

Mexico Panel Rejects Aliyev Statue

MEXICO CITY (RFE/RL) – An advisory commission in Mexico City has recommended the removal of a statue of Azerbaijan's late President Heydar Aliyev that has been erected along a main boulevard of the Mexican capital.

Gabriel Guerra, a member of the panel, said on November 23 that the commission has called for the bronze statue to be removed from the high-profile Chapultepec Park, along Reforma Avenue and transferred to another less "emblematic" location.

Azerbaijan's government paid around \$5 million for the renovation of the section of the park where the statue was erected and other public works. That corner of the park was named the "Mexico-Azerbaijan Friendship Park."

Baku has warned of damage to Azerbaijan's relations with Mexico if the statue is removed, including the potential closure of its embassy and the suspension of Azerbaijani investments in Mexico.

Azerbaijan says Mexico City's government signed an agreement stipulating the monument should be allowed to remain on the spot for 99 years.

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All-Armenian Fund Telethon Raises \$21 Million

NEW YORK – Hayastan All-Armenian Fund concluded its 15th international Thanksgiving Day telethon this year by raising \$21,422,477 in donations and pledges. The theme this year was "Our Village."

In addition, a portion of all the telethon proceeds will be going toward the outreach efforts for Syrian Armenians. The telethon raised \$12.3 million last year. Above, hosts and guests during the telethon point to the screen showing the final figure pledged by donors.

Edmond Azadian Meets with ADL Armenia District Committee Members

YEREVAN – On November 21, Edmond Azadian, co-chairman of the Armenian Democratic Liberal party (ADL) District Committee of US and Canada met in Yerevan with the Board of Directors of ADL Armenia.

ADL Armenia was established in 1991 through the efforts of ADL District Committee of US and Canada, which also helped found *Azg* newspaper, the most respected newspaper in Armenia.

The ADL Armenia had tumultuous years starting 1995, instigated by then-president Levon Ter-Petrosian. Party Chairman Rouben Mirzakhanian was replaced by Haroutiun Arakelian. During his tenure, Arakelian sold all the real estate of the party, including the headquarters in Yerevan and four district offices, all of which were donated by members of ADL District Committee of US and Canada. He was charged with embezzlement and is now a fugitive in Sweden.

Azadian informed ADL Armenia represen-



Edmond Azadian meets with members of ADL Armenia

tatives that an ADL worldwide general meeting is planned to take place soon with the participation of two thirds of the chapters in New York to discuss the party platform.

During the meeting, the two sides agreed that they will support the re-election of President Serge Sargisian to a second term, during the presidential elections on February 17, 2013.

Three Members of Family Drown Trying To Save Dog in Calif.

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) – The search was called off Monday for a teenager whose parents were killed after they plunged into the cold, powerful surf in Northern California in a nightmarish chain of events that started when their son tried to save the family dog from drowning.

Eureka residents Mary Elena Scott, 57, and Howard Gregory Kuljian, 54, both drowned Saturday, said Ariel Gruenthal, a deputy coroner in Humboldt County.

The boy, Gregory James Kuljian, has not been found and is presumed dead.

Powerful, 10-foot waves had pulled the dog into the ocean Saturday as it ran to retrieve a stick at Big Lagoon, about 300 miles north of San Francisco, authorities said.

The 16-year-old boy went after the dog, prompting his father to attempt a rescue, said Dana Jones, a state parks district superintendent. The teenager was able to get out of the waves but then went back into the water with his mother in search of his father.

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The members of the Kuljian family, from left, Mary Elena Scott, Gregory James Kuljian, Olivia Kuljian and Howard Gregory Kuljian

Community Unites Globally, Acts Locally to Aid Syrian Brethren

WATERTOWN – The ongoing conflict in Syria has resulted in the displacement of thousands of Syrian Armenians, the majority of whom are fleeing to Armenia and Lebanon, as well as to Iraq, Jordan and elsewhere. The impact of the fighting in Syria has been felt throughout the country.

By Gabriella Gage

Mirror-Special Staff

Prior to the conflict, more than 90,000 Armenians called Syria home, predominately in the cities of Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, Kamishli and Latakia. What is more surprising is the corresponding impact the crisis in Syria has had on its sister diasporan communities throughout the world.

Despite the political, regional and even religious divisions that normally plague cooperative efforts in the global Armenian community, every facet of the diaspora seems to have united to address the needs of the Syrian-Armenian community.

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Globe Spots Names Armenia a Top Travel Destination

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Globe Spots, an international tourism organization, recently included Armenia in a list of top 10 countries tourists should visit in 2013. Armenia occupies the fifth position on the list.

According to Globe Spots, "Despite its rather well developed tourism infrastructure, Armenia still flies under the radar of most travelers."

The agency also highlighted Armenia as the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as a state religion and noted its many churches and monasteries that avid travelers should visit.

Globe Spots added, "Those willing to dig a little deeper will discover a truly amazing country with a beautiful landscape, but will also encounter genuinely nice people always ready to offer them a shot of *aragh* [a strong, local drink] (introduced by never-ending toasts), or welcome them at their *khovats* [grilled meat] picnic... or both."

Visa requirements are expected to be lifted for European Union citizens beginning in January.

Defense Minister Visits Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan (Armenian Public Radio) – A delegation headed by Armenian Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan left for Afghanistan for a two-day working visit on November 26.

Within the framework of the visit Ohanyan was expected to meet with his counterpart Bismillah Khan Mohammadi, Deputy Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, Lieutenant General Nick Carter and Commander of the ISAF Regional Command North Major General Erich Pfeffer.

Issues related to Armenia's involvement in ISAF and other questions of bilateral interest will be on the agenda for the meetings.

The delegation headed by Ohanyan is also scheduled to visit the Armenian peacekeepers who have been carrying out missions in Kunduz and Mazari Sharif since 2010.

Armenian Books on Display at British Library

LONDON (Panorama) – An exhibition dedicated to the 500th anniversary of Armenian printing and 20th anniversary of the establishment of Armenian-British diplomatic relations opened at the British Library on Thursday, November 22.

Armenian Minister of Culture Hasmik Poghosyan attended the opening ceremony of the exhibition.

The exhibition features the best examples of handwritten and printed Armenian books kept at the British Library and will run through January.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Charents Remembered On 75th Anniversary of Death

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A number of pupils gathered by the monument of prominent Armenian writer and poet Yeghishe Charents to pay tribute to him on November 27, marking the 75th anniversary of his death. The program was organized by the Writers' Union of Armenia.

Chairman of the Writer's Union of Armenia Levon Ananyan stated that Charents appeared in the world literature with a special mission, which was to introduce the psychology, worldview and character of the Armenian people. Said Ananyan, "In those difficult times the national genius completed his unique mission."

The Director of Charents House-Museum Lilit Hakobyan said that November 27 is not only the anniversary of Charents' death, but one of commemoration and eternity.

"Poems by Charents live on and are uttered by the pupils. Charents lives on with them. He is immortal." She also added that Charents is timeless.

39 Percent of Armenian Women Are Victims of Domestic Violence

YEREVAN (news.am) — According to the director of Women's Rights Center Susanna Vardanyan, the basis of Armenia's draft law "On Domestic Violence" remains the same, but many details have changed. "Since the NGOs are unable to initiate legislation, the draft law On Domestic Violence was handed over to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to be submitted to the government," she told reporters on Monday.

Vardanyan presented the data of the independent research center as of 2007. According to the research, 39 percent of Armenia's women are subjected to domestic violence, 12 percent of them to serious physical violence, 5 percent to sexual violence and the remaining amount are subjected to psychological abuse.

Vardanyan said they had been working on a project for two years trying to take into account international experience to adapt the law to Armenia's conditions. The project has also been studied by many experts, including the Warsaw Institute of Human Rights.

"Under the order of Armenia's prime minister, an interdepartmental committee will be set up to deal with gender issues. The bill has also been discussed in the Council of Europe. The final document will be presented to the prime minister on December 10," Vardanyan said.

President Sargisian Attends Meghri Hydro Plant Groundbreaking

YEREVAN (Hetq) — President Serge Sargisian travelled to Meghri last month to participate in a ceremony marking the start of construction of a joint Armenian-Iranian hydro-electric plant on the Araks River.

A delegation from Iran headed by Majid Namjou was on hand for the groundbreaking as well.

Government Backs Oshakan Bridge

YEREVAN (hetq) — Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargisian has given the green light to the government plan financing the construction of a bridge to span the Kasakh River gorge in the village of Oshakan, just south of the town of Ashtarak.

Residents have long complained that they cannot farm 400 hectares of arable land and get the harvest to market without a bridge.

Armenian Presidential Election Slate Still Unclear

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia is due to hold a presidential election in just three months, but the Central Election Commission has still not yet set the exact date. Last time around, it announced on November 9, 2007, that the ballot would take place on February 19, 2008.

It is likewise not yet clear whom Armenia's two main opposition groupings will choose as their respective candidates. Discussions between them on the possibility of fielding a single opposition candidate to challenge incumbent President Serge Sargisian have not yet yielded an agreement.

Sargisian's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) formally named him as its candidate on November 9. The only other declared candidate to date is Raffi Hovannisian, the US-born chairman of the opposition Zharangutun (Heritage) party, who announced his candidacy a week earlier.

"I am doing this as a citizen of the Republic of Armenia who has responsibility and the will, shares the blame for the existing situation, and wants to help overcome and sort it out," Hovannisian told journalists, adding that, "I will be a presidential candidate only once and never again."

Hovannisian said he hopes that other opposition parties will support his candidacy. But the opposition Free Democrats, with whom Zharangutun forged a short-lived alliance to participate in the May 2012 parliamentary ballot, have said they "are not even considering" doing so. Instead, the Free Democrats may become the first Armenian political party ever to field a woman presidential candidate, nominating the party's deputy chairperson, Anush Sedrakian.

The Armenian National Congress (HAK) has not yet decided whether to propose as its candidate its chairman, former President Levon Ter-Petrosian, who polled second to Sargisian in the 2008 ballot. A senior HAK member, former Prime Minister Hrant Bagratian, said on November 15 the party will announce its candidate "within a week or two."

The HAK announced on November 12 that it had embarked on discussions with the Bargavach Hayastan Party (BHK, Prosperous Armenia) on fielding a single presidential candidate but did not name names. BHK is headed by wealthy oligarch Gagik Tsarukian, a former arm wrestler renowned for his charitable activities.

BHK was a junior partner in successive coalition governments from 2007-12. But it decided to participate independently in the May 2012 parliamentary election in violation of a memorandum Tsarukian signed in February 2011 and placed second, with 37 of the 131 mandates. Tsarukian subsequently declined to join the new coalition government formed by the HHK and its longtime ally, Orinats Yerkir (Law-Based State). But the BHK nonetheless consistently positions itself not as an opposition party but as a "constructive alternative" to Sargisian's HHK.

Three men have been named as a possible joint HAK/BHK presidential can-

didate. The first is Ter-Petrosian, but backing him would be tantamount to the BHK unequivocally signaling that it is in opposition to Sargisian and the HHK.

Several observers quoted by the Russian website Regnum believe the BHK is engaged in covert talks with the HHK and might back Sargisian's presidential candidacy in return for a promise of greater representation in government than they enjoyed in the past. (The post of prime minister or deputy prime minister figures in such speculation.)

Some other analysts rule out BHK support for Ter-Petrosian on the grounds of the bad blood between Ter-Petrosian and Robert Kocharian, who was instrumental in forcing Ter-Petrosian's untimely resignation in February 1998.

Kocharian, who was elected president in March 1998, has long been regarded as close to, and exerting an influence on, the BHK. But Kocharian has distanced himself from a recent BHK initiative to effect a sweeping constitutional reform that would truncate the powers of the president and transform Armenia into a parliamentary republic.

The second potential joint candidate is Tsarukian, who has repeatedly refused to commit himself when asked by journalists about his presidential intentions, most recently last week.

The third is Vartan Oskanian, who served from 1998 to 2008 as foreign minister under Kocharian. Urbane, formidably articulate and one of comparatively few former senior politicians not to have amassed a private fortune by questionable means, Oskanian joined the BHK earlier this year and was elected to parliament in May 2012. He currently faces criminal charges of money-laundering in connection with donations by a US businessman to the Civitas Foundation he established in 2008. Those charges are widely perceived as politically motivated retaliation for the BHK's refusal to join a new coalition government. US Ambassador to Armenia John Heffern has described the case against Oskanian as "troubling."

Among the skeptics who doubt that the HAK and BHK will agree on a joint candidate, the daily Aravot suggests that Ter-Petrosian is waiting for Tsarukian to clarify his intentions before deciding whether or not to declare his candidacy.

Meanwhile, both the HAK and the BHK are holding talks with other opposition parties: the HAK with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaksutun (HHD), and the BHK with the Free Democrats. Commenting on the latter meeting, BHK parliament faction secretary Naira Zohrabian said the various opposition parties may agree on "quite a serious political agenda" prior to the February ballot.

Artur Rustamian of the HHD for his part said his party's support for an opposition candidate is contingent on acceptance of its pre-election political agenda unveiled earlier this month. The seven-point document calls for Armenia's transformation into a parliamentary republic; the holding of parlia-

mentary elections only under the proportional representation system; the independence of the national judicial system; and the separation of big business from government.

The HHK, meanwhile, remains seemingly convinced that Sargisian's reelection is a foregone conclusion. In a rebuttal of Zohrabian's assertion that the HHK "is waiting with bated breath for us to choose" which candidate to support, HHK parliamentarian Hamlet Harutiunian told Aravot this week that the party "continues to breathe easily." Harutiunian describes the two parties as "rivals," not "enemies."

Prime Minister Demands Genocide Recognition, Karabagh Resolution

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister of Armenia Tigran Sargisian declared that issues regarding the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and regulation of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict are "links of the same chain" in an interview with the Russia publication, *Izvestiya*.

Discussing relations with Azerbaijan, Sargisian said that the peace process is going slowly with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairs representing Russia, France and the US.

Sargisian said: "Russia initiated reciprocal meetings of the authorities of our countries; there is a direct connection between them. Such ties are of a certain importance. Due to this the both sides can discuss not merely priority issues, but common human topics as well. This is a unique search for mutual trust."

Sargisian also stated that Armenia is blockaded by Turkey and Azerbaijan, and that sanctions against Iran also have negative influence on "way of life" passes through Georgia.

Among other topics, Sargisian talked about the relations with Turkey. He stated, "We are trying to refrain from being emotional regarding the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Therefore our president initiated negotiations with Turkey for the establishment of diplomatic relations without any precondition. [The European Union] EU, the Russian Federation, the United States of America approved our initiative. As to the protocols, they have been signed in Switzerland. We were under huge pressure. The Armenian Diaspora was against the negotiations with Turkey and the ratification of the protocols. Notwithstanding, due to this step, we approved our political reputation as a reliable partner."

