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NEWS IN BRIEF

France Senate To Vote on Genocide Bill By End of January

Turkey Freezes All Political Relations with France over Genocide Row

PARIS (*Guardian*, Combined Sources) – France is set to vote by the end of January on a bill that would make it illegal to deny that the 1915 mass killing of Armenians by Ottoman Turks amounted to genocide, parliamentary and government sources said on Wednesday.

Lawmakers in France's National Assembly – the lower house of parliament – voted overwhelmingly in favor of a draft law outlawing genocide denial in December.

Israeli Knesset Discusses Armenian Genocide Bill

TEL AVIV (*Jerusalem Post*) – In a sign the government still hopes to salvage ties with Turkey, National Security Council head Yaakov Amidror tried unsuccessfully on Monday to stop the Knesset Education Committee from discussing whether the mass killings of Armenians by Turks over a century ago should be recognized as genocide.

Amidror, speaking Monday night to a gathering of the heads of Israel's diplomatic missions abroad, confirmed he tried to convince the committee not to discuss the issue, saying this is the time to try and "reduce tensions with Turkey, not pour more oil on the fire."

Amidror stressed the importance of a relationship with Turkey if possible, though he expressed skepticism – because of internal changes inside Turkey – of returning to the warmth of the relationship of five or 10 years ago. Nevertheless, he said Israel needed to continue trying to see whether it wasn't possible to create a "positive trajectory" in the relationship.

see KNESSET, page 4



Members of a Turkish union hold Turkish and Algerian flags as they protest against France outside the French Embassy in Ankara.

In response, Turkey has frozen relations with France, recalling its ambassador and suspending all economic, political and military meetings.

The furious Turkish reaction to Paris's parliamentary vote marked an unprecedented low between the NATO partners.

Erdogan cancelled permission for French military planes to land and warships to

dock in Turkey, annulled all joint military exercises, recalled the Turkish ambassador to France for consultations and said he would decide case by case whether to let the French military use Turkish airspace.

He said this was just the start and "gradually" but "decisively" other retaliation measures would be taken against France. see VOTE, page 3

US Ambassador to Azerbaijan Leaving Post

By Richard Solash

BAKU (RFE/RL) – Matthew Bryza, the US ambassador to Azerbaijan, is heading back to Washington in the wake of the US Senate's decision to go into recess without voting on his appointment, which has been opposed by Armenian-American groups.



Matthew Bryza

Bryza's departure from Baku comes one year after US President Barack

Obama bypassed lawmakers and temporarily installed him in the post in a recess appointment.

Obama's move overruled an attempt by two senators, Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Robert Menendez (D-NJ), to block Bryza's confirmation. But the appointment was only valid for the current session of see BRYZA, PAGE 20

Campaign 2012: A Look Through The Armenian-American Lens

By Taniel Koushakjian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WASHINGTON – We are now less than a year away from the 2012 elections and the campaign trail is already heating up. The race for the White House has catapulted various GOP candidates to the top, only to see them tumble from its peak. There have been historic debate gaffes, bold policy proposals and unorthodox candidates trying to distinguish themselves from each other, all in an effort to be the anti-Romney, the presumptive GOP nominee. But this election season is going to be unlike any other. Fresh campaign tactics, new technologies, redistricting and the latest player in the political arena, the SuperPAC, are all poised to dramatically change the way Americans vote in 2012. And these factors will impact see CAMPAIGN, page 20



YEREVAN (Photolure Photo) – Republic Square took on a festive look in celebration of New Year's.

Church Seeks Return Of Istanbul Orphanage

ISTANBUL (hetq) – According to *Hurriyet*, Rev. Krikor Agabaloglu of the Gedikpasha Armenian Protestant Church has filed a formal application with Turkey's Foundations General Directorate for the return of an Armenian orphanage in the Tuzla district that had been expropriated in the wake of Turkey's 1980 military coup.

The late Hrant Dink also received an education at the orphanage and contributed to its construction with his brothers.

No reasons were ever provided as to why the orphanage had been expropriated, Agabaloglu said.

Clergymen Clash at Birthplace of Jesus

BETHLEHEM (AP) – A brawl erupted between clergymen during in an annual cleaning ritual at the church built at Jesus' traditional birthplace.

Armenian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox clergymen screamed at each other and beat each other with broomsticks during Wednesday, January 4's cleanup inside the Church of the Nativity in the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

They were tidying up the church ahead of Orthodox Christmas celebrations in early January. The two denominations each control sections of the church and fiercely guard their turf. The violence broke out when the sides accused each other of crossing into each other's territory. Palestinian security forces broke up the melee.

Two Armenians Named As Righteous

JERUSALEM (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Georges Dilsizian and his son, Andre Gustave Dilsizian, have been selected as being Righteous among the Nations, bringing the total number of recognized Armenian rescuers of victims of the Holocaust up to 21. The official ceremony took place on December 28, 2011, at the Yad Vashem Museum, in Jerusalem.

Georges Dilsizian fled to France at the end of the 19th century, following the persecution of Armenians in Turkey. Andre Gustave, born in France, married a Jewish woman, whose family moved to France from Turkey. During the German occupation of France, the Dilsizians gave shelter to her relatives.

According to the International Raul Wallenberg Special Research Committee on Armenian Rescuers, "the actual number of Armenians who were involved in life-saving actions during the Holocaust is impressive, well beyond the 21 Armenians who have been officially recognized...Further research will certainly unveil unknown stories of heroism."

Georges Dilsizian died in 1946; Andre Gustave in 1971.

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A Look Back At 2011

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenia to Move One Time Zone Closer to Moscow and Europe

YEREVAN (Arminfo) – In the next two years, Armenia will move one time zone closer to Moscow and Europe, Armenia's Economy Minister Tigran Davtyan said during a press-conference last Tuesday.

"We have consulted with experts and have decided to move one time zone westward. This shift will be good for people, business and tourism," the minister said.

Heritage Faction Leader Notes Increase in Regional Importance

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Heritage party's parliamentary leader believes Armenia's regional importance over the past year to have increased regardless, or rather, in spite of the authorities' actions.

At a news conference in Yerevan, Stepan Safarian cited Iran as well as Turkey-related foreign policy behind the increase of the country's regional importance.

Dwelling on Armenian-Turkish protocols, Safarian reiterated the necessity for Yerevan to withdraw its signature.

The politician also expressed skepticism over the possibility for Madrid Principles to help resolve the Karabagh issue, believing the document to risk sparking a new conflict.

Mashtots, Shirakatsi's, Sayat Nova Anniversaries Noted by UNESCO's

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Programs presented by Armenia for the 2012 anniversary events have been approved at the 36th UNESCO General Conference. Culture Ministry press office reported that events dedicated to the 1,650th birth anniversary of Mesrop Mashtots, 300th birth anniversary of Sayat Nova, 500th anniversary of Armenian typography and 1,400th birth anniversary of Anania Shirakatsi were presented, and all have been approved.

Seismologist Opposes Plan to Build Persian Tower in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Arka) – An Armenian seismologist spoke this week against plans to build the so-called Persian Tower in downtown designed as a 50-story hotel.

Vladimir Balasanian, an independent seismologist, speaking at a news conference, said he and his colleagues are categorically against the construction of the hotel in Yerevan, particularly, and in Armenia in general because a strong earthquake would collapse it and destroy all nearby structures.

Balasanian said the hotel is supposed to be built by Iranians who are unaware of Armenia's seismic risks. Mkrtych Miansian, the head of the Union of Armenian Architects, also spoke against this plan urging the government to take action against the plan.

The tower is supposed to be constructed on a land plot between Moskva cinema house and the building of the Union of Artists of Armenia. The land plot formerly belonged to the Union of Artists, but since the '90s has been resold several times and now is owned by an Iranian company Tidas International that resumes form time to time the talk about plans to build the hotel.

Earlier the Union of Architects said it was ready to ask President Serge Sargisian and the National Assembly to block the decision, as well as initiate a public debate on this issue. Miansian expressed hope that the municipality of Yerevan will reconsider the previously issued permit and will prohibit the construction of the Persian Tower.

Sargisian Reassures Nation on 2012 Polls

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – President Serge Sargisian has assured Armenians that he does not regard forthcoming parliamentary elections primarily as a means of clinging to power and said he needs popular support for their proper conduct.

"As you know, next year is also a year of the elections to the National Assembly," Sargisian said in his New Year's address to the nation aired by Armenian television. "On many instances, elections have been perceived – I repeat, perceived – only as a means of grabbing or retaining power. It is high time to realize that there are much more eminent goals."

"I have made my personal decision long ago: to do my best to get rid of those flawed stereotypes, to enroot principles of truly national and truly

state approaches in the political life. I make no secret that to do that I have needed help and I still need help," he said.

Sargisian and other senior



President Serge Sargisian inspected the armed forces on New Year's Day.

Armenian Inflation Down in 2011

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Consumer price inflation in Armenia has fallen below the maximum target rate of 5.5 percent that was set by the authorities for 2011, according to the latest official data released on Friday.

The National Statistical Service (NSS) said year-on-year inflation eased to 4.7 percent this month, down from 9.4 percent reported in December 2010. It thus reached its lowest level since 2005.

The figure stood at 8.5 percent as recently as in June 2011, not least because of increased international prices of wheat and other imported foodstuffs. Lingering effects of a 2010 slump in domestic agricultural production, which caused unusually bad weather, were also a major factor.

The Armenian agricultural sector has performed much better this year. This translated into a food price deflation in the summer, which in turn helped to

suppress consumer price increases in the second half of the year.

The NSS data shows that year-on-year inflation eased further in December even though food prices were up by an average of 4.8 percent from the November level. The prices of vegetables alone jumped by 36 percent mainly because of seasonal factors.

The second-half fall in the consumer price index came amid accelerating economic growth. According to the NSS, Armenia's Gross Domestic Product rose by 6.5 percent in the third quarter of 2011, putting the government on track to meet its full-year growth target of 4.6 percent.

Responding to weakening inflationary pressures, the Armenian Central Bank cut its refinancing rate by 0.5 percentage points to 8 percent in September. It raised the benchmark rate by a total of 1.25 percentage points earlier this year.

Ruling Party to Curb 'Oligarch' Presence in Next Parliament

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – President Serge Sargisian's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) will considerably reduce the number of wealthy businesspeople representing it in the country's parliament, a senior lawmaker said on Friday.

Gagik Minasian predicted that such individuals will not be on the HHK's list of candidates who will contest the May 2012 parliamentary elections under the system of proportional representation. Minasian pointed to Sargisian's recent pledge to separate government and business.

"There is no [formal] decision, but there is public demand and there is the position of the president of the republic," he said. "And I think this will be formalized in the decisions of our party's leadership bodies. I suppose that big entrepreneurs will have to cede their places on the proportional representation lists to more politically oriented figures."

He continued, "In this regard, I believe that the model accepted in civilized Western countries should be replicated by us," added the chairman of the

Armenian parliament committee on finance and budgetary affairs.

Wealthy individuals make up a large proportion of the HHK's parliamentary faction, the largest in the current National Assembly. The Armenian media has for months been rife with speculation that Sargisian wants to replace many of them by more educated but equally loyal figures.

The president gave more weight to this speculation in early November when he stated that "business must be consistently separated from the state system and the authority." This, he said, is essential for a radical "transformation" of Armenia.

"The merger of business and politics never leads to anything good," Minasian said, echoing statements by opposition politicians and other government critics.

Only 90 of the 131 seats in the National Assembly are due to be up for grabs on the party-list basis. The remaining seats will be contested by individual candidates in 41 nationwide constituencies.

Armenian officials pledged to prevent serious fraud in the May 2012 elections throughout 2011. They said that a set of amendments to the Electoral Code approved by parliament in May 2011 would serve that purpose.

Armenia's leading opposition forces cast doubt on the sincerity of these pledges. They have challenged the authorities to prove their commitment to free and fair elections by enacting more radical changes in the Electoral Code. Those include the holding of parliamentary elections on a solely party-list basis and mandatory inking of voters' fingers.

Sargisian's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) ruled out further amendments in the election law late last month, however. HHK representatives alleged ulterior motives behind the opposition demands.

Sargisian himself scoffed in late November at a long list of anti-fraud measures that were proposed to him by opposition leader Raffi Hovannisian. He said Hovannisian is only seeking to undermine what he described as an ongoing process of Armenia's democratization. The Armenian authorities will therefore ignore the opposition's "venom" and "vicious goal," he added.

Observatory to Host Presentation of UNESCO-Registered Discovery

YEREVAN (news.am) – On December 19, Armenia's Byurakan Observatory will become the venue for the presentation of Armenian astronomer Beniamin Margaryan's discovery, which is registered in UNESCO Memory of the World International Register and the presentation of UNESCO's respective certificate.

Afterwards, the 2011 scientific journalism awards, bestowed by the Armenian Astronomical Society (ArAS) and the Oxford Armenian Society, will be presented.

In addition, ArAS will hold its annual conference. And after that the Annual Award for the Best Scientific Work, ArAS Young Astronomers' Annual Award and the Galileo International Teachers' Program certificates, will be presented.



INTERNATIONAL

France to Vote On Genocide Bill

VOTE, from page 1

He warned of heavy diplomatic "wounds" that would be "difficult to heal."

A majority of the 50 members of parliament present in France's lower chamber approved the bill which would make denying any genocide – but implicitly the Armenian Genocide – a criminal offence punishable by a one-year prison sentence and a fine of 45,000 euros (\$60,000). The bill was put forward by a member of parliament from Sarkozy's rightwing Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) party, but the issue was supported by Socialists.

"This is politics based on racism, discrimination and xenophobia. This is using Turkophobia and Islamophobia to gain votes, it raises concerns regarding these issues not only in France but all over Europe," Erdogan said.

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé said he didn't want "our Turkish friends" to "overreact." Earlier, trying to smooth the row with Turkey, he dismissed the bill as "useless and counter-productive." He said Turkey, "a proud nation," should work on its issues of history and memory, but threatening French criminal sanctions was not the right way to make them do it.

Strains have plagued the relationship between Paris and Ankara in recent years, in large part because Sarkozy opposes Turkey's bid to join the European Union. The bill reached the French parliament after Sarkozy visited Armenia in October and urged Turkey, "a great country" to "honor itself by revisiting its history like other countries in the world have done."

Under Sarkozy, who opposes Turkish entry to the European Union, relations between Paris and Ankara have been difficult. But the NATO allies had been working together on key issues such as the Syria uprising. Erdogan said Turkey was now "suspending all kinds of political consultations with France."

A Turkish official indicated the freeze would not affect the country's membership of NATO, and that the withdrawal of military co-operation would be at a bilateral level.

But the Turkish premier called the legislation's approval "unjust and unfortunate," adding, "There is no genocide in our history, we do not accept it."

In addition, Turkey's prime minister has accused France of having commit-



French Member of Parliament Valery Boyer (Photo: Reuters)

ted genocide during its colonial occupation of Algeria in the latest round of the worst diplomatic row between the two NATO allies in more than a century.

Erdogan said that about 15 percent of the Algerian population was massacred during the French occupation from 1945 to 1962. "They were mercilessly martyred. If Sarkozy doesn't know there was a genocide, he can ask his father, Pal Sarkozy ... who was a legionnaire in Algeria in the 1940s. I'm sure he has a lot to tell his son about the massacres committed by the French in Algeria."

Pal Sarkozy told French TV: "I was never in Algeria. I didn't get further than Marseille, I was in the [foreign] legion for four months."

The main author of a French bill criminalizing the denial of the Armenian Genocide claimed to have received death threats after her website was apparently hacked by angry Turkish nationalists on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the leader of the Socialist majority in the French Senate reportedly demanded that Sarkozy's government submit the bill to the upper house of parliament "as soon as possible."

Valerie Boyer, a deputy from Sarkozy's Union for the Popular

Movement (UMP) party, was the main sponsor of the measure approved by the National Assembly and strongly condemned by the Turkish government late last week.

Boyer told the BFMTV station that she, her children and parents have received "extremely grave" threats since then. "It's totally paradoxical to be the author and the rapporteur of a text which speaks of human rights, human dignity, recognition and protection of the weak, and legislate under threat, be threatened by a foreign state and then be subjected to extremely grave personal threats," she said.

Boyer added that she will lodge a "complaint" with relevant French authorities but is undaunted by the threats. "This process can only strengthen us in both our beliefs and our resolve," she said.

An estimated 500,000 Armenians live in France, and many have pressed to raise the legal statute regarding the massacres to the same level as the Holocaust by punishing the denial of genocide.

(Reuters, Radio Free Europe and the Associated Press contributed to this report.)

Dink Lawyers Demand Details of Phone Records

ISTANBUL (armradio.am) – During the 23rd court hearing of slain Armenian journalist Hrant Dink case, one of the lawyers of the Dink family said the phone conversations that Telecommunications Directorate (TIB) provided to the court do not include all the records from the area.

Suspect Yasin Hayal is under pressure not to disclose significant information, said Fethiye Cetin, one of the lawyers representing the family of Hrant Dink, a Turkish-Armenian journalist assassinated in 2007.

"When we consider the four-year-long trial process, it seems apparent we have not made any progress, even though all the guilty parties are manifest," Cetin told the Hurriyet Daily News.

The 23rd hearing of the Dink trial began Tuesday, December 27, two hours late, due to the delayed arrival of suspects Hayal and Erhan Tuncel. The hearing yielded no results, however, and the case is still stuck in a deadlock.

Cetin also said they had met with Bahattin Hayal, suspect Yasin Hayal's

father, who had claimed to be in possession of important information pertinent to the case. But he divulged nothing the prosecution did not already know about, she said.

Meanwhile, a group of 200 people gathered in Istanbul's Besiktas district and marched toward the Istanbul's Court for Serious Crimes in protest of the apparent lack of progress in the case.

Demonstrators included Hrant Dink's wife, Rakel, and his brother Orhan Dink, as well as Sezgin Tanrikulu, the deputy leader of the opposition People's Republican Party (CHP), Levent Tuzel, an Istanbul deputy of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), and other high-profile figures.

"[Phone] records from the Telecommunications Directorate (TIB) dominated the public's attention throughout this one year, and especially since May. TIB records were of course important, but it should not be forgotten we are talking about thousands of records. The truly important thing, we believe, was the silence of those caught

on camera footage on the day of the murder," Cetin said.

The Dink family's lawyers also raised an objection to the trial of the suspects in the Black Sea province of Trabzon solely on the charge of "dereliction of duty," according to the Dogan news agency.

"These men have solely been tried on the charge of dereliction of duty, whereas they are partners in manslaughter through dereliction," prosecution lawyer Bahri Belen said in relation to claims gendarmerie commanders Ali Oz and Metin Yildiz had been notified about the murder six months earlier by suspect Coskun Igci, Yasin Hayal's brother-in-law.

The Dink family's lawyers had prepared a 200-page file connecting the history of the Armenian issue with the murder and read the document's first half during the previous hearing.

The Dink family's lawyers also argued in favor of merging the two separate case files in Istanbul and the Black Sea province of Samsun, the *Hurriyet Daily News* reports.

