

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

Volume LXXXIII, NO. 21, Issue 4266 \$ 2.00

The First English Language Armenian Weekly in the United States Since 1932



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Armenia Voted for Palestine Status Upgrade at UN

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia voted for the recognition of Palestinian Authority as a non-member observer state at the United Nations, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Tigran Balayan said.

The UN General Assembly voted to recognize Palestine as a non-member observer state by a vote of 138-9 in favor, with 41 nations abstaining.

The UK abstained from the vote, as did Germany. The Czech Republic, Canada, the Marshall Islands and Panama were among the nations voting with the US and Israel in opposing the measure.

### Ayas President to Build Noah's Ark in Sochi

SOCHI, Russia (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The president of Ayas nautical research club, captain of a famed Armenian vessel "Cilicia," Karen Balayan, spoke of plans to construct Noah's Ark in Sochi, Russia, at a meeting with Polar Odysseus sea club president Victor Dmitriev in Petrozavodsk.

Dmitriev hailed the idea as a potential international social and cultural project, expected to involve Mediterranean and Black Sea countries as well as the Armenian Diaspora, among others.

"This might be a unique opportunity to launch a scientific experiment of reconstructing the most famous vessel in human history," he said.

### Ombudsman under Fire over Dink Case

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Pressure is mounting for Turkey's first ombudsman who was only recently elected to resign amid criticism from the family of slain Turkish-Armenian journalist, editor-in-chief of *Agos* bilingual weekly, Hrant Dink, who was assassinated in January 2007.

According to *Hurriyet Daily News*, Mehmet Ömeroglu, a retired member of the Supreme Court of Appeals, is under fire for his role in an appeals court verdict. He was one of the judges who approved the late Dink's sentence under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, which outlaws "publicly insulting the Turkish nation," in July 2006.

Dink's brother, Hosof Dink, said the appeals court verdict was the late journalist's death sentence. "Instead of calling those who gave this verdict to account, they are rewarded," he said.

Ömeroglu responded saying he was not even aware that the name in that case was "Hrant" since it was written as "Firat," Dink's official name in the registered documents, according to a daily *Radikal* report on Nov 30.

The main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) also called for Ömeroglu's resignation. "Under these circumstances, we can say the ombudsman institute in Turkey was stillborn," CHP deputy Atilla Kart said.

## INSIDE

### Returning To Van

Pages 8 and 9

#### INDEX

Arts and Living	11
Armenia	2,3
Community News	6
Editorial	14
International	4,5

## Winning Move: Chess Reigns as Kingly Pursuit in Armenia

### No One Is Bored with Board Game in Nation that Adores Grandmasters

YEREVAN (*Wall Street Journal*) — Reporters stake out Tigran L. Petrosian's home. Fans seek his autograph. His image is splashed across magazine covers and his youthful face beams from posters on teenagers' walls.

The sturdy 28-year-old isn't a star athlete or a movie star. He is a chess grandmaster. In this chess-crazy country, that makes him a king among pawns.

"Chess here is like soccer in Brazil or football in America," Petrosian said over coffee at the Yerevan Chess Academy before a concert to honor the country's top players. The concert featured musicians and singers performing in see CHESS, page 3



Students last month at the Patriarch Vasgen elementary school learned to play chess, which is compulsory in Armenian schools.

JUSTIN VELA PHOTO

## Schiff Calls on Appropriations Committee To Cut All Security Funding to Azerbaijan

WASHINGTON — On Tuesday, December 4, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) sent a letter to Senators Patrick Leahy and Lindsey Graham, and Representatives Kay Granger and Nita Lowey — the chairmen and ranking members of the State and Foreign Operations Subcommittees in the House and Senate — calling on them to cut all

security assistance to Azerbaijan, including Azerbaijan's International Military Education and Training Account (IMET) funding. This latest request comes after the egregious repatriation and release of Ramil Safarov, an Azerbaijani army captain who had confessed to the savage 2004 axe murder of Armenian army lieutenant Gurban Margaryan during a NATO Partnership for Peace Program.

"Azerbaijan has committed the most terrible subversion of justice — making a hero of a cold-blooded killer," said Schiff. "Plainly the investment we have made in training Azeri forces has been worse than wasted. The United States must not tolerate

any acts of aggression against Armenia or Nagorno-Karabagh, and this hateful action by President Aliyev undermines all international efforts to bring about a peaceful solution in the region."

The full letter Schiff sent to the Chairmen and Ranking Members is below:

Dear Chairmen Leahy and Granger and Ranking Members Graham and Lowey:

As you continue work on the 2013 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs appropriations bill, I urge you to cut all security assistance to Azerbaijan, including Azerbaijan's IMET funding, in response to the egregious repatriation and release of see APPROPRIATIONS, page 16

### Kevorkian's Genocide Painting to Remain at ALMA

By Deirdre Fernandes

WATERTOWN (*Boston Globe*) — It's a question frequently asked by visitors to the intimate Watertown museum: Do you have the Kevorkian paintings?

The Armenian Library and Museum of America has a rich collection of illuminated manuscripts and a catalog of portrait photographs of some of the 20th century's leading figures, but the grisly paintings by Dr. Death himself, assisted-suicide advocate Dr. Jack Kevorkian, continue to be a draw.

see PAINTINGS, page 16



"1915 Genocide 1945"

## Diocese Ecumenical Director Visits Iraq as Part of US Delegation

BAGHDAD — Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, the Diocese's ecumenical director, joined US church leaders on a visit to Iraq earlier this month, where the delegation met with government officials to discuss Christian-Kurdish relations in the country's northern region.

The visit, which took place from November 3 to 10, was led by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the retired Roman Catholic archbishop of Washington. Participants also included Evangelical and Episcopalian church leaders.

The church leaders met with government officials of the Kurdish autonomous region, including its President Massoud Barzani, Prime Minister Nechervan Idris Barzani, and head of the Security Council Masrour Barzani. They also met with local church leaders in Iraq.

Conversations focused on the difficulties facing Christian families in the region, and on ways the government could reach out to support this minority population.

Aykazian also had an opportunity to



Archbishop Vicken Aykazian greets President Massoud Barzani in Iraq's Kurdish autonomous region.

meet with Archbishop Avak Asadourian, the Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Iraq, and to visit the Armenian Church in Dohuk. In addition, he spoke with government officials about the possibility of building a new Armenian Church in nearby Erbil, where some 250 Armenian families reside. Officials promised to clear the way for the construction project.





## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Armenian Freight Plane Crashes in Congo

YEREVAN (AFP) — A cargo plane that crashed at the Brazzaville, Congo, airport killing all 27 people on board belonged to the Armenian freight specialist airline, Rij Airways, the Foreign Ministry said Saturday.

The plane, carrying seven crew members, crashed as it tried to land in a storm on Friday.

Most of the victims were local people killed when the plane skidded off the runway and ploughed into houses and a bar in the Congolese capital.

Of the seven crew members, five were Armenian. Among those were Varazdat Balasanyan, crew commander; Ara Tovmasyan; Andranik Gevorgyan and Edgar Avetyan.

## Economy Gets Praise From World Bank Rep.

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Armenian economy has undergone a major transformation in the last 20 years; a market environment has been formed thanks to inclusive growth and structural reforms, which today is conducive for trade, investment and technological innovation, noted World Bank's country manager for Armenia, Jean-Michel Happi, at a reception dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Armenian membership in that body.

"We have come a long way with Armenia. It is of crucial importance for the World Bank to witness the poverty reduction, improvements of public administration and infrastructure in Armenia. Yet, we acknowledge that there are still some challenges which have to be solved and the World Bank is willing to support Armenian government and nation" Happi said.

Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian said at the reception that it would be hard to imagine the economic reforms of Armenia and the structural amendments without the active participation of the World Bank.

## Donor Conference to Raise Funds for Speeded Up Reforms

YEREVAN (Arminfo) — Armenia, jointly with the World Bank, European Union, Asian Development Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), is expected to hold a donor conference to raise funds to seed up economic and institutional reforms, Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian said in an interview with Interfax.

He said that the Russian Federation's involvement in the conference is currently being studied. "We are currently preparing development projects and the conference conception. We have officially requested Russia's participation in it. Such donor conferences are held in many countries, especially where there is need in financial and technical assistance to overcome poverty, boost reforms and improve the living standards. We are preparing our donor conference building on the given model. Surely, we should study in details all the financing programs, credits and grants, with our Russian colleagues," the prime minister said. He believes that Armenia has no problems with the foreign debt service, as it is lower than average and Armenia fulfills all the debt service commitments.

Asked about Yerevan's stance on the Customs Union and the Eurasian Union, the prime minister said that the country is interested in integration processes within the Commonwealth of Independent States and Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC).

"At their recent meeting our presidents voiced that issue and Vladimir Putin noted quite precisely that Armenia's case is specific — no common borders with EurAsEC and Customs Union. There is no other country in the world to have no borders with the Customs Union but have membership. Therefore, the presidents charged setting up a working group. The working group is charged with developing means to boost integration processes considering the above peculiarities," Sargsian said.

# AGBU's GORIZ Leadership Program Holds 4th Annual Seminar

## Media Trainings with Journalists Give Participants The Tools to Advocate Across Europe

YEREVAN — From Thursday, October 18 to Sunday, October 21, GORIZ held its fourth annual seminar, which brings together young leaders with exceptional academic and professional backgrounds and trains them to represent their Armenian Diaspora communities throughout Europe. While previous GORIZ sessions focused on themes such as youth political participation and economic development in Armenia, during this year's conference, "EU Eastern Partnership Youth Seminar about Communication and the Media," participants learned how to harness the media effectively in order to put Armenian issues in the international spotlight.

Working alongside top journalists, the 22 GORIZ participants, who travelled from 10 countries — Armenia, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany,



During the Yerevan-based conference "EU Eastern Partnership Youth Seminar about Communication and the Media," AGBU GORIZ participants learn how to effectively raise awareness of Armenian issues.

speak in front of the camera in the future. A visit to the ArmNews television studio provided further insights into broadcast journalism. The workshop, "Media Watch on Hate Speech," led by the Hrant Dink Foundation,

GORIZ seminar. GORIZ participants also had the opportunity to join a number of Assembly events, attending in particular the session chaired by AGBU President Berge Setrakian on Saturday, October 20, 2012, where they learned more about the organization's recent work, the challenges that the future holds and ways they can continue to make a difference — one news story at a time.

To learn more about Goriz and its future seminars, visit <http://en.agbueurope.org/goriz/>.



A media training workshop led by international journalists equips GORIZ participants with the skills to interview on television.

Romania, Spain, Turkey, the UK and Ukraine — developed successful strategies for interviewing on television, engaging with social media and coordinating messages. Together, under the guidance of reporters Armen Georgian and Achren Verdian of France 24 International Television, they conducted, taped and analyzed mock interviews, receiving critical feedback that gave them the skills and confidence to

which is committed to promoting intercultural dialogue, gave participants the tools to combat discrimination in the press.

On Friday, October 19, the group met with AGBU Europe Chairman Alexis Govciyan, who co-founded GORIZ in 2009. They were joined by members of the AGBU Europe Board, who were in Yerevan for AGBU's 87th General Assembly, which coincided with the

## Armenian Speaker Calls for Resignations After President's Criticism of Prosecutors

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenian parliamentary speaker Hovik Abrahamian says serious repercussions will follow President Serge Sargsian's recent harsh criticism of the country's prosecutors.

Abrahamian, who is on an official trip to the Czech Republic, said he expects resignations in the prosecutor-general's office.

"There are always resignations in all spheres," Abrahamian said. "In this case, the president has raised the issue very seriously."

In a televised meeting at the prosecutor-general's office on October 29, Sargsian angrily accused some prosecutors and law-enforcement officials of involvement with organized crime groups.

Sargsian said little has been done to curb the corruption and thoroughly investigate cases. According to the president, investigators at prosecutor-general's

office often forge documents, alter data and misuse facts to help criminals avoid justice.

Sargsian also accused law-enforcement officers and prosecutors of framing innocent citizens in order to protect real criminals. He said several complaints have been filed saying citizens were beaten in prosecutors' offices.

The president also questioned morale in the ranks of prosecutors and law-enforcement officers. According to him, there have been many cases in which police officers have misbehaved in public and also have been found guilty of beating people.

Sargsian demanded what he termed "more professionalism and a serious attitude" from the prosecutor-general, his deputies and their investigators.

His unusually tough criticism of law enforcement officers and prosecutors comes as the country is getting ready for presidential elections in February.

## Knights of Vartan Donate Incubator to Armenia Hospital

CHAMBARAK, Armenia — The Knights of Vartan, in cooperation with the Daughters of Vartan, started a collaboration in early 2011.

Working with Jack and Eva Medzorlian leading a team of Knights volunteers and donors, Shen NGO representatives developed a project of donating medical equipment and goods to the poor hospitals and medical centers of villages. Today with the support of the US-based International Medical Equipment Collaborative the hospital in Chambarak is well equipped, serving the area's 17,000 residents and the government of Armenia has undertaken the renovation of the building.

The donated equipment makes it possible to provide higher-quality service, for example, newborns that need additional temporary care are placed in the incubator that they did not have previously. Old beds with ragged mattresses were replaced with comfortable and functional beds and necessary furniture. There are easily transportable specialized tables for medical tools and medicine in the rooms.

There is also equipment for medical liquids needed for medical treatment that require long-term injections.

The surgery room furnishings can be compared with the ones in Yerevan hospitals. The modern anesthesia equipment gives the opportunity to keep the patient's situation under control. This enables the implementation of more complicated surgeries.