According to the Sargisian, the ball is in Turkey's court. Sargisian said, "Currently we can see the formation of a movement in Turkey for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. If I were told about this 20 years ago, I would never have believe it. My grandfathers are also survivors of the Genocide. My grandfather lost his all family in the course of those tragic events. Therefore, the issues regarding the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and regulation of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict are links of the same chain."

He ended with a declaration that the international community must recognize the Genocide.

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INTERNATIONAL

Armenia, Lebanon Agree To Abolish Visas

BEIRUT (Tert.am) — Armenia and Lebanon agreed Monday to abolish visas between the two countries and to mutually recognize college diplomas.

Armenian President Serge Sargisian and President Michel Sleiman signed the two agreements at Baabda Palace upon the arrival of the former to Lebanon, the *Daily Star* reports.

According to Sleiman's office, the two signed an agreement "to mutually abolish visas for the two countries and recognize college diplomas," in the presence of the Armenian delegation and several Lebanese ministers.

Sargisian also discussed with Sleiman bilateral agreements aimed at improving ties between the two countries.

In a joint news conference at Baabda Palace, Sargisian said he held "productive talks" with Sleiman and discussed ways to widen the scope ties between Lebanon and Armenia.

"This year marks 20 years since we began bilateral relations," Sargisian said.

Sargisian also thanked Lebanon as a people and government for granting Armenians shelter and allowing them to incorporate into society.

"We affirmed the mutual desire to strengthen ties between the two countries and focused on the need to strengthen cultural and social cooperation," Sleiman said.

The two also discussed changes in the Arab world and the eight-day conflict between Israel and Hamas which ended last week with a shaky truce.

They also discussed means for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

On Syria, the two agreed that the only optimal solution for the 21-month-old crisis was a political solution based on dialogue without any military intervention.

Sargisian also met Prime Minister Najib Mikati later Monday.



Armenia's President Serge Sargisian and his Lebanese counterpart, Michel Sleiman, right

Aivazovsky Painting Nabs \$1.6 Million in London



LONDON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Ivan Aivazovsky's "View of Venice, San Giorgio Maggiore," has fetched \$1.62 million at an auction here, McDougall Auctions said on Monday, November 26. The painting, executed by the legendary landscape master in the 1850s, was the most expensive item at the auction of a batch of Russian art, Voice of Russia reported.

FIDE Chairman Suggests Organizing Chess Tournaments in NKR

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — International Chess Federation (FIDE) Chairman Kirsan Ilyumzhinov has suggested organizing chess tournaments in Nagorno-Karabagh Republic in an interview with itogi.ru.

"Another idea I have is about establishing peace on the Arab-Israeli border. I would like to install thousand chess boards for children there. I have already

discussed this idea with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and he is completely for it. It seems that Israeli government is also not against it. It remains to be implemented. It would be reasonable to implement the same idea in NKR for Armenian and Azerbaijani children," Ilyumzhinov said.

Ilyumzhinov has stressed that chess has an important peaceful mission.

GM Aronian Gears up for London Tourney

YEREVAN (ArmeniaNow) — Top Armenian grandmaster, Levon Aronian, is going to take part in London Chess Classic, a prestigious annual tournament held in the British capital.

As part of the competition that will take place on December 1-10, Aronian, the current number two on the rating list of top FIDE players, will also face his archrival and current world number one player, Magnus Carlsen from Norway.

Carlsen twice won the tournament in the past, in 2009 and 2010.

Talking to PanArmenian.net at the weekend Aronian said: "The London Chess Classic has always been remarkable for strong participants. I've had a month of training in Armenia. I will fight for victory."

Last weekend also brought the news of Aronian being named the "Person of the Year" by a leading local magazine, *De Facto*.

The 30-year-old chess ace led Armenia to their third gold medals at the 2012 World Chess Olympiad in Istanbul, Turkey, last September.

Mexico Panel Rejects Aliyev Statue

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Human rights protesters have said they are offended by the monument to Aliyev, who is regarded by many as having led an authoritarian, rights-abusing regime during his years as ruler of the energy-rich Caspian Sea country.

Aliyev was Azerbaijan's longtime Communist Party chief during the Soviet era. He ruled as independent Azerbaijan's president from 1993 until shortly before his death in 2003. His son, Ilham, succeeded him as Azerbaijan's president.

The decision on the future of the life-sized statue now rests with Mexico City Mayor Marcelo Ebrard, who has faced criticism over the monument.

Azerbaijan's ambassador to Mexico, Ilgar Mukhtarov, said he didn't agree with the commission's recommendations and planned to discuss the situation with city authorities.

At a news conference, Mukhtarov also accused Azerbaijan's neighboring

rival Armenia and Armenians living in Mexico of being behind the movement to remove Aliyev's statue from the park.

The advisory commission of three writers and analysts, which was appointed by the city government, said authorities had erred by accepting money to allow a foreign government to essentially decide which political figures or historic events should be commemorated in Mexico City's public spaces.

The panel suggested that a citizens' board be set up to review such proposals in the future to prevent similar controversies.

Critics have ridiculed a plaque on the statue that describes Aliyev as a "brilliant example of infinite devotion to the motherland, loyal to universal ideals of world peace."

The critics say the inappropriateness of the Aliyev statue is magnified by its location not far from monuments to Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham

Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mexican national heroes.

There have been suggestions that Mexico City officials weren't completely aware of who Aliyev was when the decision to approve the statue was made.

The advisory commission also recommended that authorities take action over a second Azerbaijani-funded monument, in downtown Mexico City's Tlaxcoaque plaza.

This statue depicts a woman, her arms uplifted in mourning, commemorating Khojaly, a village where Azerbaijan claims hundreds of Azerbaijanis were killed by Armenian forces.

The Mexico City monument to Aliyev is just one of more than 10 that have been erected in foreign countries. Other countries that are home to Aliyev statues include Turkey, Georgia, Egypt, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Romania and Moldova.

International News

Armenian Filmmaker From Aleppo Released

ALEPPO (Armenpress) — Berio Diocese spokesperson Jirair Reisian announced that Aleppo filmmaker Avo Gabrielian had been freed. The State Security Office of Aleppo had arrested the filmmaker, along with two friends, two weeks ago for suspected illegal activities.

A ransom has also been demanded for the release of Armen Jukjukian, who was kidnapped a few days ago on the way from Kamishli to Aleppo. The ransom has reportedly been delivered and "every moment we are waiting for his return," Reisian said.

Jukjukian was kidnapped on November 21 on a bus going to Aleppo.

When speaking about the current situation in Aleppo, Reisian noted the situation continues to be strained, and that shootings and explosions are heard from time to time, though it is relatively calm in the central districts. Reisian also added that people remained unsafe.

According to Raffi Avetisian, a member of an assistance organization, the current data show that about 40 Armenians have been killed and 66 wounded as a result of the Syrian clashes.

Chairman of Turkish Parliament to Visit Baku

BAKU (Hetq) — Cemil Cicek, Chairman of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, traveled to Baku on Monday to attend a meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation group.

Cicek also met with various Azerbaijani officials to discuss prospects for strengthening relations between Baku and Ankara.

Azeri Boxers Arrive in Armenia for World Youth Championship

YEREVAN (ArmeniaNow) — The World Boxing Youth Championship is being held in Yerevan November 28-December 8, with the participations of 600 athletes from 55 countries.

Among them is an Azerbaijani team, whose participation was under question for some period of time, however, boxers arrived in Armenia after the receiving party provided security guarantees for them.

Vice president of the Armenian Boxing Federation Derenik Gabrielyan said the Azerbaijani team is housed in an especially-isolated residential area and the security of their residence is guaranteed by appropriate services.

"When Armenian boxers were in Azerbaijan, everything possible was done for their security," said Gabrielyan. "We have now to do the same and provide their security. This is also a requirement from the [Amateur] International Boxing Federation. The Azerbaijani boxers live in an isolated area. It's their demand. Their team member will not communicate with the other participants."

The Azerbaijani delegation includes a head coach, his assistant, a doctor and seven athletes.

Armenia Is Ready to Cooperate with New Georgian Government

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia is ready for active cooperation with the new government of Georgia, said Prime Minister Tigran Sargisian during the meeting with CIS, Baltic and Georgian chief editors' club members.

Sargisian noted that Armenia is interested in the establishment of regional peace and security.

"We respect the decision of Georgian nation and ready to actively cooperate with the new government of Georgia. We are interested in the prosperity of Georgia because it is beneficial for Armenia and Armenian nation. Relations with Iran are also very important for us so we pay great attention to them," he said.



Community News

Young Priest from Kessab Raises Funds for Syria

By Tom Vartabedian

NORTH ANDOVER, Mass. — Rev. Karekin Bedourian is on a new mission these days, one that leaves him staggering in his tracks.

In addition to spreading the word of God, the young pastor of St. Gregory Church in North Andover is making an active pitch for Syrian relief efforts in his beloved city of Kessab and other Armenian districts throughout the land.

His inspiration and drive come from the stoic pictures he shows upon the screen of villages devastated and churches turned to rubble. These same places of worship were once places of spiritual worship that warranted his services as a man of the cloth.

Among the casualties are St. George's Armenian Church in Aleppo and Holy Martyrs Madoor in Der Zor where the remains of Genocide victims yearn for justice.

A man of unbridled strength, a tear is apt to cross his eyes when he sees the carnage of bodies being lifted and children wailing.

"It's very sad when I see and hear that in all the places we used to spend our time, there is death and destruction now," he says. "We don't know what the future is holding for our people in Syria but the damage has already been done. Among them are members of my own family and many friends."

A headline in a local newspaper stretches across the page: "Priest from Syria finds things in which to be thankful."



Rev. Karekin Bedourian observes a prayer for peace in his devastated country of Syria.

The photo shows Bedourian seated in a pew inside his church, wearing a stern look. In this spirit of Thanksgiving, all is not despair for the beloved cleric of just 2 ½ years.

"We're thankful to have life and a church community where we can worship in peace and security," he says. "Being thankful is the core of this holiday and it's a good occasion to evaluate what we have."

After rallying his own community at a Family Night dinner and raising \$1,500 for relief efforts, Bedourian took part in an interfaith ecumenical service inside North Andover. With clergy and congregation from area churches filling the pews, once again he spoke of the situation in Syria.

Earlier, a special plate collection in his church turned up \$1,300 for the cause. More important than money, the word was being disseminated. A missionary had spoken. Many of those who donated had opened their generous hearts in other collections tendered by the ARS

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Gregory Melikian with his uniform

A War Story to End War Stories

PHOENIX, Ariz. (*Arizona Republic*) — The radio room was a tight 12 feet wide by 25 feet long, and inside were tucked three soldiers, working the third shift of that May 1945 night in Reims, France.

By Scott Craven

One might have called it the graveyard shift, but all of the shifts in the radio room looked the same, day or night. This was where trained Allied high-speed radio operators sent and received messages across the battlefield of World War II, and security was paramount. There were no windows, and the door was always locked.

For those eight hours, the soldiers' only connection to the outside world — besides the familiar electronic beeps and tones of incoming communiques — was an eye-level slot in the door through which messages passed.

Gregory Melikian was 20, from New York, and the youngest soldier in the room. He remembers how they learned to tell who was outside by the sounds their vehicles made. And at about 1 a.m. on Monday, May 7, the soldiers listened — and they knew. Three cars, by the sound; the most distinctive being the low rumbling of the limousine favored by British leaders.

So they waited. The three men, one with a cigar clenched in his teeth, sat at their stations, wondering if they were right.

Finally, at about 3:30 a.m., there came a sharp rap on the door. One of the radio operators slid open the door covering the slot, and a sheet of paper was thrust through from outside, followed by a gruff, "Send this out."

A glance at the paper revealed nothing, just letters grouped together in nonsensical strings. But the men were sure what it said, even if they couldn't read it.

All eyes went to Melikian. As the youngest, he was tasked for what would be the shift's only job. He took the sheet and sat in front of the teletype, fingers poised over the keys, ready to change the world.

The 88-year-old in a loose-fitting yellow shirt from the '70s took another sip of the chicken soup, pausing in what was at least his umpteenth telling of the tale.

"You know that was, let's see, 67 years ago," Melikian said, the math still coming easily after all these years. "And you don't have to put this, but it was also 40 pounds ago. Things change."

Indeed they do. That 20-year-old sergeant — one of history's extras on May 7, 1945 — has long been a successful lawyer and real-estate magnate who amassed a small fortune after moving his family to Phoenix in 1969.

He sat at a quiet table in the corner of an Irish pub on the first floor of the Hotel San Carlos, a historic hotel in downtown Phoenix. Spend some time with Mr. M, as everyone in the place calls him, and you would never know he owned the joint, though he is proud that the second-floor meeting rooms were dedicated years ago as an official wing of Luke Air Force Base, and how honored he was five years ago when he was named an honorary commander, a salute to his more than 50 years in the Air Force Reserves.

Gregarious and lively, he also speaks with the same enthusiasm when explaining the role of the Melikian Center at Arizona State University, where 22 languages are taught to those who will travel to some of the most dangerous places on the planet, where they will train soldiers and, more importantly, foster understandings between disparate cultures.

Yet it is the details of those early-morning hours in the Little Red Schoolhouse 67 years ago that fascinate people when they discover Melikian's role. Those same details — with yet another twist — recently led to Melikian receiving one of France's highest honors.

In early 1944, Melikian was one of thousands of American soldiers aboard the battleship-gray Queen Mary bound for war overseas, his orders still secret. He'd spent the previous year in Missouri and Wisconsin training as a high-speed radio

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AGBU Announces Appointment of Arpi Vartanian as Director Of Yerevan Office

NEW YORK — The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) recently announced the appointment of Arpi Vartanian as the new director of its Yerevan Office. She will oversee the organization's extensive operations and its growing programs and initiatives in both Armenia and the surrounding region.

A Michigan native and alumna of the AGBU Alex and Manoogian School in Southfield, Vartanian comes full circle by joining the AGBU Yerevan staff. She obtained her graduate degree at the American Graduate School of Global Management (Thunderbird) and went on to pursue her career in Armenia. She brings to AGBU nearly a decade of experience supporting NGOs on the ground in Armenia and raising public awareness of Armenian issues from Washington, DC.

Vartanian has served the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA) extensively as director of its both NGO Training and Resource Center and its Internship Program, as well as acting as the Assembly's acting executive director, Yerevan office director and the country director for the Armenia and Karabagh (Artsakh) offices. In each role, she has spearheaded numerous programs.

