition as a symbol of Armenian-Italian friendship and means to familiarize that nation with Armenian culture.

Later, the mayors of Yerevan and Rome unveiled an Armenian Khachkar, with Sargsian present for the ceremony.

Armenia’s Yezidi Urge UN Support for Compatriots in Iraq

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Many members of Armenia’s Yezidi minority held a rally in front of the United Nations Office in Yerevan to protest oppression of their compatriots by Iraqi Kurds.

The protesters addressed a letter to UN, urging international community to support Iraq’s Yezidi.

The Yezidi are primarily a Kurdish-speaking people living in the Mosul region of northern Iraq, with additional communities in Armenia, Turkey and Syria in decline since the 1990s, with their members emigrating to Europe, especially to Germany.

Iran Constructs New Power Line with Armenia and Georgia

TEHRAN (news.am) – A new power transmission line is being constructed in order to increase the volume of electricity exchange between Iran, Armenia and Georgia, and eventually with Europe. In an interview with the Mehr agency, Iran’s Deputy Minister of Energy Mohammad Behzad explained that the power line is being constructed in order to provide Georgia with electricity at first and later Russia and other European countries.

The power line currently exchanging electricity between Armenia and Iran has a capacity of 230 kilowatts. The new power line will allow Iran to send electricity to Georgia through Armenia. Currently Georgia gets electricity from Iran through Azerbaijan.

Iran is currently exporting electricity to Turkmenistan, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Problem of Armenian Refugees from Azerbaijan Presented in Geneva

GENEVA (Arminfo) – An Armenian delegation, led by Vahram Kajoyan of Armenia’s Foreign Ministry took part in the 100th Council of the International Organization for Migration, which took place here December 5-7.

The press service of Armenia’s Foreign Ministry reports that Kajoyan presented Armenia’s programs to control migration and to introduce biometric passports and ID cards. He said that the Armenian authorities have established a center for support of migrants, which provides people wishing to work abroad with necessary information.

Kajoyan also attended the December 7-8 ministerial meeting dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The meeting was attended by delegations from 145 countries.

In his speech Kajoyan pointed out the role of Fridtjof Nansen in supporting the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. He said that Azerbaijan’s war against the people of Nagorno-Karabagh forced thousands of Armenians to leave their homes. Over 400,000 Armenian refugees have been given shelter in Armenia since 1988.

Community News

Azerbaijan Plants Flag in DC Lobbying Scene

By Kevin Bogardus

WASHINGTON (*The Hill*) – A new nonprofit supporting Azerbaijan is setting up shop here to provide a counterbalance to the Armenian-American lobby.

The Azerbaijan America Alliance hosted its coming-out party Tuesday night at the Reserve Officers Association on Capitol Hill, holding a reception meant to serve as an introduction to power players on Capitol Hill and Embassy Row. Several lawmakers were expected to attend, along with the ambassador for Azerbaijan to the United States.

Founded by Anar Mammadov, a young Azerbaijani businessman and son of the country's transportation minister, the alliance hopes to highlight the ties between Azerbaijan and the United States, whether it's through energy or national-security interests.

Mammadov said he loves his country and wants to do his duty to help it.

"I think [the Alliance] can bring these two countries together," Mammadov said. "I think America is one of the biggest friends of Azerbaijan."

The one other individual listed in the leadership of the Alliance is Khayal Sharifzade, the group's chairman. Sharifzade is the former CEO and chairman of the Bank of Azerbaijan.

Sharifzade is also a member of the board of directors of ZQAN Holdings. Mammadov is founder, president and chairman of that company, which is based in Baku, Azerbaijan, and has interests in oil and gas, construction and telecommunications.

According to Justice Department records filed in May, the alliance signed a \$2.4 million, year-long contract with the lobby firm Fabiani & Co. to conduct outreach in the United States. Jim Fabiani, a longtime GOP lobbyist and former chairman and CEO of Cassidy & Associates, is leading the effort.

The Azerbaijan group is playing catch-up with Armenia, which has had a lobbying presence in Washington for decades.

Lobbyists for the Alliance will likely highlight that Azerbaijan is now a member of the United Nations' Security Council and is contributing troops to NATO forces in Afghanistan. The nation, which is in the Caucasus region on the Europe-Asia border, has a wealth of energy resources, helping to provide oil and natural gas to Europe.

The country's poor human-rights record could prevent the group from gaining much traction, however. The State Department's 2010 Human Rights Report on Azerbaijan said the country has flawed elections, allows arbitrary arrests for political reasons and restricts the press.

"Once again we're seeing millions being spent by a foreign government entity – in this case, the son of billionaire Azerbaijani Transport Minister Ziya Mammadov – to whitewash his country's abysmal human-rights record and aggression against Karabagh and Armenia," said Aram Hamparian, executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America, in a statement.

Here in Washington, the alliance will have an agenda to push.

One item will be lobbying on the Freedom Support Act, a 1992 law passed by Congress to aid former Soviet provinces in their transition to democracy. One provision of that law bans direct aid to the Azerbaijani government, which the Alliance will work to reverse.

The Alliance is looking to expand and is advertising to hire an executive director for the group. But once it settles down in Washington, the group can expect a rough reception from its Armenian-American counterparts.

"It doesn't change the fact that the Azeri government continues to make threats against the people of Nagorno-Karabagh," said Bryan Ardouny, executive director of the Armenian Assembly of America.



Gregory Janian is surrounded by intricate clocks he has crafted.

Armenian Clockmaker Keeps Pace with Time

SOMERVILLE, Mass. – Gregory Janian has time on his hands. Plenty of it.

One visit to his home will unveil a plethora of exotic and intricate timepieces, each crafted by hand. Had it not been for a recent bout with carpal tunnel syndrome, the 86-year-old immigrant would still be churning out his clocks.

Big clocks and small. Winchester types. Clocks with revolving apostles and Gothic motifs with frescos. Roman cathedrals have their place, along with hummingbirds, horses, an eagle-catching fish, florals, a great Barrington and a dollhouse grandfather clock that is particularly eye-popping. The scroll sawing and fretwork are impeccable.

He has got 200 of them displayed throughout his home, all in working order, from top to bottom, side to side. Pendulums move. Janian serves up another clock. That has been his mantra over the past two decades. He has given away just as many as he has kept.

"What you see here is a labor of love," said his wife, Alice. "He has turned our home into a working museum. If anything, it's become his passion during retirement. He'd go to his workshop in the morning and stay there for hours. Greg would lose all track of time working on his clocks. I admire his handiwork."

Before the clocks came dollhouses. They were almost too fancy for children. Janian turned his miniature homes into collectibles and ultimately heirlooms with wiring and hand-made furnishings. One was so big, a cherry-picker was hired to move the piece through a balcony. A Federal-style home came with 18 rooms proportionately formed.

When that passion subsided, Janian took to inlaid wood pictures. A striking "Last Supper" reproduction with 500 wood pieces held its venerable place inside my mother's bedroom. He complemented that with backgammon boards that found their way into the hands of relatives.

One was a memorial to my brother, which was ultimately finished by his son working in tandem with Janian.

"Maybe I'm a bit of a perfectionist," he admitted. "Whenever a project is completed, whether it was dollhouses, inlaid wood or clocks, the satisfaction runs deep."

Like Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*, Janian also has a masterpiece that is currently in abeyance because of the disease that has wrecked his hands. It is a clock being patterned after one in France. He has taught a granddaughter the art and hopes she will finish it someday.

The clocks date back to the 1990s when Janian visited a museum in the Midwest and saw a variety of them displayed.

see CLOCKS, page 7

UMD Entrepreneurship And Innovation Program Students Join White House 'I Am an Entrepreneur' Event

COLLEGE PARK, Md. – The success of the University of Maryland's entrepreneurship programs recently drew invitations to 35 students from the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program (EIP) to visit the White House earlier this month as part of the "I Am an Entrepreneur" event.

Sponsored by the Young Entrepreneur Council and MTV, the event served as a platform for more than 150 aspiring and current entrepreneurs from universities across the country to learn from successful young entrepreneurs. YEC founder Scott Gerber kicked off the event, while MTV's Sway Calloway moderated a series of panels featuring business leaders and entrepreneurs such as Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian and Dina Kaplan, co-founder of blip.tv.

"This was the most inspiring entrepreneurship-related event I have been to," said EIP student and marketing and psychology major Melinda Pandiangan. "The sheer amount of wealth and talent they had packed into one room made everyone want to go out and do something, not just talk about it. They gave you the impression that anything really was possible."

Students also recognized the White House's support for the event.

"During a time when people are losing faith in government, it is reassuring to know that the administration recognizes the importance of entrepreneurship in growing the economy and creating new jobs," said EIP student and computer science and finance major Raja Ayyagari. "The advice from the speakers was realistic and appropriate. They demonstrated that starting a company is a practical and reachable goal for college youth."

Students gained direct access to entrepreneurs during networking time after the event. "They were amazingly open and approachable," said Pandiangan. "You could ask them questions about their personal lives and how they balance things. It was both humbling and encouraging."

"Entrepreneurship is baked into our DNA," said Ronnie Cho, the White House's associate director for the office of public engagement. "It is a proud tradition we have in this country. It is my belief the folks in this room, this generation, will unleash innovations, launch companies that will change the world."

Deukmejian Receives Lifetime Humanitarian Award at EyeCare Project Gala

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. – Nearly 250 guests attended the ninth annual Newport gala of the Armenian EyeCare Project (AECPP), which took place this year on Saturday, November 19, at the Balboa Bay Club. Funds raised at this formal fundraising event will be used for ongoing medical missions to Armenia, the purchase of much needed medical equipment and training for doctors in Yerevan. Additionally, money raised at the gala supports AECPP's Mobile Eye Hospital that travels across the country and treats Armenians who cannot afford medical and surgical treatment.

Honorary Chairperson Gov. George Deukmejian, who served as governor of California from January 1983 to January 1991, attended the event with his wife Gloria. Deukmejian was honored at the gala for his contributions to the AECPP throughout the past 20 years. Dr. Roger see AWARD, page 8



COMMUNITY NEWS

Dickranian Lions Win First Place in Eagles Classic

LOS ANGELES – Through hard work and dedication, the Tekeyan Cultural Association's Arshag Dickranian Lions won first place in the Eastside Christian's Eagles Classic Basketball Tournament (CIF Division 6) on Saturday, December 3. The tournament was a weeklong event, starting on November 29, with the participation of eight schools.

Senior Jack (Hagop) Karapetian earned the Most Valued Player (MVP) Award, whereas fellow 12th-grader Arthur Karapetyan and 11th-grader Steve Darakchyan earned First Team All Player Tournament trophies, impressing the athletic community, including the parents of players in opposing teams. Amazed by Jack Karapetian's striking performance throughout the entire tournament, many asked to have their pictures taken with him. This was yet another triumph for the Dickranian Lions, who won first place in the CIF Mulholland League during the 2010 - 2011 academic year, in which Karapetian

won the MVP Award again averaging 32 points and 18 rebounds per game. To date this year, the Dickranian Lions are undefeated with a 7-0 winning streak.

"I have a feeling we will win the CIF League Championship again and we will qualify for the playoffs," said Coach Rudolph Rameh. "I am extremely proud of the team and hope all of our practice and effort will lead us to the CIF Southern Section Championships. I would like to thank Principal Vartkes Kourouyan, Board of Trustees Chairperson George Mandossian and the Sports Committee for all of their support."

Located at 1200 North Cahuenga Blvd., Los Angeles, the TCA Arshag Dickranian Armenian School is a federally tax exempt, Pre-K to 12th grade private educational institution. For more information visit www.dickranianschool.org.