Before the renovation when there was a need for surgery, the patients were advised to go to hospitals in Yerevan or other cities in the province. Now, hospital director and surgeon Dr. Armen Melkumyan proudly states that even some patients from Yerevan decide to come to his Chambarak hospital for operations.





## ARMENIA

# Mirrors for Largest Telescope Produced in Armenia

By Anahit Sargsyan

YEREVAN (news.am) — The largest-ever Cherenkov telescope has 875 hexagonal mirror facets each of them having a stamp with “Armenia” inscription on it.

The largest High Energy Stereoscopic

of scientists from 12 different countries, including Yerevan Physics Institute.

Official inauguration of the first HESS II telescope was held on September 28, 2012. The mirror facets for a telescope as tall as 20-story building were produced by Galaktika CJSC (Garni) which is a part of physics and astrophysics department at the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia.

The company has been cooperating with Germany-based Max Planck Institute for Nuclear Physics since 2002, Galaktika CJSC Director Ara Mirzoyan said in an interview. Armenia won the bid and was selected as a producer of mirrors for the world's largest HESS II telescope.

Since Cherenkov telescopes are installed without a dome, the requirements for mirrors are very strict. The product was to be adopted by Germany and metrology should be carried out in Germany as well. Therefore, Galaktika has developed a device to measure the mirror reflectance which has no analogue in the post-Soviet area.

It was rather difficult to find skilled manual workers but they worked hard to deliver the orders in time. They managed to meet the requirements and deliver 900 mirrors within specified schedule.

“During the opening ceremony in Namibia it was noted German side is proud of the team working for the project. It is a great honor and we are really proud,” Mirzoyan said.

The scientists faced certain difficulties in the course of their work but the most important is to achieve result.

“We were honored to hear high praise by



Mirror polishing



General view of HESS II telescope

System (HESS) II telescope with an area of 600 square meters started operation in Namibia in September 2012. Together with other four 12-meter telescopes already in operation since 2004, the observatory will continue studying cosmic sources. The HESS observatory is operated by the collaboration

Werner Hofmann, the Director of Max Planck Institute,” Mirzoyan added.

The first images from HESS II were received on July 26 before the official opening. At the moment the data is being studied and the project is declared successful.

Ara Mirzoyan said each member state paid about 1 million euro for participation in HESS collaboration.

“Under the decision of the Armenian government, Yerevan Physics Institute produced 200 additional mirrors for Germany as a contribution to the project. In addition to the Institute, the National Academy of Sciences is also a full member of HESS collaboration,” the scientist explained.

Mirzoyan and his team plans to continue their efforts and participate in the next tender invited for a larger project called The Cherenkov Telescope Array (CTA) which is estimated at 200 million euro. The goal of the project is to build two observatories with 100 small telescopes.

“While producing mirrors for HESS project, we increased our production capacity. We hope to win the next tender as well. We produced 900 mirrors in nearly two years. To date,

nobody in the world has such a production rate,” he added.

Mirzoyan expressed great appreciation to the team members, the people whose work gives an opportunity to see “Armenia” inscription on 875 mirrors.

## AUA Supports Syrian Students in Armenia

YEREVAN — Philanthropists Sonia and Zaven Akian and Rita and Adam Kablanian are supporting students from Syria to study at the American University of Armenia (AUA), without paying tuition.

The Akian Family Foundation pledged \$125,000 for scholarships for Syrian-Armenian students at AUA. A portion of the gift has been earmarked to underwrite the current classes offered to the Syrian-Armenian students. The remainder will be used for scholarships for qualified Syrian-Armenian students, as they complete their undergraduate or graduate education at AUA.

With this gift, the Akian Family increases their past support to Armenian students. The Akian Family has also supported AUA in naming the Akian Gallery, a space for art and culture, in AUA's Paremaz Avedisian Building.

Zaven Akian has enabled the AUA to meet the ever-increasing needs of Armenia's students.

“My family and I believe that investing in AUA is an investment in Armenia's future. We feel providing an American education in the region will help build a stable economy, and that is why we support AUA's mission,” Akian said. “I have personally met and spoken with AUA's students and faculty and I continue to be impressed by their level of dedication and passion.”

Rita and Adam Kablanian pledged \$132,000 to establish the Kablanian Family Scholarship. This new scholarship is targeted for qualified Syrian-Armenian students in the undergraduate program starting in Fall 2013. A portion of the pledge has also been earmarked for AUA's immediate needs to underwrite the classes taken by currently-enrolled Syrian-Armenian students.

Upon touring the campus, Adam Kablanian noted, “I was so impressed by the quality of the students and the faculty. I also loved the state-of-the-art campus facility. I can see how AUA is making a difference in the lives of so many students, as they offer such a high-caliber education.”

The popularity of the program has been overwhelming. There are many students still on a waiting list for the tuition-free classes offered in this program. To support Syrian-Armenian students who wish to study at the AUA, visit aua.am.

## Winning Move: Chess Reigns as Kingly Pursuit in Armenia

CHESS, from page 1

front of 10-foot-high chess boards while the audience clapped rapturously.

Petrosian — whose father named him Tigran after a former chess champion with the same surname — is one of a legion of top chess players that have catapulted this poor nation of three million into world champions on the 64-square board. In September, he was part of the five-man squad that claimed Armenia's second consecutive gold medal at the World Chess Olympiad.

Being good in chess carries big benefits in Armenia. Top players say they struggle to be allowed to pay for gasoline or parking. Restaurant bills sometimes never materialize when they go out to eat.

“Some girls giggle when they see us on the streets and some even give me presents,” says 30-year-old Levon Aronian, Armenia's No. 1 player and the second-ranked player in the world. “Most of us are just regular nerds, so it's quite a lot to get used to. I've changed the way I dress for photo shoots but that's all.”

Armenia's veneration of its chess players recalls a bygone era when the game produced a series of global household names.

In a Cold War grudge match that captivated audiences world-wide, American Bobby Fischer in 1972 broke Soviet dominance by beating champion Boris Spassky. Chess is still popular across much of the former Soviet Union, a legacy of Moscow's patronage of a game it said demonstrated its intellectual

superiority over the West.

But whereas chess players are on their own in many Soviet spinoffs, they still have full state support in Armenia. The country's president, Serge Sargsian, also is the president of the Armenian Chess Federation.

In September 2011, his government passed legislation that made chess compulsory in schools. Promising players get free training at elite chess academies. The state pays for children to play in foreign championships and pays a salary to all grandmasters.

Sargsian hailed a “golden age” for Armenian chess in a speech earlier this year. “It continues to inspire our society with belief in its own strength and self-confidence,” he said.

Armenia's love affair with the game is less than half a century old. The country caught the chess bug on May 20, 1963, when 33-year-old Tigran Petrosian, no relation to the current player, dethroned reigning world champion Mikhail Botvinnik, a Soviet, over a grinding 24-game match.

Nicknamed “Iron Tigran” because of his impenetrable defense, Mr. Petrosian's victory made him a national hero. Thousands of families named their children Tigran in his honor.

“In the US, everyone can remember where they were when President Kennedy was killed. In Armenia, everyone can remember where they were when Petrosian won that championship,” said Aram Hajian, board member of the Chess Academy of Armenia.

Nowadays, chess fever starts young in

the country.

At the Patriarch Vasgen elementary school in Yerevan's northern suburbs, aspiring grandmasters daily squeeze into the chess room: a makeshift shrine adorned with the sober faces of former champions and half a dozen huge magnetic boards showcasing the game's most celebrated offensive and defensive plays.

All boards, pieces and textbooks are provided by the government. The children switch between theory and practice and sit through a written test every two months. The teacher, Marina Kamalyan, a frizzy-haired chess evangelist who plays online late most nights, insists on total dedication from the pupils.

“Chess is a real passion that is a metaphor for life. Education is a very important part of our mentality in Armenia, and I want to pass on this passion to the children,” Kamalyan said as she moved white pieces into an unsailable position on one of the class's wall-mounted magnetic boards.

Many of these children are already veterans, but they are determined to join Armenia's top players as world beaters.

“I want to be world champion. Grandmaster is not good enough,” says 9-year-old Yervand Davtyan, after thrashing a reporter in a game lasting less than 15 minutes.

“I taught my mother how to play better, but I didn't show her all the secrets because I want to be the best,” adds 8-year-old Julia Hakobyan.





## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

Armenian Serviceman  
Murdered in Lebanon

BEIRUT (Armenpress) — An ethnic Armenian soldier was murdered in Lebanon while chasing a criminal in the Christian region of Junie, said editor-in-chief of *Azdaq* daily, Shahan Kandaharian, in an interview with Armenpress. He said that the deceased serviceman was Samson Andranikian, the commander of a division of the Lebanese Army. The criminal started shooting in the direction of the division pursuing him. Also Kandaharian stated that the accident is not connected with politics.

As to the current situation in Lebanon, Kandaharian stated that the situation in the northern region of Tripoli is relatively calm.

According to Kandaharian, the political situation in Lebanon is still tense, though not violent.

Afghan DM Lauds  
Armenian Contribution

KABUL (Arka) — Defense Minister of Afghanistan Bismillah Mohammadi expressed his gratitude for Armenia's leadership for its contribution to Iraqi stability at his meeting with Armenian Minister of Defense Seyran Ohanian who was in Kabul for an official visit last week.

The Armenian Ministry of Defense reported that Mohammadi said he appreciated the role of Armenian peacekeepers in training Afghan security forces.

Ohanian assured his hosts that Armenia will continue taking part in coalition forces to establish long-lasting peace and security in Afghanistan. The Armenian peacekeeping contingent, working under German command, is in Kunduz and Mazar-i-Sharif provinces as part of North regional command of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

Primate of Damascus  
Visits Diocese of Canada

DAMASCUS (Armenpress) — At the invitation of Bishop Bagrat Galstanian, Bishop Armash Nalbandian of Damascus paid an official visit to the Diocese in Toronto and Montreal. The Primate of the Armenian Diocese in Damascus celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Toronto on November 18 and St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral of Montreal on November 25.

Nalbandian met with the faithful in Toronto and Montreal and discussed the challenges facing the Armenian community in Syria. During his stay in Toronto, he met Canadian ecumenical leaders. In Montreal, he visited the AGBU Alex Manoogian School accompanied by Galstanian.

The Canadian Diocese's fundraising campaign for Syrian-Armenian relief is still underway. All the proceeds collected will go to the relief effort, to be distributed through the Mother See of Holy Eghmiadzin.

NATO Approves Patriot  
Missiles for Turkey

BRUSSELS (BBC) — NATO has approved the deployment of Patriot anti-missile batteries along Turkey's border with Syria.

The long-expected move emerged from a meeting of NATO foreign ministers here, and amid growing fears that Syria could use chemical weapons.

NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said the ministers had "unanimously expressed grave concerns" about the use of chemical weapons.

Syria has said it would never use such weapons against its own people.

The meeting of the 28-member Western military alliance's foreign ministers in Brussels follows a request from Turkey to boost its defenses along the border.

In a statement, NATO said it had "agreed to augment Turkey's air defense capabilities in order to defend the population and territory of Turkey and to contribute to the de-escalation of the crisis along the alliance's border."

Syrian Jets Bomb Near Turkish  
Border as NATO Seeks Missile Sites

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Syrian warplanes on Tuesday, November 27, attacked targets close to the Turkish border for the second consecutive day as North Atlantic Treaty Organization officers arrived to select missile sites to counter President Bashar Assad's forces.

US, Dutch and German officers representing the three NATO countries with Patriot surface-to-air missile batteries visited Turkish provinces near the Syrian border Tuesday, authorities said. As work began, Assad's jets struck the town of Harim, the state-run Anatolia news agency said. That followed Monday's bombing of a Turkish-sponsored refugee camp near the Syrian town of Atma that sent thousands of people streaming toward the frontier.

Russia renewed its opposition to NATO's involvement Tuesday, with Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Denisov telling a Berlin press conference "we don't like this plan." The alliance's aims were unclear: "Who's threatened? Where's the threat coming from?" he said. Iran has also opposed the move.

Turkey's military said Monday that the Patriots were a purely defensive measure and won't be used to enforce a "no-fly zone" or to launch attacks.

Before the start of Syria's civil conflict 20 months ago, Turkey and Syria's

bilateral relationship was so close that in 2008 Assad and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan vacationed together with their families. Since the destruction of a Turkish jet in June, the deaths of five Turks killed by a mortar round from Syria last month and the use by rebels of Turkish bases, military tension has sharply increased.

The Syrian crisis "has not shown any sign of resolution and the regime's attacks on the civilian population, as well as the clashes have continued on an increasing scale," Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Selcuk Unal said on Twitter Tuesday.

A Syrian air attack on an olive press killed at least 20 people and wounded "dozens" in the northern city of Idlib, the opposition Local Coordination Committees said Tuesday. Rebels meanwhile said they shot down a Syrian helicopter near the city of Aleppo, according to Al Jazeera television Tuesday.

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will visit Turkey from December 7 to 8, Unal said in his Twitter posting. Ban may visit a refugee camp on the Syrian border, he said.

Any Patriot deployment would aim to augment Turkey's air-defense capabilities, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said on November 21. The alliance will make a final decision based on the expert report. Russian

President Vladimir Putin will visit Turkey on Dec. 3 and the issue may be discussed in talks with Erdogan.

Turkey Monday scrambled warplanes after the Atma attack, which destroyed more than 200 empty tents at a refugee camp being set up by the pro-Islamic Turkish aid group, Humanitarian Relief Foundation or IHH, the state-run Anatolia said Tuesday. It was not clear if Syrian jets were targeting the Turkish-sponsored camp.