International News

Turkish Air Strike Kills More Than 30 Iraq Border

ISTANBUL (Bianet) – Turkish military aircraft have killed more than 30 civilians after mistaking them for Kurdish rebels in the southeastern district of Uludere, Sirnak near the border with Iraq.

Drones and thermal cameras identified a group of people heading for the border last night. F-16 planes took off and struck the group with missiles. As dawn broke, it turned out that the group was not PKK members but villagers who were trying to smuggle cheap gasoline over the border. Most of them are reported to be living in the village of Ortasu.

"The incident took place within Turkish borders, in a place nearby the village," Uludere Mayor Fehmi Yaman said. He had reported to the region immediately last night.

"These villagers were buying materials from Iraq and bringing them back to Turkey. When they were not allowed to enter the village, they returned back to Iraq. At this point the war planes attacked."

According to the newspaper *Milliyet*, the governor of Sirnak said more than 20 were found dead. A local newspaper reported that there are three wounded at Sirnak State Hospital but no one is allowed to visit.

Greece Jails Abbot in Mount Athos Fraud Case

MACEDONIA, Greece (BBC) – The abbot of the Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos in Greece has been jailed pending trial for alleged fraud and embezzlement.

Abbot Ephraim, 56, is accused of arranging land swaps between Vatopedi and the state, which are thought to have cost the government millions of euros.

The abbot, now being held in Korydallos prison in Athens, denies wrongdoing. His arrest has triggered protests.

The property scandal contributed to the conservative government's fall in 2009.

Greek Orthodox monks rallied outside the prison in support of Abbot Ephraim on Wednesday.

Russia's Foreign Ministry and the Russian Orthodox Church also criticized the imprisonment of Abbot Ephraim. No trial date has been set yet.

Vatopedi is part of the ancient Mount Athos monastic community that has been visited by Britain's Prince Charles and Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

The deal saw valuable state land traded for less valuable land held by Vatopedi. It is said to have cost the state some 100 million euros (£83m).

Iran, Armenia Mulling Free Trade Agreement

TEHRAN (*Tehran Times*) – To boost their economic and trade ties Iran and Armenia are preparing the ground for signing a free trade agreement, Iran's Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Salehi says.

The move toward a free trade agreement comes as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his entourage visited Yerevan last Friday.

Salehi described Iran-Armenia ties as "very special" and said, "The political relationship between Iran and Armenia is at its best condition."

The foreign minister added that "Armenia is an important neighbor for Iran and the relations between the two countries after (Armenia's) independence have improved deeply."

Salehi also said, during the Friday visit to Yerevan, Ahmadinejad insisted that the annual trade between Iran and Armenia reach \$1 billion annually.

Ahmadinejad and President Serge Sargsian signed five agreements during the visit: building and operating hydroelectric power plants on Aras River, which runs along the two countries' border; cooperation between national standards institutes of the two sides; cooperation in the social welfare sector and cooperation in the field of environment protection were among the agreements.



Turkey Detains Dozens of Pro-Kurdish Activists

ISTANBUL (*New York Times*) – The police detained at least 38 people, many of them journalists, in dawn raids across Turkey last week as part of an investigation into a network accused of being the political wing of an outlawed Kurdish separatist rebel group.

The operation, in Istanbul, Izmir, Diyarbakir and four other cities, followed the arrests of hundreds of pro-Kurdish political activists, including elected mayors and leading academics, suspected of having links to the separatist group, the Kurdistan Workers Party. The group, known as the PKK, has been conducting an armed struggle for autonomy in the southeast that has claimed more than 40,000 lives since 1984.

Critics question the government's true motives since those arrested have included prominent journalists, intellectuals and academics who have expressed general support for the rights of Kurds, a long-oppressed minority here. The government's new spate of arrests come amid concerns that the United States' withdrawal from Iraq could create a security vacuum that could destabilize the region and embolden the Kurdish rebels, who carry out attacks on Turkey from their bases in the Iraqi north.

Turkish officials said that Ankara's strong stance against the government of President Bashar al-Assad of Syria and its crackdown against protesters was also stoking fears that Damascus – backed by its ally Iran – could allow the PKK to launch attacks against Turkey from Syrian territory.

Turkey already has some 67 reporters in jail, according to the European Commission, an extraordinary number. Turkey says they are not in jail for their journalism. Human rights groups have criticized the government of abusing its power by using the country's security apparatus to jail those who dare to challenge its policies.

By Sebnem Arsu and Dan Bilefsky

Initial reports indicated that the arrests focused not only on pro-Kurdish media figures but also those from mainstream media that occasionally work with them.

On Tuesday, several hundred demonstrators gathered in the center of Istanbul, holding signs saying "Freedom for Journalists" and "We Are All Kurds."

Hasip Kaplan, deputy chairman of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, called the arrests an unlawful clampdown by the ruling Justice and Development Party against government opponents. "These operations are neither legal nor lawful," he said. "They are entirely political and lack any legitimacy whatsoever."

Johann Bihl of Reporters Without Borders, an advocacy group based in Paris, said in a statement that "the Kurdish issue will not be solved by attempts to suppress dissident views in the name of combating terrorism."

"The authorities must stop trying to criminalize journalism, including politically committed journalism," Bihl said.

The government has made a range of moves to improve relations with Kurds, including starting a Kurdish public television channel and introducing private Kurdish language courses. But many Kurdish activists say they will not be satisfied without a new constitution to enshrine minority rights for the nearly 15 million Kurds living in Turkey.

In November, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan apologized for the killing of scores of Kurds at the end of 1930s. Erdogan's apology referred to a previously classified state document that certified that 13,800 Kurds were killed in air and land strikes in the eastern province of Dersim – or Tunceli as the

town was later renamed – from 1936 to 1939.

The arrests Tuesday included 25 people in Istanbul, among them Mustafa Ozer, a photographer working for Agence France-Presse. The French news agency's office in Ankara said his house had been raided and he had been taken away by police. More than 10 journalists from the pro-Kurdish Dicle news agency were also arrested, state-run Anatolian news agency said. A lawyer for Dicle told the Associated Press that police had entered the agency's offices and were copying documents and hard drives.

In Diyarbakir, the capital of Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast, the police detained at least six people and raided 10

houses and offices belonging to Dicle staff, officials said. More than 150 pro-Kurdish activists remain in jail facing charges of collaborating with the PKK in an alternative state structure at odds with the central Turkish government. Many are on trial in Diyarbakir, where a large courtroom has been specially built.

They are mostly members of the Union of Kurdistan Communities, or KCK, which prosecutors say is the political wing of the PKK, in charge of recruitment and financial support.

Following an escalation of PKK violence in recent months – including the killing of 13 soldiers in July – the government in November ordered an intense military air and artillery operation against the group's bases in northern Iraq, even as it still urging a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish conflict.

Israeli Knesset Discusses Armenian Genocide Bill

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Amidror's comments came even as Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh left Gaza for the first time since 2007 for a tour of six Arab and Islamic countries, including Turkey.

Israel's ties with Turkey hit rock-bottom in August, when Ankara expelled Israel's ambassador after the United Nations published a report on the 2010 flotilla incident that justified Israel's sea blockade over the Gaza Strip. Israel at the time formally made clear to Turkey that it would not apologize for the Mavi Marmara incident during which nine Turks were killed trying to break the naval blockade of Gaza.

Government sources said there are ongoing contacts with the Turks to try and resolve the crisis and re-establish normal ties, something Amidror was concerned could be hindered by the Knesset meeting.

Nevertheless, the Knesset committee discussion not only took place, but Knesset members from all sides of the political spectrum called for the government to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide. This was the first time the issue was discussed in an open Knesset meeting.

The meeting was initiated after Member of Knesset Arye Eldad (National Union) proposed a bill to mark the Armenian Genocide annually, which was then turned into a motion for the agenda after Eldad realized the coalition would not allow the legislation to pass. The meeting also addressed a similar motion to the agenda by MK Zehava Gal-On (Meretz), making Armenian Genocide one of the few topics agreed upon by the Knesset factions farthest to the political Left and Right.

Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin said those who fight Holocaust denial must not ignore the tragedies of other nations, and it is a moral imperative that Israel remember the Armenian Genocide.

Rivlin said he made a motion to the agenda on the matter in 1989, but until Monday, it was not discussed openly in the Knesset, due to political and diplomatic reasons. He said the issue was moved from the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, where it was discussed behind closed doors, to the Education Committee, with the press present, so that "morals and values" can be discussed.

Gal-On said the meeting is an "exciting moment," bringing to fruition the efforts of many former and current Meretz MKs over the years.

She called for government ministries to stop using the Armenian Genocide as a tool in Israeli foreign policy. Although Gal-On said Israel must not allow "tense" relations with Turkey to deteriorate, she added that relations with Turkey should be separate from this issue.

"This is the first time we can really discuss this and not sweep it under the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee's rug: A million-and-a-half Armenians were murdered in the beginning of World War I," Eldad said. "Who remembers them today? We must talk about it, so no one in the world thinks [genocide] can be committed again."

Eldad accused the government of hypocrisy, saying that at first, the matter wasn't publicly addressed because relations with Turkey were strong, and now the same policy stands for the opposite reason.

Coalition Chairman Ze'ev Elkin (Likud) said he is embarrassed the Knesset has yet to fulfill its "basic responsibility" in recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

He said "a wall has been broken" in that the Education Committee discussion was taking place openly, but that progress still needs to be made.

Elkin also mentioned that in 1939, Hitler cited the fact that Europe ignored the Armenian Genocide to justify his actions.

At the same time, Foreign Ministry representatives in the meeting said it would be irresponsible to make any official declarations on the matter.

The ministry never denied the Armenian Genocide, the representatives explained, but the issue has become political, and Israel prefers not to be involved, especially because Turkey and Armenia have been holding an open dialogue on the facts and opinions surrounding it.

In addition, only 21 countries have officially recognized the Armenian Genocide, according to the Foreign Ministry, and it would be unfair to declare all those who haven't immoral.

"We can't disconnect ourselves from reality. The Islamic world is getting more and more extreme," MK Otniel Schneller (Kadima) said, echoing the Foreign Ministry's stance. "We have to improve our relationship with Turkey; it's a matter of survival, even if it has a painful price."

Schneller suggested the Knesset declare that according to human and Jewish morality, genocide is unacceptable no matter where it takes place, be it Armenia, Rwanda or Cambodia.

He added that specific discussion of the Armenian Genocide would be irresponsible.

In addition, two representatives of the International Association Israel-Azerbaijan (AZIZ), denied genocide took place, saying Armenians took the side of Turkey's enemies and were a "fifth column" in Turkey.

No vote took place at the end of the meeting, and Knesset Education Committee Chairman Alex Miller (Israel Beiteinu) said more open discussions of the Armenian genocide will take place.

Turkish Warships Shell Water between Israeli and Cypriot Gas Fields

ANKARA (*grendelreport.posterous.com*) – Cypriot President Demetris Christofias has warned Turkey to stop its warships shelling the strip of water dividing the Cypriot and Israeli gas exploration zones in the eastern Mediterranean.

DEBKAFfile's military forces report that Wednesday, December 21, 2011 Turkish warships began turning their guns on the strip dividing Israel's Leviathan gas field from Block 12 of Cyprus's Exclusive Economic Zone-EEZ, where a large gas field was recently discovered.

Neither Israel nor Cyprus reported the Turkish attacks, which are staged in international waters, but both reinforced their naval units around the gas fields. It was the Cypriot president who broke the silence Friday, December 23, 2011 with a warning: "If Turkey does not change its gunboat diplomacy and stop playing the part of regional police officer, there will be consequences which, for sure, will not be good – either for the whole region or the Turkish people and first and foremost for Turkish Cypriots," he said.

On December 22, 2011 Israel canceled the \$90 million sale to the Turkish Air Force of Elbit's hi-tech LOROP-Long Range Oblique Photography military surveillance system. Israeli defense sources said the transaction was cancelled lest SAR radar or LOROP technology find their way into the hands of Israel's enemies, such as Iran.

According to our military sources, Israel timed the deal's cancellation as a warning to Ankara to back off from its campaign of harassment in and around Israel's gas fields.

Jerusalem, Athens and Nicosia are economic and security partners in the exploration and development of eastern Mediterranean gas resources. The same firm, Noble Energy Inc of Houston, Texas, is working both Cypriot and Israeli fields. Shares in the US company are held in Cyprus by the Cypriot

national energy company and in Israel by Delek Drilling LP and Avner Oil Exploration LLP.

The recent discovery that the gas fields are much bigger than first believed has raised the stakes around them. The three governments involved are looking forward to becoming major gas suppliers to Europe and so reducing the continent's dependence on Russian and Turkish gas pipelines.

Noble Energy's latest estimate published Monday, December 19, 2011 added 6.3 percent to the Leviathan well's untapped potential, raising it from the previous estimate of 16 to 20 trillion cubic feet.

Nicosia too will shortly issue an upwardly revised estimate of its gas field. According to DEBKAFfile's energy industry sources, the new figure is cautiously estimated as 10 trillion cubic feet.

Both expect Ankara to escalate its nuisance offensive after the new Nicosia bulletin. As a precaution, Cypriot Foreign Minister Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis was dispatched to Washington Tuesday, December 19, 2011 to talk the situation over with administration officials and obtain US support for the continuing gas enterprise and the Cypriot stance against Turkish threats.

According to our Washington sources, the advice from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was to go full steam ahead with gas drilling and ignore Turkish harassment. After their meeting, Kozakou-Marcoullis said the prospects for gas development have already dramatically increased her country's strategic importance.

In a speech at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, she called Turkey "the neighborhood bully," adding that a Turkey "whose foreign minister once promoted a policy of 'zero problems' with its neighbors is now pursuing a policy of 'only problems.'"

Community News

Souren Maserejian: A Life of Dedication To AGBU

By **Daphne Abeel**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. — Even before Souren Maserejian took on more official responsibilities at the New England District of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), he proved his dedication to the organization at a young age. Newly arrived in the United States from his native Aleppo, Syria, and still in his early 20s, Maserejian was voted the most valuable AGBU volunteer in 1984.

Two years later, he was elected chairman of AGBU's Greater Boston Chapter and in 1990, he was appointed Central Committee chairman of the New England District. He soon chose his committee, which included Alex Kalayjian, Bedros Dilsizian, Jacko Atamian, Ara Barmakian Sr., Gregory Seymorian, Michael Gulbankian, Ani Kalayjian, Maida Yetimian, Lisa



Souren and Lisa Maserejians

Maserejian, Maro Getzoyan, Vartouhie Cholakian, Garo Yavshaian, William Aznavourian, Linda Abkarian, Albert Abkarian and Tina Maserejian.

Following his retirement as chairman from the New England District Committee in September 2011, Maserejian reflected on his nearly 30 years of service.

"I was in Boston when the earthquake happened in Armenia," said Maserejian in a recent interview. "This was our first big fundraising effort. The Boston Chapter coordinated with the New England District, then headed by Eva Medzorian, and we managed to raise \$700,000 from Armenian and non-Armenian donors to help the victims."

Soon after Maserejian became chair of the New England District, AGBU embarked on an effort in the early 1990s to raise \$20,000 for children's centers in Nork Arapkir and Malatya in Armenia.

"We were also able to raise \$15,000 for soup kitchens, which were badly needed after the earthquake," he added.

Back in the United States, there was concern about the condition of the local AGBU headquarters on Mt. Auburn Street in Watertown. Purchased in the early 1900s, it was the first building owned by AGBU in the US and therefore has historic value.

Said Maserejian, "By 2000, the building, an old Victorian, had deteriorated badly. We had problems with lead paint and our primary concern was to raise the money to repair and renovate this important structure. Our committee managed to raise \$100,000 locally and with that money, we redid the building, including the porches and the windows. The repairs made it a better place from which to serve the community. It was important to us to keep the facade intact, and eventually the Town of Watertown

see DEDICATION, page 8



New England Patriots star Rob Gronkowski meets with David Aykanian at one of his six Precision Fitness Equipment centers.

Fitness Guru Aykanian Equips Top Stars

BOSTON — Take it from Boston Red Sox stalwart Dustin Pedroia: If you want to stay on top of your fitness game, seek out David Aykanian.

"He helps me stay in shape," says the all-star infielder. "When you want the best, you deal with the best."

Same with Boston Bruins Stanley Cup captain Patrice Bergeron and sure-handed New England Patriots receiver Rob Gronkowski. They both swear by Aykanian and the fitness empire he has created throughout New England.

It is not only the athletic world but others like Aerosmith guitarist Joe Perry. He is quick to say that Aykanian "takes care of me."

"The only thing he doesn't do is lift the weights for you," added Perry.

Aykanian's career is a byproduct of his own experience. In between his own daily workouts, he manages to find the time to operate six physical fitness outlets. As owner of Precision Fitness Equipment, he touches the lives of many, including local VIPs.

Other names that carry his products are world cellist Yo-Yo Ma, ageless crooner Tony Bennett, actor Adam Sandler and Steven Tyler, lead singer of Aerosmith.

Politicians jump aboard Aykanian's bandwagon with people like ex-Massachusetts governors, Mitt Romney and William Weld, along with Attorney General Martha Coakley.

"We used to sell to Whitey Bulger, too," Aykanian admitted.

The most notorious criminal in Boston history who was captured this year after evading justice for two decades?

"In the early '90s, James 'Whitey' Bulger would frequent our store and purchase chrome dumbbells," Aykanian recalled. "Some of the products would be special order and we would call him at his check-cashing business in Dorchester. He'd show up with one of his big associates to see how much weight they could lift on the gyms."

Bulger did much of his business with Aykanian's associate Steve Nahabedian. Aykanian and Nahabedian go back to their Camp Haiastan days during the 1970s and have been business partners ever since.

"Bulger would brag to Steve about the time he had spent in Alcatraz back in the '60s," said Aykanian. "He would show off his Alcatraz belt buckle."

Those who attended Camp Haiastan back a generation ago remember Aykanian as a mild dishwasher few would imagine would lead 23 employees one day.

The partnership with Garabedian spills out into the Armenian community where they are members of Holy Translators Church in Framingham. Its pastor, Rev. Krikor Sabounjian is also a client.

see FITNESS, page 7

Armenian Professional Society Honors Dr. Frieda Jordan As 2011 Professional Of the Year

GLENDALE — The Armenian Professional Society (APS) hosted its 53rd annual Professional of the Year event honoring Dr. Frieda Jordan, co-founder and president of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR). The event was held on November 5, at the Armenian Society of Los Angeles.

Mark Geragos, chairman of the ABMDR and past APS Professional of the Year recipient, was master of ceremonies at this year's APS Professional of Year Event.

The evening started off with a meet and greet with Jordan over cocktails. When the doors of the banquet opened, guests were welcomed in. Taking the stage, Shahan Minassian, president of the APS, started the evening's program by welcoming the group of supporters, thanking them for their continued support and acknowledged the current members of the Executive Board: Angelo Ghailian as first vice president, Taline Hanna as second vice president and Sarko Nalband as treasurer. Minassian also recognized Seta Khajarian as scholarship chair and Christina Tokatlian as subcommittee chair and thanked Margaret Lalikian and Julie Berberian for their efforts in organizing the event. Minassian also welcomed all past APS presidents who were in attendance.