AGBU Central Board member Vasken Yacoubian welcomed Vartanian, stating, "True to AGBU's General Assembly slogan of 'Engaging the Future,' the organization is expanding the scope of its projects and activities for the betterment and prosperity of the Armenian nation. As such, the role of AGBU Yerevan Office is becoming more important and significant in fulfilling our vision locally, regionally and worldwide. We are confident that Ms. Vartanian's experience, motivation and knowledge of both the Diaspora and Armenia will be instrumental in helping the office in meeting these new challenges."



Arpi Vartanian, the new director of the AGBU Yerevan Office

Artsakh Speaker Visits California Assembly

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — On Tuesday November 20, upon the joint invitation of California state Sen. Kevin De Leon of Los Angeles (D) and State Assembly member Khachig (Khacho) Achajian of San Luis Obispo (R), Nagorno Karabagh (Artsakh) Parliament Speaker Ashot Ghoulian, paid a formal visit to California Legislative body in Sacramento.

Ghoulian was accompanied by Consul General of Republic of Armenia in California Krikor Hovannissian, Nagorno Karabagh Permanent Representative in Washington Robert Avedissian, ADL-ARCA Central California Coordinator Daniel Aydenian, as well as Sacramento St. James Armenian Parish's Fr. Asoghig Jamgochian were present at the official ceremony in the state capital.



From left, Daniel Aydenian, Fr. Asoghig Jamgochian, Assembly member Kacho Achajian, Hon. Ashot Ghoulian & Senator Kevin De Leon.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Bar Association Launches 'Armenia and Diaspora' Town Hall Series

GLENDAL, Calif. — The Armenian Bar Association announced recently that it held its inaugural "Armenia and Diaspora" town-hall discussion program, which took place at the St. Mary's Church Hall, in collaboration with the Glendale Youth Center, on November 16.

This was the first of a series of community-based meetings which the Armenian Bar will endeavor to co-host periodically with various Armenian organizations and which will center on the theme of "Armenia and Diaspora."

The initial meeting was to explore and discuss the critical crossroads facing Armenia and the diaspora and it enthralled and captivated the interested audience. The evening was highlighted by Raffi K. Hovannisian and Dr. Viken Hovsepian.

Hovannisian is the first foreign minister of the Republic of Armenia, founder of the Armenian Center of National and International Studies, a think tank and research center in Yerevan, founder and chairman of the Heritage Party in Armenia's Parliament, a presidential candidate

of the Glendale Youth Center, Armenian Bar Chairman Garo Ghazarian addressed the 700 people gathered in the standing-room-only church hall. He thanked and acknowledged Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian, members of the clergy, and the two-time mayor of Glendale and current council member, Ara Najarian.

Ghazarian's remarks described the initiative of the Armenian Bar in holding the town hall meeting, namely to hear from "two long-time servants of Armenia and the diaspora, both of whom have dedicated their lives to the Armenian Cause." He also recounted the locations around the world which constitute the Armenian Diaspora, and emphasized the link of the Diaspora to Armenia by invoking parallels between the Holy See of Cilicia to Holy Echmiadzin, Stepanakert to Yerevan and Aleppo to Glendale.

Ultimately, Ghazarian invited the audience to hear both the optimism and concerns, as well as the vision and the road map, of the two keynote speakers of the evening.

ion. Then, he recited parts from the speakers' biographies and invited them both up to the stage.

Hovsepian was the first speaker. In his remarks, he challenged the diaspora to take ownership of the present and future of Armenia. He also emphasized the need for unity in purpose, sorely needed since Armenia's independence 21 years ago. Finally, he provided his vision for moving forward with a national ideology addressing issues based on aspirations of all Armenians and taking into consideration the entire Armenian Nation.

Hovannisian transported the audience to Armenia with a comprehensive account of socioeconomic, political, civic, environmental, military and humanitarian realities and the imperatives facing Armenia today, and in the years ahead, leading to the Armenian Genocide's Centennial in 2015 and beyond.

Interrupted often during his remarks by applause from the audience, Hovannisian expressed his views, opposition to and solutions for the harsh realities that continue to afflict the people of Armenia today and since 1991. He heralded the return to Armenia's citizenry the rule of law and the rule of rights. Hovannisian then spoke of the shortsightedness of selling off the key interests in the infrastructures of Armenia, and the strategic and national folly of surrendering control of Armenia's telecommunications, energy and other critical interests. He spoke of his belief that Armenia has yet to realize its full potential in the post-Soviet era and called on the diaspora to strengthen Armenia and invest in its people, present and future. In doing so, Hovannisian stated that those in the diaspora and Armenia, under one banner, can and must take ownership of their destiny, which when tied to Armenia, and faced jointly with the Diaspora, can be undertaken in a productive and successful manner.

A lively question-and-answer session followed, after which the evening ended with many staying behind to greet and hear further from the evening's speakers.

"We are going to seek and implement innovative ways to continue to assist and to bring Armenia and the Diaspora together. Tonight, we are grateful to Dr. Hovsepian and our founder, the Honorable Raffi Hovannisian, for heeding our call and taking part in this town hall discussion. We hope to have

equal success with future volunteer public servants and look forward to helping to bridge the gap between the Diaspora and Armenia," said Ghazarian.

"Events like this are critical to the Armenian Nation. Our commitment to our people does not recognize ideological differences. We are inter-



Raffi Hovannisian



From left, Raffi Hovannisian, Dr. Viken Hovsepian and Harut Sassounian

in the upcoming elections in February 2013 and the founder of the Armenian Bar Association.

Hovsepian is the chairman of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Central Committee, US Western Region, and a former member of the ARF's Central Bureau.

After being introduced by Miganoush Ajemian

With that, he invited the evening's moderator, the publisher of the California Courier, Harut Sassounian, to introduce the evening's speakers, after likening him to an ever-ringing church bell echoing the Armenian Cause worldwide. Sassounian briefly commented on the need to have the diaspora assist Armenia in a united fash-

ested in exploring a blueprint of advancing our common objectives. We will continue to hold these public forums in different venues and with a multitude of Armenian public servants and experts as part of our Association's efforts to heighten public awareness and to achieve collective Armenia-based success, both now and in the years ahead," said Armenian Bar Chair Ex-Officio Edvin Minassian.

"I am very proud of the Armenian Bar Association and our Chairman for his tireless efforts in organizing and spearheading this historically-significant event. The speakers delivered an unprecedented analysis of the state of affairs between the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora. The solutions they proposed, if implemented, would create an environment where the collective strength of all Armenians would be greatly enhanced. I urge everyone to view the video of the lecture on the link at the Armenian Bar website," said Saro Kerkonian, chair of the ABA's Armenian Rights Watch Committee.

St. Thomas Recovers from Hurricane, Reschedules Bazaar on December 8, 9

TENAFLY, N.J. — The St. Thomas Armenian Church has recovered after the devastation of Hurricane Sandy and is very happy to announce that its Annual food festival and bazaar will take place this year on Saturday, December 8, from noon to 9 p.m., and Sunday, December 9, from noon to 6 p.m. The Food Festival and Bazaar will take place on church premises, located at the corner of East Clinton Avenue and Route 9W. The Bazaar is held indoors and admission and parking are free.

Delicious authentic Armenian and Middle Eastern foods will be available continuously. In addition, the gourmet booth will offer homemade delicacies and pastries. Some foods such as manti and harpoot kufte will be available to go.

A variety of vendor booths, including jewelry, toys, books, handcrafts and boutique gift items for pre-Christmas shopping will present a wide selection of exciting merchandise. For interested vendors, some booths are still available by calling the church office.

Children's activities will include the performance of a balloon entertainer who will make balloon animals and shapers, as well as a clown with face painting, bouncer, cotton candy, games and much more.

There is also a "White Elephant" booth for those who like exploring vintage and non-vintage treasures and value-priced merchandise.

A special attraction this year will be a folk dance performance by the Antranig Dance Ensemble of St. Thomas on Sunday, at 4 p.m.

A variety of raffle prizes will add to the excitement of the two-day event. The winners will be announced at the raffle drawing on Sunday afternoon during the bazaar.

For more information or directions call the church office or visit the church website at www.stthomasarmenianchurch.com.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Rindge Taps Elanjian as 'Man of the Year'

By Tom Vartabedian

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — George Elanjian, who provided tremendous help for the construction of the \$6.2 million Armenian Heritage Park project, is basking in another moment of glory and accomplishment these days.

He was named "Man of the Year" by his alma mater, Rindge Tech, now Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School, from where he graduated in 1957.

Close to 350 people turned out at the school's 55th reunion November 19 to applaud Elanjian for his community service, sound work ethic and his ambassadorship for the school, which has never wavered over time. The school boasts the oldest alumni association in the country, dating back 116 years.

The tribute came only weeks following the death of his 4-month-old grandchild as a result of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), a tragedy that rocked the entire Greater Boston Armenian community. Elanjian could hardly manage to keep his composure during an acceptance speech before his peers.

"Unfortunately and tragically, our family is still grieving the loss of our granddaughter," he said. "My wife Dottie is the glue that has held our family together through thick and thin."

On hand to relish the moment were his two daughters, Janine and Loren, along with

some close friends.

In presenting the award, Ted Darling described Elanjian as a graduate who embodied the true Rindge spirit of "service above self."

"George has always carried the vision of our school no matter where he has gone," said Darling. "He's the perfect role model for others who have attended this school. His work throughout the community and business world has manifested itself in every facet."

Among his deeds was chairing the All Gifts Committee which resulted in seeing the genocide memorial reach fruition this year at the Rose Kennedy Greenway. Elanjian helped organized many a fund drive inside area churches while tapping into all available resources to reach the goal.

In his acceptance speech, he touched upon his proud Armenian ancestry and being born to genocide survivors.

"My parents met here and brought other immigrants with them to discover a new world and opportunity waiting," Elanjian added. "They worked hard and coped with sacrifice. They stressed the importance of education, church and culture. I've tried to instill those same values into my children."

Elanjian became active with the Watertown Armenian Youth Federation (AYF), played football at Rindge and belonged to St. Stephen's Church. He also served on the Board of Trustees.

After high school, Elanjian attended Wentworth Institute of Technology where he secured a degree in Architectural

Engineering. He completed on-going continuing education courses at Boston Architectural Center before becoming registered in 1974.

From 1972 to 1993, Elanjian became principal architect with the firm of JGD Inc. During that time, he was responsible for the design, bid documents and construction administration for Bentley College (now Bentley University) which featured a 120-acre project worth more than \$100 million, along with a campus development plan of 1.2 million square feet of new buildings, additions, renovations and a pedestrian bridge.

Since 1993, Elanjian has operated his own business called CGE and Associates. As project architect, he has taken charge of many design projects including custom homes, multi-family residential units, commercial office buildings, restaurants and most recently, the preliminary design phase of a 20-acre, \$43.25 million housing project in his hometown of Woburn.

The Elanjians have three children and five grandchildren, alternating between their home in Woburn and another in Gloucester.

A number of notable graduates have occupied this honor roll, which came as a total

surprise to Elanjian.

"Attending this school while growing up in Cambridge had a huge impact in my life," he said. "The memories will always remain indelible."



George Elanjian shares his Man of the Year Award from Rindge Tech with wife Dottie.

Basmajian Family of Toronto Donates \$60,000 to AGBU

NEW YORK — The Basmajian family, long-time supporters of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), has donated a total of \$60,000 to the organization in honor of their loved ones, Harry (Haroutioun) Artinian and Shant Kamer Basmajian. Shakéh Basmajian has pledged \$50,000 to AGBU in memory of her brother, Artinian, who passed

ting tribute to her brother that her donation will support an AGBU facility in Armenia, which will bear her brother's name.

Basmajian's daughter, Isabelle (Isa), also an AGBU Veteran member, has donated an additional amount of \$10,000 in memory of her brother, Shant Kamer Basmajian, which will be allocated to support Armenian writers.



Harry (Haroutioun) Artinian and Shant Kamer Basmajian

away in November 2010. He was an active member of the Toronto Armenian community and, like his sister, a loyal AGBU Veteran member.

Artinian played a critical role in the formation of the AGBU Toronto Chapter, serving as a member of the chapter's Executive Committee when it was re-established by his brother-in-law, Kamer Basmajian, in 1958.

Born in Beirut, Artinian spent most of his life living in Canada, but his heart was always in Armenia, and he identified strongly with his cultural roots and his ancestral land. Upon his death and per his wishes, his ashes were buried in Armenia. Basmajian sees it as a fit-

ting tribute to her brother that her donation will support an AGBU facility in Armenia, which will bear her brother's name. Basmajian's daughter, Isabelle (Isa), also an AGBU Veteran member, has donated an additional amount of \$10,000 in memory of her brother, Shant Kamer Basmajian, which will be allocated to support Armenian writers. Shant Basmajian was a well-respected and active poet in Toronto, who passed away in 1990 at the age of 39 after struggling for many years with a heart condition. During his lifetime, he taught poetry, was featured at poetry festivals across Canada and published a great number of poetry books, reviews and articles. AGBU was proud to have Shant Basmajian's work featured in its publication, *Armenian-American Poets: A Bilingual Anthology* (1976) compiled and translated by Garig Basmajian (no relation). Shakéh Basmajian's other daughter, Knar, continues to serve the organization as chair of the Toronto Chapter for the past several years.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Program to Address Azeri Aggression in North of Armenia

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The Berd region of the northern province of Tavoush in Armenia has been the target of regular attacks and incursions by the Azerbaijani army.

Bullets frequently ricochet from buildings there and residents have been wounded or even killed.

It is only through the extraordinarily brave citizens of the area that resistance continues. They are led by Father Aram Mirzoyan, who is providing the vital spiritual leadership and organizational focus essential to the villagers' defending their homes and neighborhood.

On Tuesday, December 4, at 7 p.m., at the

hall of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Rev. Dajad Davidian, along with Jack and Eva Medzorian, Winchester residents who have been frequent visitors to the region, will discuss the problem.

"Jack and I have made extensive trips to Armenia in recent years and annually to the Berd region for the past 25 years. During our last trip this past October we explored the escalating violence on Armenia's northeastern border, Tavush Marz. The city of Berd is composed of 16 villages, and is the epicenter of the Azeri border of violence against Armenians. Through documented interviews

and visual images of the area, Jack and I have a clear and specific understanding of the life-threatening actions of the Azeris against the farmers and villagers of this remote area and the strategic designs of the Azeris on this vitally important territory," said Eva Medzorian.

Davidian, formerly of St. James Armenian Church in Watertown, and currently a resident of Armenia, is familiar with the area and is a close friend of Mirzoyan.

"If Tavush Marz is lost to the Azeris, the door is open to Yerevan. The ultimate prize for the Azeris are the beautiful, fertile lands in

this area and Lake Sevan. They have made this clear. We must work together, and act as a catalyst to alert Armenian communities throughout the United States as to Azeri designs and what the poor villagers of the Berd region are experiencing," said Medzorian.

