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NEWS IN BRIEF

Mediators again Visit Karabagh Amid More Deadly Fighting

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – International mediators have toured the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict zone amid continuing deadly skirmishes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces that left two Azerbaijani soldiers dead at the weekend.

The US, Russian and French diplomats co-chairing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group held talks in Yerevan on Friday, proceeded to Karabagh on Saturday and were due to arrive in Baku on Monday.

Official sources in Armenia gave few details of their meetings with President Serge Sargisian and Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian. In a statement, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said they discussed ways of implementing understandings reached by Armenia's and Azerbaijan's presidents at their last meeting hosted by their Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev in Sochi in late January.

The statement quoted Nalbandian as complaining about recent statements by Azerbaijani leaders which he said "run



President Serge Sargisian (right) meets with the US, French and Russian co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group in Yerevan.

counter to the agreements reached at Sochi." It did not elaborate.

In a joint statement with Medvedev issued in the southern Russian city,

Sargisian and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev pledged to "accelerate the achievement of an agreement on the Basic Principles" of a Karabagh settlement put forward by the Minsk Group co-chairs. They said they also told the mediators to continue working with the conflicting parties on a mechanism for jointly investigating cease-fire violations along the "line of contact" around Karabagh and the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

see MINSK, page 20

Schiff Presses Clinton on Armenian Genocide Position during Congressional Hearing

WASHINGTON – This week, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), the lead author of the Armenian Genocide Resolution, questioned Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during a hearing before the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Subcommittee on her recent comments that characterized the Armenian Genocide as a matter of "historical debate." Before the hearing this week, Representatives Schiff and Robert Dold (R-IL) also sent a letter to Clinton with 60 of their colleagues asking her to disavow her "historical debate" remarks, which she made at a public town hall meeting, and instead properly recognize the Armenian Genocide.

"In a town hall she recently held,

Secretary Clinton stated that the Armenian Genocide was a matter of 'historical debate.' But there is no debate about the facts of the genocide and we urge the Secretary to speak plainly about the deliberate mass murder of 1.5 million people," said Schiff. "I can't begin to express how much anguish has been caused in the Armenian-American community and with human rights activists by the secretary's comments, and I hope the president will use the occasion of April 24 to set the record straight."

"I will continue to work with colleagues from both sides of the aisle to push the United States government to recognize the

see SCHIFF, page 20

Monograph on Armenian-Turkish Protocols Published

NEW YORK – *Diplomatic History: The Turkey-Armenia Protocols* by David L. Phillips provides an insider's account of negotiations resulting in the 2009 Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations and the Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia. Published by Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights and the Project on the Future of Diplomacy at Harvard's Kennedy School, the monograph is based on interviews with US and Swiss officials involved in the mediation, as well as envoys from Turkey and Armenia.

The monograph offers a detailed history of Turkish-Armenian rapprochement beginning in 2001. It provides a blow-by-blow account of meetings mediated by

see PROTOCOLS, page 20

Armenian Rep. to UN Calls Attention To Misleading Azeri Statements

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The office of the permanent representative of Nagorno Karabagh Republic to the United States of America reported that Armenia's ambassador to the United Nations (UN), Garen Nazarian, sent a letter on February 24 to the UN Secretary General, protesting the information put out by Azerbaijan regarding the massacre of civilians 20 years ago by Armenians.

The letter reads as follows:

"I regret to note that the representative of Azerbaijan has once again taken an initiative of circulating misleading and deceptive information related to the tragic events of 1992 in the settlement of Khojalu. This delegation has on numerous occasions issued anti-Armenian propaganda and falsifications on behalf of Azerbaijani authorities relating to those events.

It would be most relevant to recall the appeal of the international community, the European Court of Human Rights and numerous human rights organizations, to

see STATEMENTS, page 20

Serge Sargisian Meets With EC President

BRUSSELS, Belgium (Armenpress) – During his visit to Belgium, Armenian President Serge Sargisian met with president of the European Commission (EC) José Manuel Barroso. Afterwards, the two leaders summoned a joint press conference.

On the first day of his visit to Brussels, Sargisian met with President of the Belgian Senate Sabine de Bethune and representatives of the Armenian organizations in the country.

Sargisian also visited NATO headquarters, where he met with NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, after which he participated in the North-Atlantic Council and Armenia meeting.

On March 7, Sargisian met with European Parliament Speaker Martin Schulz and Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy Stefan Füle.

Turkish FM Pays Visits Istanbul Patriarchate

ISTANBUL (armradio.am) – Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu paid courtesy visits to religious leaders here, including one to Armenian Deputy Patriarch of Turkey Aram Ateshian. Davutoglu said the reason for the visits was to further peace in the region.

Ateshian said that until the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) came to power in Turkey, no ministers or deputies in the country had visited the Patriarchate.

Group Calls for Boycotting Eurovision

BAKU (Armenpress) – Graham Watson, president of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, has called on the organizers of Eurovision 2012 Song Contest to boycott the contest, to be held here. He states: "Together we can announce to the Azerbaijani government that by denying the fundamental rights of their own people, they cannot host the most authoritative cultural event of Europe."

According to *Azadlig* newspaper, a statement on the website of the European Movement International presents the poor state of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Azerbaijan.

"European Liberals stand up for human rights and civil freedoms. So, when the world is going to celebrate that happy event in Azerbaijan, the liberals and democrats call on Europe to remember the atmosphere of fear existing in Azerbaijan," the statement reads.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

National Gallery of Armenia to Present Unique Exhibition of Book Art

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The National Gallery of Armenia will present an exhibition within the framework of the 500th anniversary of Armenian book printing. Director of the National Gallery, Paravon Mirzoyan, said in an interview that an original collection of book art will be exhibited in May. “It will be very large and interesting,” he said.

Mirzoyan also noted that more than 500 exhibits are kept in the museum, but about 200 works will be exhibited.

Vazgen Sargisian's Father Receives Medal

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – By Defense Minister Seyran Ohanian's decree, Zaven Sargisian, the father of National Hero of the Republic of Armenia, Republic of Artsakh Hero Vazgen Sargisian, was awarded the Defense Ministry's Vazgen Sargisian Medal, both for raising a patriotic son as well as for his contributions to the army.

Fittingly, the younger Sargisian would have turned 53 last week on the day of the awarding ceremony. Top military officers from Armenia's armed forces, led by Ohanian, visited Yerablur Pantheon to commemorate the birthday of the late hero.

Armavia Resumes Flights

YEREVAN (PanArmenian.net) – Armavia has resumed flights. According to Armenia International Airports CJSC, Armavia reached an agreement with the Federal Russian Air Transport Agency (Rosaviatsia) regarding the company's debts.

On Tuesday, March 6, Armenia's Civil Aviation Department hosted a meeting between representatives of Armenia International Airports CJSC and Armavia. A decision was made to hold another meeting next meeting.

“Hopefully, both passengers of Armavia and other airline companies will be serviced properly,” Armenia International Airports CJSC message says.

Yerevan to Have Small Farmers' Market Stalls

YEREVAN (Hetq) – Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan this week directed his staff to formulate a plan to organize a number of small farmers' markets within Yerevan.

The few that exist today do not meet the demand for fresh produce at competitive prices, he said. Last year, a farmer's market was set up at the intersection of Khandjyan and Komitas Streets and appeared to have been a success.

Court Overrules Decision To Drop Charges in Toddler's Death

YEREVAN (Hetq) – On March 2, Aram Hovsepiyan, a presiding judge at the Armavir Regional Court, overturned the dropping of criminal charges against a hospital where toddler had died on New Year's day, after reviewing the petition of the boy's parents.

In its decision, the court found that the prosecutor's arguments for dropping the criminal charges were insufficient given the seriousness of the crime.

Artashes Setrakyan, 3, was rushed to the Armavir Medical Center on January 1, 2011, where he was diagnosed with acute laryngotracheitis and was transferred to the Surb Astvatzamayr in Yerevan the next day. After four days in a coma, Setrakyan died at the hospital.

The parents accused the hospital of malpractice. Initially, the prosecutor's office had dropped the charges.

Yerevan Hails Putin's Victory In Russian Presidential Vote

By Tigran Avetisian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenia's leaders rushed to congratulate Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin Monday on his victory in Russia's weekend presidential election, saying that it will give a further boost to Yerevan's “strategic partnership” with Moscow.

In a letter released by his press office, President Serge Sargisian said the official vote results demonstrated Russians' strong support for Putin's efforts to “modernize” their country and enhance its “role and influence in global processes.” Sargisian also praised his “invaluable personal contribution” to the strengthening of Russian-Armenian ties.

“I am confident that further development of our bilateral strategic partnership will also help to reinforce peace, security and stability in the Caucasus and allow us to not only implement long-term economic projects ... but also identify new opportunities for inter-state cooperation,” he wrote. Sargisian went on to invite the Russian leader to pay a state visit to Armenia this year.

In a separate congratulatory message, Prime Minister Tigran Sargisian said Putin regained the Russian presidency in an “open and fair contest.” “I am confident that the existing strategic partnership of our states will receive new impetus,” he said.

The ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) likewise said the Russian election outcome will ensure “continuity” in relations between the two countries. “Vladimir



President Vladimir Putin

Putin's election can serve as a new impetus to Russian-Armenian political, economic, cultural and other relations,” HHK spokesman Eduard Sharmazanov said.

Also congratulating Putin was Gagik Tsarukian, the leader of the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK), a junior partner in the country's governing coalition. Like the HHK, the BHK maintains close ties with the ruling United Russia Party.

Tigran Sargisian openly backed the Russian prime minister's return to the Kremlin last month. “That is also in Armenia's interests,” he said.

The results of a global opinion poll released by Gallup last summer suggest that most Armenians would subscribe to this view. According to the poll, three

in four people in Armenia approve of the current Russian leadership's track record. Only 7 percent of Armenians were critical of the Kremlin.

The Armenian president and prime minister mostly recently met Putin during separate trips to Moscow last October.

The powerful Russian premier has singled out economic issues in his public comments on Russian-Armenian ties made in the last few years. In November 2010, for example, he thanked Serzh Sargisian for creating “necessary conditions” for Russian firms doing business in Armenia. Putin also emphasized the fact that Russia allocated a \$500 million anti-crisis loan Yerevan in 2009 and remains Armenia's leading foreign investor.

New Armenian Opposition Bloc Forming

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Opposition leader Raffi Hovannisian appeared to have moved closer on Friday to forming an electoral alliance with a new opposition party led by former prominent member of the Armenian National Congress (HAK).

Hovannisian's Zharangutyun (Heritage) party and the Free Democrats party have negotiated on the possibility of such a bloc in recent weeks. Hovannisian said last month that Zharangutyun will announce a final decision at its congress on March 2.

The congress made no such announcement, however, leaving it to the party's governing board to decide whether to team up with Free

Democrats for the May 6 parliamentary elections. The board meeting on the issue is scheduled for March 18.

“We welcome our prospective cooperation with the Free Democrats party and hope ... that it will have a long-term continuation,” Hovannisian said in a speech at the congress.

Free Democrats leaders attending the gathering implied that the alliance with Zharangutyun is a done deal. “That cooperation already exists and very soon everyone will probably be informed that the alliance of Zharangutyun and Free Democrats is going to be formed. Everything else is just technical issues,” one of them, Ararat Zurabian, said.

Hovannisian sounded more cautious,

however. “There is no decision yet,” the US-born politician told journalists.

Zurabian and other leading members of the new opposition party split from the HAK last year. Among them is Alexander Arzumanyan, a former foreign minister who managed HAK leader Levon Ter-Petrosian's 2008 presidential election campaign.

In his speech, Hovannisian also stressed the importance of Zharangutyun's cooperation with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun), the other opposition party represented in the outgoing parliament. He said his party would also seek “common ground” with Ter-Petrosian's HAK in the run-up to the elections.



Raffi Hovannisian, center, with political allies



ARMENIA

'Thinking about Thinking' Lecture Series at AUA

YEREVAN — On Friday, February 24, American University of Armenia (AUA) and Luys Foundation inaugurated a new lecture series called "Thinking about Thinking." This series invites speakers who are world leaders in the sciences, humanities, arts, engineering, media, business or social entrepreneurship to come together with young people, researchers and professionals in Armenia who welcome thinking differently, unconventionally and looking at things from new perspectives. The intent of the lecture series is to expose students to cutting-edge ideas in research, development and scholarship that are changing the face of the world today.