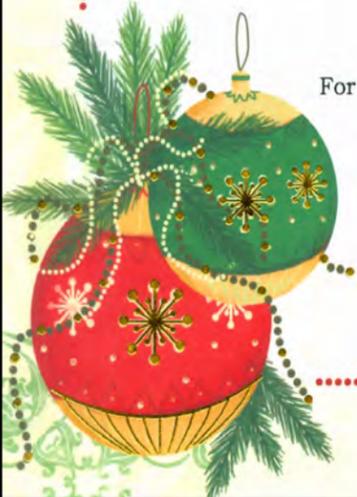
Dickranian Lions, front row, from left, Asatur Supikyan, Shant Ogtanyan and Stephen Darakchyan; standing, from left, Artur Karapetyan, Vartan Baghdasaryan, Coach Rudolph Rameh, Hagop Karapetian and David Ananyan

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AWWA Wraps Up Its Annual Luncheon/Auction

BURLINGTON, Mass. – The Armenian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) held its annual luncheon/auction on Saturday, November 12, at the Burlington Marriott. Sold out to an audience of more than 330 supporters, this year's benefit featured more than 500 items and raised more than \$37,000 for the AWWA's initiatives, which include the Armenian Nursing & Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Plain and the Elderly Care Project in Nagorno-Karabagh.

framed Bruins photo.

Also present was James Kalustian, chairperson of the Armenian Heritage Park Foundation. Kalustian presented a slideshow showcasing progress of the permanent memorial to the Armenian Genocide being erected outside Faneuil Hall in Boston.

Each year, the AWWA focuses its efforts on this signature event which is the major fundraiser supporting the ANRC, a five-star rated, 83-bed nursing and rehabilitation facility.



From left, Jordan Rich, Janet Jeghelian, Cindy Fitzgibbon and James Kalustian

Hosting this year's Auction was AWWA Board Member Janet Jeghelian who kept the crowd engaged with her positive and upbeat spirit. Joining her as live auctioneers were Jordan Rich, talk show host on WBZ Radio, and Cindy Fitzgibbons, weather forecaster for Fox News. Both Rich and Fitzgibbons dazzled the crowd as they auctioned off items, including an autographed Patriots football and a signed and

Co-chairs of the event Karen Hovsepien and Jeanne Silver were thrilled to lead their 20-person committee in planning and executing such an important fundraiser. Both said they were thrilled to have the support of the organization and the smooth working of the committee.

Next year's AWWA Luncheon/Auction will be held at the hotel on October 27, 2012.

Armenian Clockmaker Keeps Pace with Time

CLOCKS, from page 6

"I can do that," he told himself, rising to the challenge he issued himself.

Janian began to secure patterns from wood-working magazines and proceeded to utilize his carpentry skills. The first one he ever crafted was an octagon clock, which maintains a treasured place on his wall.

As a diversion, Janian veered off making tissue holders, angels, candy dishes, crosses and other decorative items. They turned into gifts for every occasion.

"I get to appreciate the fruits of my labor every day from being surrounded by my creations," he beamed. "Others have also derived pleasure from it. That is very gratifying to me."

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Deukmejian Receives Lifetime Humanitarian Award at EyeCare Project Gala

AWARD, from page 6

Ohanesian, founder and chairman of the AECP along with Aram Bassenian and Kenneth Khachigian – past recipients of the Lifetime Humanitarian of the Year Award and former board members – presented Deukmejian with the Lifetime Humanitarian of the Year Award. This award is given annually to individuals who have volunteered their service to both the community and AECP and in this case, service to the state. Bassenian and Khachigian served as masters of ceremonies.

“I was and still am impressed with the extraordinary way which Dr. Ohanesian and other doctors have been willing to provide their skills and talents to provide good eye care for people living in Armenia,” said Deukmejian. “I admire them for their tireless efforts and making the many trips to Armenia.”

“It was gratifying to see so many supporters of AECP come together,” said Ohanesian. “The night was made all the more special by remarks from long time supporter and Honoree Governor Deukmejian. Attendees were enchanted with the governor’s candid remarks about his years of service inside the office, working with heads of state and meeting royalty.”

auctions and entertainment by Robert Duquesnel and his three-piece orchestra.

Winners of the silent and live auctions took home a variety of items, including a trip to Armenia during AECP’s next 10-14 day medical mission, a weekend getaway to New York City, Las Vegas, a luxury Paris vacation package, sports memorabilia, one week in Mammoth, Calif., one week in Hawaii and more.

The mission of the Armenian EyeCare Project is to eliminate avoidable blindness and to provide eye care for all Armenians in need.

Each year, Ohanesian and an international team of doctors who volunteer their time, embark on medical missions to Armenia to provide eye care to children and adults at no cost. All the doctors and others pay their own way and receive no compensation for their trip other than the satisfaction of helping others.

In June 2010, AECP launched the Project’s Infant Blindness Initiative. This year, the 38th AECP medical mission and International Conference were held on July 15-16 in Yerevan.

The conference was sponsored by AECP, the Vision Center of Los Angeles Children’s Hospital, the Armenian Ministry of Health and USAID.



Mrs. Deukmejian accepting gift

Following the award presentation, Kenneth Kehachigian presented Gloria Duekmejian with a delicate Limoges porcelain box decorated with an ornament of her beloved beagle, one of three beagles well-known around the Governor’s mansion.

Attendees included AECP board members; the Deukmejians, Dr. and Mrs. Roger Ohanesian, Mr. and Mrs. Aram Bassenian, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Khachigian, Mr. and Mrs. Jack McHale, Mr. and Mrs. Monique Hachigian, Dr. and Mrs. Richard A. Hill, Mr. and Mrs. David Keligian, Dr. and Mrs. Baruch D. Kuppermann and Mr. Robert and Mrs. Cynthia Tusan.

Major donors to the evening also included Mr. and Mrs. Nishan Derderian, Mr. and Mrs. Ted Mooschekian, Mr. Mike Derderian, Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Beck and Mr. and Mrs. John Pridjian.

The evening included a reception, dinner,

More than 100 Armenian ophthalmologists and neonatologists attended the conference to learn about the results of year one Infant Blindness Initiative and the programs planned for 2011. The most exciting news of the 2011 conference was the announcement that more than 400 Armenian infants have been screened since the program was launched last year and 36 infants received laser surgery, at no cost to their families, saving them from a lifetime of blindness.

The AECP accomplished tremendous results this year because of the equipment donated by generous benefactors over the last year including Luther and Glenda Khachigian, Sarkis and Ruth Bedevian and the Allergan Foundation. Ohanesian was also proud to announced that the ROP national program in Armenia has been so successful that it has become a model for other developing countries.



Gov. George Deukmejian accepts the Armenian EyeCare Project’s Lifetime Humanitarian of the Year Award

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Western District of AGBU Honors Dr. Armen Sarkissian during Gala Banquet Dedicated to Organization's 105th Anniversary

LOS ANGELES – More than 500 AGBU members, supporters, government officials and dignitaries gathered for a gala banquet dedicated to AGBU's 105th anniversary on November 12, at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. Special guests present included AGBU President Berge Setrakian, AGBU Vice President Sinan Sinanian and his wife, Angele, Consul General of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles Grigor Hovhannissian and his wife, Victoria, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America Archbishop Hovnan Derderian and AGBU benefactors Vatche and Tamar Manoukian from London.

Also in attendance was the evening's keynote speaker and honoree Dr. Armen Sarkissian, former prime minister of the Republic of Armenia and AGBU benefactor, who was invited from



Honoree Dr. Armen Sarkissian, Nune Sarkissian, AGBU President Berge Setrakian, Angele Sinanian and AGBU Vice President Sinan Sinanian

London with his wife, Nune, for the occasion. The principal donors of the anniversary celebration, which was organized by the AGBU Western District Committee, were Tamar and Vatche Manoukian, Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Turpanjian, Mr. and Mrs. George Agazarian, Sinan and Angele Sinanian, EH National Bank and the AGBU Western District Asbeds.

Following opening remarks by chairwoman of the Special Events Organizing Committee Hermine Janoyan, who paid tribute to members of both the Western District and the Special Events Organizing Committee for jointly planning the celebration, AGBU Western District Chairman Haig Messerlian took the podium. He stressed the importance of the Armenian identity and legacy and its safeguarding and perpetuation through AGBU's educational, cultural, youth and humanitarian programs. Messerlian also remarked on not just maintaining current worthwhile programs, but the importance of creating new ones, in order to meet the needs of the new generation and keep them connected to their roots.

Messerlian then invited Setrakian to address the audience. He provided an overview of the focal issues facing the entire Armenian nation

and its homeland. He outlined the framework of AGBU's national agenda by delineating the potential and challenges of the new Armenian Diaspora that has evolved from the traditional tight-knit Middle Eastern communities into the vast openness of North America, Europe and Russia. He also highlighted the newly developing, vibrant post-independence Armenian-Diasporan communities that are seeking good leadership and organizational guidance and consequently the importance of adopting the technological advances in management strategies, communication and media, to address these needs. Setrakian underscored the importance of strengthening Armenia and Holy Echmiadzin for the diaspora, maintaining that a strong diaspora is conditioned solely on a strong homeland. Hence, the expanding involvement of AGBU in Armenia and its programs there are designed to provide experiences that place the new generation in touch with their homeland and inspire them. Setrakian also touched upon the disconcerting phenomenon of emigration from Armenia, pointing out that an equally and probably more alarming form of emigration was the alienation of youth in the diaspora from traditional community organizations and issues, which have lost touch with them and left them apathetic. He

stressed the importance of reaching out to the youth and providing role models and quality programs that will cultivate pride in their identity and trigger their Armenian DNA so they will be moved to take interest in their legacy and reconcile it with their global identities. Following his remarks, Setrakian welcomed to the stage life-long AGBU member Assadour Guzelian, a community activist and former teacher currently living in London, who energized the audience with



Dr. Armen Sarkissian receives the AGBU Western District Special Award from Haig Messerlian.

his inspirational remarks on the organization's mission.

The keynote speaker, Sarkissian, is the former prime minister of Armenia, the first Armenian ambassador to England and European countries, scientist, businessman and well-known AGBU benefactor. He is currently the president of Eurasia House International, which he founded in London. Highlighting the great accomplishment and vision of AGBU Founding President Boghos Nubar, Sarkissian placed importance on the 105-year-old past and experience of the AGBU as a guide for the Armenian people in facing the challenges of the 21st century. He compared the AGBU founder and the emergence of the organization to Noah and his ark, drawing parallels between them. "My childhood dream was to bring Ararat back," said Sarkissian, stressing that the current century is destined to be the century of the homeland even though the Armenian people are scattered all over the world. "We shall grow stronger through unity and that experience is the guarantee of AGBU's success over the decades," he said.

Sarkissian also noted the two sides of globalization – how a country's economic collapse can affect the economy of another country located thousands of miles away, though he expressed optimism regarding the future of the Armenian people. "Organized work is necessary in order for our people's potential to be realized. Trust must be secured in order for investments to be made in Armenia and Armenian citizenship is of high importance for all Armenians," said Sarkissian.

On behalf of AGBU's Western District Committee, Haig Messerlian bestowed Dr. Sarkissian with a special award honoring and thanking him for his continued services to Armenia and the Armenian people. The AGBU Western District Committee wished to fete such a unique individual for his philanthropic endeavors, his outstanding leadership ability and for becoming the defender of Armenia's national interests and its culture, one of AGBU's guiding principles. The committee recognized Sarkissian as a great role model for all Armenians, young and old, in Armenia and throughout the diaspora.

St. James to Honor Paul Korian as Parishioner of the Year at 80th Anniversary Name Day Celebration

WATERTOWN – On Sunday, December 18, St. James Armenian Church will honor longtime parishioner Paul Korian as the 2011 St. James Parishioner of the Year at its 80th Anniversary Annual Name Day Celebration. Korian will also receive a Pontifical Encyclical (Gontag) and the St. Nersess Shnorhali Medal from Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. On this day, St. James will also celebrate the achievements of the 75th Anniversary Capital Campaign, during which parishioners and friends donated \$3 million toward capital improvements and programming. Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church, will preside over the day's events.

Korian has focused his philanthropic and volunteer efforts on Armenia, Jerusalem, the Armenian Church and St. James Armenian Church. Born and raised in Jerusalem in the Hreshtagabed section of the convent, his expe-

riences there were the seeds that grew into a life of service to the Armenian Church throughout his life.