This informational program on December 4 will attempt to explain the problems facing the region, how to effectively communicate the plight of the Berd region to the media, the political community and to non-Armenians.

In addition, Medzorian will show her new video documentary on Berd.

A War Story to End War Stories

MELIKIAN, from page 4

operator, using cutting-edge technology that employed a teletype capable of sending messages faster, and often more accurately, than normal conversation.

Melikian would ultimately be assigned to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces, the headquarters of Allied forces from the United States, Britain, Canada and France. The command was in Versailles when Melikian was assigned later in 1944; in early 1945, it would move to Reims. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower was the supreme commander, and Melikian was among the radiomen working with him in both places.

"One of us had to be with him at all times," Melikian said. "We were his contact to the outside world. He'd be in the back seat of this Cadillac when he was out visiting various Army groups, and one of us would be in the jump seat or in the front with the driver.

"It was either us or carrier pigeon to communicate, and we were a lot faster and more efficient."

Most of Melikian's time, however, was devoted to duties other than being the general's personal Blackberry. He and the other high-speed radio operators would work four days on, three days off in the radio room, donning headphones, listening their way through beeps and code. The worst noise, however, was not something they wanted to hear: incessant radio jamming by the Germans, whose oscillating tone is forever buried in Melikian's psyche.

Even the memory of it drives him crazy.

"Let me tell you what it sounded like," he said, interrupting his story and about to disturb the handful of patrons in the pub. "It was this."

He cleared his throat and proceeded to screech — "EEEE-ooo-EEEE-ooo-EEEE-ooo" — an ear-piercing, voice-straining tone Melikian mimicked for seconds, which was far too long.

"That was it, time after time after time," he said.

By spring of 1945, the Germans were all but finished. But Allied soldiers knew that as long as Adolf Hitler was alive, surrender likely was not an option.

Melikian still had no idea if he would make it home alive. That was what it was like to be part of a group that was a high-priority target.

He and his colleagues, however, sensed that the war was coming to an end. Based on messages and what they were hearing from other soldiers, it seemed only a matter of time. They placed bets with each other on when it might happen. Better yet, that infernal German jamming tone had stopped.

The next thing Melikian remembers is the arrival of the German officers (specifically Colonel-General Alfred Jodl and Admiral Hans-Georg von Friedeburg), who had been sent to negotiate surrender terms.

"They walked around with their chests puffed up and their entourage shaking in their boots around them," Melikian said. "But we saluted them when we saw them. You see a general, you salute. That's that."

The German officers insisted they would surrender only to the British and Americans, as their forces to the east were still engaged with

the Russians.

Eisenhower said, in no uncertain terms, that surrender would only be accepted to all Allied forces, the Russians included. Melikian was the radio operator who typed out Eisenhower's message saying just that.

At 11 p.m. on May 6, 1945, Melikian reported for work. Another night. Another shift.

Until that sharp rap on the door at about 3:30 a.m. May 7.

"Send this out."

Melikian studied the message as he took his seat in front of the teletype. Any doubts what the coded dispatch said were erased when he saw the list of addressees.

All military groups.

Every command center.



Gregory and Emma Melikian

Washington. London. Moscow.

He began with a code that is as embedded in his mind as that German jamming tone. As he typed it in — "Priority," meaning drop everything you are doing and read this — he knew what the radiomen heard on the other end.

"Da di da di di da ditty di di."

He then tapped out the coded message, which consisted of roughly 75 five-letter groups. In five minutes he was done.

Knowing the historic value of the coded message he had just transmitted, Melikian asked officers for the direct translation. Within a few minutes he was handed the uncoded transcript, which Melikian then tapped out word for word on the same teletype machine.

It read:

"A representative of the German High Command signed the unconditional surrender of all German land, sea and air force in Europe to the Allied Expeditionary Force and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command at 0141 hours Central European Time May 7 1945."

Melikian pulled the all-capital-letters message from the machine and tucked it away, knowing one day people would want to see one of the war's most significant missives.

"I wanted a record of it," Melikian said. "This was history happening right now.

"After my wedding and the birth of my four kids, that's the greatest day in my life," Melikian said. "That's when I knew for sure I was going home. And in one piece. I made it."

The rest of the morning appears in his mind as bits and pieces. Celebration. Cups filled with the champagne that made the region famous. Toasts in the War Room. The Germans noticeable in their absence.

The door to the radio room left wide open.

Once the war was over, Melikian settled nicely into life. After obtaining a law degree in 1949, he established a successful practice in New York City, specializing in real-estate law.

In the summer of 1953, Melikian, who had developed a passion for the classical arts, attended a ballet and was struck by a particular

Russian dancer. They would marry in New York's Russian Tea Room after an 11-month courtship that included many visits to the outskirts of LaGuardia Airport, watching planes soar overhead.

Melikian and his wife, Emma, would have three sons and a daughter (and today, he is a grandfather of three). The lawyer would eventually become a New York City civil judge, but his true joy became the purchase and restoration of historic buildings.

After buying his first in 1951, he would go on to amass 32 properties by the time he retired from real estate in 1979, handing the keys of his company — Great Western Realty — to his children, who run it today.

Many of those buildings were in Arizona, a market he thought had more potential and room for financial growth than New York.

Melikian still recalls his first purchase in 1958, a hotel in Holbrook. The private plane landed in a field that recently had been cleared for that flight; 45 minutes later, contract in hand, he was on his way back to New York.

Over the next few years, he and Emma visited the state often. Emma quickly fell in love with the landscape, and in 1969 the Melikian family moved to Phoenix, where four years later they would purchase the crown jewel of their holdings — the Hotel San Carlos, which had opened in downtown Phoenix in 1928.

Thanks to wise investments over the years, Melikian became a philanthropist and was an avid supporter of the arts, including Arizona Opera, the Phoenix Art Museum and the Arizona Theatre Company, among others. The family made their largest gift in 2007 when he and Emma donated \$1 million to ASU to establish the Melikian Center, specializing in languages spoken in areas of military conflict.

When retirement afforded the Melikians plenty of free time, the two discovered the joys of travel. They preferred cruise ships, which allowed them to watch the world as it drifted slowly by, and over the decades they have taken



Gregory Melikian with his uniform

roughly 40 cruises. There is no question, however, that the most notable was three years ago, when a bit of serendipity accompanied them on the way.

Officials from Princess Cruises had heard of the surrender message — Melikian is still unclear how that happened — and he was invited to share his story during an Atlantic crossing aboard the Norwegian Gem in 2009. Halfway through the oceanic journey, Melikian met with the cruise director to go over the specifics of his talk. And two 60-something women interrupted in what were clearly French accents.

They had overheard his story. Was he really on duty that night? In Reims? And he was that soldier?

"I told them I was," Melikian said. "And they said, 'We've been looking for you for 50 years.'"

If only they'd been checking cruise ships, which tended to be the only time the former sergeant told the story outside of family and friends.

The women, who told Melikian they were associated with the French government, begged him to apply for the French Legion of Honor, an award given by the French president to citizens who have made contributions of exceptional merit. The honor, created by Napoleon in 1802, has gone to thousands of American World War II veterans to recognize their contributions and acts of bravery during the liberation of France.

Melikian looked into the issue upon returning home and noted the Legion of Honor was not bestowed posthumously.

"I got right on it," he said.

It would take three years to cut through the red tape (due largely to a 1973 fire in the National Center of Personnel Records in St. Louis, which destroyed an untold number of military records, including those of Melikian).

But on May 7, 2012 (the significance of that date was not lost on Melikian), he received word he had been named a "Chevalier" (knight) of the Legion of Honor. On a Saturday morning in August, he boarded a jet to Burbank, Calif., drove to an American Legion hall in Hollywood and received the medal in front of his wife and three of his four children.

Son Robert Melikian said he was never more proud of his father.

"When we were growing up, he always told us he was the guy who ended World War II," he said. "For the longest time, we just thought it was a story."



COMMUNITY NEWS

Community Unites Globally, Acts Locally to Aid Syrian Brethren

SYRIA, from page 1

The first step to uniting in efforts to aid the Syrian-Armenian community is understanding the crisis at hand. According to Prof. Ara Sanjian of the University of Michigan, Dearborn, there are two dimensions to the Syrian conflict. The first is the internal conflict that was sparked after years of the centralized authoritarian government failing to meet the needs of the general population.



Prof. Ara Sanjian

From the initial upheaval in rural regions, the uprisings eventually moved toward a demand for democratizing within the country by various segments of the population.

“The second dimension of the conflict — and possibly the more important one — is the interna-

tional implications of the revolts. Because Syria has been a staunch ally of Iran, several Western countries such as the US would prefer to unseat Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, while others such as Iran, Russia and China support his regime. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have made no attempts to hide their intentions to unseat Bashar al-Assad, as evidenced by their financial and military support of oppositional forces,” said Sanjian. In the midst of this complicated web of international tensions, the Syrian Armenians wait in hopes of returning to home and to normalcy.

Thousands of Syrians have fled the region, especially those who have been able to acquire the resources to migrate. Many still remain in Syria, hoping for a quick end to the fighting and

a return to normalcy that may never occur. For those Syrian-Armenians who have fled to Armenia or Lebanon, he said, the future is unclear. The desire to eventually return home still remains, but others are confronting the possibility of permanent emigration, Sanjian explained. Armenia, he added, is not in a position to accept and absorb unlimited immigrants.

“It is difficult to dismantle what you have assembled over many generations and just leave your home,” Sanjian noted.

Aid from the Global Community

In response to these dire circumstances, efforts to aid Syrian Armenians have come from communities across the globe, from large scale to individual efforts. The Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC Australia) recently partnered with the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT) in securing \$24.5 million aid package for Syrian-Armenians who have fled to Armenia. On November 22, the ANC-Australia website posted a press release from Walt Secord, a member of the Australian Legislative Council, stating, “I will note my concerns regarding the plight of Armenians in Syria as events continue to unfold. Just last month an important Armenian church in Aleppo was set ablaze and Armenians were kidnapped. I know that members of the local Armenian community are worried about their loved ones in Syria. My thoughts are with them at this time.”

One of the largest coordinated efforts has come through the formation of the Syrian Armenian Relief Fund (SARF), which includes the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Armenian Catholic Eparchy in North America, Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Western U.S.A. (ARFD), Social Democrat Hunchakian Party-Western USA, Armenian Evangelical Union of North America, Armenian General Benevolent Union, Armenian Missionary Association of America and Armenian Relief Society of Western USA.

Fundraising efforts by SARF have also included the two Hye Aid concerts in Pasadena and San Francisco, with two more Hye Aid concerts planned in California, “together with educating and mobilizing the public and publicizing the calamity that has stricken the Syrian Armenian communities thru the print, audio and visual media and during all activities,” according to Executive Committee Chairperson Zaven Khanjian. “There is the natural-human, national-Armenian and Christian-ethical/moral obligations. All three. We would have done it to any and all communities in peril. It must be said though that the Syrian-Armenian community has a special place in the Armenian Diaspora. It is the mother of all Armenian Diaspora communities. The closest to historical Armenia where the memories and monuments to the Genocide are living cries in the face of humanity.”

SARF partnered with the Suryahayutyan Shdab Oknutyan Ojantag Marmin (the Syrian-Armenian Emergency Relief Organization) a pan-Armenian coalition, which also facilitates the transfer of aid and funds through the Catholicosate of the Holy See of Cilicia. According to Khanjian, they have already transferred \$100,000 of the funds raised overseas and are preparing for the transfer of another \$250,000 to take place imminently. Overall, about \$500,000 in contributions and pledges have been raised by this body in the last three months alone.

Prior to coordination with SARF, the Armenian Relief Society (ARS) relief efforts had primarily focused on aiding Armenian schools in Syria with financial assistance to needy students and helping to relieve financial burdens placed on schools. Through these efforts, they have raised more than \$100,000 globally to aid Syrian-Armenian schools and students, and the funds were transferred over through religious headquarters in

Lebanon. “In the global diaspora, whenever one of the communities is in distress, the other communities have an obligation to lend a supporting hand,” said Vice Chair of ARS Central Executive Board Nairy Shahinian on the importance of aiding Syrian communities.

Currently, the ARS is also acting as part of a pan-Armenian effort “made up of the global communities coming together to create a vivid awareness amongst all the Armenian communities,” said Shahinian. The ARS helps provide weekly hot meal plans to the needy, as well as medications, in addition to raising funds. From large-scale efforts to weekly church collections for Syria in local communities, the ARS hopes to continue its aid efforts and encourages readers to contact their local ARS chapters for more ways to help.

Another sponsoring organization of SARF, is ARFD’s “Help Your Brother” initiative, which has transported nearly two tons of plane cargo carrying medicine, food and goods.

“Help Your Brother” also oversaw donations to the “Kashatagh Fund” for the housing of 20 Syrian-Armenian families settling in Kashatagh in Artsakh (Karabagh).

Elsewhere, the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund has publicly committed to donating at least 10 percent of the funds raised at its annual

government, emphasizing the strong Syrian-Armenian cooperation.

Religious sects across the Armenian Diaspora have also united under a single cause.

The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, the Armenian Prelacy and the Armenian Catholic Church have all coordinated efforts. The Prelacy and members of the Catholic and Protestant churches have participated in fundraisers in Boston, Detroit, New York and Chicago.

According to the Eastern Diocese Communications Director Christopher H. Zakian, “At the directive of Archbishop [Khajag] Barsamian, the Diocese instituted a fundraising drive last August, which has included plate collections at the parish level, periodic promotion in our weekly e-newsletter and on social media platforms, as well as an ongoing donor opportunity on our website. All the proceeds will go to the relief effort, to be distributed through the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, which is working with and through the Armenian Church Diocese of Syria.”

The Diocese has been working with the Primate of Syria, Bishop Armash Nalbandian, to keep informed on the situation and promoted communication in order to coordinate humanitarian efforts. “The Primate has urged all our people to keep our countrymen in Syria in their prayers and to pray that the historic and long-lived Armenian community there, once a place of refuge for so many of our ancestors, will endure through this period and eventually enter a new period of wellbeing and peace,” added Zakian.

Members of Congress React

The US political community has also drawn attention to the crisis, with Rep. James McGovern (D-Mass.) who serves as co-chairman of the Tom Lantos Congressional Human Rights

Caucus, voicing his strong support for US humanitarian efforts to Syria, including an ANCA-backed provision in the House Appropriations Committee’s version of the FY13 State-Foreign Operations Bill calling on the State Department to prioritize humanitarian and resettlement assistance for minority communities, including Armenians and other Christian populations in Syria.