The first lecture in this series was presented by Prof. Tod Machover, composer and inventor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Media Laboratory, and was titled "Opera of the Future." During the lecture, Machover described how barriers to musical expression are being overcome through new tools and technologies, from animated operas to virtuosity simulators like Guitar Hero, to medical devices that use music for rehabilitation and general well being. Machover also explained how a new "musical ecology" is developing which links people across generations, geography and "genius" levels to provide more deeply integrated and satisfying experiences for individuals and societies.

A question-and-answer session followed the



Tod Machover

lecture.

Machover has been called "America's most wired composer" by the Los Angeles Times and is celebrated for his boundary-breaking compositions as well as for inventing new technologies in music industry. As a founding member of the MIT Media Laboratory in Cambridge, Mass., he has pioneered the development of hyperinstruments, which use technology to extend the expressive range of traditional instruments and make active music-making accessible to all, from musicians such as Yo-Yo Ma and Prince to children and players of the computer game Guitar Hero, which grew out of his laboratory.

Machover is also renowned for his innovative operas, including the "Brain Opera" and the recent "robotic" "Death and the Powers," which premiered last year at the Monte Carlo Opera (under the patronage of Prince Albert II) and is currently on world tour.

Machover spent the day after this inaugural lecture working with a group of Armenian students, aged 10 through 12, who have used his software to compose both symphonic and rock music. On Saturday, February 25, they practiced during the day with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra, who then performed a concert of the children's music that evening at the Philharmonic's Khachatryan Hall, in a separate event sponsored by Luys Foundation.

Phillips Chides Ankara, Washington over Failed Turkey-Armenia Deal

NEW YORK (RFE/RL) — The United States deserves its share of the blame for the failure of recent years' efforts to normalize Armenia's relations with Turkey, according to a renowned US scholar who has been actively involved in Turkish-Armenian dialogue in the past.

In an extensive monograph released by New York's Columbia University on Friday, David Phillips says that the administration of US President Barack Obama did not do enough to stop the Turkish government linking parliamentary ratification of the 2009 Turkish-Armenian normalization agreements with the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. He also calls for a US "policy review" on Armenia-Turkey that would consider the possibility of officially recognizing the 1915 Armenian massacres in the Ottoman Empire as genocide.

"The United States is also at fault. The Obama administration missed an opportunity to reaffirm de-linkage of the Protocols with negotiations over NK [Nagorno-Karabagh] when Obama visited Turkey in April 2009," Phillips writes. "US officials did not accurately assess the level of opposition to ratification in Turkey."

"While US influence was essential to signing of the Protocols, the Obama administration bureaucratized the follow-up. It should have appointed a 'Special Envoy for Ratification of the Turkey-Armenia Protocols.' The Special Envoy could have played a useful role in maintaining momentum, working the system in Washington, and keeping the parties focused on next steps rather than pre-conditions," he says.

The 130-page text contains a detailed description and analysis of the failed normalization

process as well as events leading up to its effective launch by Switzerland in late 2007, several months before Serge Sargisian took over as Armenia's president. Its author coordinated the work of the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC), a US-sponsored panel of retired diplomats and other public figures, in 2001-2004.

The Swiss mediation, fully backed and facilitated by Washington, culminated in the high-profile signing in Zurich in October 2009 of the two protocols that commit Ankara and Yerevan to establishing diplomatic relations and opening the Turkish-Armenian border. Turkey had closed it at the height of the Armenian-Azerbaijani war for Karabagh, out of solidarity with Azerbaijan.

Faced with an uproar from Azerbaijan, Ankara subsequently made clear that Turkey's parliament will not ratify the protocols until there is decisive progress towards a resolution of the Karabagh conflict acceptable to Baku. The Armenian side denounced that stance, arguing that neither document makes any reference to Karabagh. Sargisian froze the process of Armenian protocol ratification in April 2010 and has since repeatedly threatened to scrap the Western-backed deal altogether.

Phillips, who is now a program director at Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights, essentially agrees with Yerevan on the issue. "The Protocols included no pre-conditions or linkage to NK," he writes. "[Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip] Erdogan, however, established a pre-condition when he went to Baku [in 2009] and stated that the Protocols would not

be ratified unless Azerbaijan's sovereignty was restored." Erdogan could have ignored the vehement Azerbaijani protests had he been "truly committed" to the Turkish-Armenian normalization, says Phillips.

Turkish officials have claimed all along that the protocols make indirect and implicit references to Karabagh. An unnamed Turkish Foreign Ministry official interviewed by Phillips is quoted in the monograph as saying that there was a "gentleman's agreement" between Ankara and Yerevan that bilateral ties and the Karabagh dispute "will be considered in parallel." James Jeffrey, the former US ambassador to Turkey, likewise told Phillips that the two issues were not quite delinked.

According to Jeffrey, "Obama did not discuss de-linkage with [President Abdullah] Gul or Erdogan during his April [2009] trip. Instead of affirming de-linkage, Obama was silent on the issue," says Phillips. He cites other US diplomats as saying that Washington had a "plan B" in case the Turks refused to unconditionally implement the protocols. But, he adds, "no fallback plan was apparent other than convincing Sargisian to suspend rather than withdraw his signature."

Incidentally, Phillips called for stronger US pressure on Ankara when he visited Yerevan in February 2010. "Unless the Obama administration presses the Turks at the highest level, the likelihood of the protocols being ratified in Ankara will decrease," he said at the time.

In his monograph, Phillips criticizes Armenia for agreeing to announce, in a joint statement with Turkey, a "roadmap" to the normalization on April 22, 2009, two days before the annual remembrance of the Armenian Genocide victims. An unnamed senior Armenian official is quoted as confirming that this was done to make it easier for Obama to backtrack on his campaign pledge to recognize the Genocide once elected president.

"Washington wanted us to announce the agreement before Genocide day so President Obama wouldn't have to mention genocide in his statement," the official told Phillips. "The Turks expected us to say 'no,' but we fooled them."

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) pulled out of Sargisian's coalition government just days after the Turkish-Armenian statement. The main opposition, Armenian National Congress, likewise accused

Sargisian of helping Turkey thwart genocide recognition.

"The timing of the announcement galvanized opposition among a broad cross-section of Armenian society, which believed that the Protocols would be manipulated by Ankara to undermine Genocide recognition," argues Phillips. He also faults Yerevan for agreeing to disclose the Turkish-Armenian protocols only four months after they were secretly finalized in April 2009.

Like many other pundits, Phillips believes that the protocols can hardly be revived "in their present form." Still, he says the Turkish-Armenian border can be reopened even without their entry into force. "Erdogan can make history by issuing an executive order to open the border and normalize travel and trade as a step toward diplomatic relations," he says.

Phillips also makes a case for continued US financing of direct contacts between the civil societies and business communities of the two estranged nations.

He goes on to urge the Obama administration to rethink its policy on Turkish-Armenian relations and consider "innovative ideas" suggested by US and other experts.

"The discussion could consider whether US reaffirmation of its Genocide recognition [proclaimed by President Ronald Reagan in 1981] would remove recognition as a bargaining chip, thereby creating conditions more conducive to reconciliation," he says.

The monograph reaffirms Phillips's view that a landmark study commissioned by the TARC from the New York-based International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) could serve as a blueprint for ultimate Turkish-Armenian reconciliation. The ICTJ concluded in 2003 that the Armenian massacres "include all of the elements of the crime of genocide" as defined by a 1948 United Nations convention. But it also said that the Armenians can not use the convention for demanding material or other compensation from Turkey.

"In any event, [genocide] recognition should not be an item for negotiations," concludes Phillips. "It should not be traded for political concessions. Not only does negotiating recognition dishonor past victims, but it also sends a signal to future perpetrators that they can act with impunity when great powers find it politically expedient."

Monograph on Armenian Turkish Protocols Published

PROTOCOLS, from page 1

Switzerland between May 21, 2008 and February 7, 2009. Signed in Zurich on October 10, 2009, the Protocols represent an unprecedented breakthrough in Turkish-Armenian relations. Failure to ratify them is a significant bilateral, regional and international setback.

According to Phillips, "The Protocols are suspended and cannot be revived in their current form. They do, however, contain elements on the way forward suggesting cooperation

between Turks and Armenians that would advance the goal of reconciliation, building momentum towards opening the Turkey-Armenia border and diplomatic recognition."

Diplomatic History also offers detailed recommendation aimed at intensifying civil society activities, emphasizing commercial cooperation, reviving intergovernmental contact and addressing historical issues. Phillips recently presented the monograph to the US Department of State and at a congressional briefing on Capitol Hill. (See interview above.)



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Levon Aronian Refuses To Participate in Baku Tournament

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Azerbaijan's chess federation has officially filed an application to host the international chess qualifying tournament this autumn. However, one of the top players, Grandmaster Levon Aronian of Armenia, has written to the body governing chess worldwide, appealing to them to have the tournament in a country other than Azerbaijan.

The Armenian Chess Federation reported that Aronian had prepared a response to World Chess Federation (FIDE) President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and FIDE President Board members.

In his letter, Aronian wrote that the "general atmosphere in Azerbaijan and continuous tensions between our countries make my participation in such a high-ranked tournament in Azerbaijan impossible. A responsible and important event, such as the Candidates Tournament, requires peace of mind and special concentration. No circumstances, if they are not chess-related, should prevent the grandmaster from demonstrating all of his skills. Unfortunately, at this moment no Armenian can find favorable or adequate psychological atmosphere in Azerbaijan, whereas that is something absolutely necessary. In my opinion, all the participants should be in equal conditions, which is impossible in case of holding the tournament in Azerbaijan. Security guaranties and any kind of additional support cannot be a remedy."

He said he would be happy to participate in any other country.

Armenian Youth of Argentina Stages Protest At Azeri Embassy

BUENOS AIRES (PanARMENIAN.Net) – On March 2, representatives of Armenian youth in Argentina staged a protest at the embassy of Azerbaijan on occasion of the 24th anniversary of the Sumgait pogroms.

The building was surrounded by a large number of policemen despite the fact that the Azerbaijani ambassador to Argentina was then back in Baku, accompanying Argentine Foreign Minister Héctor Marcos Timerman, according to the embassy.

The action was aimed at drawing the country's attention to the Nagorno Karabagh conflict settlement particularly the aggressive statements by the Azerbaijani side, as well as propaganda by Azeri embassy with a purpose to distort the actual essence of the conflict.

Nagorno Karabagh's Autonomy Will Be Recognized: Eduard Sharmazanov

VILNIUS, Lithuania (Armenpress) – A parliamentary delegation from Armenia, headed by Deputy Speaker of National Assembly Eduard Sharmazanov, met with the speaker of the Lithuanian Sejm (parliament) Irena Degutiene.

The press service of the National Assembly of Armenia said the two sides emphasized bilateral cooperation between the parliaments of the two countries.

Degutiene and Sharmazanov discussed issues related to Armenia's integration to the European Union. Degutiene expressed her country's readiness, as EU member state, to support Armenia in achieving European standards more quickly.

The parliamentarians discussed the current round of the talks on the settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh stalemate. Sharmazanov confirmed the commitment to reach a solution and added that the settlement of Nagorno Karabagh must take place in the format of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

"International recognition of Nagorno Karabagh as a state has no alternative," Sharmazanov concluded.

Faiths Clash at Jerusalem's Sacred Site

By Daniela Deane

JERUSALEM (Washington Post) – All hell's broken loose at the Old City here in Jerusalem the past few days. But you wouldn't know it if you weren't right where it had been happening – at the Temple Mount, Jerusalem's sacred site for Muslims.

Tour buses were still parked outside the Old City on the weekend around Jaffa Gate, near the Jewish and Christian side, with tourists streaming in, despite the fact that hundreds of Muslim worshippers clashed with Israeli police at the Temple Mount Friday after Muslim prayers.

Jerusalem's .35-square-mile walled Old City, a World Heritage site, is divided into four quarters – the Armenian, Christian, Jewish and Muslim Quarters.

Israeli police said dozens of protesters barricaded themselves inside the Al-Aqsa mosque, which along with the Dome of the Rock sits atop Temple Mount, after throwing rocks at security forces. The police had been trying to

stop the protesters from throwing rocks onto the Western Wall plaza below, Judaism's holiest shrine. Israeli police then used stun grenades to disperse the demonstration in the mosque.