Minassian continued with a summary of recent events hosted by the APS. Some of the events included the installation event of the new Executive Board, a mixer held at the Edison in Downtown to generate APS awareness, a dinner lecture discussing the nuclear disaster in Japan, as well as a movie clip highlighting the Santa Barbara wine tasting trip to view works by Charles Garabedian. Minassian went on to discuss the goals of the Armenian Professional Society and commitment to giving back to promote fellowship amongst Armenians through its annual scholarships.

Khajarian presented the recipients the scholarship awards of 2011 on behalf of the Armenian Professional Society. She spoke about the numerous applications that were received and discussed the criteria of selection that include financial need, scholastic achievements, faculty recommendations and involvement in the community. Five applicants demonstrated excellence in the applicable areas noted above. This year's scholarship recipients were: Nelli Martirosyan, Ara Rostomian, Sharlene Gozalians, Hovannes Kulhandjian and Armen Derian. Each recipient came to stage to discuss their career objectives and gratitude to the Armenian Professional Society in receiving the scholarships.

Haig Yuroz Gevorgian, an acoustic guitar player, performed two songs as guests had coffee and dessert. As the music came to an end, Ghailian took the stage to thank Jordan for the contributions she and the ABMDR have made in dedicating their time and effort to positively impact and save the lives of those affected with life-threatening blood-related illnesses. Ghailian, Hanna and Tokatlian each read a moving testimonial of patients and families whose lives have been touched by the ABMDR. The testimonials were followed by a powerful and emotional video highlighting the functions of the ABMDR with real life testimonials of donors as well as patients.

Geragos continued the evening's program discussing the long history he has had with the APS. He noted many of the accomplishments the APS has made within the past 53 years. As chairman of the ABMDR, Geragos was touched in the honor the APS bestowed on Jordan. Geragos noted the APS was the first Armenian organization in the United States to bestow this honor to Jordan. As Geragos

see JORDAN, page 6


COMMUNITY NEWS

Christmas Season at the Armenian

JAMAICA PLAIN, Mass. — The Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center had a festive Christmas season. In December, residents were treated to a variety of activities and performances by many caring members of the community, both on and off the center's grounds. The season was kicked off on December 3, 2011 when a group of residents attended the Annual Christmas Bazaar at Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church in Cambridge.

The following weekend members from the Armenian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) shared some holiday cheer, singing and dancing with residents to more Christmas carols and some traditional Armenian songs. A sumptuous reception followed, greatly enjoyed

by residents, families and friends. The spirit continued on Saturday, December 17, when a group of residents traveled in the center's van to the La Salette Shrine in Attleboro to see the display of Christmas lights. Christmas Day, led by the center's activities director, Siran Salibian, residents and staff celebrated by decorating and lighting the Christmas tree in the main living room.

The center looks forward to the finale of this holiday season with the AWWA Annual Armenian Christmas Party, which will be held at the center on January 14.

Residents will each receive a gift and a reception will follow. Featured performers that day are John and June Baboian.



Several residents of the center attended Holy Trinity Church's annual bazaar in December.

Armenian Professional Society Honors Dr. Frieda Jordan as 2011 Professional Of the Year

JORDAN, from page 5

explained, due to the unique genetic make-up of Armenians, it is nearly impossible to find suitable matches among the existing international registries and stressed the importance the ABMDR has on Armenians worldwide. Geragos praised Jordan's tireless efforts in presiding over the ABMDR and welcomed her to the stage.

Jordan discussed how the ABMDR originated when patient Alique Topalian was diagnosed with leukemia. Knowing that she might need a bone marrow transplant, and unable to find a matching donor in existing bone marrow registries of the world, her parents contacted Jordan, then head of Laboratory Services at the Anthony Nolan Institute. Fully aware of the unique genetic makeup of ethnic Armenians that made it nearly impossible for Armenian patients to find matches among non-Armenian bone marrow registries, Jordan approached Dr. Sevak Avagyan, and together they spearheaded the creation of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor. Jordan discussed how the registry has recruited over 20,000 donors in 13 countries across three continents, identified 2,023 patients, found 1,700 potential matches and facilitated 13 bone marrow transplants. Jordan

concluded with recognizing a list of long-term supporters and volunteers who have made the ABMDR what is today.

Jordan was presented with a plaque by APS along with letters from dignitaries praising her for her accomplishments. Taline Hanna read from the inscription from the plaque that was presented. As a surprise token, world-renowned artist Yuroz took stage to present to Jordan a moving work of art he crafted. Yuroz congratulated Jordan and described the meaning the work of art depicted in its relation to the cause and strength of the ABMDR. Jordan thanked Yuroz and dedicated the painting to be displayed at ABMDR's state-of-the-art Stem Cell Harvesting Center in Yerevan. The evening's program came to close as Jordan thanked all the guests in attendance, all of the ABMDR supporters as well as the Armenian Professional Society.

The APS is an independent, non-partisan organization founded in 1958 to promote fellowship among Armenian professionals and to encourage and foster higher education in young Armenians. Additional information about The Armenian Professional Society and upcoming events is available at apsla@apsla.org.

OBITUARY

Helen Mazoujian

WINCHESTER, Mass. — Helen Kohar (Caprielian) Mazoujian, 92, of Winchester, formerly of Dumont, NJ, died on Friday, December 16, 2011. An active member of St. Leon Armenian Church in Fair Lawn, NJ for over 50 years, she was a member and past president of the Women's Guild and soloist and member of the choir.

Mazoujian was also a member and past president of the Dumont Women's Club. An avid reader, Mazoujian also enjoyed opera, music, theatre, singing and history.

She was the wife of the late Aram Mazoujian. She is survived by: daughter Aramene Sarkisian and husband, George, and grandchildren, Kristin Sarkisian, Stephanie Sarkisian and husband Russell Jewell, and Wendy Sarkisian.

A funeral service was held on Wednesday, December 28, at St. Leon Armenian Church, Fair Lawn. Interment followed at George Washington Memorial Park in Paramus, NJ.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the above-named church.

Donation

Elizabeth Aprahamian of Farmington Hills, Mich., who had donated \$500 for the Christmas issue of the *Mirror-Spectator*, did so in memory of her father, Souren Aprahamian, mother, Arminuhe Aprahamian, and brother, Dr. Rhaffi Ashod Aprahamian.



Ladies from the Armenian Women's Welfare Association sang to the residents of the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.



Children sang carols to the residents.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Yeprem Chavdarian, Star AGBU Generation Next Mentee

By Yasmin Alpay

GLENDALE, Calif. — KCAL 9 News recently reported that a group of high school students from Glendale purchased their own marine robot from the prize money they won from a national contest on food research. Clark Magnet High School, where AGBU Generation Next mentee, Yeprem Chavdarian, is a senior, was part of the winning team of the Lexus Eco Challenge. “These students are saving our environment. They made maps and analyzed data to make sure that what we eat is safe,” reported

KCAL 9. The group collected lobsters from five locations looking for contaminants. What they found was shocking. Arsenic levels were as high as 35 parts/million, whereas FDA-safe levels are at only 0.005 parts/million. “It was shocking but then again I’m not really surprised because contamination is not regulated, no one really looks at what’s going into our water,” said Chavdarian.

Last year, the Clark Magnet team, led by Chavdarian, took home the grand prize of \$50,000, plus an extra grant of \$20,000, for their study of the global organic and inorganic contamination in lobster after they discovered metal pollutants in California lobsters in

2010. This year, the same team is at it again, this time investigating the effects of an earthquake on waste management facilities, nuclear reactors and schools in the Glendale area.

Chavdarian is an example of the success of the AGBU GenNext mentorship program. “I remember how shy and quiet Yeprem used to be,” said Saro Ayzazians, interim director of GenNext. “When he first joined GenNext three years ago, he always kept to himself and did not interact with anyone at his school or at GenNext. He has definitely come a very long way. He is talking to news reporters, presenting his ideas and projects to large audiences, and he does not even look a bit nervous! That is truly amazing! This is yet another example

of an extremely bright kid who, with a little bit of guidance from the right person, can do amazing things,” he added.

Using a program called Hazus-MH, the team is going to simulate an earthquake in the Glendale area, and note which schools are prone to incur earthquake damage. Hazus will also determine the number of casualties likely to occur in the Glendale area, the amount of economic loss and the effects of potential fires. “We hope to raise awareness of earthquake safety,” Chavdarian said.

By providing positive role models through one-to-one mentorship for at-risk youth of Armenian descent in Southern California, GenNext is helping many young persons.

Fitness Guru Aykanian Equips Top Stars

FITNESS, from page 5

“We’re both very active with local charities and give back to the community every year,” Aykanian maintained. “We’re a corporate sponsor at ALMA [Armenian Library and Museum of America] and donate to local Armenian churches, Abaka Armenian School and Armenian Heritage Park.”

Aykanian showed up at Fenway Park this past fall with TV sports personality Bob Lobel by his side. The two were there for a Heritage Park fundraiser, which raised \$100,000 in endowment money.

Lobel bought a treadmill from Aykanian back in 1993 and the two hit it off immediately.

“Around that time, we started advertising on

WBZ radio and I asked Lobel to endorse our company,” recalled Aykanian. “We started advertising on ‘Calling All Sports’ and our business started to take off. We’ve become very good friends over the years and talk on a daily basis.”

Lobel suffers from a degenerative muscle disorder, which finds him on crutches these days. He remains indebted to Aykanian for the rehab equipment that has been provided and all the moral and physical support that’s been included. “I owe him a lot,” Lobel was quick to admit.

Around the same time, Massachusetts House Speaker George Keeverian called for a treadmill. He visited the Natick store and the two chatted about diet and exercise, as the speaker was hop-

ing to shed a lot of weight.

“Keeverian told me he really wanted to lose weight and had grown very frustrated,” Aykanian said. “We delivered the treadmill and he would call periodically to give me updates. He came to us because we were an Armenian-owned business. He generally wanted us to be successful and said he would refer other business to us. He was always very nice to me.”

Aykanian’s connection with the fitness world appeared self-ingrained. He started running road races in the early ‘80s and suffered a knee injury that required surgery. He was unable to run during the rehab and purchased an exercise bike from a department store.

The bike broke down after a week and he exchanged it for another, only to have that one malfunction a few days later.

“I immediately envisioned the concept of a high-end fitness equipment specialty retail store,” he brought out. “The plan was to have a showroom and also provide delivery and service.”

Aykanian found a small fitness equipment retailer in Hartford, Conn., and asked the owner if he could work for him with the intent of opening a store in Massachusetts. The year was 1987 and Aykanian spent it in Connecticut learning the business from the ground up.

The following year, he contacted Nahabedian, a competitive runner. They opened their first store together that November and never stopped growing. Along came a second store two years later, followed by a third in 1993.

Both entrepreneurs spent the next 15 years building one of the most respected fitness equipment companies in the industry. In 2008 came the first of two New Hampshire stores. The company also has a commercial division that outfits schools, apartment complexes, municipalities, hospitals and corporate fitness centers.

The stories keep coming. Not long ago, Aykanian received a phone call from someone who wanted an elliptical machine delivered to his yacht docked in Newport, RI. The client, Tony Bennett, needed it the very next day before setting sail. Job done.

The singing Taylor brothers (James and



David Aykanian with Boston Bruins star Patrice Bergeron at one of his six Precision Fitness Equipment outlets

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On the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway, Boston



From left, Gary, Anahid and Aurelian Mardiros

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Souren Maserejian: A Life of Dedication To AGBU

DEDICATION, from page 5
accepted our plan to preserve its historical value.”

The group honored one of the donors to this project, Michael Gulbankian, who is a member who served also the Armenian Church and donated money and renovated a kindergarten in Armenia named after him and his wife.

Another major effort in 2007 included a benefit dance sponsored by AGBU's New England District, St. James Armenian Church, Knights of Vartan and several donors from different organizations, raising \$15,000 for AGBU's Karabagh Repopulation Project.

“It was a very successful event,” recalled Maserejian. “We invited Robert Chilingarian, a well-known singer from Los Angeles, to perform and we drew an audience of about 400 people. And later more performers came from LA, including the Ardavazt Drama Group, which put on shows at Watertown High School.”

“With that money, we were able to build apartments in Karabagh,” said Maserejian. “People had no houses, they were living in ter-



Michael Gulbankian honored by Alex Kalayjian and Souren Maserejian

a dinner to honor Providence Men's Chapter Chairman William Aznavourian for his more than 45 years of service and dedication to AGBU.

“Members from the New York Central Board attended, and it was an important occasion to recognize someone who had given so much to the organization,” said Maserejian.

In 2009, Maserejian expressed a desire to retire from his post as chair of the New England District.

like to thank you sincerely for your many years of commitment and dedication in leading the AGBU New England District Committee as its chairman. I personally have had the pleasure of working with you, and know that you did not spare any effort in promoting and pursuing the best interests of our Union. Your loyalty, generous nature and leadership are all very noteworthy, and on behalf of the Central Board and myself, I extend our deepest appreciation to you.”

Said Maserejian, “Most of the task involves raising money, and it is hard work. I am a Protestant and a member of the Armenian Memorial Church in Watertown. We believe that people open up their hearts if you reach out to them. In some ways, things have become more difficult since the 1988 earthquake, because the various chapters are on their own now.”

Maserejian, in addition to his efforts for AGBU, also runs his own business, Maserejian Jewelry, located on Washington Street in Boston.

“I was only 22 when I arrived in Boston. I had studied jewelry making in Aleppo, but I needed help. I knocked on the door of Barmakian Jewelers and Ara Barmakian took me in. He helped me with my papers and I worked for him for three years. He died in 2006 and his son now heads the business. But he was just an out-of-the-world person, a graduate of MIT. He didn't speak Armenian, but he loved AGBU and contributed a lot. We went to Armenia together in 1998 and we went to many conventions together. He helped many people come to this country from Beirut and other places in the Middle East. He saved many people from difficult situations.”

After his apprenticeship with Barmakian, Maserejian started his own store.

“It's a successful business now, and I design and make jewelry, which is what I love to do. And I have a family of which I am very proud, two daughters — one has a degree in marketing from Bentley College and teaches in Watertown. The other is an accountant who works for the Mugar family. My son has just graduated from the Massachusetts College of Art with a degree in industrial design. Both my daughters are married to Armenians and we all speak Armenian.”

Although Maserejian has stepped down from his official post, he said he would continue to work for the Armenian community. “There is no organization that does more than AGBU both for Armenia and for Armenians here, helping to fund schools, universities and colleges. It is exceeding expectations,” he said.

Maserejian is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Armenian Memorial Church, a member of the Knights of Vartan and a vice chairman of the Armenian Jewelers Association.

“I will continue to do as much as I can to help my Armenian community. My love for Armenia has never stopped and that is why I have been able to give my time and my effort,” he concluded.



During one of the activities at AGBU Center in Watertown

rible conditions. One apartment, specifically funded by Boston Armenians, bears a plaque thanking us and also St. James.”

More recently, the New England District has contributed \$6,000 to the construction of the Armenian Heritage Park, now under way in downtown Boston.

“We are proud of our local efforts,” said Maserejian, “but the Central Board of AGBU, especially, since the earthquake, has made every effort to help Armenia in many different ways, supporting schools, the symphony, the performing arts, hospitals and many other projects.”

In May 2011, the New England District held

“It was time for someone new,” he said. “My involvement was taking time away from my family and I truly felt it was time for a change. But it took nearly two years to find someone. It was Anita Anserian from Central office who suggested lawyer Ara Balikian. He is a young man, as I was when I first took over, and also from Belmont. He comes from a family with strong affiliations to AGBU, and it has been a very smooth transition. Now, we must all support him”

In October, shortly after Maserejian's official retirement, he received a letter of praise and gratitude from Berge Setrakian, president of AGBU's Central Board. In part, it read, “I would



William Aznavourian honored (center) on his left Anita Anserian, representative of AGBU Central Committee and members of New England Board of Directors

Christmas Donations to The Armenian Mirror- Spectator

Additional donations and Christmas Greetings were sent to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* after December 24, 2011.

The Vartkess and Rita Balian Family Foundation, Inc. Arlington, VA <i>In honor of Vartkess Balian's Memory and to keep his legacy alive among his true and sincere TCA friends.</i>	\$500
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Herbert S. and Maura K. Alexander, Westborough, MA <i>The Best for All during 2012</i>	\$100
Ann Chepjian, Boston, MA <i>Merry Christmas and Happy New Year</i>	\$100
Alis Marachelian, Arlington, VA <i>To our family and friends around the world, May 2012 bring you much joy!</i>	\$100
Edward Paloyan, Oak Brook, IL <i>Shnorhavor Nor dari yev Sourp Dznount</i>	\$100
Nelson and Anna Tabirian, Winter Park, FL <i>Good Health and Happiness to All</i>	\$100
Dr. Myron and Ruth Allukian, Boston, MA <i>Merry Christmas and Happy New Year</i>	\$50
Charles J. and Mary C. Tateosian, Walnut Creek, CA <i>Best Wishes for all</i>	\$50
Lucy A. Bedirian, Watertown, MA <i>Best Wishes for 2012</i>	\$25
Haig and Sheena Dadourian, Bryn Mawr, PA <i>Merry Christmas and Happy New Year</i>	\$25
Jack and Raya A. Arisian, Watertown, CT <i>Merry Christmas to All</i>	\$15



YEAR IN REVIEW

2011 In Review

JANUARY

• President Barack Obama appointed Matthew Bryza ambassador to Azerbaijan. Obama bypassed the US senate to make the appointment as part of a series of recess appointments. The Armenian community has long had strong reservations about Bryza, who has had “very close personal ties to Turkey and Azerbaijan,” according to Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), an opponent of the appointment.

• Dr. Arshavir Gundjian retired from the AGBU Central Board. A resident of Montreal, Gundjian has served as a Central Board member for more than 35 years and was serving as vice president during the last years of his membership on the central administrative body of the AGBU.

• Thousands took to the streets in Istanbul on the fourth anniversary of the assassination of *Agos* founder Hrant Dink on January 19. The crowd, which gathered at 3 p.m., the time that Dink was shot by 17-year-old Ogun Samast, held signs of protest against a system that failed to reveal the masterminds behind the crime.



• Turkish Premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan voiced his dissatisfaction with the erection of a monument in Kars dedicated to peace. He called it “an abomination” and announced it would not stay up much longer.

• Gov. Deval Patrick of Massachusetts appointed Massachusetts state Rep. Peter Koutoujian (D-Waltham) as the new Middlesex County sheriff. Koutoujian was finishing out the term of Sheriff James DiPaola, who was forced to resign because of corruption.

• The Supreme Court declined to hear *Griswold v. Driscoll*, a Massachusetts case that has spent six years in courts in the state. The case pits First Amendment lawyer Harvey Silverglate, backed by the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA), against the Massachusetts Board of Education over whether the removal of “contra genocide” materials from a curriculum guide amounted to a violation of free speech.