Thousands of Syrians who fled after the attacks on Tuesday were huddled on the Turkish border and waiting to cross to safety, the Foreign Ministry said. Turkey accepts refugees once a place has been found for them at refugee camps, a process which can take days or weeks. About 180,000 Syrians have fled to Turkey so far, Erdogan said on November 25.

Turkey's exports to Syria have dropped by some 70 percent over the past year, Mehmet Buyukeksi, head of the Turkish Exporters' Assembly told a news conference in Istanbul today.

The Turkish government has called on Assad to step down and has allowed Syrian officers to command the rebel Free Syrian Army from a refugee camp inside Turkey, and opposition fighters frequently cross into Turkey to obtain food, medicine and clothes. Turkey denies arming the rebels.

AGBU Young  
Professionals of Lyon  
Rhône-Alpes: A  
Successful Launch

LYON, France — On Friday, October 19, in the heart of old Lyon at Le Baronn, the AGBU Young Professionals of Lyon Rhône-Alpes (YP Lyon Rhône-Alpes) celebrated the launch of its new professional network established this fall. Aiming to bring together active young Armenians from the eastern region of the country, the debut group is proudly joining the AGBU YP Network, which is present in 16 countries around the world, including France in Paris and Marseille.

Like the other worldwide YP Groups, YP Lyon Rhône-Alpes endeavors to unite young Armenian professionals by offering events and activities throughout the year in business, culture, and leisure, such as after-work mixers, conferences, and professional training opportunities. "Lately we have noticed a decline in community interest from young Armenians and believe that we will help fill this gap to attract lost members as well as new ones," said Grégory Gazarian, YP Lyon Rhône-Alpes Chairman. "Centralizing our YP events in Lyon will also be a great opportunity to help bring together young Armenians from neighboring communities located in St. Etienne, St. Chamond, Vienne, Grenoble and Valence."

The group's kickoff event was honored by the presence of Robert Aydabirian, former Chairman of HP France and Chairman of the Board of Osiatis. In his address, Aydabirian invited guests to embrace three essential qualities for professional success: competence, confidence, and communication. His words of wisdom were well received by the more than sixty participants present from throughout the region.

To watch a video of the YP Lyon Rhône-Alpes launch, please visit: [youtube.com/UGABLYON](http://youtube.com/UGABLYON).

Gurdjieff Armenian Folk  
Ensemble Wins Edison Award

EINDHOVEN, Holland (Hetq) — Armenia's Gurdjieff Folk Instruments Ensemble has won the 2012 Edison Awards prize for best folk album.

Levon Eskenian, founder of the ensemble, and members Emmanuel Hovhannisyan and Norayr Gaboyan, travelled to the Dutch city of Eindhoven for the awards ceremony on November 28.

Upon accepting the award Eskenian said, "Winning this award is a great honor for us. It has given us a huge creative boost. It was also a great opportunity for the ensemble to once again perform on the international stage."

The Edison music award is an annual Dutch music prize, awarded for outstanding achievements in the music industry.

The Gurdjieff Folk Instruments Ensemble was founded in 2008 by Levon Eskenian with the aim of creating ethnographically authentic arrangements of the G.I. Gurdjieff/Thomas de Hartmann piano music.

The ensemble consists of leading Eastern folk instrumentalists in Armenia. Its members are on *duduk*, Emmanuel Hovhannisyan; *blul*, Avag Margaryan; *kamancha*, Armen Ayvazyan; *oud*, Aram Nikoghosyan; *kanon*, Meri Vardanyan; *santur*, Vladimir Papikyan; *tar/saz*, Davit Avagyan; *dap/daf/dhol*, Mesrop Khalatyan; *duduk* in G, Norayr Gapoyan and *duduk* in A, Narek Mnatsakanyan.



Two members of the ensemble perform at the awards ceremony.



Artistic Director Levon Eskenian receives the award.





## INTERNATIONAL

## ‘Armenian Churches in Tbilisi, Yesterday and Today’ Exhibition Opens in Georgia

TBILISI, Georgia (Hetq) — An exhibition entitled “Armenian Churches in Tbilisi, Yesterday and Today” opened on December 1 at the “Hayartun” Cultural Center of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church in Georgia.

The exhibition is dedicated to the founders of the Armenian Church Apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus.

The idea of the exhibition belongs to Varujhan Khachaturov (Jean Khach), a well-known Armenian painter from Tbilisi, who died young.

The “Hayartun” Cultural Center at the Georgian-Armenian Diocese, the Union of Armenian Painters of Georgia and the National Archives of Armenia with the support of Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Diaspora of Armenia are the organizers of the event.

There were 26 Armenian churches in Tbilisi until 1930, when a portion of them was destroyed by the Soviet authorities and the other churches became Georgian in the 1990s. The ideological basis of the exhibition is to represent Armenian churches in Tbilisi working until 1990s, those destroyed, not working or made Georgian. The paintings of Armenian and Georgian artists from Tbilisi and other regions participated in the exhibition.

Sergo Vardosanidze, professor and rector of the St. Andrew University at the Georgian Patriarchate, and sheikh Vagif Akperov, the leader of Muslims Department in Georgia, were the guests of honor at the exhibition. The event was attended by poet and transla-

tor Givi Shakhnazari, Van Baiburtian, advisor to the president of Georgia and the editor of Vrastan (Georgia), Henry Muradyan, chairman of the Union of Armenians in Georgia, representatives of Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to Georgia, intellectuals, artists and others.



“Armenia Churches in Tbilisi, Yesterday and Today” Exhibit

At the beginning of the event Levon Chidilyan, Coordinator of the Hayartun Cultural Center, noted that the exhibition presented works of 15 artists that showed all of the 26 previously existing historic Armenian churches in Tbilisi.

Merujan Shaumyan, Chairman of the Union of Armenian Painters of Georgia, presented a

detailed account about the history of the Armenian churches in Tbilisi; some of them are partially or completely destroyed, confiscated and not returned to rightful owner. He recalled Church of the Red Gospel and Saint Gevorg of Mughni Church being in ruins, and Church of the Holy Seal the belfry of which

churches in Tbilisi. He also introduced a delegation from Yerevan that included Samvel Muradian, head of cultural relations of the government of the Republic of Armenia; Sonya Mirzoyan, deputy director of the National Archives of Armenia and researcher Gohar Avakyan.

Beka Mindiashvili, the head of Georgian Public Defender’s Office, famous artist Giovanni Vepkhvadze and an archaeologist Sarkis Darchinian said in their speech that respect for the protection of religious monuments is the responsibility of the government of every civilized and democratic state.

The leader of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church in Georgia, Bishop Vazgen Mirzakhanyan praised and blessed everyone who helped to materialize the idea of organizing the exhibition. According to the head of the Diocese, “Armenians living in Georgia always praised the government and the people of Georgia. But we Armenians also have the right to demand from the Georgian authorities to provide a solution for the issue of six Armenian churches, confiscated during the Soviet period and inactive today.” Five of these temples are located in Tbilisi and one in Akhaltsikhe.

The head of the Diocese thanked monuments specialist Samuel Karapetian for publishing a series of booklets in three languages about Armenian churches in Tbilisi. At the end of the exhibition 150 slides about Church of the Holy Seal were shown and leaflets were distributed to the public.

The exhibition will run through December 10, 2012.

## Filmmakers Struggle to Tell Story of Canadian HIV Crisis

By Bruce DeMara

TORONTO (*Canadian Press*) — Filmmaker Paul Saltzman says he would have an easier time making a documentary about HIV/AIDS if it were set in Africa.

For the past two years, Saltzman (“Prom Night in Mississippi”), along with filmmakers Simcha Jacobovici (“The Naked Archaeologist”) and Ric Bienstock and a network of activists across the country, have struggled to find funding and support for a film on the HIV/AIDS crisis in Canada.

Along the way, they have faced a wall of complacency and the vestiges of stigma associated with the disease that — despite public perception — remains a serious public health issue for Canadians.

The project’s working title is Reignite because of the need to re-instill a sense of urgency that the crisis here is far from over, Saltzman said. Indeed, Saturday’s annual World AIDS Day highlights a disease that barely registers on the national consciousness the way it once did.

Officials with the Canadian AIDS Society have been frank from the outset about the difficulties ahead, Saltzman said.

“They said, ‘You wouldn’t believe how hard it is to get anybody to sit up and take note of the need to battle what is still a pandemic, and it’s much easier to get people interested in AIDS in Africa than in AIDS in Canada because we have this amnesia, we think it’s all gone because it isn’t as bad as it was in the 1980s when people were dying a lot,’” Saltzman said.

In fact, statistics provided by the society show that while the face of HIV/AIDS is changing, it isn’t going away. The latest figures show:

- there were about 71,300 people living with HIV/AIDS in Canada in 2011, 25 per cent of whom are undiagnosed, meaning they’re unaware of their HIV status.
- 3,175 new cases were diagnosed in 2011.
- while the vast majority of those diagnosed were gay or bisexual men when the virus first emerged, only 46.6 per cent of new infections in 2011 were among that group, with 37.2 per cent attributed to heterosexual contact.
- women represented 23.8 per cent of new HIV cases in 2011, up from 12 per cent prior to 1998, and First Nations people represented 12.2 per cent of new cases, despite representing only 2.5 per cent of the population.

Activist Brian Huskins — who has lived with HIV for 22 years — agreed with Saltzman’s assessment.

“There was a time when with a project like this, you’d just say you were doing it and people would be beating down your door to fund it because they wanted to have their name associated with it because it was the right thing to do. Now the right thing to do is to do it in Africa or Eastern Europe or South America,” Huskins said.

The planned format for the film will be a series of 4- to 6-minute vignettes exploring the lives of people living with the virus and others, including activists, researchers, health-care workers and those who have lost loved ones to AIDS, cutting across all demographic boundaries. With a goal of 15 to 18 vignettes, only three have been completed to date.

“Ric and Simcha are doing this for the same reason I am. None of us have time, it’s not a commercial venture. We just believe it is our duty, our social responsibility,” Saltzman said.

Acclaimed Canadian filmmakers David Cronenberg and Atom Egoyan have tentatively agreed to direct segments when their schedules permit and if funding is found to move forward.

Saltzman said he’d also like to persuade Canadian rock star Bryan Adams, a skilled photographer, to direct a segment. But without committed funding, progress on the project is glacial, he noted.

“We’re talking about money that is nothing in the big picture, nothing,” he said.

Huskins said he hopes that the big pharmaceutical companies — which are earning handsome profits through the sale of HIV drugs — will support the project.

“They (companies) have doubled and tripled their market in the last several years and they’re not stepping up to the plate,” Huskins said.

## Armenian Graves Spotlighted at Surat Science Museum Exhibition

SURAT, India (hetq) — In India, as part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Week November 19-25, the Surat Science Museum held an exhibition that spotlighted the Armenian graves of the city of Surat. The exhibition has already caught the attention of the local residents who attended. The exhibition, run by the Surat Science Museum has a photo gallery of the Armenian graves with the English translations beside them.

Until recently the Armenian graves were only ever seen with their Armenian script. Had it not been for a “pure chance” moment, it is unlikely the exhibition would ever have taken place. Photographs of the graves were posted by Arpine Gyulinyan to the Indo-Armenian Friendship NGO Facebook page and were spotted by Liz Chater, a UK-based family history researcher.

Chater then contacted Gyulinyan and the latter introduced her to Sanjay Choksi, the photographer who took the pictures. This heralded the start of a story of collaboration and co-operation spanning three continents.

Chater says: “In a way without Indo-Armenian Friendship NGO Facebook page it wouldn’t have happened. Sanjay Choksi and Piyush Dalal [Arpine’s husband] took the photos, Arpine posted them to IAF Facebook page, and I happened to see them. I asked if I would be allowed to post the photographs of the

graves on my website and said that I would try to get the English translations of them.

A few months passed and with the help from the fantastically knowledgeable historians Professor Sebouh Aslanian and Father Krikor Maksoudian from the USA the translations began to take shape. This truly international story of working together and co-operation would not have brought such lime-light onto the Armenian graves of Surat. We have all played a part and now the grave photographs and the transcriptions form part of the Surat Science Centre Heritage Programme this week.”

Although the exhibition ends on November 25, the photographs and English translations can be permanently found on Chater’s website, [chater-genealogy.com](http://chater-genealogy.com).

Chater has recently self-published a book on Armenian graves in Dhaka titled, *Armenian Graves, Inscriptions and Memorials in India - DACCA 1722-1977*, in which the English translations from classical Armenian have, for the very first time been made publically available by her. She was assisted with this project by Very Rev. Krikor Maksoudian of Arlington, Mass., who translated the classical Armenian script and who is also actively translating the Armenian graves at Surat for her.

Liz Chater’s genealogical database has more than 10,000 Armenians who once lived, worked and died in Asia and it is hoped that she will be able to get this information published.

## Catholicos of Cilicia Awards Bohjalian with Mesrop Mashtots Medal

BEIRUT (Armenpress) — The Catholicosate of Cilicia hosted a presentation of Chris Bohjalian’s “The Sandcastle Girls” on December 3, attended by Lebanese lawmakers and executive body representatives. As Anthelia informed Armenpress, Chris Bohjalian thanked for presenting his authored book, dwelled on his Armenian and non Armenian roots. The author of the bestseller recalled his childhood, days her mother used to take him to his dead grandparents, old Bohjalian home, which has left a deep impression on him.

Bohjalian expressed gratitude to Aram I and the people who have organized the book presentation.