A 25-year-old Palestinian man was killed later Friday by Israeli forces during a demonstration near a military checkpoint between Jerusalem and the West Bank city of Ramallah. The demonstration was a result of the clashes with Israeli police on the Temple Mount.

The protests came at the end of a tense fortnight in the Old City.

Two weeks ago, police barred right-wing activists from Israel's ruling Likud Party from accessing the Temple Mount. Anti-Israel protests erupted at the Israeli embassy in Amman, Jordan in reaction to the attempt to access the holy site.

An extremist Israeli website called "Temple Mount Faithful" has been encouraging religious Jews to go to the Temple Mount recently to exercise Jewish sovereignty over the religious area. The Web site openly advocates destroying any Muslim buildings there to make way for the rebuilding of the

Third Temple. Many Palestinians believe that Jews will not relent in their quest to have the Third Temple built.

On Sunday, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas called on Arabs and Muslims to visit Jerusalem more to counter what called Israel's efforts to Judaize the divided city.

Speaking at the International Conference for the Defense of Jerusalem in Doha, Qatar, Abbas accused Israel of "surrounding Jerusalem with an Apartheid wall and a band of settlements in order to isolate the city from its surroundings in the West Bank."

He urged Muslims and Arabs that visiting "occupied Jerusalem" would remind the Israelis that "Jerusalem is the cause of every Arab, Muslim and Christian."

Israel captured East Jerusalem from Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War. Israeli politicians have consistently insisted that the holy city is the Jewish state's "undivided capital" although the international community does not recognize it as such. The Palestinian Authority, in turn, regards East Jerusalem as the capital of any future Palestinian state.

Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony Takes Place for AGBU-AYA Ahranjian Center in Beirut

BEIRUT – Attended by hundreds of Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) members, community supporters and leaders, the opening of the AGBU-AYA Ahranjian Cultural Center took place on January 28. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the 80th anniversary of the founding of the AGBU Armenian Youth Association (AYA). Cutting the ceremonial ribbon was AGBU President Berge Setrakian.

In attendance were Lebanon's Minister of Industry Vrej Sabounjian; Armenia's Ambassador to Lebanon Ashot Kocharyan; AGBU Lebanon District Chairman Gerard Tufenkjian; Archbishop Kegham Khatcherian, prelate of the Diocese of Lebanon; Lebanese Members of Parliament Arthur Nazarian and Hagop Pakradouni; Bourj Hammoud Mayor Antranig Misirian and Baouchrieh-Jedeideh Mayor Antoine Bshara; AGBU Central Board member Vasken Yacoubian; AGBU AYA Lebanon Chairman Garo Djeghelian; benefactor Yercho Samuelian and several other AGBU Lebanon and AYA members.

On this occasion, welcoming remarks were delivered in Arabic by Aida Rizk,



AGBU President Berge Setrakian (second from left) cuts the ceremonial ribbon to the AGBU Ahranjian Cultural Center as, from left, Prelate of Armenians in Lebanon Archbishop Kegham Khatcherian, AGBU Lebanon District Chairman Gerard Tufenkjian, Armenia's Ambassador to Lebanon H.E. Ashot Kotcharyan and Lebanon's Minister of Industry Vrej Sabounjian, look on.

Hampig Mardirossian, editor of *Khosnag*, the AGBU Lebanon District Committee organ, emphasized that, despite difficulties, the Armenian community has maintained its vitality and continues the commitment to preserve Armenian identity.

Setrakian thanked all who helped make this project a reality. He emphasized the AGBU's role in unifying the efforts of all Armenian organizations in Lebanon. Speaking on behalf of the AGBU Central Board of Directors was Yacoubian, the body's Middle East

grams. She also expressed the hope that this facility would play its role in society to promote Armenian culture.

and Armenia coordinator, who noted that this center was bound to become the hub of the entire local Armenian community.

Stressing in his benediction that the establishment of this center was the continuation of AGBU's service to the Armenian nation, Khatcherian added that the contribution of Samuelian, founder of the Tricolor Fund, reflected true philanthropy. Through a major gift, Samuelian had underwritten the costs for furnishing the facility. Appreciation was also expressed to Shahe Khatchadourian, who had donated not only a piano, but assisted in the task of equipping the center, and to Vergine Jerejian, who had donated her husband, Vahrich's book collection.

The Ahranjian Center was built in 1953 through a donation by the Ahranjian brothers to AGBU and was used as a school for some five decades by the Prelacy of the Armenian Church of Lebanon. Following the closure of the school, the facility was transferred to the AGBU. The structure will now house the Khosnag offices, the Vahram Papazian Theater Group, the Amanos Chapter and youth division, a small library, as well as a seated auditorium.



AGBU Central Board member Vasken Yacoubian, who is also the Board's Middle East and Armenia Coordinator, addresses those gathered for the Ahranjian Center opening in Beirut.

who noted that the intention of the Ahranjian Center was to encourage youth and to cultivate educational pro-

grams. She also expressed the hope that this facility would play its role in society to promote Armenian culture.

Community News

Tree Project Expands Its Leadership

WATERTOWN – Julia Mirak Kew has become the newest advisory board member of the executive committee of the Armenia Tree Project (ATP), while Tom Garabedian has been hired as managing director.

“As the scope and complexity of ATP’s work has increased over the past several years, the executive committee has recognized the need to broaden its management team. These changes are intended to develop and strengthen a management group that is capable of handling the growth and challenges that ATP will face in the future,” notes executive committee member Anthony Barsamian.

Kew joins ATP’s founder and chairperson, Carolyn Mugar, Nancy Kricorian and Barsamian on the organization’s executive committee. Kew played an instrumental role in the Mirak Family’s decision to make a leadership pledge to ATP in 2005, when her family made a major commitment to underwrite the establishment and operation of a large-scale reforestation nursery in the Lori region of northern Armenia.

“My father Bob, sister, Jennifer and I were looking for an organization that was working in Armenia on a larger scale, and we identified ATP as a good match for the John Mirak Foundation established by my grandfather,” Kew said. “We especially liked the fact that ATP’s programs have a direct impact on the neediest people in Armenia, especially children who are the beneficiaries of their tree planting and environmental education programs.”

ATP established the Mirak Family Reforestation Nursery in Margahovit Village in 2005, and the annual operation of this program has been funded by the Mirak Family. The nurs-



Julia Mirak Kew

ery was inaugurated in honor of their parents, John and Artemis Mirak, during a visit by Dr. Robert Mirak and his sister, Muriel Mirak-Weissbach, in 2008.

“Our family recognized that ATP’s work is restoring the environment, but its more than just planting trees. ATP is changing people’s lives through its job creation and poverty reduction programs, and we know this is something my grandparents would value since they always taught us to give back,” said Kew, whose grandparents were Genocide survivors from Arapkir.

Mirak Kew is vice president of Mirak Properties, a family business that focuses on real estate management and development in the Greater Boston area. She has a bachelor’s degree in economics from Wellesley College and an MBA from Babson College. She is a member of the Armenian International Women’s Association.

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Revelers show their move on Friday night’s dance at Monroe Night Club.

AGBU Young Professionals Make ‘Sweet Escape’ to San Francisco

Gala Raises \$8,500 for AGBU Hye Geen Pregnant Women’s Centers

SAN FRANCISCO – President’s Day Weekend 2012 brought the 13th Annual AGBU San Francisco Winter Gala – titled “A Sweet Escape” – as more than 500 Armenian young professionals from across North America made their way to San Francisco. Hosted by AGBU Young Professionals, Northern California, (AGBU-YPNC), the weekend was the largest gala to date.

The weekend kicked off Friday, February 17, with a welcome reception at the Sir Francis Drake in Union Square, where dozens of gala attendees mingled before the evening event. Monroe Night Club in San Francisco’s North Beach district was the scene of the Friday club night where DJ Raffy and DJ Tigran entertained a packed house of more than 300 young professionals in the new upscale lounge venue.

Saturday, February 18 began with a walking city tour of Chinatown and North Beach. The tour, led by AGBU-YPNC treasurer and photographer Greg Nemet, was a hit as around 60 gala out-of-towners and locals alike joined in and learned some local history in the process. Later that night brought the weekend’s signature event, the “Sweet Escape” gala dinner dance in the Green Room at the San Francisco War Memorial Performing Arts Center. More than 250 attendees dined and enjoyed Armenian dancing to the sounds of DJ Raffy. Following the gala an after party was held at Morrac in San Francisco’s Mission District where the party continued with dancing to the sounds of DJ Tigran, and some Middle Eastern fare to keep the celebration going late into the night.

Sunday, February 19, brought the Napa Valley Wine Tour, where nearly 120 Armenian young professionals toured some of Napa Valley’s leading wineries. The tour included party bus transportation, tours and tastings at two wineries and lunch.

“The success of this year’s Gala exceeded our expectations and we are proud to support such a worthy cause as Hye Geen,” said Steven Cherezian, AGBU-YPNC chairman, and Gala 2012 chairman. “Thank you to all of our attendee’s and donors. They are the reason the weekend was so enjoyable and successful.”

The greater goal of raising funds for the Hye Geen Pregnant Women’s Centers in Armenia remained at the heart of the weekend. Thanks to the attendees and support from donors, AGBU-YPNC raised \$8,500 for Hye Geen.



Wine tasting in Napa Valley

‘Putting’ in The Long Hours Is Fun for the Sarkisians

By Tom Vartabedian

ANDOVER, Mass. – Sarkis and Rita Sarkisian have found the perfect formula for perpetual youth in their retirement years: Run an active business, hire students and help local charities.

Thus far, it is paying dividends for the couple as they open their driving range for the 17th year and will soon answer the call for ice cream. The fact both are into their 70s matters not.

On a busy weekend, all 33 stalls are getting a workout. A putting green is mobilized. People are lined up at the window for ice cream, slush and hot dogs. It has become a recreational extravaganza inside a neighborhood setting that has long been their family home on Chandler Road.

It all started in 1932 when Ovogen Sarkisian came to the United States and purchased land in Andover to start his farming business. It was hard work, clearing the land and cutting down all the trees by hand. For many years, he farmed the land with his wife and three children, as did other Armenians in the area. For these newly-arrived immigrants, it was a way of life in this land of opportunity.

After his death in 1968, son Sarkis took over the reins and with his wife,



Sarkis and Rita Sarkisian of Andover keep active by operating a driving range and hiring students.

Rita, a Syrian immigrant, continued to farm the land. Over time, it became a successful greenhouse operation as families flocked here to purchase vegetables and flowers.

It went well for years until the chains began taking a bite out of their trade. So instead of packing it in, they took their 15 acres and turned it into a golfer’s haven. That was in 1995. Ten years later, they added ice cream. For four years, they cultivated a “pick your own strawberries” sideline.

“We like the open land,” says Rita. “It’s all ours and we’re using it to our advantage. Our pleasure is everyone else’s joy.”

It wasn’t easy. At a time when both were approaching retirement, thoughts of retooling a business called for

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Family Celebrates 102nd Birthday of Weymouth Armenian Genocide Survivor

By Sue Scheible

WEYMOUTH, Mass. (*Patriot Ledger*) – The photo card that Asdghig “Starrie” Alemian’s children gave family and friends for her 102nd birthday celebration this weekend shows a bold-looking young woman sitting in a tree in 1931 in Detroit.

“She has a wonderfully spirited look,” her son, Alan, noted Sunday.

At age 21, Alemian had already experienced far more heartache and challenges than most ever imagine. She was a survivor of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, after losing both parents. She made a new start in this country when an uncle in Weymouth brought her here from a Syrian orphanage.

Alemian turned 102 on Thursday and as 70 people gathered to honor her long life and her courage, she was in her element.

“She’s in party mode and enjoying every minute of it,” her daughter, Claire Alemian, said



Asdghig “Starrie” Alemian turned 102 on Thursday, March 1. On March 4, she celebrated with her five children, from left, Alan, Sylvia, Stephan, Susan and Claire.

at the home they share.

With a radiant smile and finely-chiseled features, “Starrie” Alemian proclaimed, “I have no secret!” and burst into a laugh, when asked “the longevity question” for possibly the 102nd time in the past two days. Then she added, “I never wore makeup, not even at my wedding!”