• “My Uncle Rafael” was making the festival circuit, prior to being released. The movie, co-written and starring Vahik Pirhamzei as the title character, is the first US major motion picture with Armenian-Americans forming the backdrop. Uncle Rafael, basically, sits all day in his son’s cafe, where he dispenses advice. A reality show producer suggests that he move in with a downward-spiraling, upwardly-mobile family. Of course, Rafael’s straight-forward effect on them is healing. Marc Fusco directed the film, which won several awards at the ARPA International Film Festival in Los Angeles, including best director, breakthrough performance and best screenplay. The film was an official selection of the Boston International Film Festival. It is scheduled to be distributed in 2012.

• Armenian President Serge Sargisian threatened to scrap the protocols for normalizing ties with Turkey if Ankara continued to link their parliamentary ratification with the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. He said the stalled process could resume only if Turkey’s parliament ratified “without pre-conditions” the protocols signed by the two governments in October 2009.

• A decision was reached in the case of Gerald L. Cafesjian versus the Armenian Assembly of America in the building of the Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial (AGMM). US District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly of the US District Court of the District of Columbia ruled on January 26 that under the terms of a 2003 grant agreement, the National Bank of Washington building, which was one of the cornerstones of the proposed museum, should revert back to the Cafesjian

Family Foundation because it was not completed by December 31, 2010. The Assembly, in its statement, said that the court had rejected some of Cafesjian’s assertions, including his claim of wrongdoing against the Assembly and the AGMM and reduced Cafesjian’s representation on the Board of Trustees. In an open letter to Gerald Cafesjian, Assembly Board Chairman Hirair Hovnanian asked that he make sure that the building be put to the use it as meant for, namely a Genocide museum.

• Sammy Andonian of Lincoln made his debut as a soloist with the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra. He and his brother, Alexander, both are members of the orchestra.

FEBRUARY

• Academy Award and Writers Guild of America (WGA) award-winning screenwriter Steven Zaillian received the 2011 lifetime achievement award at the WGA West ceremony. He received an Academy Award for “Schindler’s List.”

• Two federal indictments and state cases charged a total of 99 defendants with a wide range of crimes, including kidnapping, extortion, bank fraud and narcotics on February 16, leading to the arrest of 74 members of the Armenian Power organized crime group. US Attorney Andre Birotte Jr. said that Armenian Power (AP) is an international organized crime group linked with criminal groups in Russia, Georgia and Armenia.

• One of the staples of Armenian charitable organizations, The Lincy Foundation, officially ceased to exist. The announcement came from Lincy founder Kirk Kerkorian and the chancellor of the University of California at Los Angeles, Gene Block. All funds from Lincy – about \$200 million – went to UCLA to create the Dream Fund at the university to support research there as well as charitable projects throughout the US. Lincy had distributed \$1.1 billion to schools, hospitals and other projects since its inception in 1989. No reason was given for the change in status.

distributed \$1.1 billion to schools, hospitals and other projects since its inception in 1989. No reason was given for the change in status.

• Rep. Jean Schmidt was the subject of an investigation by the US House’s Office of Congressional Ethics for her dealings with the Turkish Coalition of America regarding her receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars of free legal services. The issue stems from her legal battle with Democrat David Krikorian. He ran twice against Schmidt in Ohio’s Second Congressional District and in 2009, Schmidt filed a defamation suit against him after he suggested that she was getting “blood money” from Turkish interests in return for denying the Armenian Genocide.

• President Serge Sargisian met with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Munich, on the sidelines of a security conference attended by leaders from around the world. According to Sargisian’s office, they discussed US-Armenian ties, the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict and Armenia’s strained relations with Turkey.



• The Tekeyan Cultural Association Chapters of metropolitan New York and the Hamazkayin Education and Cultural Society sponsored on February 20 a program dedicated to the centennial birth anniversary of the poet, educator, novelist and Shakespearian translator Khachig Tashdents.

• The Detroit chapter of the Tekeyan Cultural Association presented an evening with actor/director Gerald Papiasian called “Discovery and Revival of a Forgotten Opera,” on his latest project, the story of Dikran Tchouhadjian’s operetta, “Gariné.” The operetta, also known as “Leblebidji Hor Hor Agha,” was a

huge hit when it debuted in Constantinople in the 1870s. The Cairo-born Papiasian, who now lives in Paris, has dedicated himself to unearthing and promoting Armenian cultural icons to the world. He revised “Gariné” from the original to be more palatable for modern audiences.

• Publisher Ragip Zarakolu, a veteran proponent of human rights who has been jailed frequently for his vocal support of the subject, was honored in Armenia by the director of Armenia’s National Library. The award was for his long-running advocacy for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

• Edgar Hagopian was feted as the Man of the Year by the Detroit ADL and Tekeyan chapters for his many years of selfless dedication to the Armenian community in Greater Detroit. Representatives from the Diocese and the Prelacy, as well as Catholic and Congregational churches, were present. Hagopian himself was too ill to attend. Hagopian died on



March 27 after a long battle against cancer. Tributes to him poured out from every corner of the community

• Armenians around the world commemorated the 23rd anniversary of the pogroms against Armenians in Sumgait, Azerbaijan.

• The American Repertory Theater, in Cambridge, Mass., presented a new version of the classic Greek tragedy by Aeschylus, “Prometheus Bound,” this time as a modern rock opera, featuring the music of Serj Tankian, founder of System of a Down.

MARCH

• The trial of the man who confessed to killing Hrant Dink, Ogun Samast, got underway in Turkey.

• The presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan said they would seek a peaceful solution to the Nagorno Karabagh conflict but announced no breakthrough after fresh talks hosted by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, on March 5 in Sochi,

• Martin Marootian, a retired pharmacist who became the chief plaintiff in a landmark class-action suit against New York Life Insurance Company, died of natural causes at home in San Diego. He was 95. Marootian’s parents fled Kharperit but their family was massacred. He saw an article in 1994 in which lawyer Vartkes Yeghiayan was looking for anyone who had an insurance policy from the company. Marootian remembered that his sister had an insurance policy from their uncle, Setrak Cheytanian. When Marootian’s mother, Yeghsa, decided to come to America, his uncle gave the insurance policy to her, before perishing in the Genocide. His case was settled in 2004 for \$20 million.

• On March 10, author Mehmet Guler and Belge Publishing executive Ragip Zarakolu were convicted on charges of “spreading propaganda for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party” (PKK) by reason of the book, *The KCK File/Global State and Kurds without a State*. The book was immediately banned and confiscated in May 2010 after it was published.

• The two attorneys whose winning track record led to the settlement of several class-action suits on behalf of Armenian Genocide survivors became entangled in another type of suit. Mark Geragos and Brian Kabateck filed suit in LA County Superior Court against one-time partners in the Genocide survivor insurance settlement case, Vartkes Yeghiayan and Rita Mahdessian, saying the latter two defrauded the community by diverting settlement funds to fictitious charities.



YEAR IN REVIEW



• Ten thousand people demonstrated against the government in Yerevan. They called for the government's resignation on the third anniversary of deadly political unrest after the presidential elections. Opposition leader, Levon Ter-Petrosian, led the demonstrations and asked for an investigation into the deaths. The authorities declared a state of emergency. The US envoy, Marie Yovanovitch, called for "deep" reforms by the government.

• *Azg* newspaper, the sister publication of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, celebrated its 20th anniversary in Yerevan.



• A delegation of the Regional Executive of the Eastern United States and of the ADL met with Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate. From left, Vartan Ilandjian, Papken Megerian, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Hagop Vartivarian, Krikor Salbashian and Dr. Vaghnenag Tarpinian.

APRIL

• The Tekeyan Cultural Association organized a book tour featuring Dr. Rita Kuyumjian. Kuyumjian is an assistant professor of psychiatry at McGill University in Montreal and is the author of *Archeology of Madness*, the story of Komitas Vartabed as seen through the eyes of a psychiatrist. The tour promoted the *Trilogy, Exile Trauma and Death, Teotig: Biography and The Survivor*, the trio of books she has put



together on the Genocide.

• Dr. Arshavir Gundjian was honored by the AGBU for his years of dedication to the AGBU Montreal community in particular at a dinner and tribute on April 1 in New York. Gundjian, who served most recently as vice president of the AGBU, was a board member for 35 years. A professor and researcher in quantum electronics at McGill University, Gundjian played a pivotal role in establishing the AGBU Alex Manoogian School in Montreal 40 years ago.

• The Arsenal Center for the Arts, in Watertown, Mass., established the annual Charles Mosesian Award for Support of the Arts during the celebration of the center's fifth anniversary. The first award was given to longtime Boston television personality and arts promoter, Joyce Kulhawik.

• Events took place throughout the month – and throughout the world – honoring the memory of the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide. In Boston, Armenian-American community members gathered at the Statehouse on April 15. The ceremony was headed for the first time by Watertown state Rep. Jonathan Hecht. In Armenia, throngs took to the streets.

President Barack Obama again failed to use the phrase "Armenian Genocide." Instead, he used the Armenian phrase, "Medz Yeghern," which means great calamity.

• Dr. Antranig Chalabian, author of several volumes of Armenian history, died at this home in Southfield, Mich. He was 89. A memorial was held for him on April 30.

• April 3, Anahid and Papken Megerian, local community leaders in Philadelphia, hosted a program at their home, bringing together several members of the local

Armenian community, as well as the Very Rev. Babken Saibyan, to raise funds for the spiritual needs of the histori-



cally Armenian Javakhk, now in Georgia. Salibyan is the vicar general of the Diocese of Georgia and has been in Philadelphia since mid-February, taking courses at Temple University.

• Tekeyan Centre Fund in Armenia hosted a scholastic Olympiad in Armenia in Vahan Tekeyan schools in Yerevan, Gumri, Stepanavan and Karbi.

• The Arshag Dickranian School in Los Angeles celebrated its 30th anniversary with a gala banquet during which \$110,000 was raised.

• The chairman of AGBU Egypt's District Committee and honorary chairman of AGBU's Cairo chapter, Berdj Terzian, was honored for his long-term commitment and contribution to



the Armenian community around the world.

• Sotheby's headquarters in New York City was the venue for a lecture by Andreas Roubian on Russian-Armenian painter Ivan Aivazovsky. From left, Ambassador Garen Nazarian, Honduras Ambassador to the UN Mary Elizabeth Flores Flake and Andreas Roubian.

• A group of French singers from Paris, led by the non-Armenian French quartet Quatuour Arevadzaghig and artist Gerald Paspasian, with the participation of conductor Raffi Armenian, presented an Armenian cultural program at St. Georges Anglican Church in Montreal on April 15. The program was sponsored by the AGBU and the Tekeyan Cultural Association, patronized by the minister of culture, communications and feminine condition of Quebec, Christine St. Pierre.

MAY

• The ADL opened new offices for a new chapter of the ADL Armenagan party in the Marduni region of Armenia. Papken Megerian, co-chair of the ADL District Committee and his wife, Anahid, had refurbished the new offices.

• President Serge Sargisian visited Switzerland, where he



spoke at the parliament, urging more nations to recognize the Armenian Genocide. The Swiss parliament adopted a resolution recognizing the Genocide in 2003.

• Thousands gathered at Times Square in New York City to mark the annual commemoration of the Armenian Genocide



on May 1. Prof. Richard Hovannisian addressed those gathered. The commemoration was moved from the traditional April 24 because the day coincided with Easter.

• The funeral of an Armenian soldier in Turkey took place in May. The Turkish-Armenian, Sevak Shahin Balıkcı, was killed on April 24 in a non-combat situation.

• World Monuments Fund announced that the organization and the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism have embarked on a partnership to conserve Ani Cathedral and the Church of the Holy Savior.

• Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston hosted the Diocesan Assembly. The host parish's Diocesan Assembly Committee was led by Fr. Vasken Kouzouian and co-chair by Janice Dorian and Nancy Kasarjian. The Eastern Diocese named Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick as its "Friend of the Armenians" for 2011. The award was bestowed during the annual Diocesan Assembly in April. Patrick's support was vital for the construction of the Armenian Heritage Park. Sarkis Bedevian was named Armenian of the Year by the Diocese.

• Members of the Armenian-American community gathered in Washington, along with Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), on May 21, to make the official dedication of the Sully Station Post Office Building in Centreville, Va., in the name of the late Col. George Juskalian. Juskalian was a decorated veteran of three years. He died in July 2010 at the age of 96.

• KOHAR put on a spectacular show on May 28 in Yerevan. The event brought together the most popular singers of Armenia.

• The American University of Armenia celebrated its 20th year and 19th commencement this month. The university now is being led by Dr. Bruce Boghosian.

• The Restoration of St. Giragos Church in Dikranagerd brought together hundreds in New Jersey to raise funds for the church.

• Fund for Armenian Relief paid tribute to philanthropist and singer Charles Aznavour at a gala program in New York.





YEAR IN REVIEW

JUNE

• The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* hosted a celebration in anticipation of its 80th anniversary on June 4 in New Jersey, attended by more than 200. Headlining the program were *Boston Globe* veteran and award-winning journalist Stephen Kurkjian, with Dr. Raffy Hovanesian as the master of ceremonies. The program paid homage to the New York-area supporters and contributors to the newspaper.

• President Barack Obama nominated John A. Heffern to be the new ambassador to Armenia. Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch concluded her term in June.

• Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Armenian Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian met in Washington on May 19 to discuss the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. They made no public



statements after the meeting. She met with her Turkish counterpart, Ahmed Davutoglu, the following month and urged that country to honor the protocols with Armenia.

• Dr. Jack Kevorkian died at the age of 83. He had led a crusade for decades to legalize physician-assisted suicide. He had been hospitalized for a month with pneumonia and kidney problems.

• Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II visited Javakhk, marking the first visit to the region by a head of the Armenian Church to the Georgian-controlled region in a century.

• Armenian Night at the Pops celebrated its 60th year, with the program this year headlined by soprano Hasmik Papian. The Armenian-born, Vienna-based singer has performed at the top opera houses throughout the world. The evening also featured works by composer John Sarkissian.

• Vergin Mazmanian, 103, of Arlington, Mass., one of the most inspirational survivors of the Armenian Genocide who never shied away from telling her story to inspire others, died. She was honored in 2009 at the annual Statehouse program in Massachusetts.



• Buckingham Palace was the venue for a posh reception in honor of Yerevan My Love program. Charles, Prince of Wales, attended the fundraising program, as well as many noted Armenians, including Nubar Afeyan of Massachusetts.

• Elena Bonner, the widow of human rights activist Andrei



Sakharov, died in Boston. She was 88. She was the daughter of Gevorg Alikhanov, an Armenian who founded the Soviet Armenian Communist Party. He was arrested and disappeared in to Stalin's prisons in 1937. Bonner continued the advocacy of Sakharov upon his death in 1988.

• The TCA Central Board of Directors met in California.

• Members of the ADL and the Tekeyan Cultural Association gathered on June 26 in the Kersam Aharonian Hall of the Tekeyan Center in Beirut to celebrate *Zartok's* legacy. ADL member and *Zartok* editor-in-chief Baydzig Kalaydjian,

Lebanese Cabinet member Jean Oghasapian, the TCA Founders' Body, the ADL Regional Executive, First Secretary Vartan Armaian, Hagop Kassardjian and Hagop Vartivarian were among those celebrating the legacy of the paper.

JULY

• The Armenian government honored Primate, Archbishop Khajag Baseman, upon the 40th anniversary of his ordination into priesthood and his 60th birthday, for his efforts to help the Armenian people both spiritually and materially. Prime Minister Tigran Sargisian personally delivered him his award.



Armenia won the 2011 world Chess Team Championship in Ningbo, China, on July 26, solidifying its international status as a chess powerhouse. Teams from 10 leading chess nations, including Russia, Ukraine, India and Azerbaijan competed.

AUGUST

• President Recep Tayyip Erdogan demanded an apology from President Serge Sargisian for remarks Erdogan claimed amounted to laying territorial claims to Turkey. Sargisian had said at a July 23 meeting with students from Armenia and the diaspora that one day maybe today's youth would succeed in reclaiming ancient Armenian lands that form part of Turkey today. Sargisian refused to apologize, suggesting Erdogan was distorting the com-

ments intentionally.

• The Tumo Center for Creative Technologies opened on Monday, August 14 in Yerevan. The state-of-the-art facility was founded by AGBU Central Board member Sam Simonian and his wife, Sylva. It is designed to introduce students ages 12 to 18 to a professional level of instruction in high-tech arts and sciences through extensive after-school programs.



• An Armenian-American woman, Alina BigJohny, died at the Indiana State Fair, after a stage collapsed. BigJohny, of Muncie, was the daughter of an Armenian immigrant. She had just turned 23 and her family was planning a belated birthday celebration for her.

• ADL Eastern District Committee Co-Chairs Edmond Azadian and Papken Megerian visited Armenia to meet with government and ecclesiastical officials regarding the issues of the ADL and the diaspora. Above, from left, Diaspora Minister Hranoush Hagopian, Edmond Azadian and Papken Megerian..



SEPTEMBER

• The Armenian Library and Museum of America in Watertown, Mass., unveiled its new permanent exhibit, that of hundreds of photos from the noted Yousuf Karsh, who had captured some of the iconic individuals of the 20th century. The photos, capturing the likes of Pablo Picasso, Winston Churchill, Helen Keller, Aram Khachaturian, Eleanor Roosevelt and Albert Einstein, were a gift from his widow, Estrellita. As a result of the gift, ALMA underwent a major



redesign. A gala opening was held, attended by Estrellita Karsh.

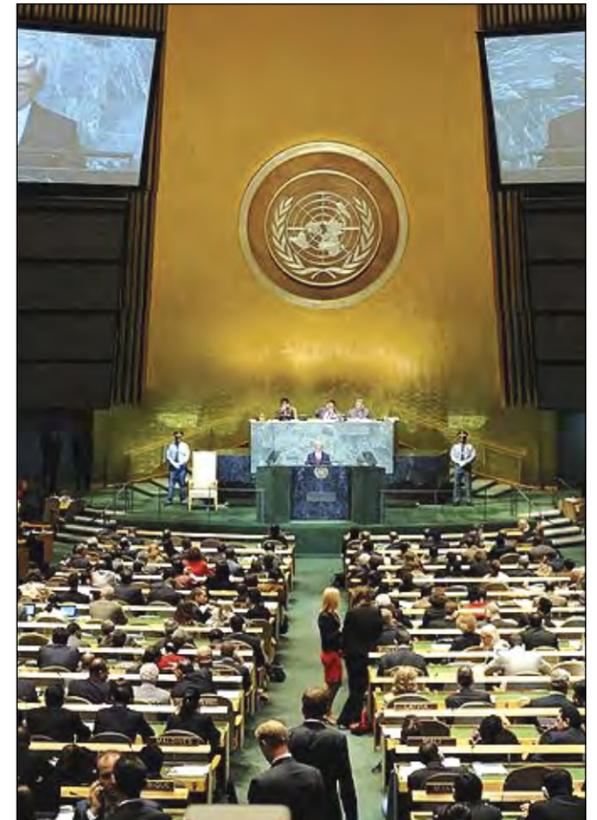
• This month marked the 20th anniversary celebrations for Armenia and Karabagh. President Serge Sargisian led thou-



sands of people in a march through Stepanakert that marked the 20th anniversary of that republic's declaration of independence from Azerbaijan.

• St. Nersess Seminary celebrated its 50th anniversary with a reception, titled "Evening Under the Stars."