Tying the crisis in Syria to the American-Armenian community, McGovern wrote in a letter addressed to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, “As you are very much aware, the Armenian community of Syria, particularly those in and around the Aleppo region, includes a great many descendants of survivors of the Armenian Genocide and the forced death marches through the Syrian desert. These Armenians, along with other Christian and minority populations, are, today, increasingly the victims of violence — in the form of bombings, sniper attacks, murders, kidnapping, and acts of destruction and desecration of holy sites.”

These are only some of the organizations globally working to aid Syrian Armenians.

Further global communication and cooperation will be necessary as the conflict continues. Government agencies and larger organizations “must coordinate on the ground and abroad in order to ensure the even, efficient distribution of resources, so that no one gets left behind,” said Sanjian.



Scene from the AGBU YP fundraiser in Boston

Young Priest from Kessab Raises Funds for Syria

PRIEST, from page 4
and other charitable groups.

“People are killing one another and we condemn that,” he said. “We don’t know when it’s going to end.”

Growing up, he recalls Syria as a peaceful country with freedom for Christians to worship. His parents, two brothers and two sisters still live in Syria, along with his in-laws. One brother was here visiting while Bedourian was making the rounds.

Though there is no definite number of Armenian fatalities, he said he feels it is more than 50 with several more missing. The vast number represents the Armenian community in Aleppo.

Bedourian was born and raised in Kessab. He attended seminary at the Armenian Orthodox Church in Bikfaya, Lebanon. Upon graduating, he served as a deacon in Greece before being ordained in 2009.

Traditionally, the newest pastor in town is chosen to give the sermon at this Thanksgiving Interfaith service. He felt humbled by the request.

Meanwhile, millions of dollars are required to meet the urgent appeal of Armenians in Syria and those who have sought refuge in Armenia and other places throughout the Middle East.

“Armenia has opened its doors to those victims in Syria but their plight remains severe,” Bedourian said. “Thousands of families fled to Armenia and neighboring countries to save themselves. They need our support.”

It was just a year ago that Bedourian and his wife, Sevan, returned to their native Kessab to have their daughter, Megheti, baptized. The atmosphere there at the time could best be described as tranquil. Since then, the Bedourians have welcomed a second daughter, Nareh.

While there, he took part in the funeral service of 104-year-old Kalila Yeralian-Manjikian, the town’s oldest resident they called Nene. Even more iron was the date: 11/11/11.

Thanksgiving Day telethon this year, to aid Syria. The organization raised \$21 million in pledges, which will primarily benefit construction projects in Armenia and Artsakh.

The Fund’s pan-European November Phone-a-thon secured more than 1,425,000 euros in pledges.

Earlier this year, the AGBU Central Board also set aside a \$1 Million Emergency Fund for Humanitarian Assistance to the Armenian Community in Syria. The Syria Emergency Fund recently raised \$250,000 in October at a dinner for General Assembly in Yerevan for AGBU Syria Emergency Relief Fund and continues to raise funds for the cause through a variety of events and efforts.

At the local level, members of the Boston chapter of the AGBU Young Professionals recently hosted a fundraising dinner at the Armenian American Social Club (Agoump) in Watertown. According to Laura Michael, YP Boston chairperson, more than 50 people attended the event and/or donated, with further donations still being accepted at <http://agbuypboston.webs.com>.

YP member and attendee Nicole Merejian said, “The AGBU YP fundraiser was a huge success[...] both Armenians and non-Armenians attended, and raised over \$1,000. I think it’s important to help Armenians, not just locally, but also globally and especially in times of need such as now in Syria. The Armenian community in Syria is relying on local efforts to address their basic needs. The local community in Boston needs to be aware of the magnitude of devastation to the Syrian Armenians.”

Meanwhile in Aleppo, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent has started distributing the aid sent by Armenians from abroad to the Syrians in order to help them cope with damages, losses and economic sanctions. Director of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in Aleppo, Hael Assi, has coordinated with the Armenian Embassy and the Armenian Orthodox Archdiocese in Aleppo to facilitate the distribution of supplies and aid. Secretary of the Baath Party branch in Aleppo, Hilal Hilal, said that the Syrian people “highly appreciate this humanitarian stance of the Armenian people and

Sites for Syrian Relief

To Donate:

- **Syrian Armenian Relief Fund:** <http://www.syrianarmenianrelieffund.org/>
- **AGBU Syria Emergency Fund** :<http://agbu.org/syriarelief>
- **Armenian Relief Society:** <http://ars1910.org/>



COMMUNITY NEWS

Local AGBU Young Professionals Reach out to Armenians of Syria

WATERTOWN – The Boston chapter of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Young Professionals (YP) hosted a fundraiser for the AGBU Syrian Armenian Relief Fund on November 13. Tickets were bought in advance for a dinner prepared by the Armenian American Social Club (Agoup). All proceeds directly helped the Syrian-Armenian community.

Months of political turmoil has displaced many Armenians forcing them to flee from their homes, leaving behind families and businesses. Many have relocated to Armenia and surrounding communities. Fighting and instability have caused some to also be injured.

AGBU has been providing basic needs such as food, water, shelter and medicine to thousands of Armenian families.

The event was well attended by many Armenian and non-Armenian professionals and raised a substantial amount of money.

Anyone interested in donating to help their fellow Armenians may do so at <http://agbu.org/syriarelief/index.html>.

Those interested in joining the AGBU YP can do so at the group's 2013 Steering Committee Open House on December 12 at 7:30 p.m. at the AGBU house, 247 Mount Auburn St.



Guests enjoyed a delicious meal while helping their fellow Armenians.

USF Students, Community Discuss Forming Group on Campus

TAMPA, Fla. – On Wednesday, November 14, more than 25 Armenian students, faculty and staff of the University of South Florida (USF) met for the first time at the main campus to get acquainted and discuss forming an active and permanent Armenian presence at USF, reported Florida Armenians (FLArmenians).

help to USF students wishing to study Armenian issues.

Demerjian, pastor of St. Hagop Armenian Church in nearby Pinellas Park, offered the full resources and blessings of the church community in support of the students, echoed by the presence of Parish Council representatives Chuck Sarkisian and Teresa Haidarian. He then spotlighted sever-



Armenian students, faculty and staff of the University of South Florida (Courtesy of Teresa Haidarian)

The event began with introductory remarks by event organizer, Fr. Hovnan Demerjian, group introductions. The group then went on to learn about basic resources for being Armenian in and around USF. They heard from longtime mathematics professor and Armenian-American activist Dr. Manoug Manougian, followed by Dr. Mark Greenberg from the USF Library Armenian Studies Program. Greenberg announced an endowment solicited by Manougian on behalf of the library, which will offer academic and financial

al programs and events at St. Hagop and beyond to get the most out of being an Armenian student at USF.

He also facilitated the final discussion, soliciting student ideas and enthusiasm for establishing a permanent Armenian presence on campus, and then handing over the establishment of the club to four student volunteers with faculty assistance from Manougian.

The group hopes to file as an official USF organization by early next semester.

Tim Jemal Named Trustee of South Orange County Community College District

IRVINE, Calif. – Tim Jemal won the election to serve as a Trustee for the South Orange County Community College District. Tim defeated three other candidates vying for the open seat.

“I thank the voters of South Orange County for electing me as a trustee for the South Orange County Community College District,” said Jemal. “I care deeply about education and our economic future. My central priority is to ensure our precious tax dollars provide world-class education at Saddleback and Irvine Valley Colleges and the Advanced Technology and Education Park.”

Jemal has been involved in the Armenian-American community for many years. As the director of government relations for the Armenian Assembly of America in the 1990s, he helped secure nearly \$1 billion in US economic and humanitarian assistance for the Republic of Armenia when the country needed it most. He led a national advocacy campaign in unity with Armenian-Americans across the country resulting in passage of legislation signed into law punishing Azerbaijan and Turkey for their illegal blockades of Armenia.

Finally, he helped secure \$10 million in US government funding to support the University of California-affiliated American University of Armenia (AUA) during the early stages of that school's history. From 1999-2001, Jemal taught Business Administration courses at the AUA in Yerevan.

“I am very grateful for the support I received from Orange County's Armenian-American community starting with my wife Gassia and my children Arya and Alex. Many others in the Armenian-American community provided substantial help to my campaign and I was so fortunate to have their passionate support,” said Jemal. “I love our community colleges. Community colleges often provide students a second chance to advance their education and careers. Community colleges are a crown jewel of our higher education system – otherwise hundreds of thousands of students may fall through the cracks.”

The South Orange County Community College District is a multi-campus district composed of Saddleback College in Mission Viejo, Irvine Valley College (IVC) in Irvine and the Advanced Technology & Education Park (ATEP) in Tustin. The Community College District serves over 68,000 students annually and employs about 3,000 faculty and staff. Saddleback College and Irvine Valley College are accredited institutions, preparing students for associate degrees, transfer to four-year colleges and universities, workforce development and basic skills training. ATEP offers career technical and advanced technology classes

Jemal is the founder and current president of Jemal Public Affairs, a public relations and business development firm with offices in Orange County and Washington, DC.



Tim Jemal

Armenian Assembly Congratulates Obama

WASHINGTON – The Armenian Assembly released a statement after the elections congratulating President Barack Obama on his election victory for a second term in office against former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, who ran a spirited and competitive campaign.

During Obama's first term US-Armenia relations were strengthened through increased contact among high-level officials, including Obama's official invitation to Armenia's President Serge Sargsian to attend the critically important summit on nuclear non-proliferation in Washington, DC, as well as the two visits to Yerevan, Armenia, by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and growing relations between the Pentagon and Armenia's Defense Ministry.

More recently, the administration reacted quickly in September to condemn the pardon issued by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev of Ramil Safarov, the

Azeri lieutenant who murdered an Armenian officer at a NATO Partnership for Peace program in Budapest.

The president also repeatedly endorsed ongoing negotiations under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group by issuing statements along with the presidents of France and Russia, the other two participant states in the Minsk Group, encouraging the parties to peacefully resolve the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

In addition, the co-chairs of the Armenian Caucus in the House of Representatives, Ed Royce (R-CA) and Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) and Armenian Genocide resolution sponsor Adam Schiff (D-CA) were re-elected, as were a majority of the Armenian Caucus members, including Armenian-American Representatives Anna Eshoo (D-CA) and Jackie Speier (D-CA).



Arts & Living

Istanbul Cultural Society Hosts Lecture On Jerusalem

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — Guests at the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) School present for a lecture and slide presentation by David Terzibashian were treated to an informative journey through the 1,600-year history of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. Terzibashian, who was born in Jerusalem and lived and attended school there, has first-hand knowledge of the Patriarchate and its historical significance.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem has equal custodial rights with the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches over the major Dominical shrines in the Holy Land. In the seventh century, the Apostolic See of Jerusalem split between the Greek Patriarchate exercising jurisdiction over the Dyophysite Christians and an independent Armenian Patriarchate having authority over the Monophysite, Jacobite Syrians, Coptic and Ethiopian Churches. Starting with Patriarch Abraham in 638 AD, 96 consecutive Armenian Patriarchs have presided over the Patriarchal throne of St. James of Jerusalem. With the passing of the late Patriarch Archbishop Torkom Manoogian on October 12, 2012 at the age of 93, Archbishop Aris Shirvanian was elected Locum Tenens until the election of a new Patriarch after the traditional 40 days of mourning period. The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem is autonomous in its electoral and administrative affairs with ecclesiastical affiliation with the Mother Church, the Holy See of Echmiadzin in Armenia.

Terzibashian informed the attendees that the St. James Patriarchate is located in the “Armenian Quarter” of Jerusalem which occupies the entire summit of Mt. Zion, with an area of about 300 acres. He indicated that as a result of the persecution of the Armenians by the Ottoman Turks during World War I, the Armenian population of Jerusalem surged to 20,000, but political and economic instability in the region have decimated that number. Today there are fewer than 1,500 Armenians living in Jerusalem, most living in and around the Patriarchate. A few hundred live in Jaffa, Haifa and Nazareth, and only a handful in the Palestinian territories.

His slide presentation included detailed photos of historic charters or “Fermans” granted to the Armenian Patriarchs by different Muslim Caliphs and rulers of Jerusalem affirming the rights and the privileges of the Armenians in the Holy Land. He also shared new photos of the interior and exterior of the Monastery of St. James, dating to 420 AD as well as photos from throughout the compound, including the living quarters.

A short question-and-answer period followed the lecture and AGBU School Principal Hosep Torossian asked Terzibashian if he would present the same lecture to the high school students. He happily agreed to do so.

A reception followed and guests were able to mingle and re-visit some of the highpoints of the presentation with Terzibashian.

The presentation, attended by more than 100 guests, was sponsored by the Metro Detroit Chapter of Cultural Society of Armenians from Istanbul (CSAI) in honor of the late Patriarch Archbishop Torgom Manoogian.



Barbara Haroutunian, left, with David Terzibashian



YerazArt's Nicole Babikian Hajjar addresses the assembled guests.

YerazArt Gala Raises Funds to Support Young Musicians in Armenia

LEXINGTON, Mass. — YerazArt held its annual gala fundraiser on November 17, at the home of Hrip and Charlie Minasian. The event, featuring dinner and an intimate concert with two YerazArt veterans, raised about \$18,000.

Before the concert, YerazArt board president, Nicole Babikian Hajjar, spoke about

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

YerazArt, its focus and the needs that the donations would address. She thanked co-founders Noubar Afeyan and Raffi Festekjian, both of whom were present, as well as the rest of the board, Sargis Karapetyan, Sylvie Zakarian, Avak

Kahvejian, Anna Afeyan, Nina Festekjian, Seza Seraderian, Vahe Ghahraman, Apo Ashjian and Roset Atinjian.

Festekjian and Afeyan founded YerazArt in 2006, she said, with “a mission to assist and promote young talented musicians from Armenia and offer them the opportunity to perform abroad. In the early days of the organization, the main focus was on selecting a few young talents and organizing a concert tour in North America. Over the years, however, our mission has evolved to better adapt to the changing needs of young musicians in Armenia and to better address the needs of classical music in Armenia.”



Vardan Gasparyan

Part of that change is that now, instead of bringing young performers here, YerazArt funds the music programs there.

This past year, she said, YerazArt distributed \$12,000 through the Instrument Donation Program to three music schools in Armenia, one in rural Kapan, to the Kapan Arts College, and two to top schools in Yerevan, the Spendaryan Music School and Tchaikovsky Music School.

“In Kapan, our initiative included a comprehensive donation ranging from trumpets and flutes to cello, violin, clarinet, synthesizer and guitar. In Yerevan, we donated much-needed oboes to Spendaryan and Tchaikovsky Music Schools,” she said.