On Saturday, she celebrated for five hours at The Red Parrot in Hull with five generations, good food, Armenian music and dancing. Although she doesn’t get up and dance anymore, she clapped up a storm.

Sunday morning brought more than 40 family members to her son’s house for breakfast.

“Our mother has always been a very coura-

geous person who had a real spirit of determination,” Alan Alemian said.

In Armenian, her name is a term of endearment meaning “Little Star.”

Alemian still votes in every election and will be interviewed by the Weymouth Historical Society. She has been active in the Armenian community in Watertown, and in 2007 she was honored at a State House ceremony recognizing victims of the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

Her memory remains sharp for the details of those tragic early years, and once she starts talking, the recollections pour forth. But for Alemian and her family, it is the other aspects of her life that she now likes to focus on.

That includes her seven children, five still living, that she and her late husband, Sarkis, raised while running Alemian’s Delicatessen in Jackson Square and then Alemian’s Package Store. She has 12 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren. She often works on needlepoint, something she learned to do in the Syrian orphanage

While she no longer lives there, decades of family photos fill the rooms, along with the family piano her daughter Sylvia played. Alemian lives across the street with her daughter, Claire, and she has constant company. She remains strong and well in the neighborhood where she created her new life in this country.

In 1922, an uncle, Garabed, brought her to Weymouth and she has lived there ever since, except for two years with cousins in Worcester.

At age 16, she married Sarkis Alemian, who was from her hometown, and they set their sights on building a new life together, working long hours at a

factory and then at their family businesses.

Within 10 years, they bought their first house and as the years went by, they invested in real estate, kept the family close by and welcomed other Armenians.

“My mother raised so many children other than her own,” Claire Alemian said.

Her husband died in 1982 at age 82, and her two oldest sons, Edward Jr. and Haig, died in their late 30s. Her other five – Sylvia, Alan, Susan, Stephan and Claire – remain nearby.

“My mother has a strong sense of Armenian identity,” Alan Alemian said, “but she loves this country and thinks of it as her home. It gave her safe haven.”

Centennial Fund Celebrates Eleanor Dickranian’s 100th Birthday



Eleanor Dickranian celebrates her 100th birthday with daughters Cindy Norian and Laurel Karabian.

LOS ANGELES – The Arshag Dickranian Armenian School has established a Centennial Fund to honor the 100th birthday of the school’s benefactress, Eleanor Dickranian. The Dickranian family has asked that anyone wishing to mark this momentous occasion consider making a donation to the school’s Centennial Fund.

“We are so pleased that Mrs. Dickranian is with us to witness the growth and accomplishments of the school since it opened more than 30 years ago. Our graduates are distinguishing themselves in all professional fields and our current students continue to excel and win honors in science, sports and scholastic competitions,” observed Board Chairman George

Mandossian. “The contributions in honor of Mrs. Dickranian’s birthday will be used to enhance these programs and to make certain that our school will be able to continue to prepare future leaders for the Armenian community.”

Eleanor Dickranian, along with her late husband Arshag Dickranian, has been an active leader in establishing and developing Los Angeles’ Armenian community. Beginning in the 1930s, they participated in every Armenian cause, especially embracing projects focusing on education, the arts and the church. Their early leadership set the pace for Armenian philanthropy in Southern California and beyond.

Donors to the Centennial Fund will be acknowledged in a commemorative booklet, in a full-page dedication placed in various community newspapers, in the school’s annual report and on its website. To ensure recognition in printed materials, respond by March 12. Contributions should be sent to the TCA Arshag Dickranian School, 1200 N. Cahuenga Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90038. For additional information, call the school at (323) 461-4377 or visit www.dickranianschool.org.

Sherman Expresses Support for US Assistance to Javakhk, Commemorates Sumgait Anniversary

WASHINGTON – During last week’s House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on the Administration’s Budget for Fiscal Year 2013, Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA) expressed support for US assistance to the Javakhk region of Georgia, reported the Armenian Assembly of America.

Sherman, noting the generous US aid provided to Georgia, requested that the Armenian community residing in the Javakhk region of Georgia benefit from such assistance targeted to that area. Sherman relayed his understanding through the Georgian Embassy that the Georgian government is supportive of assisting Javakhk and stressed that these efforts would help achieve US strategic goals in the Caucasus. US Secretary of State Hillary

Clinton, who was testifying before the Committee, indicated that she would respond to Sherman in writing.

Sherman told the Assembly that he also plans to ask Clinton additional questions for the record, including US assistance to Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh, as well as Turkey’s ongoing blockade of Armenia.

Also, this week, Sherman commemorated the 24th anniversary of the 1988 Sumgait pogrom, in which Armenians were targeted in Azerbaijan. In his House floor statement, Sherman stated: “We will not forget the ethnic cleansing of the Armenians from Azerbaijan...We must urge Azerbaijan to cease all threats and acts of coercion against the Republic of Nagorno Karabagh.”

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Valor of Vartanantz Reenacted by ASA Students in Radnor

RADNOR, Penn. — The Vartanantz commemoration held at the Armenian Sisters' Academy (ASA) on February 16 swelled the souls of all who attended. The Montessori pre-K and kindergarten students recited poems and songs that championed their Christianity. Fourth, fifth and sixth graders then reenacted the mood and solidarity of the Armenian people in 451 AD. Ghevont Yerets, the Armenian priest who encouraged the brave soldiers by blessing them and administering Holy Communion on the eve of the Battle of Avarayr, was revived on stage by one young Academy student, while the fortitude and fearlessness of Vartan Mamigonian, was depicted by another. ASA students portrayed the heroism of the Armenian people of that time and how they resisted the Persian efforts to convert them to Zoroastrianism. The unwavering commitment of the Armenian people to fight Persian assimilation and safeguard their identity was the central theme of the performance.

Young ASA girls brought to life heroines of Armenian history. Although on the outside these princesses and society women were dressed in colorful attire and bedecked in jewels, on the inside their hearts were unified in their determination to help their fathers, brothers, sons and clergy preserve Armenian

Christianity. As they recited "Deeghnayk Papghasoon," one by one they shed their exquisite jewels for the purpose of selling them to acquire ammunition and other supplies for the soldiers. The strong sense of collective identity in these women was exhibited on stage through their whole-hearted sacrifice for their beloved Armenian men and their sorrow upon the soldiers' death after battle.

Aside from recounting a significant turning point in Armenian history, this Vartanantz program was inspirational in showcasing how naturally academy students channeled the characteristics and energy typically attributed to St. Vartan and his comrades. These youngsters anchored the virtues of their fifth-century ancestors within themselves, demonstrating how each of them has the innate capability to become a hero or heroine. Through songs, poems, rehearsals and a final recital, they internalized and embraced what it takes to adhere to one's identity in the face of adversity. They learned how making courageous choices and sacrifices can be challenging, yet have positive consequences for future generations, and how "losing a battle" can still result in "winning a war." As one academy student pointed out, "I really felt like it was happening to us and I wanted to do all I could to help my friends protect



Academy students from grades 4 to 6 recreate the historic battle of Vartanantz.

our religion."

Bishop Mikael Mouradian of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of the United States and Canada attended the recital along with members of the community's clergy and addressed those gathered at the end of the program. He commended the students for their performance and expressed his gratefulness in ASA's commitment to teach and preserve the Armenian language and heritage through such commem-

orations. He encouraged the students and families to perpetuate their mother language and to always carry their Armenian faith and heritage proudly. Principal Sister Emma Moussayan then thanked all the attendees for coming and applauded the students for capturing the essence of Vartanantz. She also expressed her gratitude to faculty members Maroush Nigon and Tamar Panosian for providing musical and artistic direction.

Tree Project Expands Leadership

ATP, from page 5

The John Mirak Foundation supports a number of charitable and education institutions in the Town of Arlington and in the Armenian community including the Armenian Cultural Foundation, St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School, St. James Armenian Apostolic Church and the Armenian Heritage Park. Kew has two daughters, Christina and Alexandra.

Garabedian's new role as managing director will include program oversight, staff development and finance. The addition of Garabedian will enable ATP's Director Jeff Masarjian to focus on development and special projects. "Jeff has been critical to ATP's development over the past 11 years, and we are counting on him to extend ATP's mission in the area of environmental advocacy, working with our major funders and planning special projects such as recognition of ATP's 20th anniversary in 2014," Barsamian said.

Garabedian worked as a consulting actuary with Hewitt Associates, retiring in January 2011. He has a degree in mathematics from Bowdoin College, is a member of the Hopkinton Zoning Board of Appeals and chair of Hopkinton Commissioners of Trust Funds. Garabedian is one of the founding family members of the Armenian Church of the Holy Translators in Framingham and a trustee of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund. He is married to the former Dora Verne Kishibay and they have three sons: Deran, Berj and Gregory.



Tom Garabedian

'Putting' in the Long Hours Is Fun for the Sarkisians

FUN from page 5

extensive planning, engineering, architects, loans and equipment. It took years and plenty of *chutzpah*.

"Were we doing the right thing?" Sarkis wondered. "God gave us a nudge and we ran with it."

A former Red Sox Hall-of-Famer hits balls here. The late actor Robert Urich ("Spenser for Hire") bought his flowers here. Parents of talk show host Jay Leno were regulars. PGA aspirant Rob Oppenheim comes here to sharpen his swing.

Deer and pheasants frolic through an opening in the woods. Wild turkeys strut along. Nature has a way of manifesting itself here.

It is not so much the clientele who benefit from this enterprise as the help. The Sarkisians have made it a point to hire students. They have opened the door to kids in high school and college, many of them getting their start in the business world.

"We had one student who was so shy and withdrawn when he came here," recalled Sarkis. "Each year, he gained confidence behind that counter. By the time he was a senior at Bentley University and been working here eight years, he became student council president of the college and presiding over the entire student body. I like to think we played a small part in his development."

Besides the responsibility and maturity, graduates have come away with letters of recommendation. The Sarkisians have been like surrogate parents to many. Nothing hits home more than having them pay a return visit as

adults and recall their first job with fondness.

An organization called KIDS (Kids In Disability Sports) golfs here on Monday afternoons at half price. Youth camps converge during the summer months, run by the town's Department of Community Services. Forty youngsters at a time fill the air with golf balls.

Business is never short of demand. The season runs about eight months with hardly a free day, except for rain. Shagging golf balls at 6 a.m. each day and keeping the grass trimmed at all times might have worn a lesser person.

"It's been an endowment for our children," they concur. "And sacrifice is often called for."

The Sarkisians celebrated their 50th anniversary last year, joined by their two children, Christine Kourkounian, and Jeffrey, together with three grandchildren: Nyree, 8, Petra, 7, and Armen, 5. All play a role in the business.

Both are active members of St. Gregory Church in North Andover, relish their getaways to a second home at Salisbury Beach where they enjoy walking the shoreline and joined a group of friends for a trip to Armenia in 2006. Travel and fitness are high on their social calendar when the occasion permits.

But business has its demands in this venture. The season runs eight months with hardly a free day except for rainy ones. A golf pro is on hand to offer lessons. A well-lighted overhead keeps the place open through early evening.

"It has given us a lot of flexibility in our lives," the Sarkisians maintain. "At a time when there is a lot of difficulty in the world, you come here and find peace. We're blessed in many ways."



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Politics in the Blood: Charlie Diradour, City Council Candidate in Richmond

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

RICHMOND, Va. — Albert Steven “Charlie” Diradour, an active real estate developer and public figure, announced his candidacy for City Council on February 8. Diradour has had a long history of political involvement, including work on a number of campaigns of Democrats on a local and national level, and an attempted run against Eric Cantor for Congress. He is president of the Lion’s Paw Development Company.

The 48-year-old Diradour became interested in politics while still a child. He said, “The truth of it is when you grow up in an Armenian household, you sit around and drink coffee in the morning and talk about politics. My mother and father would talk about current events. It made me want to know more about how the government works, and how we all fit in.” Diradour learned a lot from his father, though they may have had differing political party affiliations. For example, he said, he was taught that “It’s our duty to stand up if something is wrong, point it out and say that it is wrong, and then go further. By that I mean you propose something that is better, a solution rather than just pointing the problem out.” Diradour also felt that his inclusive and pragmatic approach to politics may have something to do with his Armenian background. After all, he pointed out, “Armenians are good at negotiating, making deals and coming to a middle point politically.”