• A gala reception was held in New York in honor of Armenia's independence, with the participation of President Serge Sargisian.



• The whistle-blowing website WikiLeaks has de-classified documents that demonstrate once again that Turkey has edited its archives relating to the period 1915-1923. A cable from the US Consulate in Istanbul in July 2004, Consul Gen. David Arnett quoted Sabancı University Prof. Halil Berktaş as saying that archives related to the Ottoman Empire had "undergone purges" with relation to the Armenian Genocide.

• California-based lawyer Vartkes Yeghiayan filed suit against the government of Turkey and two Turkish banks concerning Armenian-owned lands that are now near or part of an airbase used by the US in Incirlik, Turkey. The base, seven miles east of Adana, has played an important role in supporting US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

• President Serge Sargisian was a guest of his French counterpart, Nicolas Sarkozy, on September 28. Sarkozy praised the close ties between the two peoples.



YEAR IN REVIEW



• Thousands of Armenians from around the world attended mass at Akhtamar's Surp Khach Church in Van, the second since its government-funded renovation in 2007.



• The Tekeyan Centre Fund of Armenia celebrated its 20th anniversary. Participating, were, from left, Nar Khachadourian, Vazgen Manukyan, Edmond Azadian, Vartan Ouzounian, Gegham Gharibjanian, Papken Megerian and A. Krikorian.

OCTOBER

• The only Armenian soldier in the Civil War was honored on October 1 with a khatchkar marker on his grave. Khachadour Paul Garabedian was recognized with a new grave marker in a Philadelphia cemetery, thanks to an anonymous \$10,000 donation.

• President Nicolas Sarkozy returned the visit of his Armenian counterpart to France in October. While there, he said, "The Armenian Genocide is a historical reality. Collective denial is even worse than individual denial."

• Steve Jobs' death was mourned around the world. While Jobs was not ethnically an Armenian, he was raised by an Armenian-American woman, Clara (Hakobyan) Jobs, and her husband, Paul Jobs, who had adopted him as an infant.

• Sarkis Soghanalian, the Lebanese-born arms dealer who sold weapons to rebels and autocrats, died of natural causes on October 4, in Miami. He was 78. Once fabulously wealthy thanks to his contacts with powers-that-be around the world, he died virtually penniless after the US government decided to charge him for selling arms to Iraq.

• Two very popular Armenians in show business died this month. Kay Armen, 95, died on October 3 after a short illness. Born Armenuhi Manoogian, she was a singer, actress and composer. She had a hit radio program called "Stop the Music" with Bert Parks and then was on all three TV networks on situation comedies and variety shows. Academy Award-nominated costume designer for the likes of Judy Garland, Barbra Streisand and Diana Ross, Ray Aghayan, died on October 11 at the age of 83. He was nominated for several movies, including "Funny Girl" and "Lady Sings the Blues."

• Krikor Satamian has made audiences laugh for more than 50 years. That golden anniversary was marked by a tribute by the AGBU in Los Angeles this month. Satamian is currently the director of the AGBU Ardavazt Theatre Group in Los Angeles. A graduate of the American University of Beirut, he

has acted on stage, movies and television programs around the world to acclaim.

• An earthquake in the Van region of Turkey, former Armenia, caused damage to Surb Khach Church on Akhtamar Island in Lake Van. The church's dome apparently incurred a crack after the 7.2-magnitude earthquake.

• Rwandan activist Paul Rusesabagina was the featured speaker of the second annual K. George and Carolann S. Najarian MD Lecture on Human Rights, an endowed program of the Armenian Heritage Foundation. Rusesabagina's autobiography, *An Ordinary Man*, was the basis for the award-winning movie, "Hotel Rwanda." • The European Court of Human Rights on October 25 ruled that the Turkish governments' prosecution, under Article 301 of its penal code, with respect to Dr. Taner Akçam's public views on the Armenian Genocide, violated Akçam's right to freedom of expression under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Akçam welcomed the decision, saying "You cannot achieve reconciliation and peace with Armenia with the existence of this kind of poisonous law or continue to deny diplomatic relations." Akçam holds the Kaloosdian/Mugar Chair for the Study of Modern Armenian History and Armenian Genocide at Clark University in Worcester, Mass.

• Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, (Eastern) led a group of worshipers on a pilgrimage to Diyarbekir (Digranakert) in Turkey, to reconsecrate the historic St. Giragos Armenian Church. The



group included the Diocese's ecumenical director, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian. Constructed in the 16th century, St. Giragos is one of the great sanctuaries of the worldwide Armenian Church. Funds to restore the church were raised around the

world. The December 10 edition of the *Mirror-Spectator* contained a first-hand account by Hagop Vartivarian, recording his overwhelming emotions at the site of the church, the bonds formed in the group and hopes for the future.

NOVEMBER

• Worldwide uproar greeted the arrest and imprisonment of Turkish publisher and free-speech activist Ragıp Zarakolu. Zarakolu, director of the Belge Publishing House, a member of Turkish PEN and chair of Turkey's Freedom to Publish Committee, is one of more than 40 activists who was detained in Istanbul, part of a crackdown against Kurdish political parties.

• Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak received a state award from President Serge Sargisian during his first visit to Armenia. The visit was sponsored by the government and the country's information technology industry.

• The 150th anniversary of the birth of Fridtjof Nansen was



celebrated in Armenia with the unveiling of a bust and a stamp. The Norwegian Nansen, as the League of Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees, saved the lives of thousands of state-less Armenians fleeing Ottoman Turkey during the Armenian Genocide. He also vigorously spoke out against the Genocide. Armenian Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian attended the unveiling of the bust with his Norwegian counterpart.

• The Knights and Daughters of Vartan paid tribute to Aurelian Mardiros as the Knights' Man of the Year on November 11. The Romanian-born Mardiros and his wife,



Anahid, as well as three sons, have donated the sculpture and base that will be in the Armenian Heritage Park in Boston. Mardiros came to the US in 1975 and was able to found A&A Industries.

• About 250 people turned out for a last-leg fundraising for the Armenian Heritage Park in Boston. The program, held in Fenway Park on November 17, raised about \$100,000. Supporters expect to reach the goal of \$6.2 million for the park's construction and perpetual fund by April 2012.

DECEMBER

• Paul Motian, a drummer, bandleader, composer and one of the most influential jazz musicians of the last 50 years, died on November 22 in Manhattan. He was 80. He was a link to groups of the past that informed what jazz sounds like today, according to the New York Times.

• Hagop Avedikian, chairman of the ADL Armenagan Party in Armenia and Edward Aydinyan, chairman of ADL Armenia, announced at a joint press conference on December 1 that the two parties are uniting and that this unified party will participate in the coming parliamentary elections scheduled for May 6, 2012.

• Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II bestowed upon a member of the Armenian Church in the UK, Vartan Ouzounian, the St. Nerses Shnorhali Medal with an encyclical for his many years of service to the Armenian Church and people. This was the first time that someone in the UK has received the medal.

Arts & Living

Music for Food

BOSTON (*Boston Globe*) – Moved by recent reports that poverty and hunger have risen in the current recession, a group of New England Conservatory artist faculty, students and alumni, headed by violist Kim Kashkashian, have united to present a chamber music concert series to benefit the Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB). Price of admission to the concerts will be a donation of non-perishable food items or a check to the GBFB.

Performers for the concert series include Paul Biss, Lucy Chapman, Miriam Fried, Narek Hakhnazaryan, Kim Kashkashian, Dimitri

(ARAM BOGHOSIAN PHOTO)



Kim Kashkashian

Murrath and the Parker Quartet. The December 19 program featured Brahms's G-Major Viola Quintet and Bartok's Duos. Attendees were asked to bring cans of food or a donation by check to the Greater Boston Food Bank.

Upcoming concerts are on February 20 and April 16.

"Music nourishes the spirit, and we want to inspire our listeners to give to those in need," says Kashkashian. For further information, visit www.musicforfoodboston.org

The Greater Boston Food Bank is New England's largest hunger-relief agency, serving almost 400,000 people a year. People are hungry everywhere in this region. According to a February 2010 study, 394,300 people were served by The Greater Boston Food Bank last year, a 23-percent increase since the last study was conducted in 2005.

Sandra Bedrosian Performs in Belmont

BELMONT, Mass. – Sandra "Sandi" Bedrosian, of Andover, was the featured vocalist with the Al Natale Swing Band, in concert at the Studio Cinema on Sunday, December 11.

The program, sponsored by the cinema, was titled "Buon Natale! A Holiday Tribute to the Big Bands."

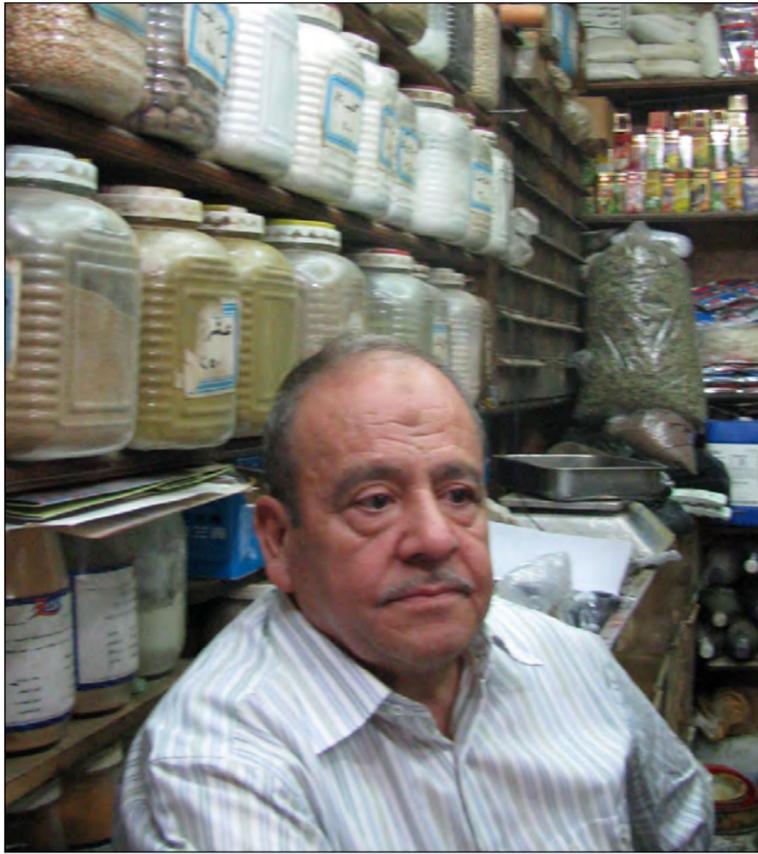
Bedrosian is well known in the New England area, having performed with Al Vega and other respected jazz musicians. This holiday tribute was dedicated to the late Vega (Aram Vagramian) who passed away recently.

Some students from Bedrosian's Voice Studio in Andover assisted her on a few Christmas songs.

Bedrosian also thrilled a packed audience at the Beech Street Senior Center, in September with her renditions of tunes from the American Songbook.



Sandi Bedrosian



The Spice Man of Aleppo

Elixir in Exile

Hidden away in my parents' home in New Jersey is an extraordinary liquid in a glass decanter shaped like Aladdin's lamp.

Tinted like a carnelian gem and with a spicy, musky, transporting scent, this exotic liquid seemed destined to be applied like perfume rather than consumed like a beverage.

By Lucine Kasbarian

The liquid only emerges from its cabinet to be carefully meted out for honored guests or

as a folk remedy for the odd illness.

Enter the rare and precious *Iskiri Hayat*. Persian for "the elixir of life," this tonic has been a source of curiosity and admiration since my childhood – a cryptic key to a fascinating past.

The word *iskir* is a dialectical variant (Turkish corruption) of the Persian *iksir* (elixir). *Hayat* means "life" in Persian and Arabic. And from the veneration with which the beverage was spoken about and handled when I was a child, I was convinced that *Iskiri Hayat* had mystical properties.

Dèdè (my paternal grandfather) knew our Armenian ancestors concocted this liqueur in their native land, but not much else – other than that one whiff had the power to transport an inhaler from exile all the way back to our native province of Dikranagerd (present-day Diyarbakir, Turkey).

I once got a glimpse of the raw ingredients, each preserved in a cloth sack tied with string. Some of them – what looked like clusters of horsehair, or a bunch of petrified raisins – could have populated a witch doctor's medicine bag. When I was old enough, Hairig (my father) would reel off the 20 ingredients of the liqueur to me in reverent tones: *Amlaj, Kadi Otì, Koursi Kajar...* Recited in succession, they sounded like an incantation. In fact, as an adult, I learned that Hairig regretted not asking Dèdè more about "the medicines" – what Dèdè called the herbs and spices comprising *Iskiri Hayat*.

On his last visit to Beirut in the 1950s, Dèdè returned with a batch of the ingredients given to him by Manoush, one of his three sisters. Illiterate, she prevailed upon her nephew, Vahan Dadoyan, to take dictation and write in Armenian script the name of each ingredient on a tag that would be affixed to each item. As was customary for that generation, women knew recipes by heart and gauged ingredients *atchki chapov* (by eye). Thus, Manoush did not identify any measurements.

Fortunately, Dèdè possessed a dry mixture of ingredients already combined. We don't know where he got it, but Hairig had, since the 1950s, repeatedly used it to make the drink. Today, our quantity is scarce and the potency of those mixed herbs, roots and spices has been depleted. Only one bottle of *Iskiri Hayat* remains. This has only intensified Hairig's mission to decode and recreate the family recipe for *Iskiri Hayat*.

How could my father, in the 21st century and far from his ancestral homeland, reconstruct the recipe when he didn't even know the English language equivalent for the names of some of these captivating-sounding ingredients, nor how much of each ingredient to dispense?

Alas, like the mélange of spices and herbs in this ethereal concoction, many of the ingredients' names themselves were probably combinations of languages spoken along the Silk Road, including the Armenian dialect of Dikranagerd, Arabic, Western Armenian, Kurdish, Turkish and perhaps even Chaldean Neo-Aramaic.

see ELIXIR, page 14

Dr. Mary A. Papazian to Be New SCSU President

NEW HAVEN, Conn. – Board of Regents President Robert Kennedy, Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) Advisory Committee Faculty Co-Chairs Arthur Paulson and James Barber and student representatives Bob Benway and Lytasha Blackwell, welcomed incoming SCSU President Dr. Mary A. Papazian to campus on December 8. Earlier that day, the Connecticut State University System Board of Trustees had recommended the appointment of Papazian to the position; later in the afternoon, the Board of Regents did so.

"Dr. Papazian is a fantastic choice to lead the campus of Southern Connecticut State University into the future," said Kennedy. "Her strong academic and administrative experience, and importantly, her work strengthening and supporting research and development at Lehman College will be of great benefit to Southern's campus. She received strong support from both students and faculty during the selection process, and I'm eager to get to work with her."

"Southern Connecticut State University students, faculty and staff will get to know



Dr. Mary A. Papazian

Dr. Papazian as a hardworking, strong and visionary president – just the type of person we want to see as the leader of one of our campuses," said Board of Regents Chairman Lewis Robinson. "She is well-published and well-respected, and understands what needs to be done to move SCSU forward."

"I am sure my colleagues join me in thanking Dr. Stanley Battle for his service to the university, which has strengthened Southern's place in the community and state and for his contributions to ensuring open access to higher education in Connecticut," said Paulson. "He has our best wishes for the future. We welcome Dr. Mary Papazian as our new president. She comes to us at a turning point of change at Southern Connecticut State University, and is very well prepared for the challenges we face. We look forward to working with her as we face the future."

"On behalf of the students of Southern Connecticut State University, we would like to thank Dr. Battle for all of his hard work over the last 18 months," said Benway, undergraduate student representative on the search committee. "We look forward to Dr. Papazian's arrival on our

see PAPAZIAN, page 16



ARTS & LIVING

Elixir in Exile

ELIXER, from page 13

Even for someone like my American-born father, who was fluent in the dialect of Dikranagerd and possessed more than a dozen dictionaries for the languages in question, trying to make sense of some names was problematic.

He knew that *Sunboul Hindi* was Indian Hyacinth. And that *Manafsha Koki* was Violet Root. But what the blazes were *Agil Koki*, *Houslouban* and *Badrankoudj*?

So much was lost in the Genocide. To cut the Gordian Knot for an Armenian of the diaspora is to locate his/her confiscated, ancestral house in Western Armenia. Since Turkish authorities deliberately changed regional names and landmarks after 1915 to obfuscate their Armenian origins, the directives (often descriptions of the house and surrounding areas, handed down verbally from genocide survivor ancestors) are today insufficient.

For Hairig, another vexing quest had been to find people, of Dikranagerd ancestry or otherwise, who could help him decipher the names and meanings of the elusive ingredients in *Iskiri Hayat*. Though the famous Cookbook of Dikranagerd possessed a recipe for *Iskiri Hayat*, it was not the formula he sought. And while some firms produce commercial formulas, he wanted our specific ancestral recipe.

While the task seemed insurmountable, my father had made some progress over the years. However, in recent times, he seemed to have exhausted his options.

So, when I decided to make the pilgrimage to the deserts of Der Zor – the killing fields of the Armenian Genocide – last year, I hoped to extend our search to Haleb (Aleppo, Syria), where some Genocide survivors (including my relatives) found refuge. There, I surmised, the right person would surely recognize the ingredients' names, know what they looked like and even point me to where I could obtain them. We could worry later about how much of each item to blend.

Ultimately, my aim was to refresh Hairig's supply – and from a source logistically close to Dikranagerd. Doing so seemed a meaningful thing a grateful child could do for a devoted parent in his twilight years.

My father had never seen the home of his ancestors and, yet, he carried the *ham yev hod* (flavors and fragrances) of Dikranagerd in his words, thoughts and deeds – from his modesty, humor and hospitality, to his dialect and storytelling ability, to his culinary and musical aptitudes. A humble gift would be to help him make that remarkable elixir that could, at least emotionally, bring his ancestors, their way of life, and

our lost homeland back to him. And was it not worth it to rediscover a missing and precious part of our culinary heritage and perhaps share it with the world?

During those fleeting days I spent in Haleb and through fellow traveler Deacon Shant Kazanjian (another person hailing from Dikranagerd), I met and quickly bonded with Talin Giragosian and Avo Tashjian, a married couple who possessed the fine qualities one would wish to encounter among Armenians. Talin also happened to be Dikranagerdsi, and it stirred the senses to hear her and Deacon Shant converse in our earthy, colorful, near-extinct dialect. Talin, an English teacher, tried her hand at translating the *Iskiri Hayat* ingredients we did not recognize and even enlisted her mother's assistance. However, they both were as baffled as my father had been over the virtual hieroglyphics. And with that, Talin and Avo met me at the famed Covered Bazaar near the Citadel of Aleppo, where the passageways are said to extend from the Fortress all the way to the Armenian Cathedral of the 40 Martyrs in the Old City.

This underground marketplace was a reminder of what life was like centuries ago. Rather than seeming anachronistic and backward, the atmosphere was invigorating. The bazaar lured visitors to connect with history by showcasing cultural features that had managed to remain intact despite the modern world's creeping influence. Here, people were not "living in the past," as some are inclined to say about those who don't conform to modern habits. These people preferred to cling to their traditions, taking part in an authentic continuation of the past in the present.