# Community News

## Jorjorian Establishes Second Endowment Fund with Armenian Educational Foundation

GLENDAL — The Armenian Educational Foundation (AEF) has announced the establishment of the Jorjorian Armenia Scholarship Endowment Fund through the donation of \$150,000 by George Jorjorian of Chatsworth, Calif. The Endowment Fund will be used to provide full, four-year university scholarships for 12 students graduating from high schools in the cities of Alaverdi and Spitak of the Lori region of Armenia, and Stepanakert in Artsakh. Jorjorian established the Endowment Fund in the name of his two daughters, Camille and Christine, both of whom are supportive of their father's philanthropic projects.

In 1994, Jorjorian established his first Endowment Fund at AEF to provide university scholarships to 3 students graduating from the Haratch K. Goulbenkian secondary school in Anjar, Lebanon. Jorjorian, a lifelong educator, retired from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and was also an adjunct professor at Pierce College in Woodland Hills, Calif.

Prior to his retirement from the LAUSD, Jorjorian went to Lebanon for a year on sabbatical and volunteered at the Haratch K. Goulbenkian secondary school in Anjar. While there, he realized how much assistance the community and the school needed.

Having heard about the work of AEF, he approached AEF and donated \$85,000 to establish an Endowment Fund to provide university scholarships to three students graduating from the Goulbenkian school. AEF has been administering Jorjorian's endowment for the past 18 years by providing three \$2,000 scholarships each year, now totaling \$98,000, to the Goulbenkian school students. The Endowment Fund is expected to continue in perpetuity. At the same time, to help the school directly, Jorjorian committed and has been donating \$2,000 each year to AEF to be forwarded to the Goulbenkian school. Following his retirement from the LAUSD, Jorjorian travelled to Armenia and Artsakh each year, lived in the villages, and became acquainted with the families and the educational needs of the high school graduating students in the area. Then, at the end of his stay, he would provide tuition money to those village students going to college who could not afford the tuition. He continued this philanthropic work until last summer when he could no longer physically continue, at the age of 87.

The Armenian Educational Foundation expresses its gratitude and appreciation to Jorjorian for his generous donations and commits to continue his mission and his wish to provide university scholarships to twelve graduating students from Stepanakert, Alaverdi and Spitak high schools through his new Endowment Fund.

The Armenian Educational Foundation was established in 1950 to provide support to Armenian students and Armenian educational institutions. Over the past 20 years, AEF has renovated more than 180 schools in Armenia, Artsakh and Javakhk and has provided aid to thousands of students.

For more information, visit AEF's website at [www.aefweb.org](http://www.aefweb.org).



Eileen Stepanian

## Mass. Nurse Continues To Work at Age 80

NEWBURYPORT, Mass. (Newburyport Daily Journal) — Eileen Stepanian is a whiz at teaching online nursing classes for St. Joseph's College in Maine, and has spent countless hours working toward her doctorate degree.

Of course, she has to fit those in around her job as public health nurse for the town of Merrimac. And, in between, her volunteering as parish nurse for Pilgrim Congregational Church.

Some might scratch their heads and wonder how Stepanian even had time to slow down and celebrate her 80th birthday last week. Luckily, the nurse did — and she did it in the biggest way possible.

Stepanian traveled to San Francisco where she was honored as the recipient of the prestigious Lillian Wald Service Award from the public health nursing section of the American Public Health Association on Oct. 30 — one day after her milestone birthday. The distinction, granted to a nurse for exemplary public health nursing practices, was one of three national awards given at the annual meeting, where Stepanian was joined by several of her children.

While Stepanian, a Merrimac native, knew colleagues had nominated her last winter, she was completely astounded to find out earlier this summer that she had won — when she eventually heard the news, that is.

"I have three email addresses," she said, and the news of her award was sent to an address that she hadn't yet checked upon arriving to work one day. Instead, she opened her second account, where her inbox was flooded with messages of congratulations.

"It was sort of a roundabout way of finding out," she said.

For those who know Stepanian, the news of her honor was hardly a surprise; but, they agree, it couldn't have been awarded to a more deserving recipient.

"She's incredible, she really is," said Laura Dillingham-Mailman, executive director of the Merrimac Council on Aging. A friend of Stepanian's for 20 years, Dillingham-Mailman says the woman has taught her colleagues "so much."

Initially hired as the town nurse in 1971 — a part-time job that she would work on her days off from Lawrence General Hospital — Stepanian's main responsibility was to check in on patients who had recently returned home from hospital stays.

For Stepanian, who first attended nursing school because her family didn't have the money to send her to college, it was the start of a "side job" that developed into a passionate joint career. As the world changed, and so did the public health field.

Today, the role of a public health nurse is multi-faceted as she covers a wide range of responsibilities from running flu clinics to following up on reported communicable diseases. She is also responsible for holding blood pressure clinics, health teaching and education, running community wellness and public health prevention initiatives and public health emergency preparedness support.

Throughout the years, as Stepanian worked at Lawrence General and, later, Amesbury Hospital, she raised four boys and three girls, while never slowing down. In 1998, she joined other public health nurses in forming a statewide organization, the Mass. Association of Public Health Nurses.

see NURSE, page 7

## Prosecutor Gasparian Says NJ Killing 'Like Predator Going After its Prey'

By Jenna Pizzi

TRENTON (*Times of Trenton*) — Three gunman in a coordinated assault, targeted and then killed 34-year-old Emilio Lopez earlier this month on a Trenton Street, prosecutors said last week.

The attack, captured on surveillance video, showed Lopez crossing a street as he saw the three men coming his way, Assistant Prosecutor Michelle Gasparian said during a hearing in Superior Court in Mercer County.

"The men then cross the street and approach the victim in a three pronged approach," Gasparian said.

One man walked in front of Lopez, another behind and one directly toward him. All three were armed with handguns, she said. Lopez was shot at least twice.

"Like a predator going after its prey," Gasparian said. "Blocking any chance the victim had of escape."

Roberto Cruz, 31, Jose Rivera and Kenneth Rivera, both 19, have been charged with murder and weapons offenses in Lopez's death. The three cousins appeared by video from the Mercer County Correction Center, this morning for a bail review before Judge Thomas Summers.

Lopez was killed on Kent Street near Division Street in the Chambersburg section of the city just before 11:45 p.m. on November 16.

Gasparian said investigators obtained video surveillance from different cameras in the area that shows a minivan arrive at 100 block of Kent Street with the gunmen. The video captured the gunfire that killed Lopez.

"The muzzle flash from the gun is visible in the video," Gasparian said.

Gasparian said that Lopez was first shot in the forearm, likely while he was trying to defend himself, before he suffered a gunshot wound to the back.

Gasparian said she could not comment on which of the three men shot Lopez because it remains an ongoing investigation.

Trenton police recognized Cruz from the surveillance video and arrested him hours after the shooting, Gasparian said.

He was wearing a "distinctive" jacket similar to the one in the video and had a ski mask in his pocket, Gasparian said. Cruz also faces drug charges.

Cruz's attorney Tom Gombar said in court that his client is innocent of the charges against him and that they are working on securing witnesses that would say that he was elsewhere during the time of the killing.

"I think the whole case is going to turn on that video tape," Gombar said, noting that he has not had a chance to review the tape yet.

Investigators interviewed several other people and learned that Cruz was known to associate with his cousins Jose and Kenneth Rivera, Gasparian said.

Jose and Kenneth Rivera were taken into custody on November 19. Police found Jose Rivera driving the same minivan that was seen in the video. The minivan is registered to his mother, Gasparian said.

"Jose was also wearing clothes similar to those in the video," Gasparian said.

In an interview with Jose Rivera's mother, investigators learned that she saw her son in the minivan with two other men around the time of the murder, Gasparian said.

"These men were trolling the city streets looking for victims," Gasparian said.

All three men are being held in the Mercer County Corrections Center in lieu of \$750,000 bail.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# San Diego's Armenians Raises \$140,000 at Second Bridge to the Future Gala

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — All of the elegance and glamour of a red carpet celebration greeted guests attending the second annual Bridge to the Future gala dinner and dance on Saturday, November 10, at the Hilton La Jolla Torrey Pines. Nearly 250 people attended the event, which raised a net profit of \$140,000 for a new church campus. The event was organized by the Gala and Trust Fund Committees of St. John Garabed Armenian Church of San Diego.

The event featured Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, as guest of honor, and San Diego's 10News anchorwoman, Kimberly Hunt, as mistress of ceremonies.

Dignitaries and officials included Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian, former Primate of the Western Diocese; Bishop Armash Nalbandian, Primate of the Diocese of Damascus, Syria; Rev. Datev A.K. Tatoulian, parish priest of St. John Garabed Armenian Church; Joe Kellejian, mayor of the City of Solana Beach; Mary Murphy, dancer, choreographer and judge on Fox Television's "So You Think You Can Dance;" Margaret Ajemian Ahnert, author of the novel *The Knock at the Door*; Armen Hampar, Diocesan Council chair; Deacon Micah A.



Gala Chair Kathy Kassardjian

Jendian, St. John Garabed Parish Council Chairman; and Harry G. Krikorian, St. John Garabed Trust Fund Committee chairman.

The evening began with guests treated to champagne, appetizers and a silent auction. Inside the ballroom, Hunt opened the evening by welcoming guests and dignitaries. She stated, "It is a pleasure to be among you tonight. With the faith and hope of Armenia's forefathers, today's Armenian community has

embarked on a new chapter — a new church campus to unite, educate and edify our entire community at the new property near Del Mar."

The event's program featured a Color Guard presentation of the American and Armenian flags by the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC), the singing of the national anthems by soloist Anahit Nersesian accompanied by Alex Mirolyan, opening remarks and invocation by Derderian and a welcome by Gala Chair Kathy Kassardjian.

Derderian shared: "Tonight's fellowship is the reflection of the Christian faith of this community. A few years back, a new journey was designed with the vision of expanding the church community to better cater to the spiritual needs of our future generations. The purchase of a new church property certainly has been a major undertaking which has called upon the dedicated members of the St. John Garabed Armenian Church and the entire San Diego Armenian community to gather as a family and launch a new beginning in our spiritual journey. We have responded to God's call in launching this most exciting mission. My message to you all is clear and direct: Let us all be shareholders in the realization of our New Church — A Bridge to the Future."

During dinner guests enjoyed a live auction led by fundraising auctioneer Keith McLane. The auction successfully sold jewelry, trips to Armenia, New York, Mexico, Newport Beach and California's Wine Country; an African safari in Kenya; tickets to the 2013 Grammy Awards with special after-party access; and unique experiences like attending the NASCAR Nextel Cup race, flying a fighter jet and seeing Celine Dion in Las Vegas. Above and beyond the excitement of the live auction, \$20,000 was raised in Fund-a-Need pledges to the Bridge to the Future campaign.

After dinner, Tatoulian addressed the audience. He said, "I greet and welcome all of our honored and distinguished guests, dignitaries, benefactors, supporters and all of our community organizations of San Diego to the second annual Bridge to the Future banquet. By trust-

ing in God with unity, positive attitude and moral and financial support, the 14 acres of barren land that has been purchased by the Trust Fund will be transformed into a beautiful Armenian Mother Apostolic Church campus. I encourage each of you and your families to contribute and take active part in this historic project."

Nalbandian offered closing remarks and the benediction. The evening's entertainment featured waltz, samba and tango performances by professional dancers from San Diego's Champion Ballroom Academy and lively dance music from international superstar Robert Chilingirian and his Band.

The funds raised at the gala support the first phase of the Bridge to the Future campaign, whose goal is to raise a total of \$1 million for expenses and fees associated with the Conditional Use Permit application and final land acquisition. The property is located at



L to R: Former Chargers Linebacker Billy Ray Smith, Emcee Kimberly Hunt of 10News, Mary Kellejian and Joe Kellejian



Front Row L to R: Rev. Fr. Datev A. K. Tatoulian, His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian; Gala Chair Kathy Kassardjian; Bishop Armash Nalbandian of Damascus, Syria; Gala Committee, from left, (Partial): Viviane Hagopian, Rose Babayan, Beth Broussalian, Nora Balikian, Lisa Kradjian, Alan Yaghdjian, Sonia Serpekian, Liza Istambouljan, Janet Desmond and Suzanne Meader

13860 El Camino Real in the Del Mar area of San Diego.

To make an online donation or for more information about the new church campus, visit [www.stjohngarabedtrust.org](http://www.stjohngarabedtrust.org).

## Mass. Nurse Continues to Work at Age 80

NURSE, from page 6

She earned her degree in health care administration and then completed her master's degree in nursing at the age of 70. She was 64 years old when she received her bachelor's. In 2005, she was hired by St. Joseph's College to teach an online class in public health. It sparked her interest to begin pursuing her doctorate.

"I feel like a living history book of nursing," she said.

After Stepanian returned home from the West Coast, the festivities didn't stop. The town held a luncheon celebrating Stepanian's award earlier this month, where she was given a certificate by the Board of Selectmen proclaiming November 7 "Charlotte Eileen Stepanian Day" in Merrimac.

"There's just not enough words, she's remarkable," Dillingham-Mailman said. "We just love her to pieces. She's one of those people, you just shake your head. Her mind never stops. One of her sons just retired, and she's still working."

Eileen Hurley, the chairman of the Board of Health, called Stepanian "a joy to work with."

"She goes above and beyond," Hurley said. She's always willing to comply with anything that anyone asks. She's a marvel."

Over the years, Stepanian has added programs — such as the monthly column she writes for the Senior Center newsletter — and continues to take part in symposiums and conferences around the state, Hurley said.