Korian attended St. Tarkmanchatz School until the age of 12, when the family immigrated to the United States and eventually came to live in Watertown. From an early age, he was involved in the life of St. James – as an active ACYOA Juniors and ACYOA Seniors member, serving as chairman and holding officer positions. He sang in the St. James church choir and was ordained a sub-deacon and served on the Holy Altar for over 30 years. In the following years, he was involved in various organizations and was an active St. James Sunday School PTA member. Korian's service to St. James continued over the years, and reached its culmination when he was elected to the Parish Council in 1979 at the young age of 35. Paul has served on the St. James Parish Council for many years, including six years as treasurer and



Paul Korian

six as chairman.

Korian guided the St. James parish through many key events and ultimately demonstrated his leadership by leading a successful 75th anniversary celebration and the record-breaking capital campaign, resulting in more than \$3 million being raised for renovations and program funding. He has also participated in numerous programs in New England, served on committees of the Diocesan Assemblies and been an active member of a number of civic and community organizations, including the Knights of Vartan, the Council of Armenian Executives, the Armenian Assembly and the Board of Directors of Armenian Library and Museum.

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New York
M E T R O

Overdue Recognition for Andreas Roubian

By Hagop Vartivarian

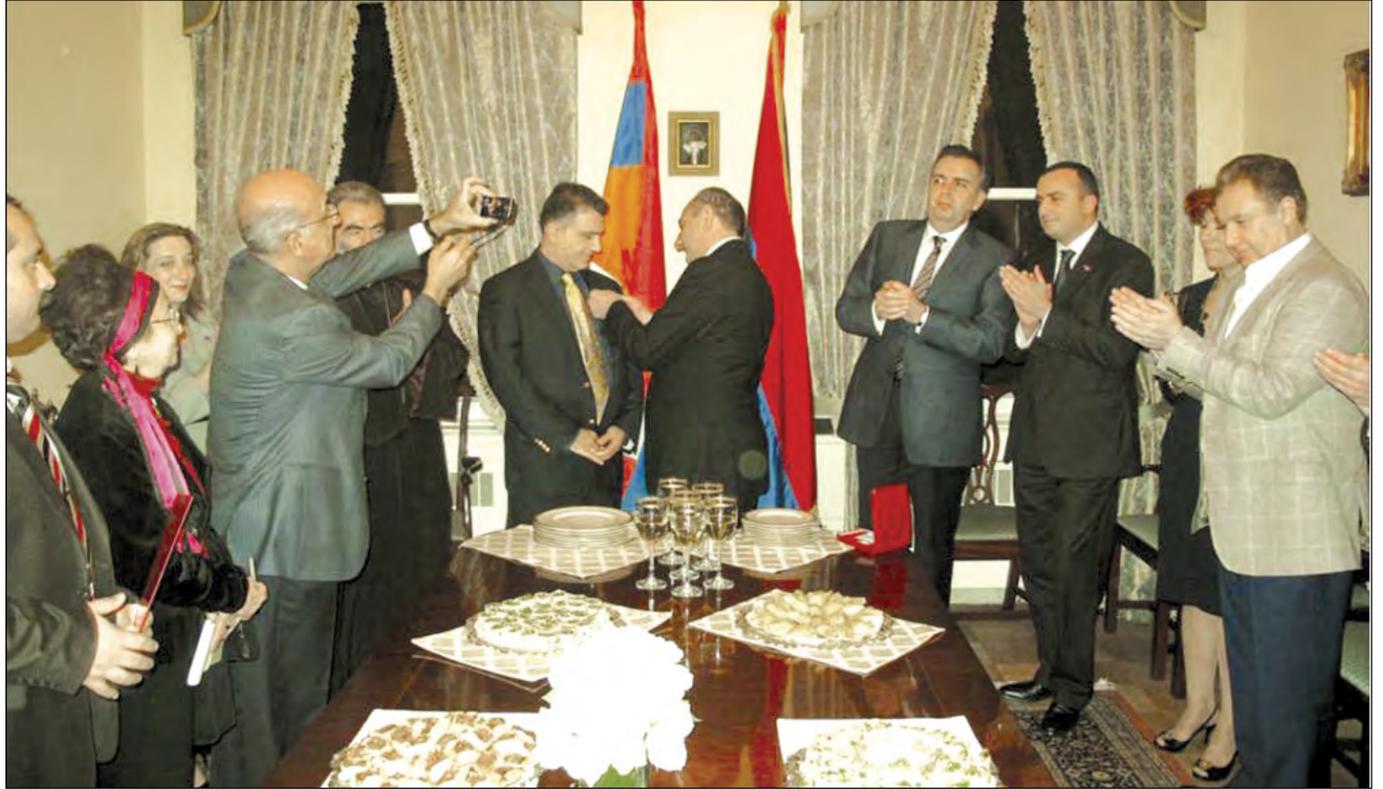
NEW YORK – More than 20 years ago, a handful of New Yorkers, largely young Armenians, inspired by the Karabagh liberation movement, created the Karabagh Committee. They set to work in the American-Armenian community to educate and raise awareness about the plight of the Armenians in Karabagh. Part of the scope of the committee's work was securing substantial financial donations to aid victims of the war and to assist the movement.

The Karabagh Committee worked tirelessly, gathering support from Armenians from various countries and all walks of life. This work of unifying the community for a cause was met with great success as they received support not only from major philanthropists, but on the grass-roots level.

One of the young and dedicated organizers living in New Jersey, Andreas Roubian, came to be the leader of this group of heroes, and his home became the site of the meetings for years. Meetings with influential representatives from Armenia, Karabagh, the US and Russia, as well as with American-Armenian activists, also took place at Roubian's home. In addition to the meetings, collection campaigns and social gatherings were organized by the committee.

While it is not possible to make any comparison with the youth of Karabagh and Armenia fighting for the liberation of Karabagh at the cost of their own lives, the work of the Karabagh Committee of New York, including the large sums it raised and sent to Karabagh, should be recognized, as well as their raising of awareness, which provided significant aid and comfort to this same youth as well as essential aid to victims of the fighting. At a time in which the Soviet Union was in its death throes, this support was a lifeline, and praise is due to the Armenian-American patriots who pressed on.

In addition to the financial support, many of the committee members, including Roubian, risked their own lives to travel in this war-torn region in order to ensure aid was being properly



Andreas Roubian receives a medal from Karabagh President Bako Sahakian.

These awards were to honor his patriotism and philanthropy from the onset of the liberation movement through the subsequent 20 years. The prestigious medal of Vachagan Parebashd and a proclamation of recognition under the Artsakh Constitution were both presented to Roubian during the ceremony.

The kind words of Ambassador Garen Nazarian, the United Nations representative of the Republic of Armenia, were particularly touching at a November 18 reception in the embassy during the visit of Sahakian to New York, where Roubian was given the medal and proclamation.

Well-known figures from Armenian life in the New York and New Jersey area were present alongside former Karabagh Committee members

icate this to them.”

The evening was a moving one, especially for those who lived day to day through the moments of the liberation of the Armenian regions of Lachin, Stepanakert and Shushi, Fizouli and

Jebrayil. Together with those days of pride, they remembered Armenian martyrs sacrificed on the frontlines.

(This article was translated from the Armenian original.)



From left, Archbishop Pargev Martirosian, Karabagh President Bako Sahakian, Andreas Roubian and Armenia's UN Ambassador Garen Nazarian

utilized. He also documented on film frontline activities which were presented to capacity crowds in the greater New York area. Without a doubt, one day, in order to do justice to the great work done by these men, the activities of the Karabagh Committee will be written down in the annals of history.

Roubian, who is of Evangelical faith, became the benefactor of the Ghazanchetots Sourp Asdvadzadzin Cathedral of Shushi. He personally supervised and financed its reconstruction. The cathedral was dedicated to the memory of his parents, Dr. and Mrs. Zaven Roubian. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, this was the first Armenian church to be resurrected on Armenian lands, and it became a good example for the future benefactors of the Armenian Diaspora or homeland to follow.

During this year's visit to the US, and on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the independence of Artsakh, two awards were presented to Roubian by Karabagh President Bako Sahakian.

Hrach Kaprielian, Hirant Gulian and brothers Armen and Paul Shahinian. The Primate of Artsakh, Archbishop Pargev Martirosian, was present together with Robert Avetisyan, the permanent representative of the Republic of Mountainous Karabagh to the United States.

Nazarian gave words of welcome and introduced the guests. Then Sahakian spoke about Roubian's unparalleled efforts during the liberation struggle.

Aide to Sahakian David Babayan read the edict: "In connection with the 20th anniversary of the Republic of Mountainous Karabagh, we award the American-Armenian benefactor Andreas Roubian for his service to the Republic of Mountainous Karabagh in the fields of the economy, culture, education and scholarship, healthcare, and politics."

In his words of thanks, Roubian said that his collaborators had earned this medal, but even more than them, those who through the sacrifice of their lives liberated Karabagh. He said, "I ded-

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New York
METRO

Levon Lachikian Exhibit to Benefit Hintlian School in Armenia

By Florence Avakian
 Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BAYSIDE, N.Y. — Datev Monastery in Goris; Hovhannes Shiraz Museum in Gumri; a Meghri backyard with old wooden houses on stilts; Baalbek Temple in Lebanon; the Bridge of Sighs in Venice; the Empire State Building in New York.

These are a few of the more than 50 unique, delicate and descriptive pen-and-pencil drawings by Yerevan artist Levon Lachikian, which were on display at the Holy Martyrs Armenian Church during a special exhibit and reception on Friday, December 2, sponsored by the Constantinople Armenian Relief Society (CARS). The proceeds from the sale of the artwork will benefit the Hintlian School in Armenia.

The Hintlian School is a project that was originally initiated by the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) in Istanbul. Since the school no longer exists there, the project having shifted to Armenia where CARS is now sponsoring and funding it, with FAR organizing and managing it. CARS also pays the cost of transporting the children to the school, as well as the daily lunch free of charge to 60 of the most vulnerable students. In addition, CARS provides scholarships to needy as well as academically able students. Currently, the school has 150 students, and is just two hundred meters from the Azerbaijani border.

The special art preview attracted close to 150 people. Among the special guests in attendance was Vasken Baron, the Deputy Mayor of Shishli, an old and wealthy neighborhood in Istanbul. Baron, who has held this post for more than 12



Levon Lachikian explains some of his works.

years, is the first Armenian to hold such a high position.

Also present were several members of the CARS organization, including its President Tamar Kayserian who welcomed the guests, and former presidents Frank Kabarajian and Berj Araz. Officials from FAR in attendance were Arto Vorperian, Andre Berg and Noun Soukiassian. Besides devoting his talent to his art, Lachikian holds the position of Press Secretary at the FAR office complex in Yerevan.

In his remarks of appreciation, Lachikian with a dose of humor and wisdom, related that he had titled this exhibition "Armenian World" because everywhere in the world there are Armenians. "A bird needs two wings to fly — Armenia and the diaspora," he continued. "The Armenian world has no borders. Armenia has such magnificent scenery, but such a desperate economic lifestyle, with close to half the country in poverty. It's crucial that the talent stay in Armenia and not leave. And for this, the people must have work."

Lachikian revealed that there are 1,400 children in orphanages in Armenia. Out of this figure, a very small percentage have no parents, he said. The rest come from families who cannot



Levon Lachikian's presentation of CARS Hintlian Program at Kalustian Hall



CARS President Tamar Kayserian speaks at Kalustian Hall of Holy Martyrs Armenian Church.

support them. "The student population is decreasing because of immigration and the low birth rate, and this results in teachers also being out of work," he added.

Showing photos and video of the Hintlian School, he declared that it is "very important to have our people on the Armenian-Azeri border so we don't lose the territory and also to relay inspiration. Therefore it is vitally important for diasporan organizations to support schools on the borders," he stated with emphasis. Ending on a positive note, he related that the Hintlian School is the only one that is increasing in population.

Lachikian was born in Gumri (then called Leninakan), in 1955, and studied philology at Yerevan State University, attaining a PhD in aesthetics. He taught at both Yerevan State University and the Yerevan Conservatory, then went on to work at the *Azg* daily newspaper as an art critic. Combining culture with media work, he became head of public relations at the Opera and Ballet National Theatre. Currently, he is press secretary at the Yerevan FAR office.