In addition, she said, YerazArt this year supported four students at the Komitas Conservatory in

Yerevan by giving them each an instrument for a total of \$3,500. Also, financial support in the same amount was given to 10 students in Armenia. And finally, master classes were offered with visiting artists through the Yerevan International Music Festival and several top students were given the opportunity to participate in international competitions.

She also spoke about past recipients of support from YerazArt who have continued toward a successful path in music.

One, pianist Levon-Armen Manaseryan, who had received a scholarship from YerazArt at the Komitas Conservatory last year, had just won the special prize at the 12th International Piano Competition for Young Musicians in Germany this past

see YERAZART, page 12

Erevan Choral Society's Annual Holiday Christmas Concert to be Held on December 9

By Robert Dulgarian

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, Fr. Vasken A. Kouzouian, pastor, and the Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra announce their annual Christmas Holiday Concert, which will be held in the church sanctuary, 145 Brattle St., on Sunday, December 9, at 3:30 p.m.

Reflecting on a year replete with anniversaries and commemorations, the program will headline a number of special performances, including the world premiere of composer and conductor Konstantin Petrossian's *Vocalise*, dedicated to the memory of the Very Rev. Oshagan Minassian,



Konstantin Petrossian

founder and director of the Erevan Choral Society until his death in 2008, and to his devoted mother, Diramayr Sirvart Minassian, and performed by the talented and compelling operatic mezzo-soprano Victoria Avetisyan.

The concert will also celebrate the 20th anniversary of the admission of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations with a performance of Petrossian's *Hayastan*, featuring tenor Yeghishe Manucharyan, to be performed in honor of the visit of Garek Nazarian, ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations. In yet another anniversary performance, the program will include Armen



Victoria Avetisyan and Yeghishe Manucharyan

Mandakounian's *Karabagh*, in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Karabagh.

On a more solemn note, the chorus and orchestra will perform the late Alexander Haroutounian's setting of *Kta Der* (Requiem) in memory of Archbishop Torkom Manoogian (1919-2012), the recently deceased Patriarch of Jerusalem. The program will be rounded out, as in years past, with a mix of traditional Armenian, classical and Western Christmas music, including more solo performances by Avetisyan and Manucharyan, and by soprano Nouna Karapetian.

Admission to the concert is complimentary.

Inquiries should be directed to Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church or office@htaac.org.



ARTS & LIVING

'Voyage to Amasia' Wins Special Jury Award at Alexandria Festival

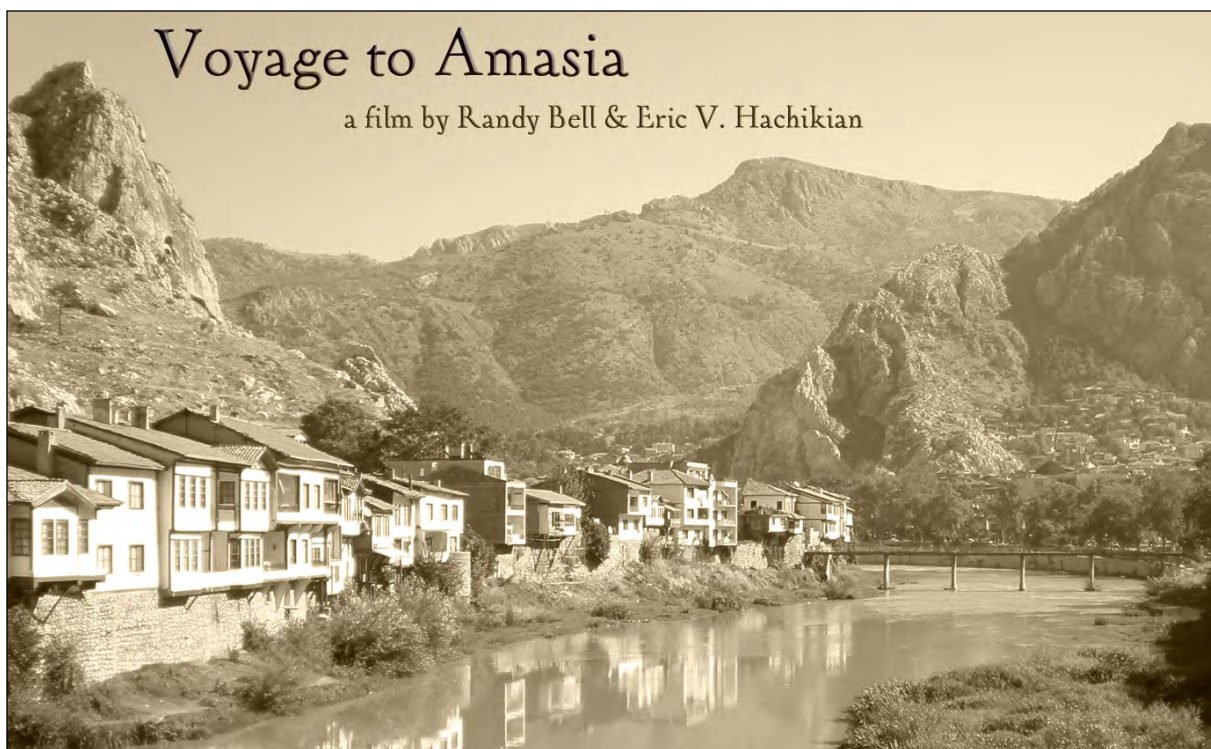
LOS ANGELES — "Voyage to Amasia," a new documentary film by Randy Bell and Eric V. Hachikian, won the Special Jury Award at the Alexandria Film Festival in Alexandria, Va. this past weekend. A yearly tribute to cinema, the Alexandria Film Festival presents feature-length films, documentaries, animation and shorts by emerging and established filmmakers to an engaged audience seeking new or rarely-seen films. In its sixth year, the mission of the Alexandria Film Festival is to promote cinema as an important cultural and educational asset and market Alexandria as a venue for creating, exhibiting and experiencing film.

"Voyage to Amasia" will have its West Coast premiere on Saturday, December 1 at 10 p.m. at the Arpa International Film Festival, where it is screening at the Egyptian Theater in Hollywood.

The film had its world premiere at the Pomegranate Film Festival in Toronto in December 2011, where it won the prize for Best Documentary. It has also screened at the 2012 Golden Apricot International Film Festival (Yerevan, Armenia), the Minneapolis International Film Festival, the Philadelphia Independent Film Festival and the St. Louis International Film Festival.

"Voyage to Amasia" documents composer Hachikian's return to his ancestral home — Amasia, Turkey — nearly 100 years after Ottoman soldiers deported his grandmother during the Armenian Genocide. The film is set to Hachikian's piano trio of the same name, which provided the initial inspiration for the documentary. "Voyage to Amasia" traces a path through the past, honoring his relationship with his grandmother and uncovering what her family's life in Turkey might have been like. It also explores how the events of nearly a century ago continue to strain the relationship between Armenians and Turks today. Inspired by one family's story, the filmmakers embark on their own journey in the hopes of finding a greater understanding between two peoples still at odds. More information on the film can be found at www.voyagetoamasia.com.

Bell is a Washington, DC-based independent filmmaker. His documentary films, which explore subjects as diverse as



Still from "Voyage to Amasia"

American popular music, mid-century European modernist architecture and the AIDS orphan crisis in Kenya, have won awards from the Cleveland International Film Festival, the New England Film and Video Festival and the Ivy Film Festival. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Harvard University in 2000 and his master's in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government in 2010.

Hachikian is an Armenian-American composer whose music has been hailed by the *New York Times* as "lovely and original." His compositions and orchestrations can be heard

in a variety of major motion pictures, network television shows, and national and international ad campaigns. They have been performed at New York's Carnegie Hall, at Boston's Symphony Hall, at The Getty in Los Angeles, and Off-Broadway in New York City. A classically-trained composer, as well as a self-taught DJ and perpetual student of world music, Eric's musical style has no boundaries, and his multi-genre interests result in a unique and personal sound.

Ticket information is available at www.itsmyseat.com/events/406705.html.

Supporters of Mer Doon Raise Spirits, Funds in Boston

By Nancy Kalajian

WATERTOWN — More than 600 guests and supporters attended a benefit celebration held at St. James Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center Hall on November 10 to benefit Mer Doon, a residence in Echmiadzin, Armenia, for young women who have outgrown their childhood home in Armenian orphanages, or who come from seriously disadvantaged backgrounds.

Mark Kashgegian, co-chairman of the benefit, witnessed the work of Mer Doon some years ago while vacationing in Armenia with his family, and was so touched by the support given to these young women that two years later, he rounded up about 30 friends in the Boston area to "generate enthusiasm" for a benefit for Mer Doon to be held in the future. Peter Babigian quickly got on board as co-chairman.

"There was a butterfly in my heart. When my wife Lori and I, and our two daughters visited Mer Doon in 2007, we met the residents and staff. They sang and cooked for us," shares Kashgegian. "There are nine orphanages and after they reach 18 years old, the youth have to leave the orphanage. Prostitution, drug trafficking and other negative influences are on the street."

The sold-out benefit celebration featured performances by two different styles of Armenian music: singer Nune Yesayan from Armenia and oudist Richard Hagopian from Fresno and his ensemble. During one set, Yesayan held many of her admirers spellbound as they danced solo-style to her strong vocal presence and contemporary flair. Composer Martin Aharonyan and Alexander (Sasha) Mirzakhanyan, filmmaker, accompanied Yesayan for this benefit performance.

From start to finish, the Richard Hagopian Ensemble stirred guests with their traditional rhythms and prompted line dancing amidst

whirling soloists. One unexpected delight occurred when 8-year-old singer Simon Hagopian joined the ensemble, which included his grandfather Richard Hagopian and his father Harold Hagopian, bringing smiles and tears to more than a few guests.

Midway through the celebration, Mer Doon President Dr. Jane Mahakian of California, facilitated an informative program, introduced the evening's co-chairmen and Mer Doon founders Julie Ashekian and Tikranouhi "Tiko"

About seven years ago, Connecticut resident Ashekian spearheaded the idea of Mer Doon. Having years of experience with establishing the Children of Armenia Sponsorship Program (CASP) program through the Diocese of the Armenian Church, she was familiar with orphanages in Armenia.

"The Gavar Orphanage, near Lake Sevan, had over 100 children. We knew that at a certain age, the young men are required to do military service for two years but we wondered what

nections among the residents and caring staff. "Everyone is like family. There's a vegetable garden in the back of the building that involves the girls. They even clean wool and make 'vermags' or quilts."

Ashekian discussed steps instrumental in the residents' growth and nurturing: taking care of their physical needs, preparing them for life, job training and building their confidence and self-worth.

"Many of the girls attend a local university. Since the inception, we have had more than 25 young women in our program. Many of our young women have graduated from college; some have married and have families," noted Ashekian.

People came from all over New England, Pennsylvania and even California to support the benefit. "It was a wonderful affair, a wonderful cause — that is what made it so special," said Betty Bagdasarian at the close of the evening, as she joined some friends to drive back home to Connecticut.

Even Yerevan-based performer Nune Yesayan, a faithful supporter, donated her time and talents; she has visited Mer Doon on several occasions and said, "I'm there for them."

The Benefit Celebration Co-chairmen report that their event was such a "tremendous financial success" that the committee has decided to make it an annual event and is already planning on next year's entertainment.

"Do you know how important it is for us to support and perpetuate this program at Mer Doon, and to get all these all-star musicians here to keep our culture and traditions alive," Babigian remarked.

"This fundraiser will help expand and take on new horizons," explained Ashekian, who plans for an additional home and staff in the future, and a job training partnership program which will afford the residents an on-the job internship and opportunities for future employment, just like butterflies spreading their wings.

Visit <http://www.mer-doon.com> for additional information about Mer Doon.



At the Mer Doon Benefit, from left, standing, Julie Ashekian, Tikranouhi "Tiko" Karapetian, Jane Mahakian, Mark Kashgegian, and Peter Babigian; seated, Martin Aharonyan and Nune Yesayan

Karapetian, and appreciated all the supporting volunteers, sponsors and donors. A short video presentation on Mer Doon was displayed on a huge screen that showed the support of volunteers and staff, and visits made by Mer Doon residents to their former orphanages.

Plenty of mezza and desserts were available buffet-style; they were homemade by supporters as well as donated by local Armenian bakeries. Alex and Ani jewelers had a display with portions of sales going to Mer Doon.

happens to the girls," said Ashekian. "After 13 years, I was no longer doing CASP, and I worked with Tikranouhi Karapetian of Armenia, now 'mother' of the Mer Doon residence, to establish Mer Doon. We purchased a place in Echmiadzin in 2005 and opened its doors in 2006 with seven girls from the Gavar orphanage."

"Our residents have to be serious about getting an education," continued Ashekian, describing the ongoing learning and close con-



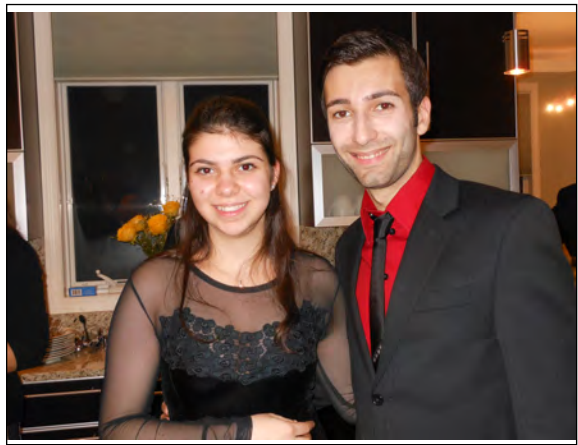
ARTS & LIVING

YerazArt Gala Raises Funds to Support Young Musicians in Armenia

YERAZART, from page 10

summer. Another, Diana Hakobyan, a violinist, recently won a major competition in Russia.

"We want to do even more to restore the place of classical music in Armenia," she said.



Pianist Nara Avetisyan and cellist Vardan Gasparyan

The performers at the fundraiser, 20-year-old pianist Nara Avetisyan, and 23-year-old cellist Vardan Gasparyan, played works by Bach (*Prelude from Cello Suite, Number 1*),

Babadjanian (*Capriccio*), Rachmaninoff (*Cello Sonata*), Komitas (*Kroonk, The Crane*) and Shostakovich (*Cello Sonata*).

Both performers were YerazArt fellows. Avetisyan, who participated in the YerazArt North American concert tour in 2007, is currently a student at the Cleveland Institute of Music under the guidance of Prof. Sergei Babayan. Gasparyan, who took part in the 2008 YerazArt concert tour, is studying at the Colburn School Conservatory in Los Angeles.

Avetisyan toured the US with YerazArt in 2007, while Gasparyan was part of the group in its 2008 tour.