Constance Hoyt, the receptionist at the Senior Center, first met Stepanian when she was her Sunday School teacher. The two women, both nurses, worked together at various hospitals over the years, Hoyt said.

"She was 14 and I was 8 when she was my teacher," Hoyt said last week. "When I rejoined the church, I sat besides her, and she asked me if I remembered her."

"She's a workhorse; she doesn't slow down a bit," she added.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Beloved Armenagan Martyrs: A Cup of Water from

VAN (Vasburagan) – I carried out my oath as a political party member this summer, in full, invoking the spiritual words above.

After entering the ranks of the party, I had sworn to pray on my knees to those Armenagan comrades who were the forerunners (*mgrdich*) on the Armenian plateau of the Armenian liberation struggle and revolution.

We were proud, we Democrat Liberals, of having descended from the Armenagan organization – and especially our generation, which on the 50th anniversary of the Great Crime swore to remain faithful to the creed of our past, believing in the constructive force of our people and the great historical mission reserved to it. We joined the ranks of the Democrat Liberal Party (ADL) with unshakeable optimism, believing that the just solution of our land case and the movement for repatriation would without a doubt be realized. Finally, our oath was through nonnegotiable patriotism to aid at least a tiny bit that wonderful goal and the realization of the dream. This is what was passed down to us from our old comrades, the Armenagans.

Those forerunners or *mgrdiches* were three: Mgrdich Khrimian Hayrig, Mgrdich Portukalian and Mgrdich Terlemezian-Avedisian. It took forty long years for me to be fully able to realize that dream.

The first step was my visit to Marseille in August 1989. The local priest, Karekin Vartabed Bekjian (today the Primate of Germany's Armenians), led me to the grave of one of the three *mgrdiches* – Portukalian. We prayed there and I renewed my oath to serve



Khrimian Hayrig

my nation, homeland and political party. On that day Portukalian's relatives entrusted to me relics which I keep to this day like the apple of my eye.

The second took place in July 2000. We came as part of an ADL delegation to visit Echmiadzin and officially meet with Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II. Archbishop Mesrob Krikorian, a warm and steadfast friend of the ADL, was with comrades Hagop Avedikian, Rupen Mirzakhanian and Dr. Krikor Adanalian. Before the meeting, the archbishop recited a prayer in front of Mgrdich Khrimian Hayrig's tomb, which lay at the entrance of the Cathedral, for the latter's soul. After the meeting with Catholicos Karekin II, the latter invited Krikorian and myself to Haykashen, where his summer residence was.

The third remained, Mgrdich Avedisian, the location of whose tomb is not known.

With a group of American-Armenian pilgrims we visited historical Armenia – our sacred sites, our mountains...and all our lands. Each of those pilgrims is an heir to that land. We conducted our prayer which began with Kars in front of the ruins of Ani, regarding from close at hand the lands of our Republic of Armenia firmly anchored on the other banks of the Akhurian River. Scraping by the west of Ararat we reached Van and traveled to the Church of the Holy Cross on Akhtamar.

The Monastery of St. Partoghimeos (Bartholomew) is not distant, where the immortal Armenagan hero Mgrdich Avedisian was martyred with his lion cubs. It is a two-hour

By Hagop Vartivarian

Translated from the Armenian



Hagop Vartivarian at the foot of St Bartholomew monastery

journey. I was able to find a driver in Van who knew where the monastery was, not far from the border of Iran. On September 9 I was able to fulfill my third oath.

## Pilgrimage to Van

It is worthy to relate the story, and why one should go on pilgrimage to that monastery.

The Sasun massacre of 1894 caused great emotion not only among Armenians but also in the world of politics. Van, due to its special position and situation remained free of the 1895 general massacre. However, as provincial governor Nazim Pasha was considered incompetent and incapable by the sultan, one of the imperial guards, Ferik Saadeddin Pasha, was sent to



Mugurditch Portukalian

Van in order to organize and rouse the Turkish and Kurdish mobs in Van and its environs against the Armenians.

"The Armenagans, guessing the intention of this extraordinary inspector of the sultan, naturally, while employing all means for self-defense, were going to try not to provide any excuse for the excitation of Turkish fanaticism," as Ardag Tarpinian later recorded in his memoirs.

Mgrdich Avedisian, who had newly returned from Salmas to Van, took on the leadership of the self-defense of Van. He was aided by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation leader Bedo, and the Hnchagist Mardig. Truly, the spring of 1896 turned out to be critical when gradually the specter of massacre turned into a reality. The massacre began on June 5 and the Armenian quarters completely fell victim to Turkish barbarism. Its description is sad.

It became clear in those battles that the youth of Van were best able to understand the meaning and spirit of the revolution which

inspired the Khrimians and Portukalians.

The Avedisians became manifest through this self-defense, as well as Yeghishe Kundakjian, Arisdages Akhigian, Krikoris Terlemezian and still other martyred and living dedicated Armenagan revolutionaries. The following certainly will remain as memorable figures of the self-defense battles of Van: Garabed Sanoyan, Hmayeag Tankarajian, Garabed and Manug Sanoyan, Haji (Zeytuntsi), Arshag Chchian, Uzun Ohannes, Sev Laj, Garabed Hiusian, Kevork Ashjian, Arabaji Kaplon, Markar Solakhian, Dikran Mherian and Sahag Pehrizian, all Armenagans. As for the Armenian Revolutionary Federation members, there were Bedo and Vartan, and from the Hnchagists, Mardig, Vahe and Sarkavag. Behold, the number of our martyrs in the self-defense battles in those days formed such proportions.

Our revolutionary comrades from all political parties were sacrificed in the self-defense effort,

which lasted one week. On the other hand, this successful resistance of the Armenians inspired anxiety not only in the Turkish government but also in the English consul, W.H. Williams. The English government feared that this resistance of the Armenians would form a pretext for the Russian Tsarist government to attack Turkey. Consequently England tried to find an end to this crisis, through its experienced diplomatic machinations.

The Armenians, fearing Williams' dishonest behavior, demanded that the other consuls in Van, the French, Persian and Russian, participate in peace negotiations. The populace, for the sake of safety, took refuge with the American missionaries and Persian and Russian consulates. Here, too, however, the sad role of the English consul was going to have decisive consequences. The men crowded into the American establishments, especially the youth, received the command to leave. If they did not, they were threatened with surrender to the government.

And he, Williams, succeeded. After the negotiations, it was demanded from the Armenians that the fighters leave Van for Persia. It was promised that nobody would pursue them on this journey, while the Armenians of Van and its surrounding villages would be left free. Consequently, the important notables of Van, holding a consultative assembly, decided to send the fighting youth with their weapons to Persia.

Later events showed that Williams' promise was mere trickery. His permanent fear was a Russian intervention, so he rushed as quickly as possible to suppress the fighting and remove the Armenagans from Van. Our revolutionaries who were struggling for self-defense and independence encountered only harm from the Christian Great Powers of the West, just as later Mihran Damadian and his fighters with the Armenians withdrew from Cilicia thanks to French intervention. And for this reason, Armenians were only able to find constant friendship from the sole Christian state of the east, Russia.

Nearly 1,000 Armenians assembled at night at Varak Mountain. The Armenagans, 600 strong, led by Mgrdich Avedisian, were going to go to Persia via by the Chukh and Bashkale route, through St. Partoghimeos Monastery. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) members and Hnchagists, around 60 in num-

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Your Birthplace Van as Balm for Your Thirsty Souls



Mugurditch Avedissian

ber, after waiting several more days on the mountain to see how events were developing, were going by a different route to the same place.

Of course, with the densely Armenian-populated Aykesdan district of Van defenseless, the Turkish and Kurdish mob again attacked, massacring 600-700 people. Saadeddin Pasha was in great joy. With the departure of the Armenian youth, the control of Van was left in his hands.

The Armenagans who left with Avedissian, who were the elite of the intellectual youth of Van, took the Aghpag road. Contrary to the promises that were made, 8 to 10 thousand Turkish soldiers and Kurdish Hamidiye regiment members began to harass the departing group starting at the outskirts of Van, especially at the passes of Rukh and Giuzel Dere. After a 24-hour battle, and several dead, the group succeeded in breaking through the siege lines and advanced toward Aghpag. During this period, around 40 fighters succeeded in returning to Van.

The group, increasingly exhausted and perse-

cuted, succeeded in arriving in front of Surp Partoghimeos Monastery, which was not far from the Persian border. The group attempted to take refuge in the sturdy monastery. It did not succeed in this. Not only the monastery, but all the important positions around it, had previously been surrounded by the enemy. The Armenians were caught in an unequal battle of one against ten, a description of which unfortunately is lacking. Avedissian and five hundred men of his brave group of dedicated Armenagans fell there.

The members of the Hnchagist and ARF group, who from the start separated from Avedissian's group, after waiting about a week at Varak Mountain, decide to go to Persia, but they too on the road are completely annihilated by Kurds.

As a result of this great loss, Van remained without youth. It was an irreparable loss. It was the promising youth born of the inspiration of Portukalian and Khrimian who disappeared, leaving behind very few Armenagans, such as Panos Terlemezian, Krikor Beozigian, Karekin Pagheshtsian (Manugian), Mikayel Natanian, Rupen Shadvorian, Krikor Ajemian.

This disappearance of intellectuals was more costly for Vasburagan and all Armenians than even the actual massacre of Van.

## In the Field of Heroes

Certainly after the final evacuation of Van, no ideological fighter visited this holy place, the plain of the apostle Bartholomew, where the Armenagan fighters are buried. The car hastened from Van toward the aforementioned monastery. These are our fields and hills...it is after all the nature of the homeland which I am enjoying from within my thoughts. Alone. I follow step by step that road on which our Armenagan comrades going toward martyrdom walked.

Meanwhile I go over my memories stretching over more than forty years of political party life to each stage, and sometimes I get emotional, but often I become happy with the experiences that I have had. I spend the approximately two hour trip with its vicissitudes, enthusiasms and disappointments, and successes and failures.

And the Armenian world's nature and land still grow more beautiful to my eyes.

We are now in the Albayrak village near the monastery. It is populated by Kurds.

It is forbidden to ascend to the monastery, which possessed great military significance as it was on a hill. The soldiers defending the border have occupied the church. Over there we see Persia. The plain of Apostle Bartholomew, where our heroes, including our Avedissian,

I also pray individually for the souls of Khrimian, Portukalian and Avedissian – those who taught us to be revolutionary, but cautious; revolutionary, but thirsty for education and progressive; revolutionary, always being led by the supreme interests of the nation and the people.

I experience the inner satisfaction of having carried out my obligations. I see at this stage of my life, over sixty, the carrying out of a dream,



Participating ADL members, from left Hagop Vartivarian, Oscar Tatossian and Dr. Jacques Gulekjian

were martyred, lies at the foot of the monastery.

I take out of my bag a bottle of water which I had taken this morning from Lake Van. First I recite a prayer aloud for the souls of the dead and then the Lord's Prayer and then I sing the ADL march. I have also brought with me our political party's coat of arms lapel pin, which I mix into our native soil, I sprinkle Van's water on the red soil of the martyrs, on their thirsty and parched souls as balm.

an oath. Carrying out this last one was the most difficult.

We return. It is already dusk. The land of the Armenians is orange, the color of apricots. Lake Van appears from a distance, and I go to the shore of the lake and I say, "Lands of the Armenians, new generations of Armenagans will come from every corner of the world and from our Armenia here and again make the lands of the Armenians flourish."

## Haig Karakashian Receives Send off to New Home in Waltham

BOSTON – On Wednesday, November 14, the Armenian Nursing & Rehabilitation Center (ANRC) hosted a luncheon in honor of Haig Karakashian who moved to a new home in Waltham on November 20. "Haigie" had been an ANRC resident since August 1998.

The luncheon featured Chinese food, one of Haigie's favorite meals, and was attended by 15 of his closest friends, family and caregivers. Close friend "Auntie" JoAnn Janjigian gave him Patriots' football posters for his new bedroom, and his cousin, Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, presented him with a framed citation marking this milestone. Other guests included Koutoujian's parents, Connie and Peter Koutoujian, and Steve Stepanian, another close family friend.

ANRC staff members in attendance were two of Karakashian's long-time certified nursing assistants, Eunice Palmer and Zola Watson, Haigie's favorite nurse, Donna Fitzpatrick, RN, as well as ANRC Activities Department staff Siran Salibian and Salpy Yeterian. Karla Fleming, executive director, Wayne Sakovich, social worker, and Massachusetts Department Developmental Services Coordinator Cheryl Makuch were also part of the group of well-wishers.

Karakashian's new residence is located just off Trapelo Road. The large, newly built five-bedroom, single-family home was customized for his needs and those of his four other housemates. Staff are on duty at all times to help the residents with meal preparation, housekeeping, and laundry, and to provide



Seated, from left, Eunice Palmer, Haig Karakashian, Sheriff Peter Koutoujian; standing, from left, JoAnn Janjigian, Karla Fleming, Zola Watson, Donna Fitzpatrick, Anaida Agopian, Wayne Sakovich, Connie Koujoujian, Salpy Yeterian, Peter Koutoujian, Siran Salibian and Cheryl Makuch

activities. There is also a wheelchair-accessible van dedicated to their use. For Karakashian, this means that he will be able to attend services at his church, St. James Armenian Church, in Watertown, every week

and participate in other events in the Armenian and wider community. He and his housemates will also receive routine medical and nursing care that may be required for the rest of their lives.