An author of four books, he has held personal exhibitions in Yerevan, Gumri and Goris, and is a member of the Artists Union and the Journalists Union in Armenia.


New York
METRO

Healthcare Professionals Celebrate Compassion with Glamor

TEANECK, N.J. — It was a night to remember for much more than the tuxedos and formal gowns, dinner and dancing and distinguished guests. This was a fund-raiser that helped save lives.

The place was the elegant Marriott at Glenpointe Hotel and the theme was “Help Save Lives! Support the Continuing Medical Education of Doctors in Armenia.”

This gala event on October 15 was energized with record-breaking support from healthcare professionals associated with the Armenian American Healthcare Professionals Organization (AAHPO), honorees and former honorees, community members and guests who were in attendance to raise funds for AAHPO’s projects, in particular the Continuing Medical Education (CME) program.

“We are so thrilled to announce that the funds raised by the gala event will ensure that the CME program can be extended and are grateful for everyone’s support,” said Dr. Tsoline Kojaoghlanian, who co-chaired the event with Dr. Aram Cazazian.

“This program brings vitally important knowledge to doctors in the remote Armenian villages. If a patient has appendicitis and it is misdiagnosed, the patient will die. If a child is born with the umbilical cord around the neck, and the doctor doesn’t know what to do, the baby will die. This is why CME is crucial, it literally saves lives,” explained Cazazian.

AAHPO’s month-long CME program provides training in Yerevan to update the medical knowledge of doctors from Javakhk and Karabagh. Many physicians from these areas are on a waiting list for the opportunity to participate in the CME program.

Some Perspective

Twenty years ago, the long-awaited independence of Armenia was celebrated. However, the country faced countless challenges as it started to rebuild its infrastructure while many sectors, in particular the healthcare system, were dealt a severe blow. Diasporan Armenians strived to do what they could, helping independently and also forming professional organizations to offer assistance.

AAHPO President Dr. Lawrence V. Najarian noted that AAHPO stands among those that have quietly and effectively aided and improved



Honoree Dr. Haikaz Grigorian



Honoree Annette Choulfaian



Honoree Dr. Richard Babayan

and said, “It was their dream to unite all Armenian healthcare providers for the purpose of improving healthcare awareness and delivery to our community.”

He thanked the support of the community which has helped AAHPO expand to more than 400 members from the tri-state area. Najarian noted the passion and commitment of the organization’s members who have been consistent and relentless in their pursuit of sharing their knowledge, abilities and resources with our brethren.

AAHPO has always made an effort to collaborate with other organizations to maximize their impact on the healthcare system in Armenia. Aside from partnering with Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) for the CME program, they have also worked with Armenia Fund USA and the Armenian Eye Care Project.

Recent Accomplishments

AAHPO’s work was recognized in 2011 by NJ BIZ, the state’s leading business news publication, which selected AAHPO as a finalist in the NJ BIZ Healthcare Heroes awards program.

AAHPO played an important role in the \$1 million donation of state-of-the-art surgical equipment by Pfizer to the Armenian Eye Care Project to develop the Center of Eye Care Excellence in Yerevan.

ships with Armenian healthcare professionals so that they can meet the medical needs of the villages they serve.”

Banquet Highlights

In their opening remarks at the banquet, Kojaoghlanian and Cazazian welcomed the evening’s three honorees as exemplars of service, excellence and dedication in their fields. The co-chairs described AAHPO’s first-ever medical mission, which took place last summer, and the significance of the CME program.

“We have become partners in this noble and very effective program,” said Cazazian. “We are offering support to all the doctors in Armenia and therefore helping the entire population.”

A video presentation of AAHPO’s activities and programs, including on-site footage of the group’s visit to Armavir, Armenia during their medical mission, showed AAHPO’s members in action.

Master of ceremonies Vartan Abdo, who has directed the Armenian Radio Hour of New Jersey for more than 30 years, led the evening’s program. Among those he introduced was Dr. Terenig Doumanian, rector of Yerevan State Medical University, who expressed his gratitude to AAHPO for maintaining a strong connection with Armenia.

Garen Nazarian, Armenia’s ambassador to the United Nations, attended the event and in addressing the audience on behalf of Armenia, emphasized the importance of equitable healthcare for the citizens of Armenia, Nagorno-Karabagh and Javakhk.

“Despite all the challenges we look back at the progress we have made in our nation,” said Nazarian. “We pride ourselves on the numbers of schools and hospitals we have built together since Armenia’s independence. We owe many achievements we have had to the Armenian Diaspora and organizations like AAHPO, its affiliates, support-

ers and sponsors.”

This year’s honorees included Dr. Richard Babayan, who received the Scientific Achievement Award; Annette Choulfaian, RN, MPA, who received the Distinguished Humanitarian Achievements in Public Health award; and Dr. Haikaz Grigorian, who received the Lifetime Achievement award. The honorees were introduced by Dr. Aram Chobanian, Dr. Raffy Hovanessian and Dr. Louis Najarian, respectively, who spoke of this year’s awardees’ professional accomplishments and of their ongoing assistance to

Armenia and Armenian-related projects.

“I was very honored; when professionals are honoring you it is very special,” said Choulfaian, who currently serves as professor and chair of the Health Policy and Management Department at the New York Medical College School of Public Health.

An Ellis Island Award recipient, Choulfaian is also the vice president of FAR and has helped develop health and social services programs in Armenia, which include the Homeless Children’s Center in Armenia and fellowship programs for the elderly under the auspices of Armenia’s Ministry of Health. She has also been involved with the Armenian Health Care Managers, a group that works to expand the knowledge of healthcare delivery, financing and management.

Professor and chair of Boston University’s Department of Urology and chief of Urology at Boston Medical Center, Babayan said he was extremely honored to be recognized at the banquet. “I watched AAHPO grow over the years and expand its horizons, and I am very encouraged by the work they are doing,” said Babayan. “It is a distinct honor for me to receive this.”

Babayan has been active in medical efforts in Armenia since the 1988 earthquake, when he traveled to Armenia as part of a medical relief group. He has been heavily involved in the Boston University-Armenia Medical Partnership Program and is an active member of the Armenian Medical International Committee. He has also served on the Advisory Board for the Yerevan State Medical University for the last five years to help revamp the Medical Curriculum and academic standards for medical education in Armenia. He was recently awarded the American Urological Association’s Distinguished Service Award.

Grigorian said he was “enormously honored” to receive recognition from his fellow Armenians. “I have never felt that I have done enough and I always feel that I should be doing more, and I will continue to do more according to my abilities,” he said.

Grigorian is a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, past president of the New Jersey Psychiatric Association and a retired clinical professor of psychiatry at UMDNJ Medical School. A former member of the Board of Trustees of AAHPO, Grigorian established a clinic in Armenia following the 1988 earthquake to prepare local psychiatrists and mental health professionals to treat survivors of the tragedy. In 1994, he received the Award of Recognition of Humanitarian Services from former President Levon Der Petrossian for his dedicated service to Armenia, and in 1996, he received an award from the American Psychiatric Association for services to victims of disaster.

The evening concluded with guests dancing to live Armenian music as well as the results of the silent auction, which further helped raised funds for AAHPO’s outreach projects.

“The response and support we received from the community for our programs was overwhelming,” said Kojaoghlanian following the banquet. “It gave us all a lot of pride that we are helping Armenia.”

To learn more about AAHPO or make a donation, visit www.aahpo.org.



Gala attendees

the healthcare system in Armenia. Since its founding 17 years ago, AAHPO has forged a positive and cooperative relationship with doctors in Armenia and has served as a bridge between the homeland and the diaspora. This connection was evident to the 250 guests at AAHPO’s banquet.

The link in the chain between Armenia and the diaspora consists of visionaries who early on recognized a need in Armenia and mobilized to fulfill it. Najarian spoke of the three founders of AAHPO, Nabet Kasabian, MD, John Nercessian, MD and Khoren Nalbandian, RPh,

Another project resulting from such partnerships is the HyeBridge Telehealth Program, a collaboration between AAHPO and Armenia Fund USA. This program enables healthcare practitioners to communicate with physicians in Armenia from a specially-equipped studio in Manhattan.

“The CME and the HyeBridge program enable us to share our knowledge with physicians in Armenia on an ongoing basis long after we leave,” said Najarian. “It has been AAHPO’s long-time goal to leverage our skills, train doctors, and maintain relation-



COMMUNITY NEWS

Houston, Texas, Parish Marks Three Milestones

HOUSTON, Texas — Last weekend, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), visited St. Kevork Church of Houston as the community gathered to observe three milestones: the 30th anniversary of the church, the 20th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Armenia and the 40th anniversary of Barsamian's ordination into the holy priesthood.

between husband and wife, their partnership in raising children, and in passing on our faith and heritage? This is one of the most important ministries a person can undertake; parents and children alike should understand it as a ministry to Christ."

Following services, 350 people gathered for a banquet in the church's Hekimian Hall. Parish Council Chair Vrej Kolandjian served as the master of ceremonies and opened the program

bridge between the North and South and the East and West," he said.

The gathering was also an opportunity to recognize individuals who have shown exemplary service to the parish. Barsamian presented the St. Vartan Award to Dr. Hagop and Silva Bedikian and certificates of recognition to Sarkis Ohanian, Andre Melikian, Hulik Stepanian, Deacon Garabet Balyan, Deacon Vrouir Frankian, Zabel Simonian, Lucy Abajian, Raisa Abazajian, Tikranoochi Tajian, Armine Keshishian, Sylvia Dekmezian, Annie Mardickian and Hamlet Hovsepian.

Barsamian also extended his gratitude to Shoghig Frankian for the service of her late husband, Deacon Hovig Frankian. In addition, a special thanks was extended to the Khanoyan and Dawood families, who donated the church's new organ.

The Primate acknowledged Hakobyan's recent appointment to the Houston parish and wished him a fruitful ministry.

During a cultural program, choreographer Hulik Stepanian led dancers in four Armenian dances and Andre Melikian presented a video highlighting the community's history and its more recent achievements.

St. Kevork Church was originally located elsewhere in Houston, but in the early 1980s, looking to expand, the community purchased another property and with the support of benefactors George and Lena Harrison built the current house of worship.

"The whole community participated in making this special day as memorable as possible," Kolandjian said of the celebration. "Everything was very carefully thought through and well organized."



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian and parishioners cut the celebratory cake in Houston, Texas.

On Saturday, December 3, Barsamian ordained 10 altar servers. He was assisted by the parish's interim pastor, Rev. Martiros Hakobyan, and its former visiting pastor, Rev. Zenob Nalbandian.

Karabet Balyan was ordained to the diaconate and Haikaz Gharakhanian to the subdiaconate. Karlen Palyan, Kevork Kasparian, Robert Krbashyan, David Shtenberg, Shant Abrilian, Romik Aevaz, Andre Simonian and Varuzhan Markosyan were ordained acolytes. A reception followed in the home of Parish Council Chair Vrej Kolandjian.

On Sunday, December 4, Barsamian celebrated the Divine Liturgy and blessed a new street sign bearing the name "Armenia Park Drive," which will be installed on the church's driveway.

In his sermon, Barsamian spoke about lay ministry — the focus of this year's Diocesan theme. He encouraged parishioners to continue to build on the community's tradition of dedicated commitment to the Armenian Church.

"'Ministry' means that we are called to be like

with a welcoming address. He spoke about the pride and strength of the community and expressed his gratitude to the parish's first pastor, Rev. Terenig Kondralian, and its most recent visiting pastor, Nalbandian. Both clergymen were in attendance on this special occasion.

Kolandjian also expressed his gratitude to Khoren Mekanejian, the Diocese's music ministry coordinator, who led workshops for choir members and deacons at the church over the weekend.

Keynote speaker Ambassador Edward P. Djerejian, the founding director of the James Baker Institute for Public Policy at nearby Rice University and a former US ambassador to Syria and Israel, spoke about Armenia's development and encouraged people in the diaspora to "be strong advocates of democracy in Armenia."

"The challenge for Armenians in Armenia and throughout the diaspora today is to work together to ensure that Armenia realizes the true fruits of independence by evolving as a truly democra-



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, assisted by the Rev. Fr. Martiros Hakobyan, and the Rev. Fr. Zenob Nalbandian, ordains altar servers in Houston, Texas.