As we entered the bazaar, we marveled at the vaulted ceilings, the intricately carved doors and metalwork on the walls. Merchants – some wearing kaftans, others in Western dress – would call out to customers. Through the narrow, serpentine passageways, hired hands led donkeys carrying sacks of grain. Others carried supplies on horseback. *Niquab*-wearing women haggled over prices. Through the labyrinths, we passed through the jewelry, textile, pottery and camel meat districts, until we finally reached the herb and spice district.

Talin directed me to the stall belonging to the Spice Man of Aleppo. He was the eldest, best known and most amply supplied of the spice vendors. Talin surmised that the Spice Man, who inherited the business from his father and grandfather, retained the knowledge they had amassed and transmitted to him. This would have meant that when our ancestors emerged from the

deserts of Der Zor speaking a variety of dialects, the Spice Man's grandparents picked up the many names a product went by, including those used by the Armenians.

In spite of whatever their personal ambitions may have been, the Spice Man's four sons all worked in the family business, operating out of a closet-sized stall. It was teeming with bottles, packets, canisters and jars filled with powders, liquids, seeds and roots. A ladder led to a trap door on the ceiling that opened into an attic, their main storehouse.

Unable to communicate with words, I still could not contain my zeal upon encountering the Spice Man. Stoic and world-weary, he had no inkling of or interest in the source of my enthusiasm. A man of few words as it was, the Spice Man did not speak English. But as Talin recited the shopping list to him, name by name, something incredible occurred:

"Do you have *Agil Koki*?" she asked in Arabic. The Spice Man gestured a grand nod of the head, like a solemn bow, to signal "Yes."

"What about *Badrankooj*?"

Again, the Spice Man's head would slowly move from up to down until his chin brushed his collarbone.

And so this ritual went on. Talin would say a name and the Spice Man would unhurriedly acknowledge that not only did he know what the word meant, but that he stocked the desired item.

Then, the Spice Man would call out to his sons to each fill different parts of the order.

By the time Talin was through, we had collected all but one of the ingredients on the list. Even if he were not interrupted by demands from his customers, the Spice Man still would not have been inclined to have a significant chat. We were neither able to cajole him to explain in Arabic some of the more esoteric terms, nor did Talin recognize mystery ingredients by sight or smell. However, the Spice Man's sons did write down, in Roman letters, each ingredient's name on its corresponding package – a revealing moment.

I was in mortal shock when we left the stall having completed the lion's share of my mission. To celebrate, Avo, Talin, Shant and I went to the bazaar's bath oil and fragrance district and rewarded ourselves by purchasing traditional *kissehs* – the coarse washcloths used by our elders.

Back in my hotel room, I shed a tear while inhaling each aromatic ingredient. Then, I securely packed them into Ziploc bags, distributed them throughout my luggage, and hoped I wouldn't be taken aside at Damascus airport for suspected drug smuggling. Even afterwards, the heavenly scents that clung to the clothes in my suitcase made my mouth water when I unpacked them back in the States.

What was Hairig's reaction when I returned to New Jersey, told him my tale and presented him with one packet after the next? He seemed grati-

fied, but also at a loss. Were we really that close to our goal? It was almost too remarkable. He inspected each sachet carefully as if to say "So this is what *Badrankooj* looks like!" and braced himself for the next step: finding a knowledgeable spice vendor who could give us English equivalents to foreign words with the help of visual stimulus.

From here, we will keep readers apprised of the last legs of our intoxicating voyage. The reconstituted beverage may indeed be so supernatural that the next time you hear from us may be from Dikranagerd itself.

(Lucine Kasbarian is the author of *Armenia: A Rugged Land, an Enduring People* (Dillon Press) and *The Greedy Sparrow: An Armenian Tale* (Marshall Cavendish). She may be reached at: editor@lucinekasbarian.com.)

Concert Review: Clarinetist Narek Arutyunian at Kennedy Center

By Cecelia Porter

WASHINGTON (*Washington Post*) – The clarinet is a tricky instrument, challenging the player with some treacherous hurdles to overcome. If the lowest notes are blown with an indiscriminate fortissimo, the instrument honks like a Canada goose.

If the upper range is handled carelessly, its warbling sounds pierce the human ear like an out-of-tune air-raid siren. But the 19-year-old Armenian-born clarinetist Narek Arutyunian shows complete command of his instrument.

At his Washington debut last month at the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater, Arutyunian's deepest notes were at once vibrant and enveloping. His highest range had the clarity of a vibrant coloratura.

With his impeccable pianist, Steven Beck, Arutyunian opened with Francis Poulenc's *Sonata, Op. 184*, Jean Francaix's *Tema con Variazione* and Carl Maria von Weber's *Grand Duo Concertante in E flat, Op. 48*.

The second half of the program included Joseph Horowitz's *Sonatina*, an arrangement of Paul Schoenfield's *Four Souvenirs* and Edison Denisov's *Sonata for Solo Clarinet*.

The event was sponsored by the Young Concert Artists series, which has launched such musicians as Emanuel Ax, Pinchas Zukerman and the Tokyo String Quartet into major careers. And the series has picked another winner.

Arutyunian's playing reaches passionate depths with seemingly effortless technical prowess, beguiling sensitivity and an energetic stage presence. He plunged up and down his instrument with gleaming homogeneity, propelling the Poulenc at lightning speed in the allegros and, in the Romanza, portraying the composer's signature casual air with utmost fluidity and meaningful phrasing.

Arutyunian exposed a similar Gallic wit as in Francaix's bizarre waltz and dazzling *cadenza*. Both musicians gave an elegant account of von Weber's rather superficial duo, impeccably surmounting its virtuoso difficulties.

The performers lost none of Horowitz's blues color and jazzy rhythm interplay – perfect Benny Goodman fare. In the Denisov, Arutyunian exhibited the clarinet's endless vocabulary of effects – flutter tongue, micro-tones and wobbling tremolos. The Schoenfield offered a feisty set of stylized Latin dances and a Tin Pan Alley movement of unabashed swing. Along with an entertaining encore, these last pieces bared the clarinetist's taste for the theatrical nicely, as long as he keeps it reined in.

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ARTS & LIVING

Children of Armenia Fund Holiday Gala Raises \$1.4 Million

NEW YORK – The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF), a non-profit organization working to improve living conditions for village children in Armenia, hosted its Eighth Annual Holiday Gala on Thursday, December 15, 2011 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Temple of Dendur in the Sackler Wing. More than 300 attendees came out in support of the organization, which raised more than \$1.4 million.

For the fifth year in a row, Emmy- and Tony

award-winning star of the screen and stage, Andrea Martin, was the master of ceremonies for the evening. Multiple Tony and Emmy Award nominee, Victor Garber, was honored with the 2011 COAF Humanitarian Award. The gala featured a number of musical performances by children from COAF-sponsored villages in Armenia. In addition, Tony Award-winner Christine Ebersole performed two songs, closing the program with her rendition of *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*. Music during the cocktail hour and dinner was provided by The Narod Ensemble, an Armenian jazz band from Richmond, Va., headed by Raffi Bandazian.

The COAF Humanitarian Award was created to recognize individuals doing outstanding work in advocacy and awareness outside of the organization. Garber was chosen for his work in raising aware-



Temple of Dendur



Pat Field with village children from Armenia



Matthew Broderick and Victor Garber

ness for Alzheimer's Disease and Juvenile Diabetes. Garber's longtime friend and colleague, Tony Award-winner Matthew Broderick, presented him with the award.

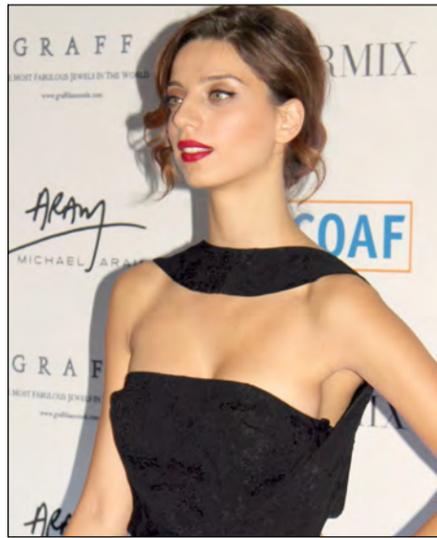
In addition to the performers and the presenters, the gala featured a long list of celebrity attendees including "Twilight's" Angela Sarafyan, the Food Network's Geoffrey Zakarian, Logo's Robert Verdi and producer and director, David Alexanian.

A charity auction conducted by Sotheby's auctioneer C. Hugh Hildelsey was held to raise money for the renovation of a school in the Armenian village of Karakert. Last year's auction raised money for the renovation of a school in the village of Myasnikyan. With the financial backing of supporters at the 2010 gala, COAF was able to complete renovations of the school in Myasnikyan in fewer than nine months.

COAF, to date, has raised more than \$14 million and currently operates in 12 rural villages.



Andrea Martin



Angela Sarafyan



COAF Chair Garo Armen and Peter Balakian

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Recipes: Potato and Lamb Moussaka

By Christine Datian

"Sometimes I change up the recipe and top this casserole with crumbled feta cheese. I like serving it with a simple Greek salad, pita bread and a great red wine." – Christine Datian, Las Vegas

(This recipe was originally published in *Cooking Light* magazine in the September 2008 issue.)

Yield: six servings (serving size: one piece)

INGREDIENTS

Cooking spray
2 pounds peeled baking potato, cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices
1 cup chopped onion (about 1 medium)
2 garlic cloves, chopped
1 pound ground lamb
1/2 cup chopped green bell pepper
1/2 cup chopped red bell pepper

1 cup no-salt-added tomato sauce
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 cup 1 percent low-fat milk
2 large eggs, lightly beaten

PREPARATION

1. Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Coat pan with cooking spray. Add one-third of potato slices to pan; cook 3 minutes on each side or until lightly browned. Transfer potato to bowl. Repeat procedure with cooking spray and remaining potato slices.

2. Preheat oven to 350°.

3. Recoat pan with cooking spray. Add onion, garlic and lamb to pan; cook 3 minutes or until lamb begins to brown. Add bell peppers, tomato sauce, salt, cumin, black pepper, cinnamon and parsley; cook 10 minutes.

4. Arrange half of potato slices in a 13 x 9-inch baking dish coated with cooking spray. Arrange lamb mixture over potatoes; top with remaining potato slices. Combine milk and eggs in a small bowl; pour over potato mixture. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes or until top is golden and set. Remove from oven; let stand 10 minutes before serving.

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ARTS & LIVING

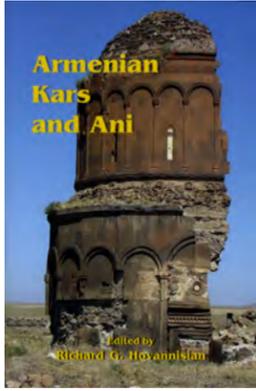
Richard Hovannisian to Speak at First Armenian Church on Armenian Kars and Ani

BELMONT — The First Armenian Church and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will sponsor a talk titled “An Illustrated Journey to Kars and Ani,” by Prof. Richard G. Hovannisian, on Friday, January 20, at 8 p.m. at the Nahigian Fellowship Hall, First Armenian Church, 380 Concord Ave.

A signing of Hovannisian's newest edited volume, *Armenian Kars and Ani*, will follow the lecture. A reception will follow at the NAASR Center, across the street from First Armenian Church, at 395 Concord Ave.

The lecture and reception are free and open to the public.

Hovannisian traveled through Historic Armenia in spring 2011 as the historian-guide for a NAASR Armenian Heritage Tour led by Armen Aroyan, providing him with the opportunity to visit and reflect on these cities and



Cover of new book *Armenian Kars and Ani*, edited by Richard G. Hovannisian

regions that he has so often written about as a scholar.

Armenian Kars and Ani is the 10th volume of proceedings from the UCLA conference series “Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces.” This present volume represents a departure from its predecessors that have focused on historic Western Armenian areas, whereas Kars and Ani were very much a part of Eastern or Russian Armenia.

Hovannisian is the author of *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, the four-volume history *The Republic of Armenia*, and has edited and contributed to more than 25 books, including *The Armenian*

Genocide in Perspective; The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times; Remembrance and Denial; Looking Backward, Moving Forward and *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*.

Dr. Mary A. Papazian to Be New SCSU President

PAPAZIAN, from page 13

campus and are excited to begin working with her in the future. Dr. Papazian has the skills needed to move the university in a positive direction and we are confident that she will work in the best interest of the campus community.”

“I am honored by this appointment and humbled by the support both the Boards of Trustees and Regents have placed in me,” said Papazian. “Southern Connecticut State University is a great campus with enormous potential and I am looking forward to meeting the students, faculty and staff who call Southern home.”

On Thursday, Papazian said she is fortunate to join the Southern community on the heels of so much good work that has been done at the university. She said she will strive to help the university build upon those accomplishments. She said she will fight so that Southern students are afforded the best education possible. “I want students to have the opportunity to participate in the American Dream.” She said she is excited to embark on an exciting journey with the students, faculty and staff at Southern. “I promise you a journey of respect and commitment — one that is dedicated to excellence and human dignity. Our students — at the end of the day — are the reason why we're here.”

Wife of Dr. Dennis R Papazian, professor emeritus, University of Michigan, she received her bachelor's, master's and PhD from the University of California, Los Angeles, in English literature. She began her career at Oakland University in Michigan as an assistant professor of English and ultimately became the associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences there. Following her time at Oakland University, Papazian was the dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Montclair State University, a comprehensive public university with 17,000 students and 500 full-time faculty members. There, she recruited more than 30 diverse faculty members, managed the college's nearly \$23 million budget and set spending priorities that supported the students even while budget dollars tightened. At Montclair State, Papazian also created a strong partnership between liberal arts and education, helping to strengthen the teacher education program at the school.

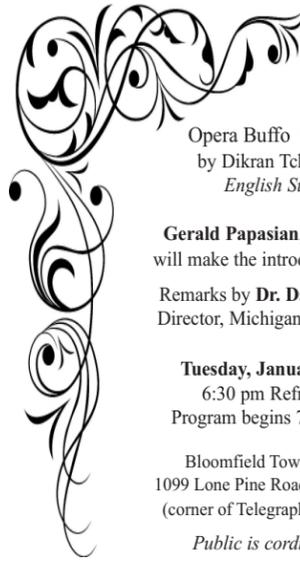
In 2007, Papazian became the provost and senior vice president for Academic Affairs at Lehman College, part of the City University of New York (CUNY) system. At Lehman, Papazian was responsible for a \$60-million budget, more than 750 full- and part-time faculty members and 200 staff, as well as the management, planning, development and quality control of all academic programs at the college. Papazian helped articulate a strategic vision and long-term goals

for the college and has played a leading role in their implementation. She also supported efforts to build strong community relationships with the college and was a key member of Lehman's leadership team as it launched Lehman's first capital campaign with a \$40 million target by 2014 — \$34 million of which has been raised or pledged to date, including nearly \$1 million for scholarships.

Focusing on Lehman's position as a comprehensive college within a research university, Papazian strengthened Lehman's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs to leverage support in that community for Lehman. She has hired dozens of research active faculty to join a group that has already been awarded \$20 million annually in external funding.

Papazian has published a number of books, articles and reviews, including her most recent book, *The Sacred and Profane in English Renaissance Literature*. In 2009, Papazian presented to the “University Education for the 21st Century” conference in Armenia, focusing on the future of teaching and learning in the new millennium.

She is a graduate of Holy Martyrs Armenian high school and the daughter of Hagop and Marilyn Arshagouni of Northridge, Calif.



Tekeyan Cultural Association sponsors the film projection and presentation of

Opera Buffo **Gariné**
by Dikran Tchouhadjian
English Subtitled

Gerald Papasian, Actor/Director will make the introduction in person
Remarks by Dr. David DiChiera
Director, Michigan Opera Theater

Tuesday, January 24, 2012
6:30 pm Refreshments
Program begins 7:00 pm sharp

Bloomfield Township Library
1099 Lone Pine Road, Bloomfield, MI
(corner of Telegraph and Lone Pine)

Public is cordially invited

Tekeyan Cultural Association will screen Gerald Papasian's modified version of Dikran Tchouhadjian's "Gariné" Opera at the Bloomfield Public Library. The Opera will be presented by Gerald Papasian, the artistic director of the Dikran Tchouhadjian Research Center of Paris, and will be followed by the projection of the performance.

Tchouhadjian's "Gariné" operetta, originally called "Leblebiji Horhor Agha," was written in 1875 in Turkish, and quickly became a hit. Tchouhadjian used the urban and folk melodies of his time in the framework of a comic operetta. The setting was in the harem of Prince Khurshid Bey, in the 18th century. The prince fell in love with young Fatime, whose father, Horhor Agha, was a poor chickpea seller. He wanted to save his daughter from what he thought was a kidnapping, but his daughter was actually in love with Khurshid.

The operetta was translated into Armenian while Tchouhadjian was still alive, and in the 20th century it was translated into Greek, French, Russian and German. In the 1940s, it was performed in Soviet Armenia under the new title "Gariné." In 1967 the Armenian version was made into a film. It was still set in Istanbul, but the harem story was changed.

While Tchouhadjian's original score has been lost, Papasian discovered scores in Paris in French translation that were intended for a French production that never occurred. After this discovery, and through lots of detective work, Papasian was able to use the various versions to make his own revisions for a new Western Armenian script. He changed the figure of the father from a poor vendor into a rich man, changing also the development of the love story to allow for a livelier plot. Gariné gradually falls in love with Armen, a young intellectual who returns from his studies in Venice and establishes the theatre company in which Gariné performs.

After creating a new Western Armenian version, with a revised script, Papasian translated the operetta into French and English. The French version was staged in Paris and Marseille last year by a company of 40 singers/actors, dancers and musicians (including Gerald Papasian as the father, Horhor Agha), to critical acclaim.

For more information call 248-302-7576



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MASSACHUSETTS

JANUARY 21 — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) presents jazz sensation Grace Kelly in Concert. Proceeds to benefit the Avedisian School in Armenia. National Heritage Museum, Lexington. Tickets \$35, \$20 with student ID. Cocktails at 6:30 p.m., concert at 8 p.m. For tickets or more information, call AMAA at (201) 265-2607; Jean Marie Papelian at (781) 904-2700 or visit www.gracekellymusic.com or www.amaa.org.

NEW YORK

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



On January 21, at 8 p.m., the Armenian Missionary Association will present a concert by Grace Kelly, pictured here, with proceeds to benefit the Avedisian School. Tickets are \$35 and \$25 with student ID. For more info, visit www.gracekellymusic.com or www.amaa.org.



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Political Activism Pays off in France

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Turkey's Islamist government is once again gripped in a frenzy of anger, this time regarding the vote in the French parliament criminalizing the denial of the Armenian Genocide. Once again, Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has resorted to his characteristic vituperation, threatening France with a number of punishing countermeasures.