After high school, Diradour attended Fordham University in New York, and then started working in the family real estate business. Both of Diradour’s parents were Republicans, but Diradour became a Democrat. Perhaps it had something to do with the times, because in the 1980s most Virginians were Democrats. But there was more to it than that. Diradour said, “I never felt comfortable calling myself a Republican because I don’t believe that we should tell people how to live their lives. For Republicans, at least in the 1980s and 1990s, a lot of social issues were at the fore — and I didn’t agree with the Republican stance on any of them.” Among other things, Diradour is a strong supporter of a woman’s right to choice concerning abortion.

Diradour’s local role models are Virginia Democrats like Chuck Robb, Douglas Wilder and Mary Sue Terry. He felt they are “people who are fiscally conservative and responsible, and yet socially they understand that understanding each other is the first step towards respecting each other as human beings. For me, being a Democrat means being inclusive, listening and understanding others’ viewpoints.”

Diradour volunteered on his first campaign in 1985, helping Terry win office as attorney-general of Virginia. In 1986 he worked for Kenneth E. Powell, who unsuccessfully ran for congress in Virginia, and then in 1988 worked on Al Gore’s presidential campaign in North and South Carolina, Connecticut and New York during the primary season. Diradour explained, “I did field work, organizing people before there were computers, laptops or even cell phones with some change in my truck, a file folder and a rolodex. I loved engaging with people.”

He organized local Democrats into phone banks to call identified Democratic voters, operate door-to-door campaigning and distribution of literature. He also prepared sites for Gore, coordinating with police and secret service and preparing information so that Gore would be able to publicly recognize the local notables.

Diradour then worked on some local races in Richmond, and a campaign for a seat in the Richmond House of Delegates in 1991. He worked for Bill Clinton in 1992 in North and South Carolina. After this he focused fulltime on real estate, a field more lucrative than politics, for some time. Diradour also completed his college education, obtaining a bachelor’s degree in 1999 from Virginia Commonwealth University in, naturally, political science.

Diradour lived from 2000 to 2005 in North Carolina because of his wife Dr. Ann Ritter’s work (pediatric neurosurgery), but after returning to Richmond, he helped on C. T. Woody’s successful 2005 race for city sheriff. He served as an advisor for Greek-American William “Bill” J. Pantele on his 2006 city council race, and then his unsuccessful 2008 Richmond mayoral campaign. Diradour explained his rationale for political involvement at this stage: “Once you become involved in the public arena and you have a real interest in helping people, you realize that if you are able to help get good people elected, that is your duty.”

In 2009, Diradour himself decided to make a run for office against a very powerful Republican representative, Eric Cantor. He was motivated by his feeling that “Eric Cantor represents himself and hardly anyone who lives in the seventh district.” After a few months, Diradour realized that he was not getting the necessary Democratic support and the odds were stacked against him, so he pulled out of the race.

This year, Diradour said, people came to persuade him to run



Charlie Diradour

for Richmond City Council in the second district. The district, including the Jackson Ward, Carver, Northside and Fan areas, is one in which his father owned restaurants, and where Diradour grew up. He lives in the Fan neighborhood now and has his own business, office and many properties there. Diradour feels that “it is very unique because it is very diverse. You have everything from the very wealthy to the working poor. There are students, and residential housing.”

Diradour is known in the area because of his work on the Fan District Association and his leadership in a campaign to oppose the construction of a stadium in the Shockoe Bottom neighborhood, which would have required the issuance of a \$77-million bond. He also helped stop the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts from putting up a bright electronic sign on a historic boulevard.

Formally, candidates for councilman are only allowed to run on their own records without stating political party allegiance, but of course the public generally knows the leanings of prominent individuals. The second district is a mixed one politically, and Diradour feels a Republican candidate would not have a chance, as it leans Democratic.

Charles R. Samuels, the present councilman, has a background as a Democrat. He has not yet declared his intention to run again, but probably will be Diradour’s main opponent. Diradour says that the main difference between him and Samuels is that he would put his business interests in the hands of an operations manager while in office and give nearly 100 percent of his working time to be in constant contact with the people of the district. Samuels, on the other hand, works fulltime as a lawyer in addition to holding a city council position.

Some of the key issues for Diradour in his campaign are improving some core services by government such as insuring safety in the neighborhoods, infrastructure like sidewalks, streets and lighting. He stresses that he is willing to listen to the people. He does not anticipate the race being an especially expensive one, and in general the most ever spent on a city council race, he thought, was roughly \$100,000.

Descendent of Genocide Survivors

Diradour is descended from Armenians who immigrated to Virginia in the early 20th century. His paternal grandparents, Hagop and Yughaper Diradourian, were originally from Agn, and they settled in Hopewell, a small city in the Richmond metropolitan area. Diradour said that a small group of Armenians, along with Greeks, Italians and others, came to Hopewell in the early 1920s because of the manufacturing jobs there. Hagop Diradourian had graduated from Robert College in Constantinople and initially came to New Hampshire via New York. Hagop Diradourian found the climate too cold and wrote to Armenians and Armenian churches up and down the East Coast until he got an answer from Hopewell that the Tubize Artificial Silk Company would hire his whole family. The Tubize Company was the successor to a DuPont plant, which manufactured guncotton.

Diradour’s maternal grandparents, Stepan and Nazley Beducian, were originally from Dersim. Stepan Beducian came directly to Richmond from New York. He arrived with no money, and worked on a merchant marine vessel until he had enough money to bring his wife, who he had left in Beirut for 12 years after the Genocide. The couple lost three children during the deportations and they started a new family in the United States. Eventually, he started a real estate business.

According to Diradour, very few relatives survived the Genocide and made it to the United States. After they immigrated here, he said, “Both sides of the family worked hard. My parents met when my father was in the restaurant business in the Fan district.” Their family origins in different parts of Ottoman Armenia led to some good-natured banter. Diradour said, “My father always used to tease my mother that ‘my people are city people and you are country people.’”

Diradour never met any of his grandparents, but he learned conversational Armenian from his parents. When he was a young child, he said, “One evening we were in a restaurant. My father said something to my mother and somebody asked what he said, so I translated. But it was something not for public dissemination. After we got home, my father told me that we should never translate what we say in Armenian, and secondly, that we would speak Armenian at home.”

Before the St. James Armenian Church in Richmond was consecrated in 1956, many Armenians would attend St. Paul’s Episcopal Church downtown. Stepan Beducian was one of those Armenians. Occasionally though, an Armenian priest would be brought to town for a service. In the 1950s, Beducian helped in the process of establishing a church, but he did not go regularly, as he already felt at home at St. Paul’s.

Diradour as a child would be brought to St. James for major feast days like Easter, and came with his family for picnics and other types of events, but he regularly attended St. Paul’s Church. He now is a lay minister at St. Paul’s, but he occasionally attends St. James. Among other things, he said he helps the church’s annual Armenian Food Festival.

Recently, in 2009, Diradour became a member of the National Ethnic Democratic Coordinating Council, which has a number of other Armenian members prominent in Armenian-American politics. This body is a wing of the Democratic National Committee, which does outreach among different ethnic groups on behalf of Democratic candidates who need help.

When asked what role Armenians have to play in the US politically, he responded, “I would say that all of us in this great country are ethnic, in that all of us have forefathers and foremothers who risked it all to get to this great land of opportunity. We all



Charlie Diradour, his wife Dr. Ann Ritter, and two of their three daughters

must take a role in political life in some form to help shape our communities, whether local or international or anywhere in between for this Democracy to work for all.”

Diradour concluded, “I sort of live in two worlds. I am an Armenian-American. I’m not an Armenian. I’m an American who happens to be Armenian, with those values drilled into us as Armenians of hard work and family. It’s hard now when there is no family left that speaks the language or lives the lifestyle.” Nonetheless, he is trying to pass something on to the new generation, and he is already teaching his daughters how to count from one to 10 in Armenian. And he promises that “one of the things that I would work on if elected is to expose more Richmonders to the realities of the Armenian Genocide as the first major genocide of the 20th century.”

The election will take place in November.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Ladder 133 Fundraiser Brings in Much Support for Cory Garabedian

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – A fundraiser held in honor of Cory Garabedian, who recently suffered devastating injuries in a car accident, provided good news, as it far exceeded the goals that were set. More than 125 supporters showed up and raised close to \$10,000 for the Friends of Cory Fund that has been established in his name.

Ladder 133, the host restaurant, donated all the food. Supporters included Garabedian's friends from all three Armenian churches, his large family, including those from Worcester, friends of his grandfather, Charlie, and business associates and friends of his Uncle Harry, as well.

Garabedian had celebrity status that night, as people were lined up to speak with him.

The owner of the restaurant, Richard Angell, made just one request of the guests – to tip the waitresses. However, one of the waitresses refused to take the money, but participants of the fundraiser insisted she accept it.

The admission tickets were also donated by Hopkins Press.

25 Years for Dragging Store Owner to Death

JEFFERSON, N.J. (*Daily Record*) – A landscaper who dragged the owner of the Getty Mart in Jefferson to his death with an SUV after shoplifting lottery tickets was sentenced Friday to 25 years in prison.

Murat Ambaroglu, the son of victim Nisan Ambaroglu, 65, gasped and choked back his tears as he described how his father only wanted "the American dream" for his family and cheerfully helped anyone who turned to him for aid.

"This act was senseless and brutal. He must have felt my father under his wheels. He didn't stop," Murat Ambaroglu said of defendant Ronnie Fedo's actions on June 25.

When he became too overwhelmed by emotion to finish reading his victim impact statement to Superior Court Judge Stuart Minkowitz in Morristown, county Assistant Prosecutor Brian DiGiacomo took over, before a cousin of the victim read a statement on behalf of Nisan Ambaroglu's widow, Nayda.

"What I miss the most is Nisan's company," the wife's statement said. "I cannot hug him, or kiss him or tell him I love him." She said her husband had nearly saved enough to buy a home but burying him and keeping the convenience store and gas station afloat with him gone have wiped out their savings.

Fedo, now 34, pleaded guilty in January to aggravated manslaughter of the Paramus resident and business owner who was of Armenian descent and emigrated to this country 12 years ago with his family from Turkey.

Fedo, a resident of the Lake Hopatcong section of Jefferson, went to the Getty Mart to buy a pack of cigarettes and wound up swiping a few scratch-off lottery tickets and an energy drink while Ambaroglu was delayed outside

tending to a customer.

Both DiGiacomo and the judge noted how Fedo told police he stole because he felt the proprietor was disregarding him.

Fedo paid for his cigarettes and got into his SUV but the victim followed him, realizing items were shoplifted.

Fedo had admitted that Ambaroglu grabbed onto him and onto the driver's side of the SUV and he accelerated while trying to push him away. He drove onto Route 15 south; the victim lost his grip and was run over by a rear tire.

Fedo told the judge he never intended to hurt anyone and that he prays for the victim and his family every day.

His mother, Susan Lally, stood in front of

the two dozen relatives and friends of the victim and apologized but said her son is "a kind, loving, caring, gentle person." She also said he successfully completed a six-month drug rehabilitation program in the past, though drugs were not suspected to be part of the incident on June 25.

The judge, who ordered that Fedo must serve at least 85 percent of the 25 years before parole consideration, said Fedo had multiple chances to prevent the tragedy.

"You knew that he was hanging on to the car. You could have not put your foot to the gas pedal. You could have just thrown the items out the window," the judge said. "This man was doing nothing but protecting his own business."

United Armenian Fund Contributed \$33.3 Million of Aid to Armenia in 2011

GLENDALÉ – The United Armenian Fund (UAF) contributed a total of \$33.3 million of assistance to Armenia during fiscal year 2011, including \$28.6 million worth of mostly medicines and medical supplies and \$4.7 million to renovate six schools in the earthquake zone, according to the latest audit of its financial statements.

The UAF devoted less than 1 percent of its total revenues to administrative expenses, allocating the remaining 99 percent to assisting the people of Armenia and Artsakh, according to the audit.