Christ; to recognize our true identity in and through him; and to share who we are with others," Barsamian said. "For many people, such ministry begins in their home and family life. You may not think of it that way. But how else would you describe the communication

tic state living under the rule of law, providing its people with economic prosperity and security and pursuing an enlightened foreign policy that maximizes Armenia's great potential to be a cultural, economic, commercial, scientific and democratic center in the Caucasus and as a regional

Spirit of Van Remembered At Detroit Celebration

DETROIT — When students question the exploits of the heroic Armenian defense of Van against the military might of the oppressive Ottoman Turkish government, Hourig Toukhanian Jacobs has an answer that honors the creed of Vanetzi descendants.

"They were ordinary people — the unknown heroes of the defense of Van. It's a story we must pass on to our future generations," Jacobs stressed in her address at the annual Herosamard celebration of Detroit's Vasbouragan Avak-Vanig Chapter at St. Sarkis Church.

For all those present Jacobs's message was motivating as she shared personal and depressing thoughts on having walked the same paths of her massacred ancestors during a pilgrimage to Turkish-occupied Western Armenia in 2010.

"The old city of Van was destroyed but not its spirit. We can still honor those people. Ordinary but devout to their faith and identity," the Beirut Jamaran graduate shared at the November Thanksgiving Week rally.

While majoring in foreign language education at Wayne State University, she never lost sight of her Armenian and her *Vanetzi* heritage.

In outlining the 1915 defense of Van and honoring the memory of patriot Aram Manogian, who went on to serve as the first president of the May 28, 1918 republic of Armenia, Jacobs emphasized the role of ordinary people: "When the Russian army finally reached Van, their generals were amazed to learn that ordinary people, with no military training had successfully repulsed the advancing Turkish army and collaborating Kurdish tribes — and the valiant role women of Vasbouragan played in its defense."

As a teacher for the ARS language program in Detroit and at area public school adult education classes, Jacobs stressed that even back then Van had hospitals, pharmacies, chemists and were able to create their own gunpowder to defend themselves from the Turks and Kurds.

She also outlined the strict strategy of the city's defense and how its people made it work. "The people of Van and Vasbouragan had certain advantages which helped them survive the Turkish plan of genocide. Their minds and hearts were prepared by the writings of Raffi, Khrimian Hayrig and many others. These great men had instilled the patriotic movement of fighting for self-defense, along with the political parties who supplied the guns and training to our young civilian *Vanetzi* heroes."

While on the pilgrimage to historic, barren Armenia in 2010 Jacobs prayed for the souls of her later family members in Kharpet and the village of Goms, the birthplaces of her parents.

In reviewing the landscape that was once the proud city of Van, Jacobs explained that after "seeing the rugged terrain that was in Vasbouragan, one could understand and appreciate the difficulties the Armenians encountered while trying to defend the city and villages. It was truly a 'Herosamard' — the battle of the heroes."

As a fluent linguist in her native Armenian, French and Spanish, Jacobs recognizes the need to inspire young Armenians that "our people had no army, no government to guide and protect them. The defense of Van was a self-defense against the Turkish military. And these ordinary people saved thousands of lives. Those of us here today and the Diaspora are the descendants of the *Herosamard*. We need to tell the story how people rallied to save Van from Turkey's plan to massacre Van's survivors before the Russian army came to their rescue."

At the closing of her address, she also emphasized that Van served as the birthplace of "the ancient state and civilization of Urartu. We *Vanetzis* have been around for centuries. This organization will keep that in focus. If we forget our past, how can we look to the future."

Presently she is in the final editing of a grammar book designed to teach the Armenian language, also CD's to teach conversational Armenian to high school students and adults.

Motion picture director Hrayr Toukhanian, producer of the docu-drama "Assignment Berlin," filmed segments of the *Herosamard* celebration for posting on the Muse Pictures and Vasbouragan websites.

Community activist Paul Bardizbanian, chairman of the Detroit Vanetzi chapter, applauded speaker Hourig for focusing on the future while honoring the past when ordinary people stood up to repulse the Turkish army.

He closed the program by calling on the audience to "salute our senior *Vanetzi* member — 97-year-old Oghig Mooradian, a survivor of the Genocide."

In return, the smiling sprightly Mooradian snapped a military salute to her fellow *Vanetzis*, declaring "We won. We survived."

By Mitch Kehetian

Arts & Living

Dr. Matioossian Lectures on Armenians and The Aryan Myth

NEW YORK – Dr. Vartan Matioossian presented a lecture titled “The Aryan Myth, Hitler and the Armenians,” in an event hosted by the Zohrab Center on Thursday, December 1, at the Diocesan Complex here.

Tracing the definition of the origins of the “Aryan” race in particular, Matioossian began his remarks with an overview of the concepts of race and language since the late 18th century. He said the concept of the “Aryan Myth” emerged in the late 19th century and explained how, contrary to opinions of the time, it is now considered a purely linguistic term.

He cited examples of European poets and journalists who were quoted as representing Armenians in an unfavorable light, including the French poet Alphonse de Lamartine and the British journalist S.A. Longworth. Lamartine had written after a visit to Constantinople in 1835: “Like the Swiss of Europe, they are laborious, peaceful and regular; but, like them, they are calculating and avaricious. . . . There is nothing heroic or warlike in their nature. Commerce is their deity: they would pursue it under any master.”

Matioossian spoke about general attitudes of the time, including rising anti-Semitism, and negative views of Armenians. Like Jews, Armenians were perceived as swindling money changers, merchants and bankers. Such a view was widespread throughout Europe, including Germany, which had set expansionist designs over the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19th century. In 1898, the best-selling German novelist Karl May, who would go on to become one of Hitler’s favorite writers, warned that Armenians were not to be trusted.

This was compounded by anti-Armenian sentiments in Turkey at the close of the 19th century. Bishop Grigoris Balakian, who survived the Armenian Genocide by disguising himself as a German soldier, later wrote that the German



Dr. Vartan Matioossian

officers he was working among commented that Armenians were “Christian Jews” and “bloodsucking usurers of the Turkish people.”

By the rise of Nazism in Germany, such sentiments had become a stereotype. Hitler was particularly keen on eliminating ethnic minorities in Germany. Focusing his attention on the purported purity of the Aryan race, he strove to remove Jews, Gypsies and other undesirables from the German nation. He already considered Armenian as a “mixed race” in an interview from 1922.

Matioossian pointed out that, after the introduction of the Aryan laws in 1933, Armenians lobbied to have themselves officially recognized as Aryan, for their putative identification with Jews could have turned them into another

see MATIOSSIAN, page 16



Janetta Kardashian

A Kardashian Offers Vintage Fashion on the East Side

MANHATTAN (DNAinfo.com) – There’s a Kardashian living here who loves high-end, designer clothing with low necklines and stylish flairs – only this beautiful brunette is not trailed by paparazzi or plagued by tabloid rumors.

Her name is Janetta Kardashian and she runs a tiny but swanky second-hand store called NY Vintage Club at 1073 First Ave. near East 59th Street. She has never met the reality TV-friendly trio of Armenian sisters who share her name, but she supposes there is a distant connection.

Despite the reality TV ups and downs that have befallen her possibly distant relatives, Kardashian has managed to maintain a drama-free lifestyle. Over the past decade or so, she has built a business and a reputation all on her own.

Her store doesn’t stock old prom dresses or run-of-the-mill Louis Vuitton purses. Instead, her racks are full of sable fur coats, mink dresses, \$1,000 evening gowns and a coat made of real leopard skin.

Kardashian has helped Yoko Ono, the Olsen twins and Oscar winner Frances McDormand sift through her stock, which is now overflowing with Jimmy Choo stilettos and at least one handbag made out of ostrich. The desktop image on her work computer features a photo of her and fashion designer Marc Jacobs at one of his infamous soirees.

Hers is really the only vintage shop in the neighborhood, and though the area lacks the retail prowess of shopping hubs further west, she makes up for it in spades.

“This place, it’s like a clubhouse,” Kardashian said. “[My customers] all share their secrets here, their love affairs.”

Her shoppers like to linger inside for hours, she said, trying on a few things, gossiping over cups of tea and rarely leaving empty-handed.

On her website, Kardashian notes that she will validate parking for customers who spend more than \$800 inside her store. Reaching that amount is surprisingly easy, she explained, since she rarely prices any of her items at less than \$350.

Kardashian, 40, an Armenian from Russia, came to the United States in 1993 for love. Her romance didn’t last, but her affair with New York City did.

“Saw all the lights. Never went back,” she recalled.

Kardashian started her career in finance and technology, but she always had “a tremendous passion for fashion,” she said.

In Russia, she worked for an Italian oil company. On business trips to Italy, she would purchase mounds of clothes, stuff them into suitcases and sell them to her Russian friends.

“I would come [home] with three suitcases – gone in two days,” she explained.

In New York, her coworkers would solicit Kardashian’s opinion on new purchases or style choices, often summoning her into the bathroom for impromptu fashion appraisals, she said.

see KARDASHIAN, page 15

Pomegranate Film Festival Celebrates Sixth Season with a Star-Studded Line Up of Films

TORONTO, Canada – The Annual Pomegranate Film Festival (POM), held here, officially ended its sixth season on Sunday, December 4, with a big bang. POM VI celebrated a four-day weekend (December 1-4), featuring 37 films from 14 countries, including eight world premieres.

“This year’s POM Festival completely surpassed all expectations,” said Jacob Porpoosian, director of communications and marketing for POM. “Our variety of films, which were carefully selected for our programming, attracted over 2,000 viewers throughout the weekend, including one of the most successful Gala nights in the festival’s history.”

The festival concluded with a sold-out screening of the comedy “My Uncle Rafael,” directed by Marc Fusco and starring Vahik Pirhamzei, followed by the 2011 POM Awards Ceremony. Jury members Silva Basmadjian, executive producer of the National Film Board of Canada; actress Arsinée Khanjian and cinematographer Norayr Kaspar had the tough job of selecting the 2011 award-winning films in their respective categories. The film “King of the World,” directed by Stéphane Kazandjian, was awarded Best Feature Film. Best Short Film was awarded to Swedish director Emil Mkrttchian for his film “The Spaceship” and Husein Karabey’s powerful “No Darkeness Will Make Us Forget.” Best Documentary went to the personal journeys: “The Son of the Olive Merchant,” directed by Matthieu Zeitindjioglou and “Voyage to Amasia,” co-directed by Eric Hachikian and Randy Bell. The coveted Audience Choice Award went to director Braden King for his poetic film “Here.” Other featured films such as Eric Nazarian’s “Bolis,” French Robert Guediguian’s “The Snows of Kilimanjaro,” Barry Levinson’s “You Don’t Know Jack” and the Gala film, Vahan Stepanyan’s and Artak Igityan’s co-directed “Sunrise Over Lake Van” certainly created a lot of discussion throughout the weekend.

With the sixth season came the birth of a few new series to POM. This year, the festival added two programs: a series called Armenia Now, dedicated to featuring a vibrant collection of films commemorating the 20 years of Armenian independence with all proceeds being donated to the All Armenia Fund, as well as the Spotlight on Armenian Women which screened the much talked about “My Grandma’s Tattoo” directed by Suzanne Khardalian – a female perspective on the Armenian Genocide.

“Our introduction of the new series films allowed the festival to grow and appeal to a variety of different people. We are always looking to expand and have already begun preparations for next year’s festival,” said Porpoosian. “We want to make the Pomegranate Film Festival become the leading Armenian film festival in Canada and North Eastern USA and hopefully one day the diaspora!”

For more information on the Pomegranate Film Festival, visit www.pomegranatefilmfestival.com.



ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

DECEMBER 31 — St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of Merrimack presents its annual New Year's Gala, Saturday, at 8:30 p.m. \$75 pp, Wyndham Hotel, Andover. Includes mezza and the midnight soujouk and eggs full breakfast, buffet and desserts. Music with Richard Berberian, Mal Barsamian, Bruce Gigarjian and Ron Tutunjian. For tickets, contact Christine Kourkounian at (508) 878-4199, Greg Minasian at (978) 470-3075 or the church office at (978) 685-5038.