On the eve of the French parliamentary debate over the Genocide bill, Mr. Erdogan had addressed a personal letter to President Nicolas Sarkozy, cautioning him about the consequences of adopting the Genocide Bill. He indicated particularly the "grave consequences for France in political, economic and cultural relations." Sarkozy scoffed at the threat and even refused to take a phone call by President Abdullah Gul.

Erdogan's macho tone has resonance in the domestic political market, and perhaps in some Islamic quarters elsewhere, but in Western countries, it is taken as a *deja vu* bluff, similar to the threats Turkey hurled at France after the French parliament recognized the Armenian Genocide in 2001.

It is particularly ludicrous for Turkey to threaten France in the realm of culture. One could rightfully ask what kind of culture Turkey can offer to a nation, which has given to the world Corneille, Racine, Descartes, Debussy, Delacroix and other giants of the Enlightenment? Perhaps only Nasreddin Hoja, who has dispensed common sense and practical wisdom to the Turks for many centuries.

And today, one of his anecdotes is a propos to define Turkish attitude in this case.

The anecdote goes like this: Nasreddin Hoja has borrowed some money from his neighbor and cannot repay the loan at the deadline. He is restless and sleepless all night. Once his wife finds out the cause of Hoja's worries, she opens the window and hollers to the neighbor: "Hoja will not pay his debt tomorrow" and turning to the husband, she adds: "Now you can go to sleep, and let the neighbor lie sleepless."

This anecdote exemplifies our case for the Genocide, which has kept us sleepless for more than 95 years. Now it is Turkey's turn to worry, except that Armenians cannot afford to go to sleep yet. The Armenian Genocide has indeed become an agenda item of national discourse in Turkey, leading to all kinds of interpretations, and, yes, certainly eroding the denialists' policy in the state.

December 22 was a crucial date as the lower house of the French Parliament voted overwhelmingly to criminalize the denial of the Armenian Genocide, punishable with a one-year prison term, with a fine of 45,000 euros (approximately \$60,000).

To become law, the French Senate must also pass the bill. There is a limited time to put the bill on the Senate agenda — between January 10 and February 22 — to be debated some time in March.

The bill was authored and introduced in the parliament by the French Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) right-wing ruling party MP from Bouches-du-Rhone region, Valerie Boyer, whose web page has been hacked by the Turks and has received many death threats, perhaps as an expression of Turkish "culture."

Meanwhile the leader of the Socialist majority in the French Senate demanded that the government submit the bill to the upper house "as soon as possible." Therefore, the bill has bipartisan support in the Senate.

In 2006, the parliament had voted to adopt the Armenian Genocide resolution but it was placed on the senate agenda only five years later to be defeated. This time around, that political game cannot be played, because the Genocide bill has become an election issue and presidential run-off election will take place after the March vote, on May 10. And the National Assembly elections will take place on June 10 and 17. Otherwise the bill could fall victim to political expediency and die in its track.

Turkish reaction was as harsh as Erdogan's rhetoric: "As of now, he said, we are canceling bilateral level political, economic and military activities. Bilateral military cooperation and joint maneuvers are cancelled as of now...Our measures and precautions will come to life stage-by-stage according to France's position." He added, "There is no Genocide in our history, we do not accept it."

Following his prime minister, Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu took up the diatribe, during his consultations with Turkish ambassadors in Ankara. He accused France of "racism" and a "medieval mentality."

On the other hand, the French Prime Minister Alain Juppé tried to smooth over the deteriorating relations, cautioning his Turkish counterparts against extremism.

Ironically, some of the respected Turkish media echoed the call for caution by the French prime minister; for example Koray Caliskan wrote in *Radikal* "the happenings in the Ottoman period need to be taken calmly." Candas Tolga Isik wrote in *Haber Turk*, quoting Henry Kissinger, "the last one quitting the negotiating table is the winner in diplomacy." Namik Cinar wrote: "A Turkey which is its own enemy." The veteran journalist, Ahmet Ali Birent, who is respected beyond Turkey's borders wrote in

Hurriyet: "What we need most today is cold-blooded open policy."

Erdogan and Davutoglu have accused France and its president with a number of misdeeds, which may easily turn against them:

- That France has committed Genocide in Algeria;
- That Sarkozy is using the Armenian Genocide issue for his electoral purposes;
- That there is no freedom of thought in France and
- Leave history to historians.

Let us take the above accusations one by one. France does not have clean hands in Algeria, but repression of an independence movement in that former colony does not amount to genocide. But even if France had committed a genocide in Algeria, that does not absolve Turkey in committing genocide against Armenians. Accusing France of committing a genocide is not proof that the accuser, Turkey, itself has not committed genocide. Mr. Erdogan pontificated to the French president that if he does not know what his country did in Algeria, let him ask his father.

Sarkozy is certainly using the Armenian Genocide issue for his political ends. He wishes to win over 500,000 Armenians in France during his re-election bid for the country's presidency.

That statement in itself is a tacit admission by Turkish leaders that indeed politically active community in France is a force to reckon with.

Also, it is the nature of politics to tag the interests of a minority to the political interests of more powerful entities. Why should Sarkozy, and for that matter anyone, take an interest or espouse the cause of a murdered nation, when at the end there is no political dividends for that party.

It is ironic that Erdogan, while keeping Article 301 in the Turkish penal code to harass and punish anyone mentioning the word Genocide, accuses France of restricting freedom of thought.

Turkish groups demonstrating in front of the French parliament against the vote carried signs with the antiquated message that history should be left to the historians, when historians have already given their verdict that, indeed, Turkey committed genocide against Armenians. While the world has already admitted the fact of the Genocide, the Turkish government still tries to obfuscate the facts.

Besides, genocide is not only a historical reality; it is a crime with legal implications, it is the destruction of 1.5 million lives, whose ancestral homeland has been usurped.

The French vote comes to prove that political activism is working and yielding results albeit 95 years later.

The vote also has come to awaken the conscience of many Turks, who call for placing the issue on their domestic political agenda.

One of the unintended consequences of this national debate has been to awaken also the dormant majority of Armenians or half-Armenians, who are gradually reverting back to Christianity and their Armenian identity.

It was an interesting development that the US State Department did not issue one of the run-of-the-mill statements about the French vote. Indeed the spokesperson at Foggy Bottom Mark Toner when asked about the issue, in a press conference, stated: "We have already expressed our position on the issue and we have not changed it. We continue to support the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia. We wish good relations also between Turkey and France and we hope they can overcome the current misunderstandings."

The only cautious party in this new development is the Armenian leadership in Turkey. The press also echoes that sentiment, which is understandable, because when they take up a taboo from the past, an entire history comes fore.

Indeed, Turkey has relapsed into its medieval behavior every time a progressive political advance has been achieved. Armenian writers remember the era of "property tax," September 6 atrocities, Gen. Kenan Evren's gallows and other instances of repression, while signing an article.

For example, the *Agos* editor has found the French vote detrimental to the Armenian community.

Etyen Mahcupyan, writing in *Zaman*, speaks from both sides of his mouth. "The republican era [in Turkey] sought to make sure that the people remain ignorant about the Armenian issue, and it was successful in this attempt. In such an environment, there was no other way for the Armenian Diaspora but to rely on external political supporters." Then he flips his position in the conclusion of his article by writing, "In conclusion, the bill adopted by the French parliament and other similar initiatives will do nothing good to Armenian and Turks."

Mr. Mahcupyan had certainly Hrant Dink's murder on his mind in taking the issue cautiously.

The French vote is one more stage in the international political scene to tighten the noose around the neck of the denialist Turkish government.

Kudos are due to the French-Armenian community for its success in its political activism.

As to the French government, it is a partial retribution against its 1921 betrayal in Cilicia, causing many deaths and loss of ancestral Armenian homeland.

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EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Marc Mgrditchian

PRODUCTION

Dilani Yagaratnam

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:

Edmond Azadian

CONTRIBUTORS:

Florence Avakian, Elizabeth Aprahamian, Daphne Abeel, Dr. Haroutiune Arzoumanian, Taleen Babayan, Prof. Vahakn N. Dadrian, Diana Der Hovanesian, Philip Ketchian, Kevork Keushkerian, Sonia Kailian-Placido, Harut Sassounian, Mary Terzian, Hagop Vartivarian, Naomi Zeytoonian

CORRESPONDENTS:

Armenia - Hagop Avedikian

Boston - Nancy Kalajian

Philadelphia - Lisa Manookian

Contributing Photographers:

Jacob Demirdjian, Harry Koundakjian, Jirair Hovsepian

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Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472-1509



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Turkey Besieged by Armenian Successes Long Before the Genocide Centennial

Turkish leaders made a serious tactical error in 2011. They were so preoccupied with countering the upcoming tsunami of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide in 2015, that they lost sight of the more immediate political storms facing them.

Armenians quickly capitalized on the Turkish blunder, managing to score a series of early successes: 1) the French Parliament adopted a bill banning denial of the Armenian Genocide, 2) the US House of Representatives passed a resolution calling on Turkey to return Armenian churches and other properties to their rightful owners, 3) an Israeli parliamentary committee held a public hearing on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and 4) a US Federal Court may shortly issue a default judgment against the Republic of Turkey.

Facing a tenacious French president who refused to be intimidated by insults and threats, Turkey reacted with slash and burn tactics that aggravated its problems and undermined its bid for European Union membership. By withdrawing its ambassador from Paris, the Turkish gov-

ernment deprived itself of the services of a capable diplomat at a crucial time when the French Senate is about to take up the bill criminalizing denial of the Armenian Genocide. Judging from past experience, the Turkish ambassador will be sent back to Paris soon, making his dramatic recall an exercise in futility and attracting the ridicule of the diplomatic community. If Turkey withdraws its ambassador every time a country recognizes the Armenian Genocide or adopts a decision contrary to Ankara's wishes, it will isolate itself from the rest of the world.

Even more damaging to Turkey's interests is the threat to boycott goods imported from countries that are deemed to be "unfriendly." Turkey would simply damage its own economy by purchasing inferior products at higher prices from alternative sources. Moreover, should Turkey stop buying highly technical items such as passenger planes and advanced missiles from the few countries that make them, it will end up with an antiquated air transport system and a weakened military. In recent days, however, Turkish leaders have sheepishly withdrawn their bombastic boycott threats, after realizing that the World Trade Organization would impose severe penalties on Turkey for violating its membership obligations.

Turning to the House resolution on return of church properties, the Turkish government and its high-priced lobbying firms were caught flat-footed on how to counter such a delicate matter. After years of success in derailing Armenian Genocide resolutions, the Turkish side was clueless about fighting a motion that called for the return of church buildings and other properties to their respective Christian communities. Consequently, the resolution was approved by a vote of 43-1 in the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and by more than two-thirds of the full House. This is the first time that the US Congress has gone on

record demanding that Turkey restore the rights of Genocide victims beyond the mere acknowledgment of the Genocide. In the coming months and years, Armenians will be presenting an ever-growing list of demands to international organizations, parliaments around the world and the Turkish government itself.

The third positive development took place in Israel, when the Knesset's Education Committee held an unprecedented three-hour public hearing on the Armenian Genocide, despite pressure from Turkey, its lackey Azerbaijan and the Netanyahu government. This discussion, held in front of TV cameras, and not behind closed doors, is expected to continue at a later date. It is shameful that the Israeli government continues to obstruct recognition of the Armenian Genocide, perhaps hoping to regain Turkey's trust and friendship. Rather than playing political games with mass murder, the Netanyahu government should acknowledge the truth of the Armenian Genocide for the sake of its own reputation.

The final salutary development is an expected default judgment to be issued by a US Federal Court against the Republic of Turkey on two lawsuits demanding payment for Armenian properties confiscated during the Genocide. Such a judgment would be a stern warning to the Turkish authorities that they cannot continue to enjoy the ill-gotten gains from the blood money of Genocide victims.

Long before the arrival of the Armenian tsunami in 2015, Turkey is increasingly confronted by pressures for greater human rights and Kurdish autonomy, and far-reaching Armenian demands, while experiencing acute problems with virtually all of its neighbors. A Turkish regime besieged with serious internal and external challenges is less of a threat to its own population and its neighborhood and more likely to settle past injustices and present conflicts.

Turkey's Long Road to Reconciliation

By Robert Fisk

Just for a moment, put aside the current Franco-Turkish war over the 20th century's first Holocaust – of the Armenians – and remember that Nicolas Sarkozy's electoral venality (500,000 French-Armenian voters want to hear him tell the truth) and Turkish nationalism (which feeds on holocaust denial) make a bad cocktail.

So here is a story of good cheer. I've just completed 21 interviews on Turkish radio, television and in newspapers, on the Armenian Genocide. Not all of my talks were about the deliberate mass murder of a million and a half Armenian Christians by the Ottoman Turks in 1915 – there was much discussion of Syria and Kurdistan and whether Turkey should be a "role model" for the Arab world (another 24-hour wonder produced by the Washington dream team) – but there was some serious discussion about that most unmentionable subject.

The occasion was the launching of the Turkish-language edition of my book, *The Great War for Civilisation* – which includes an entire and detailed chapter on the Genocide – and which has just appeared in Turkey without any imposition of the infamous law 301 (the "anti-Turkishness" law) nor any threats to Ithaki, my Turkish publishers. The chapter on the Armenians, which states repeatedly that this first Holocaust of the 20th century was planned and executed by the Turkish authorities in Constantinople (Istanbul), is titled in Turkish "The First Genocide."

And, for the most part, Turkish journalists and television presenters simply didn't question the veracity of what I wrote.

And I think I know why. For many hundreds of thousands of Turks, the Armenian Genocide is now a fact of history. The Turkish government still officially denies these atrocities, claiming that they were the outcome of a "civil war," that some Armenians were aiding the Tsarist anti-Ottoman army (true – though hardly the excuse for a genocide), that only historians "from both sides" could conclude whether or not this was a genocide. And imagine, as I always say, if "historians" were to decide whether the Nazi genocide of the Jews actually took place. But that's not the point.

Thousands of Turks are digging into their own family histories. Why, they are asking, did they have Armenian grandmothers and great-grandmothers? What is this secret history that has to be guarded by laws, which can imprison you for merely discussing in public Turkey's responsibility for this genocide? And I asked, repeatedly, on Turkish television and in the press, why a strong and brave country like Turkey – whose victory at Gallipoli remains one of the world's great military achievements, whose soldiers were the only UN unit in the Korean war who refused to be brainwashed – cannot acknowledge the terrible deeds which took place before almost all of them were born? There are no surviving murderers – though there are a pitifully few surviving Armenian victims – and there can be no trials. Turkey still wants to join the EU and in four years the world will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the

Armenian genocide.

Why not acknowledge this history now? The Germans have apologized 1,000 times to the Jews; the US has apologized to Native Americans for their 19th-century ethnic cleansing; the Australians to the Aborigines, the British to the Irish, the Ukrainians to the Poles for their mass rape, pillage and massacres under German occupation after 1941. What is it with the Turks? But as I say, many Turks believe their country should own up to its history, however inglorious.

Only a few weeks ago, Recep Tayyip Erdogan acknowledged that the Turkish army had massacred thousands of Kurds in the 1930s. The newspaper *Zaman* asked whether this might open the way to an acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide – and the newspaper did not use the word "alleged." It treated the genocide as fact. The only journalistic denial I came across was in a pre-interview discussion, when a producer described 1915 as a "mutual massacre." Like Bosnia, I asked? Silence.

Within the military police elite, of course, denial remains. After the Armenian-Turkish editor Hrant Dink was murdered by a nationalist youth from Trabzon in 2007, hundreds of thousands of Turks marched in his memory. They believed Turkish law would deal with his murderers. But cops were photographed posing beside the suspected killer after his capture. And Bahattin Hayal, the father of one of the suspected conspirators, now says that his son was mixed up with police informers, and that after see RECONCILIATION, page 19

Israel Must Not Politicize the Armenian Genocide

(This editorial was originally published in *Haaretz* on December 27, 2011.)

The approximately 1.5 million Armenians who were murdered or driven out in death marches in 1915 deserve international recognition of the holocaust they suffered.

The possibility of officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide was for years weighed in terms of Israel's foreign-policy interests in Turkey, on the one hand, and fear over the loss of the concept of "Holocaust" as an exclusive Jewish "property" on the other. Morality or identification with the Armenian holocaust were secondary issues that occasionally made their way into the public debate.

Now, too, the Prime Minister's Office has interfered with the deliberations of the Knesset Education, Culture and Sports Committee on the issue, on the grounds that the session's outcome could sabotage Israel-Turkey relations.

In this context, it is worth recalling that after the Turkish flotilla incident, a number of Knesset members and cabinet ministers threatened to put the Armenian Genocide on the Israeli agenda, to avenge the verbal attacks against Israel by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Indeed, the Knesset members who hitched a ride on the coattails of the new French law that makes denial of the Armenian Genocide a criminal offense appear to be motivated more by political vindictiveness than a genuine desire to right a historical wrong. Israel had plenty of opportunities to demonstrate its solidarity with the Armenian people when Jerusalem-Ankara relations were good. But at the time, Israel chose moral silence, and even used its friends in the US Congress to keep it from recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

Israel, one of the last countries in the world to occupy another nation and to deny the memory of the Palestinian Nakba, cannot wrap itself in the flag of morality now, while the embers of political account-settling burn beneath it. No special Knesset deliberations are needed in order to teach the Armenian Genocide – or the Nakba – in Israel's schools; the education minister has the authority to make these decisions without creating a circus of hollow morality.

The approximately 1.5 million Armenians who were murdered or driven out in death marches in 1915 deserve international recognition of the holocaust they suffered. Above all, they deserve Turkey's recognition of this terrible chapter of history.

But for Israel to make this recognition at a time that is politically convenient to it, as part of a tit-for-tat and as a means to provoke Turkey, is light years away from the recognition the Armenian people deserve.



COMMENTARY

Turkey's Standing in Region is Growing, but International Credibility Should Be in Doubt

By Emma Sinclair-Webb

There has been much discussion in the US and European media of Turkey as a rising star after its recent stance on Syria and its general support for the "Arab Spring."

Turkey is viewed as the successful merger of Islam and modernization. The Muslim religious coloring of the ruling Justice and Development Party is not seen as being at odds with its democratic, pro-Western outlook. The government has won popular support in the region, with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan greeted rapturously on his recent tour of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Turkey's vibrant economy contrasts with the economic crises in Europe and the United States.

But whatever the wisdom of a search for the best "Muslim" model for Arab countries, Turkey's international credibility should be in doubt as long as it fails to address its domestic human rights record.

The lack of rights for the country's large Kurdish minority remains at the top of the list. Two years ago the government announced a "democratic opening" to extend greater rights to all of Turkey's ethnic and religious minority groups, easing restrictions on broadcasts in minority languages such as Kurdish. Today the government has replaced that with an approach that bans, suppresses and jails its critics.

Turkey's Kurdish issue continues to be largely defined for the world by the government's nearly 30-year conflict with the outlawed, armed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, during which gross human rights abuses were committed by both sides and 40,000 people died.

At the heart of the issue lie restrictive laws that limit free speech, prevent the teaching of minority languages such as Kurdish in schools and require a political party to secure a whopping 10 percent of the nationwide vote to gain a seat in parliament. This has meant that Kurdish political parties cannot get into parliament except by standing independent candidates who can then form a minimum 20-seat party grouping once in office.