During its 22 years of operations, the UAF

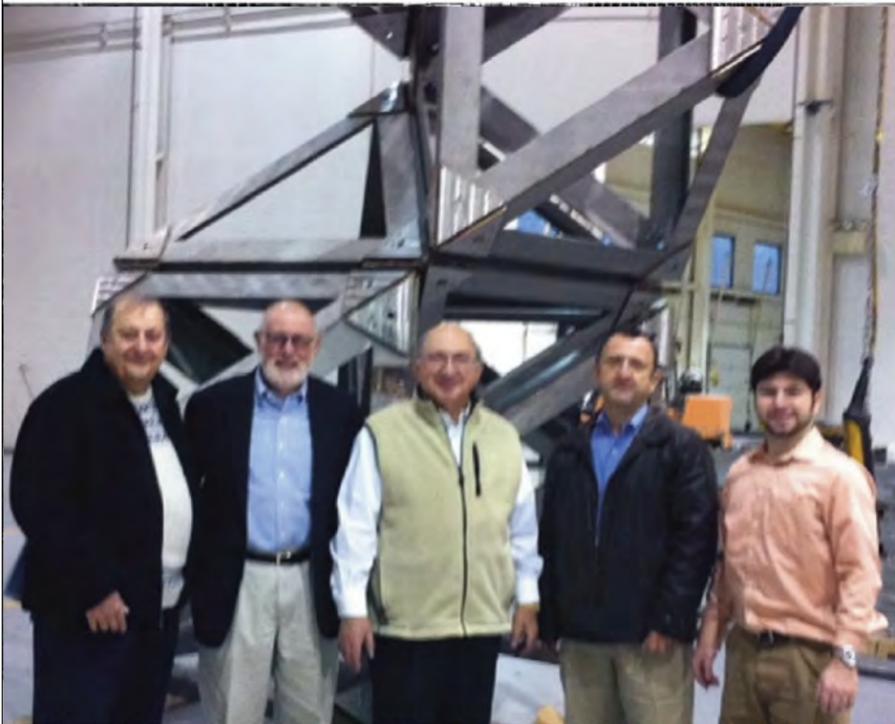
delivered to Armenia a grand total of \$632 million worth of relief supplies on board 158 air-lifts and 1,942 sea containers, as of September 30, 2011, the end of UAF's last fiscal year.

The UAF is the collective effort of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy, Armenian General Benevolent Union, Armenian Missionary Association of America, Armenian Relief Society, Diocese of the Armenian Church of America and the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America.

For more information, contact the UAF office at 1101 North Pacific Ave., Suite 204, Glendale, CA 91202.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Sisters' Academy Celebrates 30th Anniversary in Style

By Lalig Musserian

BOSTON – “I watch the growth of spirit in the children who come to my class,” wrote William Saroyan in “The Human Comedy.”

There were no more appropriate words to describe the sentiment of the teachers and the guests gathered on February 11, at the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Armenian Sisters' Academy (ASA) of Lexington. The event raised close to \$90,000 for the school.

There were more than 200 guests and dignitaries at the black-tie-optional event, including Ambassador Rouben and Lilit Shougarian, Very Rev. Raphael Andonian from the Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church in Belmont and Rev. Arakel Aljalians from St. James Armenian Church of Watertown.

Boston-based Armenian artist Daniel Varoujan Hejinian was also in attendance. Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, who has three children at the school, served as master of ceremonies for the evening. Guests included alumni, the parents of alumni, parents of current students, teachers, staff and friends and supporters of the school from across the Boston-area Armenian community.

The evening's formal program was launched by the singing of the American and Armenian national anthems by Ani Zargarian, lead singer for the Arev Armenian Folk Ensemble and an ASA alumna herself. ASA Principal Sr. Cecile

Keghiayan began the program by presenting the mission and history of the school, followed by an overview of recent school accomplishments and investments by Vice Principal Mayda Melkonian. Melkonian highlighted that the school holds membership in two different accreditation organizations, New England Association of Schools and Colleges and the Association of Independent Schools of New England.

Andonian offered words of inspiration to those gathered and a slide show took everyone down memory lane, remembering all those that walked through the school's doors over the past 30 years. In his keynote presentation, Ambassador Rouben Shougarian conveyed the message that Armenian schools are an asset not only for the families they directly serve, but also for the future of Armenian communities more broadly. He concluded by pointing out the collective responsibility of Armenian community for supporting schools such as the Armenian Sisters' Academy in order to continue the mission they embarked upon so long ago.

The school's academic success is directly linked to its noteworthy faculty and staff. Accordingly, an important part of the evening's program included formal recognition of each teacher and staff member for their numerous years of service and dedication to the school.

A live auction raised more money, with guests bidding on several items, including Boston Harbor cruises, lithographs by French-Armenian painter Karzou, a pair of diamond earrings and a painting by Hejinian.



From left, Very Rev. Andonian, Sr. Aghvita Der Ghougasian and Sr. Cecile Keghiayan

Following dinner and a cake-cutting ceremony, the Ellie Berberian Band from Montreal, Canada, provided multilingual entertainment for the evening, with renditions of old favorites and new songs, enticing guests onto the dance floor.

The Parents Committee, as well as several members of the school's Advisory Board, worked tirelessly to plan this event. The ASA school administration appreciates all those who worked to make the evening a success.



Teaching faculty and staff received recognition awards.



From left, Jacqueline Kebabjian, Shakeh Chaglassian, Zovig Kojanian, Sylvie Meguerditchian, Carineh Avakian and Katrina Glorikian



Sr. Cecile Keghiayan delivers the opening remarks.



Former Armenian Ambassador to the US Rouben Shougarian


New York
METRO

AAHPO Co-Sponsors Career Day Event on Fordham Campus

NEW YORK – More than 100 people attended Career Day on Friday, February 17 at Fordham's Lincoln Center campus as Armenian-American students listened to leading Armenian professionals give advice and speak about their personal experiences in the working world.

Hosted by the Fordham Organizational Leadership program and Fordham Armenian Society and co-sponsored by the Armenian American Health Professional Organization (AAHPO) and the Armenian Engineers and Scientists Association (AESA), the event also garnered the support of other distinguished Armenian professional organizations, including the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA), Armenian Bar Association (ABA), Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), Armenian Youth Federation (AYF), Armenians in Finance and Banking and the Armenian National Science and Education Fund (ANSEF).

Armenian professionals working in diverse fields from finance to engineering to law to healthcare spoke to attentive and engaged students who were intrigued to learn more about the possible career paths they could pursue in the near future. A theme echoed throughout the evening by participants was to "do what you love and to love what you do." Each speaker noted the importance of having a passion for one's chosen field of work, since it consumes a significant amount of an individual's life.

Suzy Davidkhanian spoke about her career path working in public relations for a financial services company for five years followed by her



Dr. Tsoline Kojaoglanian, a member of AAHPO who serves on the Board of Directors, speaks to participants about her profession and experiences.

decision to earn her MBA and continue her career working in marketing strategy. As a Canadian, she offered to talk to international students in attendance about student visas and work permits, and help guide them through the process.

"Everyone who participated in the program was very energetic and spirited," said Davidkhanian. "The key take-aways for me were to be flexible and not to give up on your dreams."

Students not only had the opportunity to hear advice, they also had the chance to participate in a mentoring session in the second portion of "Career Day's" program, which gave students the opportunity to speak with presenters about their work and ask any questions they had. A variety of industries were represented including architecture, computer science, education, physics, chemistry and interior design. The program concluded with a presentation by AGBU of scholarship and internship opportunities for students.

Co-chair of Career Day and AAHPO board member, Dr. Garbis Baydar, said the event was a successful one and he had received positive feedback.

"We [AAHPO] wanted to sponsor this event because it is in our mission to foster healthcare and education in the tri-state area," said Baydar. "We wanted to educate young Armenian-

Americans, give them guidance and inform them of internship opportunities."

Organizers of the event wanted to create a network of support and mentorship, as many of them had faced difficulty when breaking into their professional fields and believe that this mentoring event will help alleviate challenges for the current generation.

"Many of us came from different countries and studied and worked hard to succeed in various professions," said chair-

man of Career Day, Dr. Vahan Tanal, who was representing the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America. "The least we can do now is to share our knowledge and experience with young Armenians. We need to promote, assist and support young Armenians in their education in reaching their full potential and better

serve their communities."

Dr. Harold Takooshian, supervisor of Fordham's Armenian Society, has overseen Career Day since its inception two years ago and hopes it will continue on for years to come.

"We have many Armenians today excelling in different fields such as medicine, law, education and technology," said Takooshian. "The Armenian youth are so career-oriented, the Armenian professional associations naturally see mentoring as a high priority."

The welcoming committee included Katrina Selverian, president of the Fordham Armenian Society, Malvina Mardirosyan, advising alumna, and Grant Petrosyan, advising alumnus. All three were involved in the organization process of the mentoring program and noted the importance of an event like this for Armenian students.

"I truly appreciate the time and effort the mentoring committee and all of the speakers devoted to assisting and advising us young professionals," said Petrosyan, who is currently in law school. "With their help, guidance and knowledge of their respective industries, the younger generation will certainly achieve their goals more efficiently and effectively."

"It was amazing to be with so many successful Armenian professionals who were eager to lend a helping hand to our younger colleagues," said Dr. Larry Najarian, president of AAHPO. "The students were wonderful and enjoyed an incredible opportunity to network with us."



Dr. Larry Najarian, president of AAHPO, which co-sponsored "Career Day"

Ekmekcioglu to Speak About Armenian Women And Children during And after Genocide

NEW YORK – Dr. Lerna Ekmekcioglu will give a lecture titled "A Climate for Abduction, A Climate for Redemption: Armenian Women and Their Children During and Immediately After the Genocide," on Wednesday, March 21, at 6:30 p.m., at Knox Hall 207, Columbia University, 606 West 122nd St. (between Broadway and Claremont Avenue). The lecture is sponsored by the Middle East Institute at Columbia University, the Armenian Center at Columbia University and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

Ekmekcioglu's talk will focus on two processes. The first is the forcible incorporation of Armenians into Muslim households and orphanages during World War I. Ekmekcioglu will elaborate the historical reasons that enabled Ottoman politicians to conceive such a policy and the Ottoman Muslim society to successfully implement it. Second, she will discuss post-war Armenian attempts to rescue the kidnapped. She argues that this effort remained extremely inclusive whereby rape victims, former concubines and wives as well as their (technically) Muslim children were treated as full-fledged Armenians. This administrative policy, however, did not necessarily reflect the victims' and their relatives' perceptions of who could, after 1915, belong to the Armenian nation and who would have to be left out forever.

Ekmekcioglu is the McMillan-Stewart Career Development assistant professor of history at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She received her undergraduate degree from Istanbul's Bogazici University and her PhD in history and Middle Eastern and Islamic studies from New York University. In 2010-11 she held a post-doctoral fellowship in the Armenian Studies Program of the University of Michigan. Currently she is revising a book titled *Surviving the New Turkey: Armenians in Post-Ottoman Istanbul, 1918-1935*.

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Arts & Living

U. of Michigan Devotes Evening to Charents

ANN ARBOR, Mich. – The Armenian Studies Program at the University of Michigan has organized an evening devoted to the poet, Yeghishe Charents, to be held at the International Institute on Tuesday, March 13, at 4 p.m.

The event will begin with the showing of a film by Shareen Anderson on Charents, produced in 2009. The film will be followed by a lecture by one of the specialists on Charents, Prof. Azat Yeghiazaryan of Yerevan.

“Yeghishe Charents became known in Armenian literature as a poet of revolution. Really the theme of revolution was one of the central topics in his poetry. Yet in this lecture I consider revolution more widely than events such as the October revolution and Civil War. In the worldview of Charents and a great number of writers of his generation in Russia and other countries, revolution was not only a solution to social problems, but a beginning of a new humanistic civilization. And this aspect was more essential, than social problems,” stated Yeghiazaryan. “He hated the past. He was not interested in present so much. But he dreamed about the future as something bright and beautiful for all the men.”

From 1999 to 2008, Yeghiazaryan was director of the M. Abeghyan Literature Institute of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences. Since 2008 he has been serving as head of the Armenian language and literature chair, Slavic University of Armenia. His most recent publications include *Charents and History*, Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, 1997; *Poetics of the Epics “Sasna Tsrer” (Daredevils of Sassoun)*, 1999; *Armenian Literature of 20th Century: Personalities and Problems*, 2002; *Modern Armenian Literature. An Outline of History*, 2004; *Nineties: Criticism and Publicism*, 2005; *Organ of History. Yeghishe Charents. Tigran Mets*, 2007; *Daredevils of Sasun. Poetics of an Epic*, 2008, and *This Skilled, Genius Man from Lory* (about the works of Hovhannes Tumanyan), 2009.