JANUARY 21 — The Armenian Missionary Association presents jazz sensation Grace Kelly in concert. Proceeds to benefit the Avedisian School. National Heritage Museum, Lexington. Tickets: \$35, \$20 with student ID. Cocktails, 6:30 p.m.; concert, 8 p.m. For more information, visit www.gracekellymusic.com or www.amaa.org.

NEW YORK

MAY 19, 2012 — HMADS Gala Dinner Dance. Details to follow, June 25. HMADS 30th Commencement Exercise at 8 p.m., Kalustyan Hall.



On December 31, St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of Merrimack will present its annual New Year's Gala, Saturday, 8:30 p.m., at the Wyndham Hotel, in Andover, Mass., featuring music with Mal Barsamian, pictured here, Richard Berberian, et. al. For tickets, call Christine Kourkounian (508) 878-4199, Greg Minasian (978) 470-3075 or the church office at (978) 685-5038.

Car Rally in Europe Is Topic of New Book

CHICAGO — In his new book, 7000 KM To Go, travel expert Ric Gazarian and his team race across the Balkans and the Caucasus in an 11-country, 17-day car rally. The rally begins in Budapest, Hungary and ends in Yerevan, Armenia, Gazarian's ethnic homeland. This non-fiction account is described as a cross between "Cannonball Run," "Amazing Race" and "Midnight Express," and in it Gazarian recounts the challenges — from mundane to potentially life-threatening. His adventures include an accidental visit to a country not on the itinerary, a visit to one of the newest countries in the world, breakfast with mafia/special forces soldiers on the Black Sea and a police escort out of No Man's Land in a country that does not legally exist.

"This book shares my love of travel and adventure," says Gazarian. "The rally pro-

Press at Cal State Fresno and Armenian Studies Program Release Book of Poetry

FRESNO, Calif. — The Armenian Studies Program and The Press at California State University, Fresno released this past fall the book, *Armenian Poetry of Our Time*, translated by Diana Der-Hovanessian. The American-born poet has won national and international awards for her translations and poetry in Armenia and the diaspora. *Armenian Poetry of Our Time* is the third book published in the recently established Armenian Series at The Press, under the supervision of series editor Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian, director of the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State.

Armenian Poetry of Our Time is a collection of Armenian poems that spans a broad period of modern Armenian literature. It is a valuable addition not only to Armenian studies, but also

to western poetry. Der-Hovanessian is a well-known poet and author of 25 books of poetry and translations, whose earlier work, the groundbreaking *Anthology of Armenian Poetry*, appeared more than 30 years ago.

The works of 117 poets, all originally composed in Armenian, are presented in this anthology. The poets are themselves from either Armenia or live in the Armenian Diaspora.

There are excerpts of poems translated from the literary giants of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: Daniel Varoujan, Siamanto, Vahan Tekeyan, Avedik Issahakian, Indra and Bedros Tourian.

The works of noted diasporan writers such as Vasken Shushanian, Zahrad, Nigoghos Sarafian, Antranig Dzaroujian, Vahe Oshagan and Zareh Melkonian are also included among

the translated poems. Their works explore themes that are different from the earlier writers, as they were composed post-Genocide, but they reflect the pain of exile.

Some works, by poets from Armenia or Karabagh, have been translated into English for the first time.

Der-Hovanessian was Fulbright professor of American poetry at Yerevan State University in 1994 and 1999. She is, according to former book editor of the *Boston Globe* Herbert Kenney, not only the foremost translator of Armenian poetry into English but also a striking and original poet herself. According to the *Times Literary Supplement*, she is a brilliant poet who has opened up the book of her people to the English-speaking world.

Armenian Poetry of Our Time is translated by Der-Hovanessian, 304 pp., \$20 paperback, ISBN 978-0-912201-43-6; The Press at California State University, Fresno.

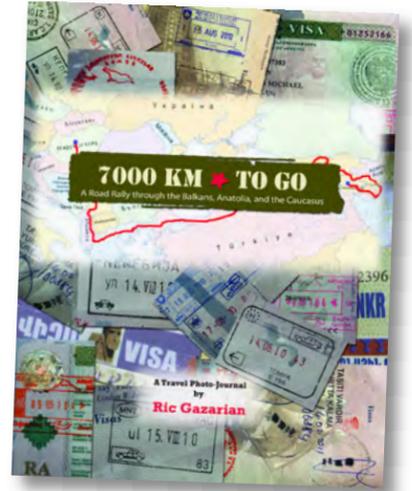
Matiossian Lectures On Armenians and The Aryan Myth

MATIOSSIAN, from page 14 target. This did not stop identifications in the press and scholarship. During the 1938 Kristallnacht pogroms, Matiossian said, Armenians seem to have been also targeted, probably confused with Jews.

He went on to explain how Armenians successfully lobbied against this dangerous classification after the outbreak of World War II, when German authorities seemed again to be leaning towards considering Armenians as Semites.

Most of this work was carried out through the German-Armenian Society, which had been established in 1914. Around 1942-1943, despite contradictory signals from German officials, Armenian efforts resulted in ensuring the safety of the Armenian population in Germany and occupied territories.

Matiossian is currently the executive director of the Armenian National Education Committee in New York. He is a native of Montevideo, Uruguay, and earned his PhD in history from the National Academy of Sciences in Armenia. He is the author of five books in Armenian and one in Spanish. In addition, he has translated 13 books from Armenian into Spanish.



vided an excellent opportunity to cover a lot of ground, especially off the beaten path."

7000 KM To Go is Gazarian's first book and includes more than 100 color photos. Gazarian has traveled to more than 70 countries and seven continents. He is based in Chicago and is currently planning his next trip.

Gazarian is a Boston native and currently resides in Chicago. He recently founded DriveMeSafely, a Boston-based business providing drivers for personal vehicles. "Your car, our driver, very smart."

He is an avid traveler who has been to all seven continents and more than 70 countries. He hopes to travel to every country in the world.

Gazarian has traveled to Armenia every year since 2004 when he volunteered for four months at Zatik Orphanage and Manana Youth Center. When visiting Armenia in 2009, he saw an advertisement for the Caucasian Challenge, which immediately caught his attention. After further investigation, he signed up for the 2010 race across the Balkans, Turkey, Georgia and Armenia. The race ended in Yerevan. During the race, \$9,000 was raised for Zatik and Manana.

Ten percent of profits will be donated to Armenian Volunteer Corp and Manana Youth Group.

This book (color hard copy and Kindle, both with over 100 photos) is available at all major Internet retailers. For bulk purchases contact the author.

For more information on the book, or to see pictures and the routes, visit www.7000kmtogo.com.



SANTA FE, N.M. — A painting by Richard Tashjian, "Grazing with Clouds over Mesa, NM," is currently on display at the InArt Santa Fe Gallery of Fine Art, as part of an exhibit. The oil on canvas painting was also used on the pages of *Cowboys & Indians* magazine in the January 2012 issue.



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN Mirror- Spectator

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COMMENTARY

The Population Weapon

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Population growth is a strategic weapon for many nations. For long, European countries have adopted "birth encouragement" programs to overcome the drop in their populations. France, especially, has a very generous "birth encouragement" program, which was adopted a long time ago due to concerns about the decline in births there. However, with the flow of immigrants, mostly from France's former North African colonies, the program has benefited these immigrants, rather than the ethnic French people.

Now that many similar programs are in place throughout Europe, many politicians have been alarmed that within the next half century, Muslim populations may make up the majority population on the European continent.

The former Soviet Union had a similar plan in place, which also benefited the Muslim population; women with multiple children were awarded the title "hero mothers." Most of those "hero mothers" in Soviet Armenia were either Kurds or Azeris.

China, with a population well over 1.5 billion, has a reverse population policy. Families are discouraged from having more than two children. China is an economic super power developing at a very fast rate, and its population control plan is intended to calibrate its birth rate with the pace of its economic progress. Runaway population growth may hamper its economic growth.

Armenia has a half-hearted population program in place, which has not contributed much to its growth because such a program needs solid infrastructure to sustain the intended rise in population. Surveys taken in Armenia have demonstrated that many families are reluctant to have children because of economic problems and uncertainties facing the youth there. Should Armenia one day enjoy a strong economy and help its citizens resist the lure of foreign countries, it would benefit from fertility clinics for some population increase.

In Muslim countries polygamy is standard practice and it contributes significantly to the population growth. As a Muslim country, Turkey's population grew at a faster pace and now it is over 70 million. Parallel economic progress has justified the population growth, although out of 70 million, 20 million are Kurds who have become, over the years, more and more assertive of their ethnic identity.

On the other hand, Egypt's overpopulation has become a national trauma, because the economy does not keep pace with the population growth. Birth control is a voluntary option for Egyptian families and it is not encouraged by the religious authorities. With the recent emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood, that problem can only be compounded, as the fundamentalist party will try to impose on the country Sharia law.

In its December 10 issue, the *New York Times* ran a feature article about the population problem in Nagorno Karabagh, under the title, "The National Womb."

The article refers to a recent government program to encourage population growth, because, the ethnic profile of the Karabagh Republic is a critical one, well beyond economy and politics. The future of that tiny republic hinges on its population retention and growth. The *Times* has also given some

statistics which seem to be disappointing: "Since its introduction four years ago, the birth encouragement program has been credited for an increase in births, 2,694 in 2010 from 2,145 in 2007. The program pays each couple about \$780 at their wedding and then an additional \$260 for the first baby, \$520 for the second, \$1,300 for the third and \$1,820 for the fourth. Families with six or more children under the age of 18 are given a house. These payments are quite substantial in a region where an average monthly salary is \$50."

The above statistics demonstrate that the population growth has been at a snail's pace; only an incremental growth in three years, yet Karabagh's future depend on its population growth.

Throughout all the negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, under the auspices of the Minsk Group, a referendum has been one of the sticking points. Azerbaijan insists that in order to have a national referendum, Karabagh's Armenian population, along with Azerbaijan's 7-million population should participate to determine the future status of Karabagh. In that scenario, it is obvious what the outcome would be. The Armenian side maintains that referendum must be limited to the Karabagh population. In this case, the outcome can also be predicted very easily. But there is an inherent danger here. Even if the exiled Azeri population returns to Karabagh to participate in the referendum, their numbers could have increased to dangerous levels, because, even in refugee camps, the Azeri population can grow at a faster pace than the Armenian population, without counting the decrease of Armenian population due to the youth seeking employment in foreign countries. There is also a caveat in this scenario; the Armenian side maintains pre-war ratio of 20 percent to 80 percent in favor of the Armenian population.

No one knows exactly the number of Karabagh's current population and no one wishes to know. The generally-accepted figure is 180,000.

Since Israel's independence in 1948, the Jewish population has grown exponentially trying to outnumber Palestinians, particularly the right-wing, religiously-intolerant faction wanting to settle in Palestinian territories, despite the wars and siege mentality, all helped with US tax dollars.

Despite the rise in the Jewish population, the growing Palestinian population within Israel and in the occupied territories poses a serious demographic problem for Israel's future. That is why some extremist groups in Israel maintain that all Palestinians must be expelled to Jordan.

Despite a massive infusion of funds and military support, Israel is still under a demographic threat. Which brings us back to Armenia and Karabagh: where will that support for Armenia come from?

That is why the *Times* sees a very gloomy prospect for that policy, by stating: "In a region as economically deprived as Nagorno Karabagh, is the solution simply to increase the birthrate? Without first improving education, infrastructure and employment opportunities for future generations and raising the standard of living, the children of today's baby boom may grow up to leave in search of better lives abroad, just like the youths of today."

The Karabagh population demonstrated its patriotism and heroism by winning the war but patriotism and heroism are not enough to win the peace and to win the future of the land. Something more tangible is necessary.