In the last three years the biggest problem has been the misuse of anti-terrorism laws to bring criminal charges against many ordinary people who engage in legitimate and nonviolent pro-Kurdish or leftist political activity. This crackdown also includes journalists, and it threatens the very fabric of human rights and democracy in Turkey.

Thousands are on trial for membership in the Turkey Assembly of the Union of Kurdistan Communities, or KCK/TM, alleged to be the PKK's urban wing. Most of the defendants are activist members, officials and serving elected mayors of the legal Peace and Democracy Party, which formed a group in parliament after winning 36 seats as independents in the June general election.

Several defendants are with local branches of the Human Rights Association, including Muharrem Erbey, head of the Diyarbakir branch, who has been imprisoned for two years awaiting trial. Among the more than 1,000 in prison awaiting trial are 40

lawyers. One is Veysel Vesek, active in fighting for justice for families of the thousands of Kurdish citizens who disappeared or were killed by state perpetrators, such as the Turkish security forces, in the early 1990s at the height of the conflict with the PKK. Abdulcabbar Igdi, a local human rights defender in the southeast town of Cizre, is also in prison. I have worked closely with these people, and their imprisonment is a serious setback for the human rights cause in Turkey.

A new low came in November with the arrests of Ragip Zarakolu, an internationally-known publisher and human rights defender; Busra Ersanli, a political science professor who had been advising the Peace and Democracy Party on constitutional reform, and Ayse Berktaay, a vocal peace activist.

What is the evidence against all these people? It is mostly wiretaps and information about their political organizing. In most cases there is no evidence of any activity that should or could be described as terrorism. Yet the widely drawn and vague nature of Turkey's terrorism laws gives zealous prosecutors and judges the ability to imprison and try them as if they were armed members of the PKK.

On November 28, in Izmir, 25 trade union officials and members of a public sector workers' union confederation were sentenced to six or more years in prison. The court had heard no evidence that any had incited violence or been involved in activities that could constitute terrorism.

There also are dozens of journalists in prison on terrorism charges. Their "crimes?" In most cases, writings that have not incited violence. In the case of Ahmet Sik, it involved an unpublished manuscript.

There is an urgent need to revise these flawed, sweeping laws, which make criminals out of the wrong people. But legal reform isn't enough. The government needs to stop silencing Kurds and other critics.

There is little sign, however, that change is coming. The prime minister and interior minister have repeatedly supported the arrests as the way to defeat the PKK, unconcerned that the democratic process in Turkey may be the principal victim of the crackdown. More chillingly in a climate of mass arrests, the prime minister demonstrated his intolerance of debate when he warned after the arrest of Zarakolu, the publisher, and Ersanli, the professor, that those who criticize such arrests should scrutinize themselves.

The US and European governments support Turkey's efforts to combat the PKK, but they have been all but silent on the crackdown on legal Kurdish politics. Turkey's three-decades-old policies of ban, suppress and jail have failed to solve the Kurdish issue. The US and Europe also should remember that a vibrant economy and popularity in the region are no substitute for basic rights. Without the latter, Turkey risks descent into widespread violence.

(Emma Sinclair-Webb is a Human Rights Watch researcher working on Turkey. This commentary originally appeared in the December 19 issue of the *LA Times*.)

OPINION

Long Live France And All the Armenian People!

This extremely emotional appeal was uttered publicly by French President Nicolas Sarkozy during a mass public rally of several thousands, which had been organized in connection with his meeting in Yerevan with Armenian president Serge Sargsian. During the rally, Sarkozy stated that if Turkey didn't take serious steps toward accepting the Armenian Genocide by year's end, then the

French republic would pass a bill, according to which the denial of the Genocide will become criminally punishable throughout France.

Although this statement and Serge Sargsian's subsequent speech in Marseille, which undoubtedly was the logical continuation of, or concluding tie-in to, Sarkozy's, were received with popular rejoicing, they didn't meet with unequivocal reaction, however, in various political circles.

To be sincere...numerous promises had been given, which hadn't been respected by various states. For that reason, in turn, the concerns of those, who regarded that critical statement by Sarkozy with reservation, were quite understandable.

It was difficult, particularly when the Turkish political elite and the information services catering to them threatened France with the employment of various punitive measures, which also included certain foreign policy spheres, besides the economic, military and tourism realms.

One can immediately say that Sarkozy and the French National Assembly honored their promise right down to the final hour and passed the bill criminalizing the denial of the Armenian Genocide by an overwhelming majority of votes, thus remaining faithful to their high calling. Furthermore, in the process, they gave a most solemn lesson to the leaders of certain states, whose promises fail to materialize.

Before shouting out loud "Long live Armenia, long live France" with all our hearts, along with the presidents of Armenia and France, on this victorious day, it is naturally not worth touching on the threats made by the Turkish government. However, we owe it to the two of them to reflect not so much on the importance of this historic day, as to once again stress the complete absence of grounds for the foreign policy conducted by the Turkish government.

What was the thrust of their so-called threats? "Turkey's airspace will be completely closed to France's air forces;" "Turkey will no longer defend French policy in different international institutions." Here it was possible to put a period or ellipsis, if the other two announcements hadn't followed these, which perhaps pertain to numerous other realms, but not at all to policy or sound logic: "Turkey will cease to cooperate with France in the realms of science, fine art and culture." Can any sober-minded individual explain what threat of cessation of cultural and scientific cooperation is the Turkey of Sultan Hamid, Talaat Pasha or Ataturk making to the fatherland of Rabelais, Balzac and Hugo? It was perhaps possible to end this series of absurd pronouncements if we hadn't learned of the most shocking one: "Turkey will no longer share with Paris information about Iran, Syria and the Middle East."

This is the political and moral bankruptcy, the wretchedness of a state that considers itself a leading country in the region.

Meanwhile, what is it that the French wanted? During the discussion on the bill criminalizing the denial of the Armenian Genocide, French National Assembly member Christian Estrosi gave the answer in minute detail: "We shall vote unanimously in favor of the law criminalizing the denial of the Armenian Genocide, because this bill pertains to an exceptional people, for whom France has become an abode during a period of time that was difficult for them. The generation having settled here has transmitted to its new generation the knowledge that the new homeland, France, takes corresponding measures. This bill is not an insult to Turkey; the new millennium must return dignity to the Armenian people. The history of the Armenian people is connected today with our history, and I am proud that I must vote in favor of the passage of that bill."

Before Estrosi, Bernard Valeria, spokesman for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also attempted to explain to his Turkish colleagues, stating that "Turkey is simply obligated to carry out its international obligations and waiving them is not dependent on the whim of this or that politician."

Indeed, giving a long and laborious explanation is easy, of course. Understanding it is difficult, especially when the desire doesn't exist, or the will to seriously appreciate the geopolitical changes is totally absent.

We are facing a fait accompli from now on.

The denial or refutation of the Armenian Genocide throughout the French Republic is already a criminally punishable act. And we think that, on this occasion, it is not at all superfluous as well to repeat the appeal, together with the presidents of the republics of France and Armenia, which rang out months ago in the capital city of Yerevan: "Long live Armenia, long live France!"

Let us echo this slogan and assure our readers that upon occasions presented to us, we shall address those highly-merited individuals one by one, without fail, through whose indefatigable and industrious efforts over many years this slogan was rendered into real work.

Great work.

(TRANSLATED BY ARIS G. SEVAG. THIS EDITORIAL APPEARED IN ZARTONK DAILY OF BEIRUT ON DECEMBER 23, 2011.)

Turkey's Long Road to Reconciliation

RECONCILIATION, from page 18

the murder the Trabzon police chief, Yahya Ozturk, told the boy that he was "serving his country." An intelligence official, Hayal claimed, later sent him a message: "I pay my respects to you. You have raised a patriotic son." The court case has now turned into a scandal. Papers have been lost. Government departments unaccountably decline to help the trial prosecutors.

Not to mention the whole Kurdish catastrophe – and the Kurds, I should add, have acknowledged their own role in the Armenian Genocide in a way that the Turks have not – and the threats against freedom of speech, let alone the Hrant Dink trial, Turkey is scarcely a nation which the Arabs should treat as a "role model." But as I repeatedly pointed out in Turkey, Erdogan was the first Muslim leader to recognize and admire the Arab awakening. Never could I have imagined the Turkish flag flying once more in Gaza and Cairo. Turkey is a changed country.

There are miserable sides to all this. Pakistani journalist Ahmed Aziz has written to tell me that an article of his on the Genocide "got heavily edited because in Pakistan we have this fallacy about the Ottoman Empire being the last great Caliphate made up of saints and it might have hurt some [sic] people." Online, "it did manage to get my point across judging by the number [sic] of hate mail that I got..." Aziz asked, "Why do human beings, when denying something of which they are at fault, use personal attacks to refute the criticism?"

But as I say, be of good cheer. At one of my Istanbul book autograph sessions, a young man asked me to sign a copy for his father who had seen me on television and liked what he heard. I signed the book. "My Dad," the man said, "is the chief of police for Istanbul."

(This commentary appeared in the December 24 edition of the *Independent* newspaper.)



Campaign 2012: A Look Through the Armenian-American Lens

CAMPAIGN, from page 1

not only the presidential race but congressional races.

So what does this all mean for the Armenian-American community?

In congressional elections, for decades Armenian-Americans have been active in raising Armenian issues and concerns, upon which politicians compete for the Armenian-American vote. In recent years, the small but growing Turkish-American community has followed suit. From its peak in the 110th Congress, the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues boasted more than 160 members; today it stands at 135. At the same time, the Congressional Caucus on Turkey and Turkish-Americans grew from just over 60 members in 2006, to 126 members today, a 200-percent growth rate.

So far this year, 17 House Democrats and 9 House Republicans have announced their retirement or will not seek re-election. The number of outright retirements can be attributed in large part to the redistricting process, a once-a-decade phenomenon. The announced retirement of Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA), a strong leader on Armenian issues, is a prime example. Additional retirement announcements can be expected in the coming weeks.

As of this writing, the Armenian Caucus is set to lose nine members: Representatives Lynn Woolsey (D-CA), Dennis Cardoza (D-CA), Jerry Costello (D-IL), John Olver (D-MA), Barney Frank (D-MA) and Dan Kildee (D-MI) have all announced retirement. Kildee's nephew, Dale Kildee, is a candidate for his uncle's seat. In addition, three Armenian Caucus members are running for other office: Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA) is running for mayor of San Diego, Rep. Chris Murphy (D-CT) is running to replace Joe Lieberman (I-CT) in the Senate and Rep. Shelly Berkeley (D-NV) is also running for the Senate. As of this writing, the Turkish Caucus is set to lose seven members: Representatives Mike Ross (D-AR), Dan Boren (D-OK) and Geoff Davis (R-KY) are retiring, while Representatives Connie Mack (R-FL), Denny Rehberg (R-MT) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) are all running for the Senate. Rep.

Mike Pence (R-IN) is running for governor. Mack, Flake and Pence all sit on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, where they voted against the Armenian Genocide resolution in 2007 and 2010.

Redistricting has resulted in some of the retirements, but it is also putting pro-Armenian incumbents in head-to-head battles and making re-election much more difficult for others. Looking at congressional champions of Armenian issues, Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ) and Armenian Genocide resolution sponsor Adam Schiff (D-CA) have not been adversely affected by redistricting. However, Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Ed Royce (R-CA) and Armenian Genocide resolution sponsor Robert Dold (R-IL) are not as fortunate. Redistricting has made Dold's district favor Democrats more, and given his narrow victory in 2010, he is a top target for Democrats in 2012. Rep. Ed Royce has also been victimized by redistricting, putting him in a dual-incumbent battle with caucus member Rep. Gary Miller (R-CA). In New Jersey, reports indicate that caucus member Steven Rothman (D-NJ) has decided to challenge his colleague, fellow member Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) in the redrawn 9th Congressional district, setting up a costly dual-incumbent primary.

The most prominent tete-a-tete battle to result from redistricting has put two pro-Armenian (and pro-Israel) incumbents in the same district: House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Howard Berman (D-CA) and House Foreign Affairs member Brad Sherman (D-CA), both champions on Armenian issues. Berman has a decades-long record on Armenian issues, particularly the Armenian Genocide. Berman has a similarly strong record and as chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in 2010, ensured the successful passage of H. Res. 252, the Armenian Genocide resolution. While Sherman has ratcheted up over 30 endorsements from House colleagues, Berman has the backing of three SuperPACs. A product of the 2010 Citizens United vs. FEC Supreme Court ruling, SuperPACs are

independent expenditure only committee's that can raise and spend unlimited amounts of money.

In addition to working with supporters in Congress, electing Armenian-Americans is long overdue. This year a new face emerged, Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian, who sought the Democratic nomination for the 1st Congressional district. Although unsuccessful, he was able to garner 22 percent of the vote in the primary, no small feat. As of this writing, only one Armenian-American has officially filed papers to run for Congress, while another is preparing to jump in: David Krikorian and Danny Tarkanian, respectively.

Krikorian unsuccessfully challenged Rep. Jean Schmidt (R-OH) in 2008 and 2010. Schmidt, the top recipient of Turkish PAC money, filed a complaint against Krikorian with the Ohio Elections Commission (OEC) after Krikorian accused her of taking Turkish "blood money" on campaign advertisements in the 2010 race. The OEC ruled in Schmidt's favor. However, following the election, the House Ethics Committee began an investigation into the free legal services provided to Schmidt by the Turkish American Legal Defense Fund and the Turkish Coalition of American. Although the House Ethics Committee found no wrong doing on Schmidt's part, she was ordered to repay the \$500,000 legal bill and amend her financial forms to reflect this in-kind contribution. According to a December report in Roll Call, Schmidt "has yet to amend her financial disclosures or begin repaying the debt."

Tarkanian is preparing to run in the new 4th district of Nevada. According to a December poll by the conservative Public Opinion Strategies, Tarkanian leads his primary challenger (73 percent to 9 percent) and when matched up with the Democratic front-runner, he holds an 11-point advantage. Tarkanian has not officially filed and has stated that he will announce his intentions in January.

Turning to the presidential race, President Obama deserves acknowledgement for his audacity to speak about the Armenian

Genocide inside the Turkish Parliament, something no US president has ever dared, and for overseeing the signing of historic Protocols by Turkey and Armenia. However, his broken promise of employing the proper term, Armenian Genocide, in the annual April 24 statement, as well his policies toward Azerbaijan, from disproportionate military funding to Ambassador Matthew Bryza's recess appointment, leaves many Armenian-Americans skeptical.

Looking at the GOP field today, there are front-runners: Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich. Neither can be viewed as favorable through the Armenian-American lens. During President Bill Clinton's second term, then-Speaker Gingrich built a leadership team that consisted of Dick Arney, Robert Livingston and Dennis Hastert, all of whom went on to lobby on behalf of Turkey against US reaffirmation of the Armenian Genocide. Romney has been endorsed by pro-Armenian officials, such as former Sen. Robert Dole (R-KS), Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL) and former Rep. Susan Molinari (R-NY). However, from a legislative standpoint, it is cause for concern that Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO) is his Congressional liaison. In 2007, Blunt, then-House Republic Whip, was appointed by President Bush to the Foreign Affairs Committee the day before a vote on the Armenian Genocide resolution, in order to whip his Republican colleagues to vote against the bill. Recently, Blunt won a top post, securing his position within the Republican Senate leadership, and is working to rake up Congressional support for Romney.

It is too early to say what is going to happen between now and November 6, especially in the race to the White House. While the focus is on the Republican primaries, Democrats are activating their grassroots in what is likely to become one of the nastiest and most expensive campaign seasons ever. In politics, anything is possible and there is certainly a long road ahead. In the meantime, it is critical that Armenian-Americans know where elected officials stand, with whom they are associated and their record in support or opposition to Armenian issues.

US Ambassador Bryza to Azerbaijan Leaving Post

BYRZA, from page 1

Congress, which ends next week. To stay in Baku, Bryza needed the confirmation of the Senate, which went into recess before Christmas.

Bryza has more than 25 years of experience as a US diplomat and was one of the most visible US officials in the Caucasus region during George W. Bush's administration, serving as deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs. He is a former US co-chair of the Minsk Group, which seeks to broker a settlement to the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabagh.

To mark the end of his appointment, Bryza met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on December 27 and on December 28 held a press conference to look back on his brief tenure. He said that under his leadership, the United States "has done good work in establishing strategic partnership and friendship between the US and Azerbaijan," and "deepened cooperation" on Afghanistan.

"Azerbaijan has emerged as a crucially important transportation route for supporting operations in Afghanistan, and that route is now becoming a very important commercial asset for Azerbaijan," Bryza said.

Bryza said that Baku and Washington had "energized an enormous range of cooperative programs" between the two countries' militaries, including improving security in the Caspian Sea and development of Azerbaijan's coast guard.

Azerbaijan has witnessed an "incredibly successful year" in its energy sector, he added, highlighted by the signing in late October of an agreement between Baku and Ankara to open the so-called Southern Corridor for natural-gas deliveries to Europe.

Bryza also said that he had pressed the

Aliyev government on its troubling human rights record. "We're all familiar with the criticism by myself, my government [and] the West about shortcomings on democratic reform and human rights [in Azerbaijan] and the areas where a lot more should be done and I hope will be done," he said. "We repeatedly have expressed our views in public, and worked hard in private, to create the opportunity for people to express their views freely."

But Bryza said he didn't think that an "Azerbaijani awakening" will take place, in part because economic conditions are better than in most Arab countries. He also said that "very

enlightened officials" in the government understood the need to liberalize.

News of Bryza's departure has been welcomed by members of the Armenian-American community. Aram Hamparian, who leads the Armenian National Committee Of America, is among them.

"US diplomacy in this part of the world needs a fresh start. We need a new ambassador who can show up without any bias, without any baggage and start fresh. We would put a very high focus on challenging very assertively the Aliyev government's threats of war," he said.

Bryza also has powerful supporters. Fred Hiatt,

the editorial-page editor of the *Washington Post*, wrote recently that Bryza's departure was a "vivid example of how the larger US national interest can fall victim to special-interest jockeying and political accommodation."

More than 30 policy experts and former US government officials also sent a letter to Congress earlier this month urging members to keep Bryza, whom they called "an exemplary ambassador," in Baku.

Until a new US envoy to Azerbaijan is nominated and confirmed, the post will likely be filled by the embassy's current deputy chief of mission, Adam Sterling.

Convention on Prevention and Punishment of Genocide Adopted 63 Years ago

YEREVAN (armradio.am) – On December 9, 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The Convention entered into force on January 12, 1951. It defines genocide in legal terms, and is the culmination of years of campaigning by lawyer Raphael Lemkin.

All participating countries are advised to prevent and punish actions of genocide in war and in peacetime. The number of states that have ratified the convention is currently 140.

The convention, a major pillar in the evolving framework of international humanitarian rules, declares genocide a crime under international law. It condemns genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, and provides a definition of this crime.

Moreover, the prescribed punishment is not subject to the limitations of time and place.

The convention defines genocide as any of a number of acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The convention also declares that there shall be no immunity. Persons committing this crime shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.