Avetisyan has received support from the organization since 2007 for concerts, master classes and competitions. She also received YerazArt's Anais Afeyan Scholarship. She took part in her first competition in Lithuania at age 7, where she took home three special prizes.

Gasparyan, who is studying with Ronald Leonard, debuted as a soloist at age 16 with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2011 he was awarded the first prize at the Fine Arts Club of Pasadena. He is scheduled to perform at Carnegie Hall on December 1.

At the conclusion of the program, Gasparyan, speaking for both of them, thanked those assembled and other donors for their support, noting that such support has brought to them opportunities they would not have had otherwise.

Guests were delighted with the young performers. Avedis Barmakian said, "It was a beautiful performance. The event got out a good representation of the community. The presence of people in such big numbers tonight shows that our people really care about music."

Zakarian said she was happy with the program and the goals of the organization. "Now we're doing a lot more. It is not only the foreign exposure but it is helping the next generation of artists in Armenia itself."



From left, Maggie Melkisetian, Marlene Fereshetian, Susan Demirchian, Dr. Reem Parseghian, Hrip Minasian, Roset Atinikian and Carmen Barmakian, with Rita Bejakian in the foreground



Dr. Nubar Afeyan, left, and Dr. Richard Babayan



Houry Boyamian, left, with Ani Sahakian



Lilian Mahrokhian and Adam Steinberg

Egoyan, Bohjalian, Khanjian and Nazarian to Speak in New York

NEW YORK — Four prominent Armenian artists who have made their mark on film and literature in North America will converge in New York on Sunday, December 9, to take part in a panel discussion titled "Atrocities and Expressions: Pursuing Justice Through Art."

Organized by Armenian Genocide Justice, an ARF Eastern Region committee, the event features filmmaker Atom Egoyan, novelist Chris Bohjalian, actress Arsinee Khanjian and filmmaker Eric



Chris Bohjalian

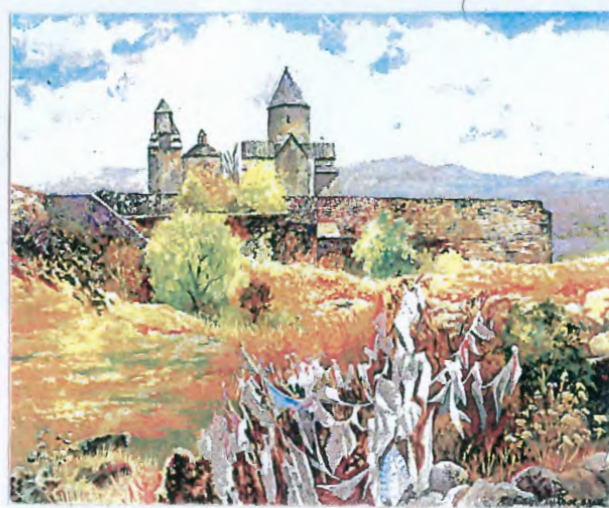


Atom Egoyan

Nazarian. *Armenian Weekly* editor Khatchig Mouradian will moderate the panel.

The panel discussion is co-sponsored by the AGBU Young Professionals of Greater New York, the National Association for Armenian Studies & Research (NAASR), the AYF-YOARF NY Hyortik Chapter, and the New York Armenian Students' Association.

The event will be held at 4 p.m. at Hosack Hall, at the New York Academy of Medicine, 1216 Fifth Ave. It is free and open to the public.



This painting was painted in 2012, acrylic on canvas and has been made into a giclee print on canvas capturing the beauty and texture of the original image. It is entitled, "Tree of Wishfillment" and features a Church built in the 1300s.

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ARTS & LIVING

Dr. Taner Akçam Speaks in Detroit about Latest Book on Ottoman Archives

By Alice Nigoghosian

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — On Tuesday, November 13, Metro-Detroit Armenians gathered in the Vartan Room of St. John's Armenian Church to hear Dr. Taner Akçam introduce his recent book, titled *The Young Turks Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*.

Akçam's latest work sheds new light on the radical decisions that led to the ethnic cleansing of Anatolia and, more specifically, the Armenian Genocide. Akçam was able to research the Ottoman Archives from 1913 forward. As he explained, the records (particularly those from August of 1914 and beyond) are most critical in shedding light on what happened. By comparing documents in the Ottoman archives with Western archives, Akçam determined that they essentially "tell the same story but from different points of view."

The archives reveal the concerns that government authorities had about the "Armenian Reform Agreement" and how it might lead to the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. Their concern was that the Armenian provinces would unite and become strong enough to separate themselves from Ottoman governance. Therefore, a conscious decision was made by the Ottoman leadership to prevent this from happening.

A major theme of Akçam's talk was the significance of the "5 to 10 percent formula" which guided the Ottoman Empire's decisions/actions throughout the perpetration of the Armenian Genocide. He translated this to mean that wherever Christians (but in particular Armenians) exceeded more than these pop-

ulation percentages in villages and cities, that they were to be deported and resettled in other regions. And, also, that in the region where the Armenians were being resettled, they were again not to exceed more than 5 to 10 percent of the local population. Sometimes this meant that the Armenians would be subject to a second relocation, if they survived the first relocation. This formula explains why if a village had only a few Armenian families (less than 5 percent of the population), they would be allowed, in most cases, to continue living in the village.

What the Ottoman Government was doing is considered "demographic or social engineering" and the primary purpose was to restructure Anatolia's population. The Christian population (Greeks and Armenians) were to be eliminated by expulsion or massacre. The Armenians, however, were targeted for total destruction by deporting them to the deserts of Syria and Iraq, with the end result being that the six historic Armenian provinces were nearly completely emptied of Armenians.

Akçam's comments confirmed what many historians and Armenians had already concluded — that the "destruction of the Armenian population" in the Armenian provinces was calcu-



Dr. Taner Akçam

lated and organized at the highest government levels. In addition, the archival records revealed the number of Armenians that were being moved from a given village to a new location; and then regular reports provided on a daily basis as to how many Armenians were surviving

in each region. Telegraphic equipment was in constant use, according to Akçam.

Further, there is even evidence about how the Turkish citizens should deal with the Armenian orphans and the methods by which they must be assimilated into Ottoman society and culture.

Interestingly, records of the whereabouts of the Armenian orphans were also being retained in the Ottoman archives — indefinitely — so that the government would always know "which of its citizens had Armenian blood."

For his research, Akçam only had access to the "open archives of the Ottoman Government" and his new book is based on 600 secret archival documents. He explained that, over the years, there had been "a house cleaning" of potentially incriminating evidence. Apparently, there are archives that are still closed to research. Who knows what will be revealed if and when all the surviving documents in the archives become accessible to scholars?

The lecture was co-sponsored by the Armenian Research Center (of UM-Dearborn), St. John Armenian Church and the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Detroit Chapter.

Book of Poems by Canadian-Armenian Scholar Presented at Armenian Embassy in Canada

OTTAWA, Canada (Armenpress) — The Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Canada organized a presentation of the bilingual collection of poems by Canadian-Armenian political scientist and poet, Prof. Alan Whitehorn.

A number of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada and the Ministry of Defense of Canada attended the presentation. Also present were many ambassadors, publishers, representatives of public organizations and the heads of the structures of the Armenian community of Canada.

Armenia's ambassador in Canada, Armen Yeganyan, made the opening remarks.

Whitehorn is a former professor at the Royal Military College of Canada and author of a number of books. The majority of the poems is dedicated to the Armenian Genocide and his love and yearning for the motherland.

Return to Armenia by Whitehorn is dedicated to the same topics. This is the first book by Whitehorn which is in the Armenian language as well.



Prof. Alan Whitehorn, left, and Armenia's ambassador to Canada, Armen Yeganyan

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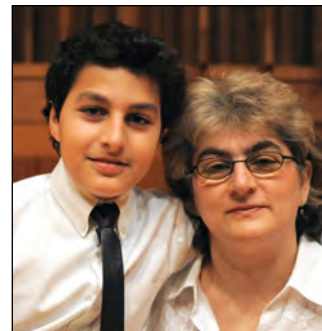
CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

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

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

The mother-son duo of Ani and Haig Hovsepien will perform on piano and violin December 8, 6 p.m., at Jaffarian Hall, St. Gregory Armenian Church, 158 Main St., North Andover. \$20 adults, \$10 students.





COMMENTARY

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COMMENTARY

We Need to Better Assess Our Community

By Nubar Dorian

It is significant, ridiculous, almost absurd that we do not have critics. We should objectively and fearlessly be critical of many of our activities as a community, when they warrant a closer look. Those who report these events use superlatives to describe the affairs, the speakers, the organizers, along with the audience. It is obvious that the media is often afraid to be critical. Most reporters feel constrained or compelled to praise the audience, the speakers and the attendees.

Critics are unwanted! They are afraid to antagonize, to hurt, to ridicule. Thus, all of our affairs, gatherings, public meetings are described in superlatives even though they are truly poorly organized, held in restaurants or expensive locations that are excessive and geared toward our super rich, so called “elite” members of the community – those who are anxious to wear \$1,800 shoes, expensive diamonds and gold to demonstrate wealth, breeding, sophistication, taste or originality, but who are simultaneously bored stiff with speakers or the program. They all want to impress their tablemates and at the end of the affair, be labeled “fabulous,” “successful” or “praiseworthy.”

A case in point was “Armenia Fund Marks 20th with Gala” which was spread over one and a half pages of the October 29 issue of the *Mirror-Spectator*.

“The gala was held in Manhattan’s Gotham Hall. The space proved worthy of the ‘a-list’ of participants.” (You read: bedecked, bejeweled, dressed to the hilt, rich members among us who were exchanging names of famous designers). “Worthy” audience members – I am sure – promised to attend the next gala with new couture outfits and the most eye-catching jewels, talk-of-the-town hairdressers and makeup artists.

The recurring theme was how the nation-building mission of Armenia Fund USA transcended division and cut across generations (most attendees were same old, same old.)

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg sent a letter citing how Armenia Fund is becoming a unifying force on a monumental level (You may read doubt into this.). A congratulatory statement was read from President Serge Sargisian. The president of Armenia took the unity theme to the next order of mag-

nitude (You read: monumental disunity with some 16 political parties). He spoke of living in a prosperous and powerful homeland (You read: hundreds of thousand Armenians leaving their homeland to secure a better life.).

Then came Frank Lautenberg, US Senator from New Jersey attesting to the unity which Armenia is enjoying with Armenia Fund (after some 20 years Armenia does not know the word unity, Senator.) To make it more tragic, they don’t even know how to spell unity yet, even after all of these years!

Then, Armenia’s Permanent Representative to the UN Garen Nazarian came on stage and noted the Fund’s growing relationship with the global community by announcing its broad efforts to engage international agencies in eradicating global poverty (You read: Charity begins at home to help keep Armenians at home.).

This goes on and on. Homeland officials have found a formula to shower big donors with praise. They are flattered by being knighted, flattered as princes, flattered by being awarded medals of honor, all because they return home filled with good tidings about Armenia. Every honor is for sale.

I know I cannot do justice to this predicament with humor, but the message is clear, though extremely heartbreaking and tragic. Some of my readers may accuse me of being un-Armenian, someone who hates Armenia or looks at matters differently. I am completely certain no matter how many “hate” calls and letters I receive. A country that loses more than one million of her people because they leave or plan to leave their homeland after decades to seek comfort, safety, shelter and bread, brings shame to herself and her governing body. No excuses, whatever their nature can justify this shame, even though it is justifiable to some.

I honestly believe, however, that five-star hotels, restaurants, bars and casinos cannot represent Armenia today when children have no milk, no clothes, no shelter and parents are trying to find ways to escape a homeland plagued by corruption and bribery. Mayhem is the norm and not the exception.

It compels me to challenge anyone who claims I am wrong. I do not exaggerate or take pleasure in writing this article. If others join me I would be grateful. If others oppose me, are angry, hateful or disappointed, I thank them for reading the *Mirror-Spectator* as good, solid American Armenians.

(Nubar Dorian is a resident of Cliffside Park, NJ. He is active in the community, including as a Diocesan Delegate.)

Finding One’s Personal God

By Fr. Bedros Shetilian

In my article about God’s existence dated to August 25th in *Mirror-Spectator*, I pointed out that it is difficult to deny God’s existence and that almost everybody at least feels that there is something, a metaphysical existence who is more powerful than us, human beings.

My experience tells me that if the issue of the acceptance God as a supreme being – as God the creator – is relatively easy, then the personal God – God of religion – is much more difficult to be accepted and understood by many people.

The French great philosopher and scientist Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) said:

“God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,

Not of the philosophers and scholars.
Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace.
God of Jesus Christ.”

Here “the philosophers and scholars God” is a conditional terminology, because there have been and still are philosophers and scientists who are real witnesses of Jesus Christ (Schopenhauer, Enrico Fermi, Berdyaev, Pascal himself and many others). This terminology was created by Pascal and later was widely used in order to show the difference from God of religion.

“The philosophers and scholars God” (or transcendent God) is God that was understood by the effort of human beings. Philosophers (like Aristotle) and scientists (like Einstein) were among those who witnessed for such a God. As a result of their efforts and research, they understood that the universe could not have been created as a result of a coincidence. They understood that there is a supreme

power and a supreme wisdom that created the universe and established its rules. It is very interesting to quote Einstein’s words: “Anyone who gets deeply involved in the research of the universe and its rules cannot come to a conclusion other than that there is a soul who was the reason of this creation.” It is an interesting thing that Einstein calls God a soul and not a power or wisdom. Unwillingly, the word “soul” comes out of his mouth, which gives God a personalized nature.

This is what we call scientists and philosophers God, a supreme power who created the universe, who established the rules of the universe, and then distanced himself from his creation. He doesn’t intervene. He is a somewhat indifferent to what’s going on in his created universe. Today people who call themselves “spirituals” are in one way or other followers of this direction.

Different from the transcendent God, personal God is God who revealed himself and is continuing to do that. We know Him not by our limited minds, but by His revelation. Personal God requires a personal live experience. The biggest document of this revelation is the *Bible*. As a difference to the scientists’ transcendent God, the *Bible’s* God, who has all the characteristics that are recognized by scientists (most important of which are perfection, mightiness, wisdom, etc.) has something else. The *Bible’s* God has similarity to human beings. He is not similar, but has a similarity. If man was created by the image and likeness of God, then the perfection of that image and likeness is God himself. The *Bible’s* God, like man, is not indifferent to His creation. Like man, He is not indifferent to His children, us. The *Bible’s* God, besides being perfect, almighty, and wise, has something that scientists God does not have: the *Bible’s*

God has perfect goodness, He has a moral essence, He is the source of morality.