LETTERS

Toys and Books Needed

To the Editor:

Your correspondent, Sara Khojoyan, has written about the shortage of children's books in Armenia, a most serious problem that affects the well-being of the nation. Part of the problem is that there never has been a tradition of illustrated children's books in Armenia. There always have been stories, told by grandmothers and parents, but nothing approaching what is the custom in the West. Our public libraries have separate children's sections and public story hours which appeal as much to the parent as to the child. But it is not only the question of having picture books available, there is also the need of the parent to share, with delight, these stories with the child. Soviet libraries were never a destination for young mothers and their small offspring. And

under the new government it has not changed. But if the children are young, the Westerner can bring a Maurice Sendak book and tell it in Armenian.

But it is not just a question of storybooks; there is also a paucity of toys. Few well-made trucks are available that will hold a boy's imagination, and though you can buy a Lego set on Mashtots Boulevard near the bazaar, or in a cute boutique on Abovian Street, the price is such that they can be afforded only by the visiting Westerner as a gift. Those lovely model sets, from which you can build a space rocket or a cement truck, are available but the cost is in excess of \$25 and not part of an Armenian family's discretionary budget.

I visit friends with young children. There are few toys in the house, though the TV is

on 18 hours a day; the child plays outside with his friends, but there is little to do: no trucks to run in the sandy side streets; no cards for young girls to play with in a circle.

But Armenia needs so much. Thirty percent of the inhabitants have an income of less than \$90 a month. This is abject poverty though the people are so socially disciplined and with such tight family structures that they do not let themselves fall into spiritual despair (a fresh peach will brighten a day). The country needs much more than the frivolity of toys and picture books.

But what each American traveler can do is to get a dozen or so top quality toys and a dozen decks of cards, rent a car for the day and have a picturesque drive out to a village where the toys may be distributed at a school. If they are eventually stolen, at least they'll be in the hands of a child.

Take toys to Armenia. And the joy!

— John A. C. Greppin
Cleveland, Ohio



COMMENTARY

Fortunes of the Upcoming Years

GOD must have a love affair with our parents and grandparents who escaped the horrors of the Genocide and came to America. They are now exemplary citizens and call this "land of ours" with pride, joy and gratitude. We now are almost 1 million souls with our churches, organizations, press and other institutions. We have buried almost all of our grandparents, who worked diligently to leave us an Armenian legacy we should cherish, indeed love. "God gives food to the birds, but does not put it in their nest" goes an old saying. Just as birds have to search and often fight their food, we, as well those who will follow us, must search, fight and find the "food" to exist as a community. We also thank God that blessed the homeland, whose very existence seemed in doubt, had declared independence some two decades ago. While homeland is having growing pains and corruption, bribery, nepotism and mayhem is rampant, in time and with assistance and love of Armenia, we find her way towards tranquility, wealth and order.

By Nubar Dorian

While no one can foretell the future, as it stands presently, our situation as a community in the US bodes ill for our future. As we enter a New Year, so many involved, caring, loving American Armenians died, leaving most of us uncaring, un-involved in Armenian community life. If this trend continues, it surely will be a tragic portent of our future demise. So many of us do not utilize the tools, materials and means to get joyfully involved to secure a bright future for our community. "We are now Americans," they claim and "American we shall remain."

Then there is a group of very active, loving and caring people among us who worship and admire the Armenian Church and happily give their time, treasure and talent to her. They are building more and more churches and establishing new parishes, in the hope that our faith and churches will invigorate the Armenian spirit and ensure the continuation of the community. This, they think, will ensure the continuity of the Armenian community in America. This attitude unquestionably, is positively and highly commendable and inspiring. But, isn't it true that we are asking too much from the Armenian Church? Isn't the mission of the church to save our souls? Are we asking the church to save us as she did centuries ago? Do we really think that only the church will keep us strong, vibrant community and safeguard our future as a community? What is our answer to those who do not attend church, except for weddings and funerals? Don't we witness empty pews in most churches? How about those who think the Armenian church is the only institution to keep the Armenian community existing in the US?

As most of you know, the Armenian Church is no different than other Christian, Apostolic, Orthodox churches, with a combined membership at almost 300 million worldwide. There is really nothing more special or life-giving to a community than to keep them active and alive forever. There are those among us of different religious beliefs, like the Armenian Protestants or Armenian Catholics who do not attend our churches. Certainly, they too happen to be of Armenian descent. The Armenian Church does not have a license or life insurance to keep our community alive for decades and centuries to come.

Then we have a super majority who proudly claim that they and their children are proud Armenians. They serve Armenian food to their children and they are proud that their grandchildren also love the food they eat. The fact is that they do not speak Armenian and know little about Armenian history, literature and yet they are proud to call themselves Armenian Americans. It is fine to let this uninvolved, large majority to consider what they cook for their children. In fact, what they offer their children is Turkish, Arabic or Persian food. The list includes *dolma*, *sarma*, *kufta*, *shish kebab*, *burma*, *bulghur*, *pilaf*, *gavourma* and *halva*. They are all good and tasty, but not Armenian, and serving these dishes, we do not make them or their children active and involved Armenians — even if they were to eat tons of this food!

Besides church and food, what about Armenian culture? The very word culture is the hallmark of a nation. Culture is a time-honored practice, observation, system of values. By its very definition, culture is almost second nature throughout life's duration. In short, culture must be considered the Ivory Tower of a nation, especially those who live not in the homeland, but in dispersion.

I am almost certain that the huge majority of us have considered, and still consider church and food, will make us good Armenians. Unfortunately, they are wrong, dead wrong. As a personal survey, I asked 10 highly-educated Armenians, whose mothers attend church every Sunday, what are the colors of the Armenian flag? "We only have one flag and that is the American flag" was the answer of nine out of 10 who answered. The next question I asked was where the Holy Land Armenia was located. Most answered, "somewhere in the Middle East." These fine, young men and women are going to get married, have children, all of whom will be part of the Armenian community. It is impossible to blame them, as they have never been exposed to our language, books, newspapers and are not part of any Armenian organization. Obviously, their children will be raised without Armenian culture. This is indeed very tragic!

Some time back, the month of October was declared "Culture Month." With the exception of the two political parties, no church or other organization honored Culture Month. The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) is to be commended for organizing young professional groups. While their focus has been raising funds or creating fellowship among people, Armenian culture certainly is part of their function and future plans. The hope is that the coming year and the years beyond are unquestioned, loved and the cry will be to make Armenian culture a national habitat wherever Armenians live.

(Nubar Dorian is former co-chair of the Armenian Assembly in Washington DC.)

An Unintended Consequence

My Involvement with Cosmic Ray Division

By Joseph Dagdigian

December 26, 1999: My wife Lisa and I were unable to decide on New Year's Eve plans for the new millennium. So we went to Armenia. Believing that the prophecies about the world's computers crashing on Y2K may be true, I hoped to be stranded in Hayastan for a while. But it was not to be.

A few months prior to our departure, at one of Prof. Richard Hovanissian's Armenian Cities seminars at UCLA, I met Anahid Yeremian. An announcement that she was working on some science projects in Armenia led me to introduce myself to her. So on our December trip to Armenia I took an envelope from Anahid to be delivered to the head of the Armenia's Cosmic Ray Division (CRD), Prof. Ashot Chilingarian. The envelope contained a few papers and some money for CRD.

CRD and Prof. Ashot Chilingarian

We met Professor Chilingarian in the lobby of the Ani Hotel where we delivered the envelope, and talked a bit. Professor Chilingarian was extremely personable and easy to talk to. Anahid had suggested (strongly I may add) that if we got invited to one of CRD's research stations on Mt. Aragats it would be good to go. Although I am an engineer with a strong interest in physics, I was apprehensive about spending a day with a group of PhD physicists: what would we talk about? Would I understand anything they were saying? Lisa was adamant: "If we get invited, we're going. It's only for a day!" The invite came and we met Chilingarian at his office at the Yerevan Physics Institute where he briefly described CRD's research. They study cosmic ray physics and space weather; the effect of cosmic rays on the earth's environment and on systems such as satellites, power grids and pipelines. They collect cosmic ray data from two cosmic ray observatories on Mt. Aragats. We left for the lower of CRD's two research stations, the Nor Ambert research station at about 6,000 feet on Mt. Aragats. Going higher up to the Aragats station at 10,500 feet would have been treacherous and time consuming as there was deep snow cover at the higher altitudes.

At CRD's research stations on Mt. Aragats crews monitor sophisticated cosmic ray detectors around the clock. Professor Chilingarian with another senior scientist, Valerie Babayan, showed us their facilities. One technician, working on an old troublesome IBM PC which was used to relay cosmic ray data to CRD's facilities in Yerevan, joked about how valuable the antiquated equipment was; museums would pay a fortune for this stuff!

That evening we dined with the crew at the Nor Ambert station: scientists, engineers, cooks, cleaning women and the rest totaling perhaps eight to 10 people who were on duty there. We discussed everything imaginable: science, Armenia, the US, politics and history exactly as we would do with dear friends back home. These people defied my preconceived stereotype. It seemed that we had known each other all our lives — it is just we hadn't met yet. After dinner one gentleman arose, approached me, looked me in the eye and said, "I want you to know one thing. We're going to do our research no matter what, but we're going to do it in Armenia. I've been to Europe and the US. I can go wherever I want. But I'd rather starve than leave Armenia." Yes, I thought, but if your child is going hungry you will leave.

I excused myself and asked for directions to the rest room. Looking around I felt both embarrassed and ashamed that we, the Armenian people, allowed such gifted scientists and dedicated Armenians to work and live in such run down conditions. That evening as time to return to Yerevan approached, Chilingarian indicated that he would remain on "our mountain." Two of his staff would drive us back to Yerevan. Chilingarian thanked us "for all we had done." Embarrassed by his statement, I protested that we did nothing, just delivered an envelope from Anahid. He stood up, looked me in the eye and said, "You don't have the slightest idea what you've done. The mere fact that you're here indicates that someone in the rest of the world knows we exist. You don't know how important that is for us. It gives us the strength to go on."

During our drive back to Yerevan I quietly thought about how I would sell Lisa on doing what we could

to help CRD. We arrived at the Ani Hotel. Despite only having met hosts eight or so hours ago, we knew each other in a very fundamental way. It was an emotional goodbye. As soon as the car left Lisa turned to me and stated, "That's it, were going to adopt the CRD."

Upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union CRD's funding dried up, with CRD's employees going without pay for months on end, Professor Chilingarian told his people that as funds became available, he would distribute the funds equitably among them. Whoever wanted to seek employment elsewhere had his blessing, he understood, and would help as best he could. Most everyone stayed. But to keep up with cutting edge science some of their antiquated equipment had to be replaced. Confident of Chilingarian's leadership, his people agreed to forego part of their already meager pay to fund essential new equipment. It was an investment in CRD's future. Local villagers, I am told, during the cold winter months would cook and bring warm food to the scientists stating, "We don't quite understand what you are doing, but we know it's important."

Professor Chilingarian has on numerous occasions decried the emigration of bright young Armenians to foreign soil. He once told me "You don't realize how bright some of our students are. I know I can't hire them all, I don't have the means. But every year if I can hire one or two of the brightest, keep them here in Armenia, pay them enough so that some day they can bring up families here, well... I think my life will be a success."

Prof. Chilingarian in Boston

Early in February 2000 Professor Chilingarian was invited by the US State Department to a conference in greater Boston, after which he stayed with us for a few days. He, accompanied by Anahid Yeremian, gave a lecture at the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA). While staying with us he received news that CRD's electric power was about to be turned off for non-payment of their bill. CRD simply did not have the cash. Chilingarian convinced the electric company to delay cutting the power for another month or two. I suggested to Anahid that Chilingarian issue an appeal to the diaspora for support. Anahid replied, "These people have lost everything but their dignity, I'm not about to ask them to give that up too," referring to having them plea for funds. So Anahid and I asked our friends and relatives for support. Chilingarian was initially against this. He stated the diaspora had enough problems, they need schools, community centers, etc. But finally he relented. Anahid and I formed the Support Committee for Armenia's Cosmic Ray Division (SCACRD) working in conjunction with a number of organizations, including the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESA).