Yeghiazaryan is a leading scholar in the field of Armenian literature.

The lecture, to take place in room 1636 of the International Institute on campus, is titled “Charents and Revolution.” It is open to the public and will be recorded for later viewing on the website of the Armenian Studies Program (www.ii.umich.edu/asp).

Armenian Soirée Celebrates Cultural Ties between Armenia and France

BOSTON – Despite their geographic distance, France and Armenia have been close for centuries. From the alphabet Denis Diderot published in 1765 to the numerous French personalities of Armenian descent, including, singers Charles Aznavour and Sylvie Vartan, film director Francis Veber, former Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, etc., the two cultures have shared a rich history.

In honor of this exchange, the French Cultural Center (FCC) has teamed up with the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) to organize an Armenian soirée as part of 2012’s Francophone Celebration in New England. The event will take place at the French Cultural Center, 53 Marlborough St., on Wednesday, March 21, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

This event will feature a one-night-only exhibition of the FCC’s collection of photographs by Canadian-Armenian photographer Yousuf Karsh. The prints, donated to the French Cultural Center’s founder, Georges F. Doriot, by Karsh himself, portray French, Swiss and Canadian personalities.

Armenian hors d’oeuvres and French wine will be served throughout the evening.

This event is presented with the support of the Québec Government Office in Boston and the Consulate General of Canada in Boston.

For more information, contact www.frenchculturalcenter.org.



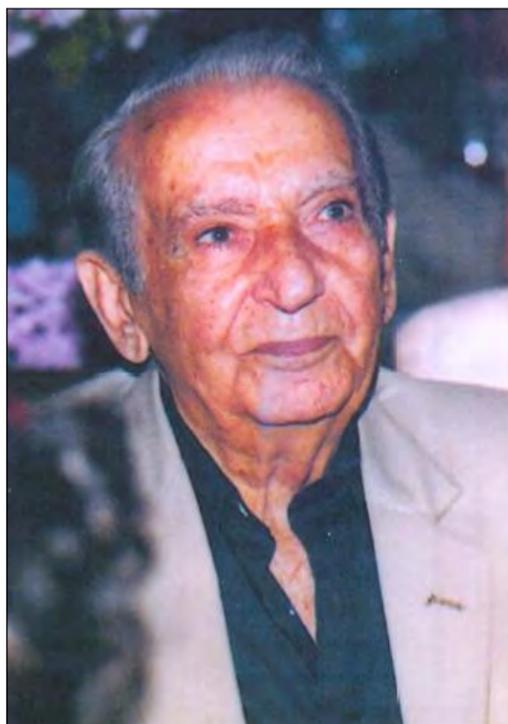
Arsenal Center for the Arts

Charles Mosesian’s Legacy Honored at Arsenal Center for the Arts

WATERTOWN, Mass. – The Arsenal Center for the Arts pays tribute to the late Charles Mosesian at its annual benefit Saturday, March 24. The evening’s program will feature a 16-piece big band performing original arrangements of classic Broadway favorites on the stage of the Charles Mosesian Theatre. In addition, arts critic Joyce Kulhawik will present the Charles Mosesian Award for Support of the Arts to brothers Bruce A. Beal and Robert L. Beal of the Beal Companies.

The Charles Mosesian Award for Support of the Arts is given annually to an individual or corporation that exemplifies Mosesian’s commitment to the arts, the arts community and the Arsenal Center. It was established last year in honor of the center’s fifth anniversary.

Like the late Mosesian, this year’s recipients are community leaders who promote the importance of the arts through word and deed. The Beal brothers are fourth-generation owners of a family-run commercial real estate company that was started by their great-grandfather in 1888. The Beal Companies are deeply involved in the



Charles Mosesian

greater Boston community, including several philanthropic and arts organizations throughout New England such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Harvard art museums and the Department of Contemporary Art at Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The early support of Charles Mosesian played a pivotal role in founding the Arsenal Center for the Arts. His \$1-million gift helped launch the center’s building campaign. Mosesian’s leadership made the difference, inspiring others in Watertown and the surrounding area to lend their support to create what is now a flourishing arts center.

This year’s benefit, “Big Band Meets Broadway,” begins at 6:45 p.m. with a reception, followed by the concert at 8 p.m. featuring the music of Gershwin, Porter, Berlin, Rodgers and Kern in a program led by celebrated saxophonist Larry Monroe, with veteran vocalist Donna McElroy.

Proceeds support the Arsenal Center for the Arts programming and scholarships. For tickets and more information, visit www.arsenalarts.org.

Californian Launches Drive Demanding British Museum Return Bust of Anahit to Armenia

LOS ANGELES (Hetq) – More than 500 California Armenians have signed a petition demanding that a bronze head of the goddess Anahit now in possession of the British Museum be sent to Armenia.

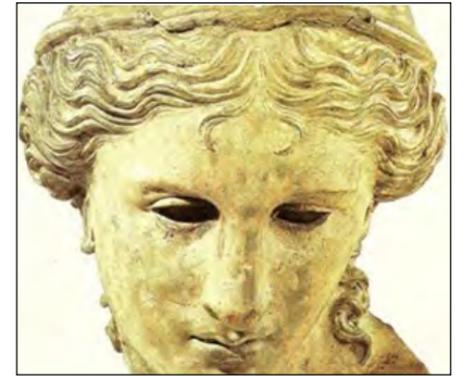
The petition was launched by Gevorg Martirosyan who, as a student in England, often visited the British Museum and viewed the bronze head on display.

While Martirosyan said he thanks the British for preserving this priceless Armenian artifact, he said he believes that the bust must be relocated to Armenia’s Museum of History.

Armen Ashotyan, Armenia’s minister of Education and Science, has launched a similar campaign to get the bust to Armenia.

Martirosyan says that he tried to get in touch with Ashotyan in order to inform him of the California petition. He noted it is vital for the minister to reach out to the young people in the diaspora for the campaign to be effective.

Ashotyan’s initiative was not well received in Armenia. Many say that Armenia has no legal recourse to demand the return of the bust and



Anahit

that it never belonged to any Armenian government in the first place. Others have cited the futile attempts of Greece to have the British Museum return the Elgin Marbles.

The bronze head was found in 1872 in the town of Sadak (ancient Satala) in northeastern Turkey and was purchased by the British Museum.

Martirosyan responds to the nay-sayers by citing the example of Egypt, which has successfully fought for the return of some 5,000 cultural artifacts from around the world, 400 of which came from the British Museum.

French Designer Didier Parakian to Present at India Fashion Forum

MARSEILLE, France – Didier Parakian, a famous fashion designer hailing from this city has given the fashion world an internationally-renowned eponymous label since 1989. Mediterranean, colorful and sensual, every creation of Parakian is inspired by the designer’s Armenian background, ethnicity and sophistication. He will present his collection at the India Fashion Forum 2012 March 13 to 15, in Mumbai, India.

This luxury brand uses embroideries, pearls, lace and stunning prints with an eye for detail on comfortable fabrics of unmatched quality, to evoke the Parakian style, making the collection, be they dresses, tops, skirts, pants, jeans, jackets, scarves and cardigans, unique.

Parakian has also launched three complimentary brands: Anathéa by Parakian, Carlopik and DP Jeans. Anathéa by Parakian offers trendy and fashionable plus-size women’s clothing. Carlopik was launched in 1995 to give expression to a more urban look and offers a colorful and sensual line for everyday wear. DP Jeans was launched in 2000 and is aimed at younger consumers.



ARTS & LIVING

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The Gathering Place Focuses on Armenian Social Club of Shanghai at Turn of Century

SEATTLE, Wash. – On May 15, Coffeetown Press will release *The Gathering Place: Stories from the Armenian Social Club in Old Shanghai* (\$13.95, 216 pages, ISBN: 978-1-60381-123-1), a collection of stories compiled from interviews with Armenians who immigrated to Asia during the first half of the 20th century.

A hundred years ago, Armenia, within the Ottoman Empire, became the site of continuous border conflict, political intrigue and sporadic wars between the Turks, the Persians and the Tsarist Russians. Early in the 20th century, these regional conflicts erupted into bitter political and ethnic “cleansing” that decimated the country and nearly destroyed the population living there. The causes and magnitude of the ethnic killing that took place during and after World War I are still debated and disputed in Turkey and Armenia today.

In times of calamity or economic distress, a small percentage of people (about 2 percent) are willing to leave family, home and their country of origin to set up businesses in exotic or foreign lands. The 2-percenters and undocumented immigrants whose stories appear in *The Gathering Place* made the arduous trek across Asia to gather in the exotic city of Old Shanghai, where they joined a social club in the city's Old International Settlement. Their travels coincide with war, economic depression, revolution, banditry and military occupation during the most turbulent period in modern history – a period that covers what some call the Modern Dark Age – the first half of the 20th century. The personal histories in *The Gathering Place* offer a fresh take on the immi-

grant experience during a time of momentous change in Asia – from the end of World War I to the exodus of Europeans from China.

Says Sergoyan, “I was inspired to write *The Gathering Place* by two photographs given to me by my mother. The first was a family portrait taken circa 1920. I did not recognize any of the five people. My mother was not surprised and explained that it was the only group photo of my father's family that survived. I realized then that my father had not spoken of his family or how they had migrated across all of Asia and settled in the Orient. There was a deep tragedy associated with their experience that he did not want to share. I became determined then to interview him and get as much information as possible. That led me to interview others as well. I noticed that many of the stories revolved around the Armenian Social Club in Shanghai – the subject of the second photograph. My hope is that these stories will also help others to personalize the immigrant experience in the Orient between the two World Wars, a subject that has had little attention.”

Sergoyan holds degrees in aeronautical and mechanical engineering and has been involved in the aerospace industry for more than 40 years. This book is his first non-technical publication. Sergoyan and his wife live in Mukilteo, Wash., with family nearby. For more information on the book, visit Sergoyan.coffeetownpress.com.

The Gathering Place is currently available for pre-order on Amazon.com. After May 15, it will also be sold on Amazon.co.uk, Amazon.de, Amazon.fr and Amazon Japan.

Greek-Armenian Guitar Virtuoso Iakovos Kolanian to Perform in Watertown

WATERTOWN, Mass. – The Boston chapter of the Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society is presenting Greek-Armenian classical guitar virtuoso, Iakovos Kolanian, in concert at the First Parish of Watertown at 8 p.m. on Friday, March 30.

Based in Athens, Greece, Kolanian is considered one of leading classical guitarists of his generation. Born to an Armenian father and Greek mother, Kolanian is best known for having expertly transcribed folk songs from both sides of his ethnic heritage.

Of his recent album, “Iakovos Kolanian Plays Mikis Theodorakis,” (Legend Classics), Theodorakis raved that Kolanian “achieves technical and expressive perfection.” In *Soundboard Magazine*, Albert Kunze proclaims of Kolanian, “his tone is beautiful, his playing sensitive” in describing “Shoror” (Pomegranate Music), a collection of Armenian folk music transcribed for classical guitar. Other recordings include collections by J.S. Bach (Legend Classics) as well as masterworks by

Agustin Barrios (Pomegranate Music).

Kolanian has performed with every major orchestra in Greece and Armenia, as well as select appearances in Europe, North America and the Middle East. He currently resides in Athens, where he balances teaching and transcribing along with his various performance engagements around the world.

In 2011, he was awarded the Komitas medal in Yerevan for his ongoing contributions to Armenian culture.

In his spare time, Kolanian volunteers his time giving gratis master classes in Armenia to underprivileged youth. He currently holds the post of guitar department director at the Contemporary Music Education Conservatory of Athens.

During the March tour, Kolanian will perform the works of Komitas, Bach, Barrios, Mario Guiliani, Leo Brower, Antonio Lauro and his own transcriptions of Armenian folk music.

For further information or tickets, visit the Hamazkayin website.