Although the staff and residents of the ANRC were very sad to see him go, this new move is the opportunity of a lifetime for Karakashian who will be able to enjoy living in a non-institutional community setting.



COMMUNITY NEWS

# ‘Dixie’ Evokes Strong, Sometimes Mixed Emotions

ST. GEORGE, Utah (*The Spectrum*) – When Dixie State College (DSC) began exploring what the school’s name and brand should be after it is granted university status, the debate reawakened memories of the impassioned divide over the school’s mascot change five years ago.

In 2007, Dixie State announced it would retire the Rebels nickname after having shelved the Rodney the Rebel confederate soldier mascot previously. The school’s Red Storm name and mascot were introduced in January 2009, after voting settled on Red Hawks, Red Devils and Red Storm as the preferred alternatives.

Red Storm was the least popular of the three, but the committee charged with the final decision preferred Red Storm’s originality.

Sarkis Arslanian, also known as “Coach Sark,” said his feelings about Dixie’s identity run deep. The second-generation Armenian came to Dixie with a friend in the 1940s to play football under famed Coach Walt Brooks, then returned in 1955 to coach after having begun his career in northern Utah.

“They were going to close the school. The governor had given us a two-year moratorium – if we didn’t increase the enrollment, they were going to close it,” Arslanian said. “I told the president, ‘Let me have the school car.’”

After touring communities throughout the

state where he “promised every girl she would be a cheerleader, and every boy he would play football if he wanted to,” Arslanian helped drive an increase in enrollment from 164 students to 265.

He also was part of the drive to distinguish the college from Dixie High School by changing the mascot for post-secondary students from the Flyers to the Rebels. The change, Arslanian said, was in honor of the region’s pioneers, many of whom were natives of the southern states and sent to Southern Utah to establish a cotton industry for residents during the Civil War’s textile shortages.

Coach Sark would later go on to coach at Weber State and Colorado State before leading pro teams in Italy, Japan and Armenia and ultimately returning full circle to coach at Pine View High School. In 1999, he was inducted into the Dixie College Hall of Fame.

“This is my first love,” he said. “You can’t find a nicer place to have a college than right here. ... We just love it. But they’re not getting the money they should be.”

Arslanian said he believes Dixie State disappointed many of its alumni and potential donors when it did away with the Rebels mascot. If the school abandons the name Dixie when it becomes a university, probably next year, that will be another nail in the coffin, he said.

“It ought to be Dixie State University Rebels,” he said. “I’ve fought very vehemently to get rid of Red Storm. We’ve got to get back to the Rebels.”

Arslanian acknowledged concerns that the name Dixie might be offensive because of its ties nationally to the South’s slave history, but he said he doesn’t buy that argument. The University of Nevada-Las Vegas and the University of Mississippi both have kept their Rebels mascot and Confederate imagery amid changes to their brand, and they still attract significant numbers of African-American students, he said. Ole Miss fans also regard the Confederate tune *Dixie* an unofficial school fight song.

During the past year, DSC President Stephen Nadauld often told students that he hopes by next year the school will be “Dixie State University.” But, he has said the name is more of a place-holder title and not a decided-upon result, even though some of Southern Utah’s legislative representatives have said they think the name is a done deal.

St. George resident Thad Stewart, the founder of Dixie Lumber and Hardware, said he and his partner chose the word Dixie for their company simply because it was descriptive of the area when he launched the business in 1972.

“This is Utah’s Dixie,” Stewart said. “[There is] no negative aspect whatever, just positive.”

Dixie Lumber is one of more than a hundred companies listed in the phone book with the word Dixie in the title, beginning with Dixie Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine and including the hospital, schools, motels and Realtors.

Washington County Economic Development

Council Director Scott Hirschi, whose job is to recruit national businesses that will provide a significant economic benefit to the county, said the name Dixie does often prove confusing to outsiders, however.

“Some take it in stride. It leads to a discussion of our history,” Hirschi said. “Their initial response is one of curiosity and confusion. They just don’t associate Utah or the West with Dixie. There’s confusion about our location anyway. For most people outside of Utah, their image of Utah is the Wasatch Front – mountains, snow and great skiing. ... We are so foreign to that.”

Hirschi said he’s often asked what the “D” on Black Hill and the “Dixie” on the Red Hill mean. When he’s given a chance to explain the region’s heritage and the schools’ part in it, it becomes a non-issue. The challenge is seeing through the questions clients don’t ask, he said.

“I get all sorts of questions about [whether] anyone will work on Monday night. Will they work on Sundays? I’ve even had companies ask do they have to pay tithing on their revenues. But they don’t ask about the Mormon influence,” Hirschi said. “The question that begs to be answered is, how many clients have I had that had questions [about Dixie] and didn’t ask them? That’s something I can’t quantify.”

Hirschi said most outside corporations already assume Dixie State is a university, so he doesn’t think the transition to university status will make a big difference to them.

“[But] I could see how [university status] would be a big advantage for students,” he said. “To get a graduate degree at home would be a real big advantage for them.”

## OBITUARY

### Aram Peter Kezirian Armenian Assembly Board Member

LOS ANGELES (*Metropolitan News Enterprise*) – Aram Peter Kezirian Jr., a Republican activist and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Armenian Assembly of America, died unexpectedly last week at the age of 48.

A spokesperson for the Armenian Bar Association said Kezirian was playing basketball at his church on November 19 when he suddenly collapsed.

“Peter was a dynamic, talented, dedicated individual who greatly contributed to the Assembly’s ongoing work for the betterment of Armenia and Artsakh,” said Assembly

A fifth-generation Armenian-American, Kezirian served as the state chair of the Armenian Assembly and in 1995 was a member of the faculty, headed by US Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, for the Armenian Judiciary Conference in Yerevan, the Armenian capital, which worked on issues of constitutional interpretation.

As a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, Kezirian also served on task forces evaluating NATO’s military role in Bosnia and Kosovo and a wide range of bilateral issues facing the US and Mexico.

In 2003 he joined a team led by former New Jersey Gov. Christine Todd Whitman to oversee Cambodia’s national elections.

Kezirian was an active member of the Pacific Council on International Policy. He headed a delegation to observe and report on changes in US Army training tactics and methods in armored warfare and, more recently, as a German Marshall Plan Fellow, worked with business, governmental and philanthropic leaders in six countries to help strengthen transatlantic relationships.

In recognition of Kezirian’s service in the public sphere and his keen interest in politics and international relations, the Assembly Board of Trustees announced the endowment of a scholarship in his name for students participating in the Assembly’s Terjenian-Thomas Summer Internship Program in Washington, DC.

The eight-week summer program is designed to provide college students of Armenian descent the opportunity to intern in the nation’s capital in congressional offices, think tanks, media outlets, government agencies and non-governmental organizations, while taking part in a full schedule of educational, social and cultural activities.

At the time of his death, Kezirian was general counsel for the California department of the Cooperative of American Physicians, which helps its physician members protect against professional liability risks.

Kezirian is survived by his wife, Michelle Kezirian, his mother Marilyn Kezirian, four brothers, two nieces and a nephew.

Services were held at the United Armenian Congregation Church, followed by interment at Forest Lawn in Glendale.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers charitable donations be made to the Aram Peter Kezirian Jr. Foundation at 2335 East Colorado Boulevard, Suite 115-230, Pasadena, CA 91107.



Aram Peter Kezirian

Chairman Hirair Hovnanian and President Carolyn Mugar in a statement.

As an undergraduate student at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Kezirian chaired the largest Model United Nations program in the world, with 3,200 participants and a multi-million dollar budget.

He was also the first intern to work for US Sen. Pete Wilson (R-CA) and ultimately joined his staff as the research assistant for national security.

Kezirian first became involved with George Deukmejian while volunteering on his 1982 gubernatorial campaign. Four years later he worked with Deukmejian again as part of the finance team for the governor’s 1986 reelection effort.

Kezirian went on to earn his law degree from the University of Southern California, where he was the articles editor of the law review.

When Wilson became governor in 1991, he appointed Kezirian general counsel of the newly-created California Department of Corporations, which licenses and regulates a variety of financial services and securities businesses.

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# Arts & Living

## Young Pianist's Love of Music And Dedication Put Her on Path To Success

By Serena Hajjar

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

MONTREAL — At age 17, Alina Israilian has already accomplished what most serious pianists only dream of: playing at Carnegie Hall — at age 11, no less.

"It was everything I'd dreamed of in one place," she recalled.

In addition, she has been a recipient of the McGill Conservatory Vera Black Scholarship for the last two years. Yet despite these accomplishments, Israilian's warm, welcoming smile and jovial demeanor have not changed.

Born in Toronto and raised in Laval, Montreal, Israilian attended her first piano lesson at the age of 4, under the direction of Tina Kakabedze. In 2003, at 7, she participated in her first piano competition; two years later, she won the second place prize in the 9-year-old category at the Canada Music Competition. At the 2006 World Piano Competition in Cincinnati, she placed second, and was awarded the prize to play at Carnegie Hall. "It was very exciting. I don't think I was aware that I was playing at Carnegie Hall, but now that I look back, it's, 'Oh my God, I played there,'" she recalls.

To top it all off, she has taken some master classes from renowned pianist Anton Kuerti and Prof. Marc Durand.



Alina Israilian

Israilian's musical heroes are pianists Vladimir Ashkenazy, Martha Argerich and Jan Lisiecki. She enjoys playing pieces from the Romantic Era, and says that she recently "started to expand my view on classical music, from the Classical period" after playing Beethoven's *Third Piano Concerto*. While her favorite piece to play is Chopin's *Etude No. 3*, she noted she would love to learn Brahms' *First Piano Concerto*.

Israilian says her parents are her inspiration, acknowledging the invaluable role they have played in her career. "They encourage me a lot. They're great supporters. They just love music," she says. "We attend concerts together, we share opinions on concerts, everything."

She says her father often reminds her to live in the moment and take advantage of the time she has now: "When there's an opportunity, I have to open my eyes...if see ISRAILIAN, page 13



Lori Sahakian

## Armenian Performers in Boston Ballet's World Premiere of 'The Nutcracker'

BOSTON — Students of Armenian descent who attend the Boston Ballet School and a new member of the main Boston Ballet Company who joined the troupe this year from Armenia, are among the performers in Boston Ballet's debut production of Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen's "The Nutcracker."

The show, which started on November 23 to rave reviews, will have 43 performances,

ending on December 30.

The Boston Ballet School students have been a vital part of celebrating the Holiday Season with the magic of "Nutcracker" for more than 44 years. Boston Ballet's 2012 production showcases the talents of the Boston Ballet's company dancers and features all new costumes and sets.

Boston Ballet soloist Avetik Karapetyan, 27, performs in the Russian Dance and Chinese Dance segments in Act II. Karapetyan graduated from Yerevan National Ballet Academy of Armenia in 2003 under the direction of Hovhannes Divanyan. He was then invited to study at the Heinz Bosl Ballet Academy of Munich, where he trained with Alexander Prokofiev. Upon graduating in 2005, he worked in Staatsoper in Vienna for a year, before dancing with the Royal Swedish Ballet in Stockholm. He is the recipient of outstanding prizes and awards, including the bronze medal in Sergey Lifar Ballet Competition in Kiev, Ukraine; first place in the 2009 Rome Primo Ballet Competition, first prize in the 2012 International Istanbul Ballet Competition and second place in the 2011 Beijing Ballet Competition.

Lori Sahakian of Lexington, an eighth-grade student at the Lexington Christian Academy, performs as a soldier in Act I and as Tea/Chinese dancer in Act II. Sahakian has been attending the Boston Ballet School for the last 10 years, with appearances in the previous production of "The Nutcracker" for four consecutive years. Students Hazelyn Aroian and Talia Der Sarkissian, are making their first appearances in this year.

Students of Boston Ballet School in "The Nutcracker" were hailed by the Boston Globe as "adorable, focused and disciplined," handling serious pattern and partner work with "impressive aplomb." All children performing in "The Nutcracker" are students of the Boston Ballet School and coached by an experienced staff including Nissinen, Boston Ballet School's Director Margaret Tracey, Ballet Mistress Melanie Atkins and the school's world-renowned faculty. Students have an exciting schedule through the months of October, November and December, which includes rehearsals with company dancers, costume fittings, experiencing the unique, backstage atmosphere at the Boston Opera House and numerous performances accompanied by Boston Ballet Orchestra and enthusiastic audiences.

Boston Ballet School is the largest ballet school in North America, now operating studios in Boston, Newton, Marblehead and other programs throughout New England.

Nissinen commissioned Robert Perdziola to design the immaculate new sets and a total of nearly 350 new costumes. The previous production, which the company featured for 17 years, was set in 1835 during the Biedermeier period. Nissinen and Perdziola brought the new production back 20 years, to what many know as the "Jane Austen era."

For more information about "The Nutcracker," including events around Boston, blogs, videos and images of the production, visit [www.bostonballet.org](http://www.bostonballet.org).

## Mumbai Art Galleries Promoting Foreign Artists For Potential Market

MUMBAI, India (*India Express*) — In Mumbai Art Room, a small two-room space located in one of the Colaba bylanes, a month-long exhibition of Armenian-French video artist Melik Ohanian concluded last week. Nearby, Gallery Maskara has four contemporary Belgian artists showcasing their works in a month-long exhibition, the first-of-its-kind in the country.

Last week, Sakshi Gallery played host to a show by British artist Julian Opie, for the second time in two years, even as Galerie Mirchandani+Steinruecke's exhibited fines-ketch drawings of British artist Nicola Durvasulala. Jhaveri Contemporary gallery at Walkeshwar Road is currently displaying works of Pakistani artist Hamra Abbas for the first time in the country.