In spite of the fact that the scientists have in their minds the same God as the God of religion, their understanding of God is imperfect from the real God who revealed himself through the history of the revelation. Their understanding is based mainly on their minds and logic and thus lacks the personal live experience which is crucial in order to know God.

What Pascal is talking about is the personal God of revelation. God who is not only in heaven, but God who has a relationship with us and we can have a relationship with Him, God whom we call Father, God who cares about us, God who, each time we forget about the Truth, intervenes visibly or invisibly, directly or indirectly, in order to bring us back to the Truth (Nazi Germany’s defeat during the second war, the collapse of the communist regimes, etc.), God who talks through great people (Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., Zareh Serpazan Aznavorian, etc.), God who talks through creation and arts (St. Krikor Naregatsi, J. S. Bach, F. Dostoevsky, Misak Medzarendz, etc.), God who talks through saints and miracles, God who talks with us (Abraham, Moses, etc.), and finally God who, if needed, can come down to be incarnated and to give His life for our salvation (Jesus Christ).

From today on, my future articles will be about the personal God, God of religion and about His will.

(Fr. Bedros Shetilian graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory in Russia. He has worked with internationally known orchestras like the St. Petersburg Philharmonic and the Moscow Chamber Orchestra. He is the pastor of Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church in Troy, NY, and St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church in Springfield, Mass.)



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Annual Hayastan Fund Telethon: A Constructive Critique

A few thoughts may be in order on the occasion of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund's 20th anniversary and its 15th annual telethon. The intent is not to intrude into the Fund's internal affairs, but offer constructive criticism and suggestions that could help improve its humanitarian mission and public image.

In the absence of an elected structure representing Armenians worldwide, Hayastan Fund is the only pan-Armenian body that brings together under a single umbrella all major Armenian political, religious and community entities. The Fund's Board of Trustees is comprised of leaders of the Republics of Armenia and Artsakh, heads of large Diaspora Armenian organizations, and prominent benefactors. As such, the Fund serves as a unique platform where all segments of the Armenian world can address their common concerns. In view of this globally singular role, the board may wish to consider expanding the organization's functions beyond its philanthropic activities.

The most urgent Armenian issue at this moment is the tragic condition of Syrian-Armenians whose very survival is at stake, as their situation worsens on a daily basis.

Hayastan Fund and its 25 affiliates worldwide should have acted much sooner by organizing an emergency telethon and donating all the proceeds to alleviate the dire needs of Syrian-Armenians, be they in Syria, Armenia or elsewhere.

After much delay, the Fund decided to allocate 10 percent of the amount it would collect to Syrian Armenians. This small percentage, compared to the vast needs of that threatened community, disappointed many potential donors. Instead of assuming collective responsibility for this unwise decision and reversing it, the Fund's representatives engaged in unnecessary finger pointing. When complaints from the public grew louder, some of the Fund's affiliates grudgingly revised the 10 percent quota to an unspecified portion of the total amount raised, after setting aside the funds earmarked for other projects. Also, the Fund allowed donors the option of designating 100 percent of their contributions to Syrian relief. Of course, it would have been preferable if Hayastan Fund had designated all donations to Syrian-Armenians, except those earmarked by donors for other projects.

The situation became more confusing when Bedros Terzian, chairman of Armenia Fund in France, made a surprising announcement at the conclusion of the Fund's European phone-a-thon (fundraising by telephone) on November 18. In a euphoric mood, he promised to allocate a portion of the \$1.8 million raised to reconstruct housing for Armenians in Aleppo after the war. Mr. Terzian, a distinguished corporate executive, may not have realized that Syrian Armenians need food, medicine and other basic necessities for survival right now, rather than after the war, at which time the Armenian community may have dwindled along with its housing needs.

Now that the telethon and phone-a-thon are over, one can take note of some interesting numbers in the

announced results. Amazingly, Armenians in Armenia and Artsakh contributed \$2.5 million, whereas Armenian-Americans donated only \$2.1 million (\$1.5 million from the West Coast and \$600,000 from the East Coast). The \$21.4 million announced at the end of the telethon included all the amounts pledged or actually raised throughout the year at different fundraising events in over a dozen countries, such as the \$12 million pledged by Armenian businessmen in Moscow on November 8. Another surprising number is the substantial contribution of \$600,000 received from India. Since there are only a handful of Armenians in that country, there must be an interesting explanation as to the source(s) of such a large sum.

To avoid further confusion regarding the disposition of the raised funds, Hayastan Fund's Lebanon affiliate may consider allocating the entire proceeds of its December 8 radio fundraiser to the thousands of Syrian-Armenians refugees. The displaced Syrian-Armenian families in Lebanon are in desperate need of financial assistance to pay for basic necessities as well as their children's schooling. Lebanese-Armenian schools, which are in dire financial need, are now additionally burdened with hundreds of Syrian-Armenian students whose parents cannot afford to pay tuition. Keeping its collected funds in Lebanon would enable Hayastan Fund to simultaneously help the Syrian Armenian refugees, while ensuring the survival of Armenian educational institutions.

In the coming days, as Hayastan All Armenian Fund sums up the fundraising results of its worldwide affiliates, it should announce: 1) the final amount raised, 2) the breakdown of the amounts allocated to specific projects and 3) its plans to extend immediate assistance to Syrian Armenians.

Reversing the Depopulation of Armenia: People Need Reasons to Stay

By Gabriel Armas-Cardona

Armenia has a people problem. While many Hayastantsis may be proud of their country, they're leaving in droves, having fewer children and are not hopeful about their futures.

Emigration and a low birthright are existential challenges for Armenia that its leaders are not able to face. Instead of promoting bad policies like paying for families to have children, we could use those resources to make Armenia a country people want to live in.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Armenia has had an emigration problem. The World Bank estimates the peak of Armenia's population at 3.54 million in 1990. Now there are 3.1 million. During the Soviet Union, Armenia had a growth rate of 1.5 percent. If Armenia had the same growth rate since 2003, when the population started to increase again, Armenia would have 3.5 million people. We are missing 400,000 people. Where are those people?

Emigration and a dropping birthrate are the key explanations. The birthrate per woman was 1.74 in 2010, below the approximately 2.1 children needed to sustain a population. It's estimated that 97,000 people have left Armenia as of September, with about 39 percent of citizens wanting to leave permanently. Fortunately, Armenia's emigration rate is improving, as it is currently -3.35 per 1,000 people instead of 2010's net migration rate of -4.9 per 1,000 people.

The government has tried to limit emigration through ineffective mechanisms. The government can't stop people from leaving, but it has tried to make it harder for people to leave rather than try to make them want to stay.

This summer, the government instituted a new policy requiring citizens that leave the country for six months to tell the local embassy or be fined 3,000 dram. The fine, for now, isn't large, but the concern is the government is keeping watch over the people that leave, maybe to dissuade them from leaving. Some even say the government delayed giving passports to children during the summer to stop families from leaving.

The government's single-shot solution of paying people for having children is a much worse waste of government money. Armenia has been paying people to have children for a long time. The government is currently planning to start paying in 2014 a massive 1-million and 1.5-million drams payment to families for any child past the second child.

This is an expensive policy is a terrible waste of money because there is no multiplier effect. In any policy, the government should try to increase its multiplier effect. If building a new road costs 50 million drams but creates 300 million drams worth of activity, then it has a multiple effect of six. The money given for a first child will likely go to buy new clothes or items for the child. This has a multiplier effect of one. For the third and fourth child, the family already has many of the items they need, so they'll buy fewer things, causing a multiplier effect of less than one. Considering the abundance of challenges Armenia faces, to promote a policy with a multiplier of less than one is a waste.

Even worse, the poor families that are most incentivized to take advantage of the million dram offers are the least able to afford to have children. Poor families desperate for money might have a child

The government has tried to limit emigration through ineffective mechanisms. The government can't stop people from leaving, but it has tried to make it harder for people to leave rather than try to make them want to stay.

primarily for the money. The million drams can help the family to live for at most a year or two. Afterwards, the family may still be poor and won't be able to take care of the new baby. The baby may be sent to an orphanage or maybe worse; poor children are the most vulnerable to being trafficked by criminal groups.

What the government needs to do is to make people not want to leave and feel confident about their futures to want to raise families in Armenia. To do that, the government needs to focus on why people are leaving. From 2002 to 2007, 94 percent of Hayastantsis left to find better work. In 2010, 89 percent of Hayastantsis said that unemployment, poverty or low income was the most pressing issue for their families. Without increasing employment options, Hayastantsis will continue to leave, no matter what stopgap policies the government attempts.

Increasing the number of jobs in Armenia is hard but doable. Use the millions of dram that would have gone to the third or fourth child and use that money on policies with high multiplier effect, or institute (free) policy choices that open up the market to new entrepreneurs, or make sure that foreign investors have redress for any fraud or corruption to encourage more investments. Any of these things will promote the economy and allow Hayastantsis to stay.

The Diaspora also needs employment prospects

On a personal note, I want to mention how much more the government could do to encourage the Diaspora to return to Armenia. I am a member of the Diaspora who was able to come and live in Armenia for six months thanks to Birthright Armenia. I was a fellow at the Human Rights Defender's Office through the coordination of Armenian Volunteer Corps. As my time was reaching an end, I spoke with as many people as possible to find a job that could keep me in Armenia longer.

I was unsuccessful and still have yet to secure anything that can bring me back. I don't deserve a job more than any Hayastantsi, but without opportunities for young members of the Diaspora to work in Armenia, we can't and won't come back to live in Armenia. New programs like Repat Armenia are helping solve this problem, but the government could do more to encourage this immigration and help repopulate Hayastan.

(Gabriel Armas-Cardona is a graduate from New York University Law School and was a legal fellow at the Office of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia. He regularly comments on the politics and human rights situation of Armenia on his blog <http://humanrightsinerevan.wordpress.com>. This column originally appeared in Hetq.)

Notice to Contributors

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator welcomes articles, commentaries and community news from our readers. In order to assure the accurate and timely publication of articles submitted, please note the following policies:

— All articles submitted should be typed, double (or triple) spaced and printed in a type size large enough to be clearly legible (10 point or larger). Submissions

that do not conform to these specifications will be assigned lowest priority.

— Articles sent by fax are acceptable, and e-mail submissions are encouraged.

— All submissions should include the name of a contact person and a daytime telephone number.

— Deadline for submission of all articles and advertising is noon on the Monday of the week of publication.

— Photos will be published without charge at the discretion of the editors

and art director. Photos will be returned only if a self-addressed and stamped envelope is included.

— The M-S will publish only one article about an upcoming organizational event. For major special events, exceptions may be made only by special arrangement with the editors.

— Telephone numbers, ticket prices and other details (at the discretion of the editors) will not be included in press releases, but should be reserved for calendar listings and advertisements.

Europe’s Caviar Diplomacy with Azerbaijan Must End: EU Observer

STRASSBOURG (Armenpress) – The recent revelation that Azerbaijan has pursued a policy of bestowing gifts of caviar on parliamentarians and officials at the Council of Europe comes as no surprise to those who follow the interactions of the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) with the Caspian petro-state.

Citing the website of the European Union (EU) Observer, last week the EU officials, who conducted dialogues regarding the protection of human rights in Azerbaijan, confessed that “Azerbaijani caviar” has also been on the menu in Brussels.

The website states: “Whilst there has been no concrete evidence of bribe-taking linked to policy outcomes, Azerbaijan’s relations with

parts of the European Parliament are cozy. The largest political grouping in the parliament, the European People’s Party, held a conference on February attended by Azerbaijan’s Foreign Minister during which some of its leading members extolled “the virtues of Azerbaijan’s political reforms” and the fact it “has made clear its intention of building democracy.”

In comparison to other neighbors, the EU appears to practice a form of exceptionalism towards Azerbaijan.

Catherine Ashton, the EU’s first High Representative for Foreign Affairs, recently released two widely contrasting statements on Belarus and Azerbaijan within days of each other. According to EUobserver though

both feature side by side in various democracy indices and ongoing repression in the two countries is in many ways comparable, Belarus comes in for censure while Azerbaijan receives fulsome praise. Ashton’s congratulatory statement on Azerbaijan confirms the argument that the EU is taking a different posture towards its neighbors depending on whether or not they have energy to sell or not. The official welcomed the release of nine political prisoners under amnesty, but neglected to mention that a further 60 remain behind bars.

Among other issues the aforesaid website states: “The Arab spring demonstrated that when it comes to EU foreign policy towards its neighbors, values and interests are deeply

intertwined.”

EUobserver states also that following May’s Eurovision song contest, pressure on activists has intensified. Senior government officials have targeted democracy activists and independent media calling for a cam-



Catherine Ashton

paign of public hatred against them. Also the website refers to the arrests of the journalists, buying Olympic medals by petrodollars, and organization of a number of events of international importance thanks to the aforesaid petrodollars.

Summing up EUobserver states: “For the Council of Europe, the continent’s premier rights institution, it means putting an end to the caviar-fuelled farce and showing Azerbaijan the door.”

Boston Armenian Community Meeting with US Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia



John A. Heffern,

Ambassador Heffern will Present the
“20th Anniversary of US-Armenia Diplomatic Relations”
Q/A after the presentation
Master of Ceremony



Sheriff Peter Koutoujian

Thursday, December 13, at 7:00 PM
St. James Armenian Church, Charles Mosesian Cultural and
Youth Center, Keljik Hall
465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA
Free Entrance Reception

Three Members Of Family Drown Trying to Save Dog

DROWNING, from page 1

“Both were dragged into the ocean,” Jones said, adding the dog got out of the water on its own.

The couple’s daughter and the boy’s girlfriend watched the tragedy unfold.

A nearby bystander called police, but by the time help arrived, it was too late.

Jones said a park ranger had to run a half-mile to get to the beach because his car wasn’t made to handle the rugged terrain. When he arrived, he wasn’t able to get to the family members because of the high surf, she said.

Coast Guard Lt. Bernie Garrigan said the search for the teenager was stopped because a person without a wetsuit could not survive for long in the surf because of the frigid waters.

Saturday was overcast and a bit damp and the winds were light at Big Lagoon beach, a steep shoreline where the waves roll in and crash onto the sand, making the area dangerous, officials said.

Signs are posted near the beach parking lot warning beachgoers not to turn their back to the surf and to pay special attention to “sneaker waves,” or swells that can seemingly appear from nowhere and violently smash onto the beach, Garrigan said.

“Because the beach is designed that way, when that 10-foot wall breaks, it surges up on the beach and surges back really fast,” he said. “It’s like a cyclical washing machine.”

Rescuers eventually retrieved Scott’s body, and Howard Kuljian’s body washed ashore.

The Coast Guard deployed a helicopter and two motor life boats to search for the teenager, but thick coastal fog made the search difficult. The parks department has also called off its search.