Subsequent Visits to CRD

During one visit I was escorted to a building at the Nor Ambert research station — a large garage filled with wood and woodworking equipment. Professor Chilingarian explained that he needed new windows for the Aragats Research Station building at 11,500 ft altitude atop Mt. Aragats. Winter snow there often reaches the second-story windows. Though there were funds to buy new windows, he realized that with the same amount of money he could equip a woodworking shop and hire a couple of local carpenters to make the windows. Otherwise, he stated, these people would have had to leave Armenia as they had no other opportunities for work here.

On another occasion I sent \$100 to Professor Chilingarian. This was not part of our official aid to CRD, but a personal contribution for him to use as he saw fit. I suggested they buy a new TV, or perhaps a couple of kegs of beer for CRD's employees on Mt. Aragats. A week later I received a thank you note. There were two men in the local village who did part-time repair work on CRD's facilities. Both had orchards, which were wiped out during a recent hail storm. "If I give each \$50," stated Chilingarian, "they can replant their orchards and be back in business in a few years. Is that ok?" Of course it was!

Anahid and I were privileged to attend the international Solar Extreme Events conference at CRD's Nor Ambert research station during the summer of 2005. By this time diaspora funding had allowed Chilingarian some latitude in negotiating research partnerships with many international scientific organizations. Research grants now paid for well over half of CRD's budget with a bit more support now coming from the Armenian government as well. Still, diaspora support remained, and remains, essential.

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

President Sargisian Makes Major Strategic Shift in Armenia's Demands from Turkey

President Serge Sargisian delivered a major speech in Marseille, France, last week, during which he introduced a new strategy for the resolution of Armenia's demands from Turkey. Until now, the Armenian government had merely pursued the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

For the first time, the president spoke about Armenia's demand for "justice." To ensure that his message was received loud and clear, he repeated the word "justice" three times in three separate sentences:

"Every Armenian demands justice, whether he or she lives in Armenia, Artsakh or the diaspora."

"We were strong enough to survive the *Meds Yeghern* [Great Calamity], and we are just as strong now to demand justice." The president used the term "Armenian Genocide" six times in other parts of his speech.

"That was the joyful news for justice, not revenge," Sargisian stated, describing the joy of Marseille Armenians in 1921, when they heard the acquittal of Soghomon Tehlirian, Talat's assassin, by a German court.

Surprisingly, not a single political commentator in Armenia, Turkey or elsewhere took note of the significant shift in the approach articulated by Sargisian. Seeking "justice" for the victims of genocide is a completely different objective than simply attaining recognition. In this context, the word "justice" encompasses the undoing of as much of the damage as possible, by demanding the restitution and return of all looted assets, confiscated properties, and occupied territories.

While advancing a more comprehensive set of demands from Turkey, Sargisian expressed his conviction that the day would come when Turkey's leaders would acknowledge the mass crimes committed by their predecessors: "We are confident that Turkey will repent. That is neither a precondition nor a desire to exact revenge. Turkey must face its own history. Someday, Turkey's leadership would find the strength to reassess its approach to the Armenian Genocide. Our position has not changed – it is clearcut. We are prepared to establish normal relations with Turkey, befitting neighboring countries. For example, neighboring countries Poland and Germany led by Chancellor Willy Brandt, acknowledging his country's terrible crimes, dropped to his knees at the Warsaw Ghetto. Sooner or later, Turkey, a self-described European country, will have a leadership worthy of being called European, which will bow its head at the Tsitsernagapert [Genocide] Memorial. The sooner the better, but, that's the prerogative of the Turkish people. We cannot impose anything on them. They should do that for the sake of the Turkish people, just as Willy Brandt did for the sake of the German people."

Egemen Bagis, Turkey's Minister for European Union Affairs, perhaps not comprehending the far-reaching consequences of Sargisian's demand for "justice," react-

ed angrily to other parts of the Armenian President's remarks. Bagis arrogantly stated: "There is no power in the world that could bring the Turkish people to its knees. On the contrary, the Turkish people know full well how to bring to their knees those who make such ill-informed statements."

I fully endorse President Sargisian's new approach to the pursuit of Armenian demands from Turkey. Through my columns, speeches, interviews and private meetings, I have repeatedly urged Armenia's leaders to demand "justice" from Turkey, rather than simply seeking Genocide recognition. One of my articles on this topic, "Genocide Recognition and Quest for Justice," was published last year in *The International & Comparative Law Review* of the Loyola Law School of Los Angeles.

Armenia is better off presenting its claims from Turkey in terms of seeking "justice," to avoid the danger of making official territorial demands from a powerful and menacing neighbor. Nevertheless, the demand for "justice" is a code word or shorthand for a comprehensive set of claims from Turkey. Not even Turkey's denialist leaders would dare challenge the universally-accepted notion of "justice" based on the rule of law, specifically, international law.

While Sargisian's remarks in Marseille are highly commendable, it remains to be seen how this newly articulated concept of seeking justice for the Armenian Genocide will be translated into action. What practical steps will the Armenian government, particularly the Foreign Ministry, take to demand justice from Turkey? Will Armenia back the lawsuits filed by Diaspora Armenian communities in American and European courts against Turkey, demanding restitution for Armenian losses during the Genocide or will Armenia bring its own lawsuit against the Republic of Turkey in the World Court?

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Anahid and I interviewed on video a leading scientist from a Swiss research institute. We assured him that we wanted honest responses and would not be offended by any comments he may make. We proceeded to question him on the quality and relevance of CRD's research. He had nothing but positive things to say. The following day he approached us and requested that we delete his interview. Shocked, we agreed to do so. "Yes," he exclaimed, "since yesterday I've seen more of the facilities here and have a better understanding of the research being conducted. Would you mind interviewing me again? I have many more positive comments to make about the CRD!"

At the conclusion of the conference a scientist from Japan, a very senior, internationally-renowned physicist asked for permission to speak. He reminisced about his long association with Professor Chilingarian, first as a young PhD, until now. He spoke admiringly of Chilingarian's research, vision and his leadership of the CRD.

The Future

Professor Chilingarian and the CRD have received numerous accolades and awards too numerous to list here (visit www.crdfriends.org for a details). He has increased the number of students taken under his wing, mentoring a number of very talented young scientists. Chilingarian has not only taken a leadership role within Armenia but within international scientific organizations as well. He recently was appointed director of the Yerevan Physics Institute where he is embarking on a program to utilize Armenia's scientific talent to generate revenue for Armenia while benefiting Armenia socially. Among projects being implemented are the production of short live medical radioisotopes for the diagnosis of diseases and sophisticated medical imaging. He continues as well to lead the CRD. Chilingarian's research has been internationally acknowledged on a number of occasions. He is a newly-elected Fellow of the American Physical Society together with two other Armenians, Harut Avagyan at the Jefferson Laboratory in Virginia, and Yuri Oganessian from the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Russia. All are originally from Armenia.

Conclusion

A last-minute trip to California, then Armenia, resulted in an unintended but welcome consequence: the formation of the Support Committee for Armenia's Cosmic Ray Division (SCACRD). While I don't know all of our dispersed SCACRD members and supporters personally, I think of them all every day and thank them for their trust. What they have helped accomplish is and continues to be extremely important. And I thank Anahid for her vision, tireless dedication and determination.

In 2000 there were perhaps two to three young scientists at the CRD. Now there are many. Both graduate and undergraduate students conduct relevant real world research under Professor Chilingarian's tutelage. Many of these students have received international acclaim for their research. During a recent visit to CRD's headquarters in Yerevan I entered an office filled with young people. As I left I stopped in Chilingarian's office to say goodbye. I commented on how impressive it was to see an office full of young people working collaboratively. Professor Chilingarian looked up and said, "Of course, what do you expect? This is the road to our future."

(Joseph Dagdigian is a Massachusetts resident.)

Bankers Are The Dictators Of the West

Writing from the very region that produces more clichés per square foot than any other "story" – the Middle East – I should perhaps pause before I say I have never read so much garbage, so much utter drivel, as I have about the world financial.

But I will not hold my fire. It seems to me that the reporting of the collapse of capitalism has reached a new low which even the Middle East cannot surpass for sheer unadulterated obedience to the very institutions and Harvard "experts" who have helped to bring about the whole criminal disaster.

Let's kick off with the "Arab Spring" – in itself a grotesque verbal distortion of the great Arab/Muslim awakening which is shaking the Middle East – and the trashy parallels with the social protests in Western capitals. We've been deluged with reports of how the poor or the disadvantaged in the West have "taken a leaf" out of the "Arab spring" book, how demonstrators in America, Canada, Britain, Spain and Greece have been "inspired" by the huge demonstrations that brought down the regimes in Egypt, Tunisia and – up to a point – Libya. But this is nonsense.

The real comparison, needless to say, has been dodged by Western reporters, so keen to extol the anti-dictator rebellions of the Arabs, so anxious to ignore protests against "democratic" Western governments, so desperate to disparage these demonstrations, to suggest that they are merely picking up on the latest fad in the Arab world. The truth is somewhat different. What drove the Arabs in their tens of thousands and then their millions on to the streets of Middle East capitals was a demand for dignity and a refusal to accept that the local family-ruled dictators actually owned their countries. The Mubaraks and the Ben Alis and the Gaddafis and the kings and emirs of the Gulf (and Jordan) and the Assads all believed that they had property rights to their entire nations. Egypt belonged to Mubarak Inc, Tunisia to Ben Ali Inc (and the Traboulsi family), Libya to Gaddafi Inc. And so on. The Arab martyrs against dictatorship died to prove that their countries belonged to their own people.

And that is the true parallel in the West. The protest movements are indeed against Big Business – a perfectly justified cause – and against "governments." What they have really divined, however, albeit a bit late in the day, is that they have for decades bought into a fraudulent democracy: they dutifully vote for political parties – which then hand their demo-

cratic mandate and people's power to the banks and the derivative traders and the rating agencies, all three backed up by the slovenly and dishonest coterie of "experts" from America's top universities and "think tanks," who maintain the fiction that this is a crisis of globalization rather than a massive financial con trick foisted on the voters.

The banks and the rating agencies have become the dictators of the West. Like the Mubaraks and Ben Alis, the banks believed – and still believe – they are owners of their countries. The elections which give them power have – through the gutlessness and collusion of governments – become as false as the polls to which the Arabs were forced to troop decade after decade to anoint their own national property owners. Goldman Sachs and the Royal Bank of Scotland became the Mubaraks and Ben Alis of the US and the UK, each gobbling up the people's wealth in bogus rewards and bonuses for their vicious bosses on a scale infinitely more rapacious than their greedy Arab dictator-brothers could imagine.

I didn't need Charles Ferguson's *Inside Job* on BBC2 this week – though it helped – to teach me that the ratings agencies and the US banks are interchangeable, that their personnel move seamlessly between agency, bank and US government. The ratings lads (almost always lads, of course) who AAA-rated sub-prime loans and derivatives in America are now – via their poisonous influence on the markets – clawing down the people of Europe by threatening to lower or withdraw the very same ratings from European nations which they lavished upon criminals before the financial crash in the US. I believe that understatement tends to win arguments. But, forgive me, who are these creatures whose ratings agencies now put more fear into the French than Rommel did in 1940?

Why don't my journalist mates in Wall Street tell me? How come the BBC and CNN and – oh, dear, even al-Jazeera – treat these criminal communities as unquestionable institutions of power? Why no investigations – *Inside Job* started along the path – into these scandalous double-dealers? It reminds me so much of the equally-craven way that so many American reporters cover the Middle East, eerily avoiding any direct criticism of Israel, abetted by an army of pro-Likud lobbyists to explain to viewers why American "peacemaking" in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be trusted, why the good guys are "moderates," the bad guys "terrorists".

The Arabs have at least begun to shrug off this nonsense. But when the Wall Street protesters do the same, they become "anarchists," the social "terrorists" of American streets who dare to demand that the Bernankes and Geithners should face the same kind of trial as Hosni Mubarak. We in the West – our governments – have created our dictators. But, unlike the Arabs, we can't touch them.

The Irish Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, solemnly informed his people this week that they were not responsible for the crisis in which they found themselves. They already knew that, of course. What he did not tell them was who was to blame. Isn't it time he and his fellow EU prime ministers did tell us? And our reporters, too?

(Robert Fisk is a columnist for the *Independent*. This commentary originally appeared in the December 11 issue of the paper.)



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