While international artists exhibiting in Mumbai is not entirely new, these recent instances reflect the fact that the city has witnessed a marked rise in the number of such shows. Clearly, Mumbai's galleries are now warming up to the works of artists from across the shores. "People are wearing western clothes and eating global cuisine. In the art world too, there is an attitudinal shift happening. People have started thinking, 'Why should my art be confined to my nationality?'" says Abhay Maskara, director of Gallery Maskara.

If Mumbai's increasingly global citizens are ready to look beyond Indian art, the galleries

are seeing it as an exercise to expand their repertoire. "It's like the way it was with films; after the DVD and Internet boom, the popularity of Iranian and Korean cinema, which we were not familiar with, soared," says Geetha Mehra, director of Sakshi Gallery. "Similarly," she says, "people want to look beyond the top 2030 Indian artists that we have, and foreign artists are a breath of fresh air." Her gallery has been host to a wide range of artists from Israel, Netherlands, Brazil, Japan and England. "It's a part of a long-term process," she says.

Ranjana Mirchandani, director of Galerie Mirchandani+Steinruecke agrees. "The footfall has substantially increased, not the market. But visitors are very enthusiastic that such exhibitions are taking place here. In the long term, we will see the emergence of a new generation of young Indian art collectors who will have a more global approach to collecting," she says. Maskara spells it out more clearly, "In spite of not yielding great immediate market value, these exhibitions act as exercises to familiarize the audience with such work. It's an ongoing dialogue, an association that will culminate a few years down the line."

According to both Maskara and Mehra, their second shows with artists such as Ruben Bellinkx and Max Streicher and Opie, respectively, showed a considerable leap in enthusiasm, interest and knowledge about the artist's works. "By the second show, the audience was far more familiar with the style and felt more associated," says Mehra.

One of the reasons behind the Mumbai art collectors' delayed awakening is the lack of institutional support. "Besides us, the government museums too need to develop a program to show international art and engage the public. The market depends on both institutional and private support," says Priya Jhaveri, co-director of Jhaveri Contemporary that specializes in showcasing works by artists who, though born abroad, are deeply affected by India in their art.

How do the artists view India as a space for their art? "Even though India is not exactly on an international artist's map, it is always an exciting prospect for them; it is probably India's exoticism and mystery that naturally attract them," says Susan Hapgood, director of Mumbai Art Room, a non-profit organization that has a half-Indian half-foreign program of shows.



Melik Ohanian





ARTS & LIVING

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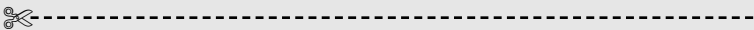
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# Teen Violin Virtuoso's Star Is Ascending

By Tom Vartabedian

BELMONT, Mass. — On the surface, Haig Aram Hovsepian is like most 13-year-olds. He enjoys video games and other electronic gadgets, YouTube, even beat-boxing, break dancing, swimming lessons and music.

What separates him from the pack is the violin, when it could very easily have been the saxophone, clarinet or the piano. He was equally adept at all four, as well as the Armenian recorder (*sh'vi*), before making his choice.

The *sh'vi*?

"I took lessons for two years with a great teacher who came here from Armenia," he recalls. "It was an opportunity to play our traditional music on an ethnic instrument. This experience created more interest in Armenian music which has now become an important part of my violin repertoire."

As for the sax, that medium gives him a jazz element which also complements the classical. He listens to jazz and improvises. Add it up and you have one boy with five instruments.

Anyone present at the State House last April for the Armenian Genocide commemoration would have seen a pre-teen stand before a packed house with his instrument in hand, performing like a true professional before an audience holding its applause.

On hand were state representatives and senators as well as members of Congress and other leaders. Friends. Family. Total strangers. And four Genocide survivors who appeared quite moved by it all.

In other words, he "nailed" it.

About his stellar performance that day, he had this to say:

"I was trusted to represent our cultural heritage in front of a very large audience of Armenians and non-Armenians with merely one piece — and it had to be done well. The sense of responsibility was overwhelming but I was inspired by the thought that this was a tribute to those who perished and those who survived. I felt proud to carry the torch of the past and celebrate the present."

Hovsepian has a dream, one that may have been far-fetched some years back but more realistic these days. He'd like to become a professional violinist and perform in the symphony. To reach that level, he'll continue playing at schools and nursing homes.

The ultimate, he feels, would be taking his instrument to Armenia and play before the majestic Mount Ararat.

"To paraphrase William Saroyan's words," he says, "we can always create a new Mount Ararat anywhere in the world so long as we keep up our hard work. Our nation has produced many great musicians and artists. I'm proud to be an apprentice, hoping to become one of them someday. All the sorrow and suffering our nation has witnessed reveals itself in music with more passion and depth."

In such a short time, he has built up an impressive resume. He's been studying violin since the age of 4. In 2009, he received his first competitive award at the Massachusetts Music Teachers' Association. On April 24,

2010 — Armenian Martyrs' Day — he won the Gold Medal at a classical music competition in Canada.

Two months later, he was honored again as winner of the Young Promise International Competition.

In addition to performing extensively at various community and charitable events, Haig has appeared as a soloist with the Belmont All-Town Elementary Chorus and participated in a Belmont Telethon to raise funds for the town's food pantry.

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

"I often listen to other violinists on YouTube," he reveals.



Haig Hovsepian is making quite a reputation these days on the violin.

"Two of my favorites are the old masters, Arthur Grumiaux, a Belgian, and the Polish-born Isaac Stern. When I play, I often feel like a different person than going to school or hanging out with friends. Sometimes, it relax-

es and excites me. Other times, I feel like I'm in the process of discovering something wonderful. In my 'violin' time, nothing is the same as 'real' time."

His early success has not come without a price. Hours of personal sacrifice and rehearsal have certainly proven advantageous. The private lessons and expense are on-going rituals.

Any free time after school is tied up with his music, whether it's the lessons or his school's "coolest jazz band around." Last year the ensemble won a platinum award at the Districts (better than gold).

He has a management team in place, led by his mom Ani, a talented keyboard artist-teacher, and dad Jirair, whose photography and video work carry their own merit. Last we heard, the youngster's calendar is rather crowded with dates.

On Saturday, December 8, he and his mother are presenting a mother-son concert for the Merrimack Valley community at St. Gregory Church in North Andover. It's all becoming fairly routine for the young star.

"My parents check the calendars for any possible conflicts and off we go," he says. "It's a great experience to play for various types of events and audiences. I learn a lot from that."

## Young Pianist's Dedication Puts Her on Path to Success

ISRAILIAN, from page 11

I really want something, I should go get it."

Israilian hopes to inspire young musicians to commit to their goals and remain optimistic. She adds more to the generic response of "try your hardest and dream big." She advises those seeking a career in music to "always practice."

After the practice there's always something good that comes out. ... If they work hard when they're young, when they're older they can look back and they'll live the life they always wanted."

In fact, she cites an anecdote from her own experience to prove how much she values practicing. While preparing for the Canadian Music Competition, Israilian, who was 12 at the time, began feeling pain in her hands from playing the big chords in Rachmaninoff's *Second Piano Concerto*. After a visit to the doctor, Israilian was forced to change her piece, with only two months left before the competition. During that time, Israilian practiced diligently.

"I was determined, I was motivated, and I got the piece, it was ready... I played it at the competition and I really liked my performance. That just proved that if I practice and if I set my mind to something, I could really get some good results. And anything is possible if you practice hard," she said.

A recent graduate of Ecole Internationale (high school) in Laval, Israilian is currently pursuing a double major in university. She studies music at the Conservatoire de Musique de Montreal under the guidance of Andre Laplante and business at Marianopolis — an odd combination indeed. Israilian is not interested solely



Alina Israilian

in the performance aspect of being a pianist.

She is curious about the "behind-the-scenes" portion of staging a concert, and believes a business degree will enable her to do her own marketing and managing. Although the business studies are usually completed in two years, Israilian has opted to spend three years on the program "so that I can focus more on music."

When she is not at the piano — she anticipates spending up to 5 hours a day practicing this year — Israilian enjoys traveling, hiking and reading. She windsurfs, too, when on vacation in a tropical island. On top of that, she plays another instrument — a vocal one. She sings in the Nor Dzaghig (New Flower) Armenian choir. Israilian has also been a member of the Garni Armenian dance group for the past five years.

For Israilian, the best part of being a pianist is playing both solo and with an orchestra. "When I play with the orchestra, I feel like I'm guiding this music and there are 40, 50 musicians following my lead... Playing solo, I get into my own bubble, my own world ... and make the best music I can. I just love it."

She only wishes that more people would appreciate the beauty of classical music. "I just find it too bad, you know. It's a great thing, classical music."

Israilian plans to participate in more competitions this coming year, including international ones. She hopes to have the opportunity to play at a concert with her younger sisters, who play the piano and violin.

In the meantime, Israilian is living by the wise words of her father. "I'm never going to be, say, 17 again. I have to take advantage of the time I have now. It's a great age; I can accomplish a lot."

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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Minorities in Egypt

By Edmond Y. Azadian

I am back in Cairo, Egypt, in this most turbulent of times. This is a city which I called home for almost a decade when I was invited to serve as the editor of the daily *Arev*, established in 1915 by its founding editor, Vahan Tekeyan, who is generally celebrated among Armenians worldwide as a poet.

My term as editor coincided with the Gamal Abdel Nasser era, when patriotic fervor was in abundance, balanced with the scarcity of commodities and food staples. At that time, contrary to outside adverse publicity, the government treated the Armenians and minorities with kid gloves, as long as our community observed a cool distance in its relations with Soviet Armenia. Visiting dignitaries, artists, clergy and writers were under vigilant scrutiny, but welcomed anyway.

Armenian churches, schools, cultural centers and newspapers were tolerated and well-protected, sometimes with that official “affection” bordering on a “bear-hug.”

Upper middle class Armenians suffered across the nation as a consequence of the Arab socialist experiment, which some people took erroneously as directed only at minorities.

In the aftermath of World War II, the Egyptian-Armenian community was 45,000-strong, only to be reduced to less than 5,000 today.

Armenian contributions to Egypt are one of the best-kept secrets of Egyptian history. During the construction and the opening of the Suez Canal, Nubar Pasha tried to secure the majority of the Canal shares for the Egyptians; that was considered a challenge to the British colonial authorities who were vying for the full control of the waterway.

Nubar Pasha also instituted a fairer legal system for Egyptian citizens by establishing mixed tribunals. Until that period, each foreign consulate ran its own court system and any foreign national who had a case against an Egyptian citizen would present his case to their respective consulate and it was not difficult to predict the verdict of that particular court.

There were other prominent Armenians who contributed significantly to the education, industry, agriculture and economy of Egypt.

Boghos Nubar Pasha, son of Nubar Pasha, was the director of the railway system and in 1906 took the initiative to found the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), whose real estate holdings and endowments today date back to that era.

One would be remiss not to refer to a very interesting comparison with Armenia: a communist revolution took place in Armenia and all the facilities built by Boghos Nubar Pasha were taken over and the compound which was named after his family, Nubarashen, was re-christened as Sovetashen. Independent Armenia restored the name, but ironically that compound is mostly known for an infamous jail nearby.

Similarly, a socialist revolution took place in Egypt but the name of Nubar Street in Cairo was kept as well as the agricultural region called Nubaria, which has kept its name.

This comparison demonstrates that the Armenians in Armenia tried to be the more Catholic than the Pope.

Today Egypt is undergoing another phase of its history, with the coming to power of Muslim Brotherhood. There is an unsettled air in the atmosphere. Hosni Mubarak ruled Egypt with an iron fist, at the same time providing security and stability. Today insecurity reigns and fluid political trends are rampant.

The Muslim Brothers’ leadership, which mostly inhabited the jails before, has returned to power with a vengeance. President Mohammed Morsi, who is considered a moderate by Middle Eastern standards, is trying to keep the balance between the secularists and the Salafists who are on the extremist right of the political spectrum. Both the Muslim Brothers and the Salafists are eager to rule the country under Sharia law, but their interpretations of that law differ widely.

Ever since I left Cairo, a number of magnificent mosques have been built with their minarets pointing to the sky, but unsure if they lead the believers to heaven or the Middle Ages. The veil and the chador – once ridiculed by Nasser himself – are common in Cairo. To find out the degree of fanaticism of any male believer one has only to measure the length of his beard; Salafists almost always wear a longer beard (most of the time without a mustache) and the Muslim Brothers shorter ones.

Images aside, President Morsi has taken his role very seriously. Following the abrogation of parliament by the Constitutional Court, he has decided to rule by decrees until a new constitution is adopted, touching off a firestorm of controversy. The legal system is paralyzed and the courts have no jurisdiction at this time. Society has been polarized. Tahrir Square has changed its complexion. This time around, the people who have taken to the streets are the judges, the intellectuals, the professionals and overall, the secularists.

Minorities have thrown in their lots with the secularists. The Muslim religion in Egypt and in the Middle East, for that matter, does not have the Christian equivalent in the West; it is a way of life, it is a political philosophy and an ideology. There is no dividing line between religious and lay leaders.

Under the previous regime, the Muslim Brothers provided social services to the poor for many years. They helped the underprivileged with food, water, shelter, schooling and clothes, and they made inroads in society on the grassroots level, as their leaders languished in jail cells. Today, they have shaken off their shackles and are now trying to force their sociopolitical philosophy upon the general populace. However, there is a world of difference between running a government and distributing charity without the prerequisites of statesmanship.

Not only the secularists but also a good segment of Islamists are alarmed by the political direction that the country is veering toward. But since the army and the Interior Ministry have taken a neutral stance, Morsi’s government is plowing ahead, as far as one can see.

The average man on the street believes that Europe and the US are behind the “Arab Spring” or the violent changes in the Middle Eastern countries, and consequently, they have been asking why Washington has let this change happen. Why did they support the Muslim Brothers’ ascension to power?

The answer is very simple. At the onset of the ascension to power by the Muslim Brothers, the US Secretary of State rushed to Cairo to take the pulse of the new leaders. Subsequently, she gave a green light upon being assured that Egypt’s peace treaty with Israel will remain untouched and that the new leaders will play the tune of the US in Middle Eastern policies.

After those guarantees, they were allowed to treat their people any way they liked and the West euphemistically called the game “democracy in progress.”

Mr. Morsi, in his turn, made good on his pledge by announcing in Tehran, during his first foreign trip, that President Assad of Syria must go, gleefully cheered by Washington and the EU. Egypt also continued its stronghold on the Rafah passage, to choke Palestinians in the gulag of Gaza, a favorite stand in the eyes of the Israeli government.

After Mr. Morsi brokered a cease-fire between Hamas and Israel in Gaza, the Hamas leadership switched allegiances from Tehran to Cairo, very much in line with the Western policy of isolating Iran in the region.

Therefore, Mr. Morsi earned an international license to chart his own domestic policy, undisturbed by outside interference and allegations of mismanagement.

To say that there is uncertainty in Egypt is an understatement; not only the civic institutions are under assault but the future of minorities is in limbo.

Unless a rapid slide towards Sharia is stopped, Egypt may become another fundamentalist country like Iran, serving as a counterweight to the latter, which adheres to the Shia sect of Islam. For a while, Turkey claimed the leadership of the Sunni branch in the Middle East and it looked as if an undercurrent of competition may be triggered between the two nations. However, for now, there seems to be a sharing of leadership, much to the long-term detriment of Armenia.

The 10-million strong Coptic community – the descendants of the indigenous Egyptians – has been reduced to an oppressed minority. The bombing of churches, which coincided with the rise of the Brothers, has intimidated that ethnic group, whose members all seem to be headed to the West. The recently-elected Coptic Pope Tawadros II has reflected that sentiment of desperation in his inaugural sermon, by stating that during his tenure, he will avoid being involved in politics.

Armenians have been reduced to a negligible minority. Their institutions have historically been well-funded as the community is overall wealthy, often with their children studying abroad. That trend also seems to indicate where the community is heading.

Incidentally, no other Armenian-Diasporan community, besides India, has similarly solid financial foundations, as the founders of Kalousdian School in 1854, Agha Garabed Kalusdian, bequeathed endowment funds and large holdings of real estate to perpetuate Armenian schools and the church. The community is more affluent than it can manage. Recently, the Kalousdian school, which boasted 850 students in the 1950s, lost most of its student population and joined the Nubarian School, to educate a student body of 145. The Boghosian School in Alexandria has 27 students. The Diocesan headquarters, the cultural clubs, newspaper offices have been maintained magnificently to cater to a dwindling population.

Is the Egyptian-Armenian community on its way to emulating the Armenian community of India?

We hope not. But, everything depends on the political furor of the country.

THE ARMENIAN  
Mirror-Spectator

Established 1932  
An ADL Publication

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The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is published weekly, except two weeks in July, by:

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472-1509  
Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

U.S.A.	\$80 a year
Canada	\$125 a year
Other Countries	\$190 a year

© 2011 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator  
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston, MA  
and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, P.O. Box 302, Watertown, MA 02471-0302

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

# Karabagh War Comes to Hollywood, Courtesy of Azerbaijan

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Karabagh (Artsakh) should not give free license to anyone to make racist and insulting statements about people on the other side of the border. Even under war conditions, there are civilized norms of behavior.

Since these two neighboring countries are in the midst of delicate negotiations to resolve their thorny conflict, it is highly irresponsible to pour oil on the fire by inciting inter-ethnic and inter-religious hatred, and inflaming pent up emotions. While some Armenians may engage in periodic emotional outbursts, Azerbaijan's leaders have exacerbated the conflict by making racist statements and anti-Armenian threats into state policy.

Such despicable behavior has caused the Artsakh conflict to spill over into Hungary (by using an axe,) Mexico (by offering a \$5 million bounty for Heydar Aliyev's statue with an anti-Armenian plaque in a park) and many other countries around the world, thousands of miles away from the actual theater of conflict.

The Azeris have now decided to fight the Artsakh war in Hollywood, after Armenia officially submitted to the Academy Awards an innocuous film titled "If Only Everyone," for the category of Best Foreign Film. The movie's American premiere was held last Saturday at the ARPA International Film Festival in Hollywood.

The Armenian movie depicts the story of a young Russian girl whose father was killed during the Artsakh war. Twenty years later, she comes to Armenia hoping that the commander of her father's military unit would help locate his unmarked grave. After a lengthy search, the young girl discovers that her father's grave lies on the other side of the border, inside Azerbaijan. She and the Armenian commander cross the frontline surreptitiously in the cover of darkness, and while planting a birch tree by her father's grave, are confronted by an armed Azeri shepherd who threatens to shoot them. Upon learning that the girl's father is buried there, the Azeri lets them go safely after telling them with a heavy heart, that his 10-year-old son had also died during the war after stepping on a landmine. The Azeri shepherd tells that he is unable to visit his son's grave because it is located inside Artsakh. The movie ends on a high note with a wonderful gesture, when the Russian girl and her Armenian companions plant another tree, this time next to the young Azeri boy's grave.

Even though the movie neither contains anti-Azeri rhetoric nor depicts any scenes of the Karabagh war, Azerbaijani journalists have harshly attacked it without having seen a single clip. Apparently, the fact that it was an Armenian film was enough reason for them to try and undermine its submission to the Academy Awards! The Azeri media falsely labeled the movie as a "propaganda film" and an example of "the information war unleashed by Armenia against Azerbaijan."

To make matters worse, Ali Hajizade, an Azeri journalist, attacked Teni Melidonian, the publicist for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, for simply being of Armenian heritage. As part of her official duties, she had issued a press release that named all 71 foreign countries that had submitted movies for the Foreign Language Film category, including Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey.

It is important for Azeris to understand that such racist remarks have no place in civilized society. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan needs to be resolved through peaceful negotiations, not by hurling xenophobic insults.

Someday, when peace returns to the region, Armenians and Azeris will have to live side by side, not as enemies, but as neighbors and friends. Azeris who are engaged in sowing seeds of hatred and racism are not only besmirching their own reputation, but unnecessarily aggravating and prolonging the antagonism between the two peoples.

Fortunately, Armenians have refrained from retaliating against the film submitted by Azerbaijan to the Oscars. Political feuds should not be converted into cultural wars or personal vendettas. May the best movie win regardless of whether it is produced by an Armenian, an Azeri or a Turk. The Academy will announce the short list of nine films in the Foreign Language Film category on December 20, 2012, the five finalists on January 10, 2013, and the Oscar winner on February 24, 2013.

"If Only Everyone" is co-produced by Tereza Varzhapetyan and award winning actor and director Michael Poghosyan, who plays the role of the retired Armenian commander. Natalia Belyauskene is the director and Ekaterina Shitova plays the role of the young Russian girl. The movie was screened in Yerevan, Moscow, Paris, Bucharest and Hollywood, and has won several awards at international film festivals.

# Saving the Syria Story, with Technology at Our Side

Farida Beydoun and her three children live off food hand-outs in a camp for displaced Syrians, in the border town of Bab al Salam. They fled their home in Aleppo and now live in

By Lara Setrakian

a tiny tent with no warm blankets, no shoes on her children's feet. There's a stench of sewage over the camp, as a child defecates on the ground nearby.

"Journalists come here and take photos and leave without helping us. You take pictures and then what? If we don't die because of the war, we will die because of the filth," she told us.

She's right. As journalists we don't help, not enough, because we're not telling her story, Syria's story, in ways our audience can understand.

We float in and out of the issue, our attention pulled in so many directions. That's no one's fault: as a foreign correspondent I have to chase the latest breaking crisis; as a viewer, you follow the headlines that flow. But as a result we never really get a deeper understanding of a what's going on. Its victims, like Farida Beydoun, get forgotten.

I love what I do in journalism, covering the world on radio and television. But when I look at the system as a whole, how all of the networks and newspapers cover foreign news for an American audience, I know we can do much, much better. We are failing the Syria story and complex issues like it.

For the sake of the Syria story, for women like Farida Beydoun, I've pressed pause on my TV career and leaned into technology. I decided to build Syria Deeply, a single-story website that launches today (December 3), using the best digital tools we could find to convey the story in a more complete way. Our goal is to bridge journalism and technology, education and foreign policy, by reshaping the way we create and deliver the story.

Syria Deeply was created to share the best of what we know, in ways that technology now makes possible. I cracked open my rolodex, rounded up my favorite experts and started taking a much more open approach to my craft. When I have an interview with a great mind on Syria, I do it over Google+ for all to see. As I hear from Syrian journalists and bloggers, I take the time to elevate their voices, giving my American audience greater access their perspectives.

As I started building Syria Deeply, wonderful friends stepped forward to help – members of the Middle East press pool who all believe it's time to try something new. The venerable Deborah Amos of NPR agreed to serve as our advisor. Technology partners like Prezi, Soundcloud and Google+ all stepped up to help us deliver new ways to serve our audience with information.

Along the way, I shed my old media skin and took on a tech startup mentality: just build and iterate. Accept that there will be kinks and flaws, a hair or two out of place – instead of always expecting to live life camera-ready. Be flexible and let the platform evolve. The Syria Deeply you see today will change with new ideas and user feedback, as we learn what works in optimizing foreign news for digital delivery.

The best part of what we're doing: we are connecting people on both sides of the story. We know that Americans care about what's happening in Syria. Teachers like Andrew Beiter at Springville Middle School are working with us to turn the Syria story into a social studies curriculum, bridging the newsroom and the classroom. We're helping college students at Yale, Stanford, the University of Michigan and UC Long Beach as they launch a movement called Caravan Aid, promoting awareness and refugee relief for UNHCR.

They all fit into a vision of America that I believe in and have dedicated myself to serve. The old, cynical narrative that Americans aren't interested in foreign news just isn't true. The Pew Research Center shows a growing number of Americans want more foreign news coverage and that their number-one obstacle is a lack of background information. As we properly fuse new media and traditional journalism, that becomes an easy problem to fix.

Journalists alone can't feed the Beydoun family, or put shoes on their children's feet. But we enable you to do that – once we empower you with information, instead of just bombarding you with content. If we change how people see the world, we can change the world, because we all act on our perceptions of reality, our mental fact file of myths and misconceptions. We can make the world a much better place, in a quantum leap, if we can achieve a breakthrough in how we explain it.

It's a lofty goal, but consider Syria Deeply the open source R&D. What we learn and hone we hope to apply to a range of global issues: think Iran Deeply, Pakistan Deeply, Drug War Deeply, Debt Crisis Deeply. If we do that, we can get a whole lot smarter, together. Then the good we all have in us will have better information to go on, shrinking wicked problems down to size.

That's the hope and the jet fuel that's driving us at Syria Deeply. It's a creative news experiment and I sincerely hope you'll join us for the ride.

(Lara Setrakian is a foreign correspondent and founder of Syria Deeply. She has covered the Middle East for more than five years, filing for ABC News, Bloomberg Television, *Monocle Magazine* and the *International Herald Tribune*. She splits her time between New York and Dubai and lives on Twitter as @lara. This commentary originally appeared in the Huffington Post on Monday, December 3.)

# A Tale of Two Christmas Trees

By Tom Vartabedian

When is a Christmas tree not a Christmas tree? When the naysayers of our society have a problem with the "word" Christmas and want to call it a holiday tree.

Somehow, it doesn't seem to fit. When people want to wish me a "happy holiday," I cringe, then retort, "You mean Christmas, don't you?" And I add a little chagrin to their grin.

We grew up in a modest neighborhood as children. No matter how tight our budget was, my immigrant parents always made sure we put Christ into Christmas. Dad always managed to erect the biggest tree he could find.

Because he worked seven days a week in his luncheonette, many times the tree didn't go up until Christmas Eve. I suspect he combed the lots of Somerville in that final hour, looking for the biggest deal he could find for his big tree.

As I recall one Christmas, he had difficulty finding a commercial tree. Off into the woods he roamed to cut down a balsam. Good thing the neighbors didn't catch him or he would have had some explaining to do.

I was cut from the same mold. For years, we ventured in and out of the many tree lots of my city, looking for the perfect tree. Being a bad judge of character and size, the lucky tree which found our home was usually higher than our ceiling.

I was about to take a cutter to it when one of my kids let out a yelp.

"Dad, how would you like your head cut off?" the child reminded me. "Can't we just keep it long?"

And we did. A heavy angel on top caused it to droop like an arch. Indeed, it was our very own archangel. As the years progressed, we tagged and cut our own at a tree farm, replete with Santa, hot chocolate and all the magic that surrounded the search.

Big was always beautiful with me. My wife was a little more sedate when it came to the tree. She found "small" to be more practical. Easier to decorate with fewer needles covering the rug. I remember one year, because we were so late, all that was left of our tree were the barren branches. The needles were completely detached.

It was rather sad seeing something so stately standing there with bare limbs and just a few bits of tinsel clinging to it. It was still the tree of life.

see CHRISTMAS, page 16