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Iakovos Kolanian



ARTS & LIVING

Silk Routes

By Alastair Hamilton

On the south bank of the Zayandarud, opposite Isfahan, the former Safavid capital of Persia, the frescoed Armenian cathedral, the churches and the merchants' houses still testify to the existence of one of the most prosperous mercantile communities of its time. In 1604, the Persian ruler, Shah Abbas I, destroyed the city of Julfa, on the Aras, just north of the present Iranian border, and deported its population. The suburb of Isfahan the Armenians finally came to inhabit was known as New Julfa. The merchants of the old city were already successful purveyors of raw Persian silk, and that was the commodity in which they and their descendants specialized, under the Shah's protection, in their new homeland. Within an astonishingly short time, they established an international network of extraordinary dimensions. In many of the existing Armenian communities, the immigrants from New Julfa were soon predominant – in Venice, Livorno, Amsterdam, London, Aleppo and, above all, in India – and, before the

17th century was out, they had established new ones further afield – in Tibet, China and the Philippines. Their ingenious use of a Russian route for transporting silk from Persia to Europe led to settlements in Astrakhan, Kazan, St. Petersburg and Moscow. In the early 18th century, they even crossed the Pacific and extended their web to the New World.

In contrast to the European trading companies, which had military support, the New Julfans set up their stations peacefully. Their neutrality enabled them to circumvent the boycotts imposed on one another by the Europeans and to act as go-betweens in the East among the Spanish, the English and the French. Also in contrast to the Western organizations, but like those of the far larger communities of Multani Indians and Sephardic Jews, the New Julfan firms were based on the patriarchal structure of the extended family, their agents bound by the terms of the commendas, strict contracts of which the trust resulting from familiarity was an essential component. The merchants of New Julfa, however, formed a relatively small community, probably numbering some 30,000. This, Sebouh David Aslanian argues in *From the Indian Ocean to Mediterranean*, was to be

their greatest weakness. Various reasons have been advanced for their sharp decline in the late 1740s. While the Armenian successfully survived the collapse of the Safavid dynasty and the Afghan occupation of Isfahan in 1722, the rapacity of Nadir Shah was too much for them. Faced with exorbitant taxation and the threat of torture and execution during his visit to Isfahan in 1747, they started to emigrate. New Julfa never recovered. But, Aslanian claims, even without the atrocities of Nadir Shah, the community could hardly have sustained its success. Its size would ultimately have prevented its expansion, and it would have been prevented its expansion, and it would have been unable to compete with the English East India Company later in the century.

One of the most interesting features of the New Julfan merchants is their relationship with the Armenian Church. The church of New Julfa, which initially retained its jurisdiction over the Armenian communities in India and continued to supply the churches in the East with priests, played an important part in holding the New Julfans together, in providing them with information often vital for their trade, and in cementing the trust, on which their network rested. Yet many Armenians proved remarkably flexible in their

confessional commitment. It was not unusual for merchants in Spanish-held territory (such as Manila) to convert to Catholicism and then to revert to the Gregorian Armenian faith as soon as they were back in Persia. The great Shahrimanian family, which settled in Venice, the home of the Catholic Armenian Mkhtrist congregation, in 1698, and was elevated to the ranks of both the Austrian and the Italian nobility, converted definitively to Catholicism, but despite the hostility this aroused in New Julfa, its members appear to have retained ties with the Persian community. The New Julfans in Spain, Italy and France had no hesitation about frequenting Catholic churches in the absence of churches of their own, and in Cadiz, they went so far as to patronize the local religious confraternity of the Brotherhood of Jesus the Nazarene, based in the Church of Santa Maria, where they had a chapel. Rome, certainly, pressed for conversion and dispatched missionaries to Isfahan, but in New Julfa, Aslanian shows, the true Catholics remained an exiguous minority.

From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean is a fascinating book. Aslanian has been tireless in his consultation of archival sources in India, Armenia and Iran, throughout Europe and even in Mexico. Most of the merchants' letters are written in the archaic Julfan dialect, still "nearly incomprehensible to most Armenians," which the author is one of the few scholars to understand. One might regret, however, the publisher's choice of an Armenian typeface for the quotations; it hardly does justice to that handsome alphabet.

(This review ran in the *Times Literary Supplement* on February 17.)

Book Review

From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The global trade networks of Armenian merchants from New Julfa. By Sebouh David Aslanian. 392 pp. University of California Press, \$49.95. Distributed in the UK by Wiley, 34.95 pounds 978 0 520 26687 2

Novel Portrays Intriguing Connection between Holocaust and Genocide

By Daphne Abeel

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Blueprint for Genocide.

By J.F. Paulsen. 411 pp.

In his first and self-published novel, Jeffrey F. Paulsen has woven a family saga that is also a kind of detective story that involves the linked history of the Holocaust and the Genocide. Paulsen is not Armenian, but is married to an Armenian and has drawn upon the stories of his wife's family to tell a tale that tantalizes the reader with its hints of explanation of the truth and origins of both the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide.

The novel is set in Michigan on the shores of Lake Huron, where an Armenian family has a weekend and summer cottage that serves as a gathering place for their extended clan.

In August 2004, several of the children find a metal box in which they eventually discover a German Lueger. The cottage, once owned by a Senator Klausner, of German descent, was passed on to Leyla and Ulrich, who then insisted upon giving it to the Armenian family.

It is later revealed that Leyla is the granddaughter of Sultan Abdul Hamid, and her husband has had ties with Hitler's Nazi regime.

Satie, the daughter of Siran who first acquired the house, is married to Fritz, a lawyer of German descent and the novel traces his efforts to track down the evidence that proves that the Nazis devised their blueprint for the Holocaust after being made aware of the circumstances of the Armenian Genocide.

In addition to the metal box with the Lueger, Fritz and Aram, a member of the extended Armenian family, discover a bunker under the cottage with a room that contains blueprints that lay out the design of Auschwitz, the Nazi death camp. There are additional documents, one of which quotes Hitler's much repeated comment about the Armenians.

Once these materials are discovered, the family agonizes over whether to reveal what they have found. A further discovery, a letter in Armenian, leads them to believe that there is at least one other document, which would prove the intentions of the Turks to annihilate the Armenians.

The story is drawn out over several years and the text is studded with small essays regarding the history of the Armenians and the refusal of the United

States to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

Fritz states, "The Turkish Blueprint for Genocide was also the blueprint used by Nazi Germany to exterminate over six million Jewish people during World War II. Hitler did not come up with the plan of extermination and the plans to build the Jewish death camps on his own. Hitler simply followed the plan already created and used by Turkey. In exchange for sparing Turkey from destruction and occupation during World War II, Hitler borrowed Turkey's plan for genocide as he considered it to be the perfect plan."

The twists and turns of the plot are interspersed with accounts of many holiday gatherings at the cottage, where the families celebrate their Armenian culture and history and enjoy feasts of Armenian food.

The novel is both fanciful and also propagandistic, in the sense that it asserts many tenets of the Armenian Cause. The text ends very much in the present with President Obama's refusal "to do the right thing" and recognize the Armenian Genocide.

Paulsen has been an international lawyer for 25 years. His wife, Diane, also a lawyer, is Armenian and it is through his acquaintance with her extended family, that he gathered much of the information for this book.

Armenian Research Center At UMich./ Dearborn Publishes Translation of Bois de Vincennes

DEARBORN, Mich. – The Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan-Dearborn will publish the English translation of the short novel of exile, *The Bois de Vincennes*, by one of the prominent Armenian-French authors, Nigoghos Sarafian.

Originally published in Armenian in 1947, the work is best known by its French-language title, which has been retained in this English translation.

Able translated by Christopher Atamian, this novel introduces to the English-speaking world, the mind of one of the Armenian Diaspora's most complex writers. The book also features an introduction by Prof. Marc Nichanian, who discusses Sarafian's intellectual world.

In this book readers see the effect of exile caused by the Armenian Genocide on Sarafian. He lived in Paris from 1923 to his death in 1972 and was a member of the Menk ("We") group of Armenian-French writers who attempted to renew and redefine (in part through their eponymous journal) Armenian identity in its new diaspora setting. This book is in some measure a way for Sarafian to come to terms with his own exile and the exile of the Armenian people in general. It is also an extended meditation in and on the Vincennes Woods, a park just outside Paris, where he spent time in solitary contemplation.

Atamian is a New York-based writer, filmmaker and producer. *The Bois de Vincennes* is his first published, book-length translation.

The book's publication was subvented through a grant from the Ajemian Foundation, in memory of Robert Ajemian.

The Bois de Vincennes (ISBN 978-1934548-02-8 or 1-934548-02-2) is distributed by Wayne State University Press and can be purchased from national chain booksellers, special ordered from smaller bookstores or ordered from major online retailers. The retail price is \$20.

Lenten Recipes:

Armenian Potato Salad (Haygagan Kednakhuntzori Aghtsan)

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound small new potatoes
4-5 scallions, chopped
1/4 cup minced dill
Salt and freshly-ground black pepper to taste
Garnish: Sliced tomatoes and cucumbers

PREPARATION:

1. Boil potatoes, just until tender. Drain, rinse with cold water, peel and set aside to cool. Cut them into thin, round slices.
2. Mix together in a bowl scallions, dill, salt and pepper. Stir in potatoes. Refrigerate at least one hour before serving.
3. Turn potatoes into a flat dish, heaped in a mound. Garnish rim with tomatoes and cucumbers.

Yields: four servings

Note: If you prefer, do not peel the potatoes.

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ARTS & LIVING

Helene Pilibosian Autobiography Explores Armenian-American Experience

Reviewed By
Dr. Mary A. Papazian

In *My Literary Profile: A Memoir*, Helene Pilibosian, long-time editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, has written a personal and intimate memoir in which she charts her own literary development over the course of a full and active lifetime. Some of what she tells will be familiar to her readers; other details of her personal experiences and development will surprise all but her closest friends.

The daughter of Genocide survivors and of the first generation born in America, Pilibosian looks back on her life growing up in Watertown, Mass. Coming of age in the middle of the last century, she expresses multiple threads of influence, from the emerging Armenian community in Watertown to her experiences as a student in the Harvard Extension School, her mature years as a wife and mother and finally to her evolution in her later years as a writer and poet who is constantly seeking her voice, which is another word for her own self-identity. Pilibosian's "literary memoir," which she publishes through a micro-press, Ohan Press, that she established with her husband, Hagop, is the story of her life, and in it her attempt to understand the influences that led to her growing identification as a poet and writer. This story of self-discovery and growth is clear, direct and honest ... and it is a story that reminds us that we need never stop learning and developing.

Narrating her story more or less chronologically, Pilibosian begins with her early years as "the second daughter of Khachadoor or Archie and Yeghsa or Elizabeth Pilibosian" (p. 1). In the very way she represents her parents through their dual Armenian and American names, Pilibosian underscores her own duality as a representative of the first generation of hyphenated Armenian-Americans growing up under the influence of the stories of the generation of Genocide survivors. Her efforts to understand and interpret this duality underlie the entire narrative, as do her efforts to place her experiences within the American cultural development of the 20th century. The tension between the two strands is more acute in the years before her long and seemingly fulfilling marriage to Hagop Sarkissian, an immigrant from the vibrant Armenian community in Beirut, Lebanon, who enabled her to bridge the gap between her two worlds.

Pilibosian's early years were typical of that of many immigrant Armenians – and indeed many immigrant Americans from many other cultures and countries – in the first half of the 20th century. And thus in its particulars, her memoir exudes a kind of universality. She tells the story of her father's survival during the Armenian Genocide, where "On the death march he had been taken from his mother, his brother and his two sisters by a Kurd who sold him to another Kurd for a goat" (p. 4). He escaped this captivity four years later and fled to an orphanage in Aleppo, Syria. Ultimately, he came to America, joining his father in Whitinsville, Mass., and set out to make a life for himself. An important step

in establishing himself in the new world was his marriage following a "courtship by mail" to Yeghsa Haboian, a young Armenian woman who had settled in Gardannes, France.

Although she spends some time telling her parents' moving stories of survival and renewal, Pilibosian's story is not primarily a story of the Armenian Genocide, nor of the experiences of those who would survive the tragedy. In fact, while the book contributes to the growing body of survivor literature, it is primarily the story of the next generation. She, a child of survivors, provides the details of the Genocide to lay the foundation to explain her own experiences and those of other members of the next generation and the communities they built. In this way, this essay more aptly shares in the tradition of Peter Balakian's *Black Dog of Fate* (1997), among others.

While many figures wander in and out of the narrative ... from friends and family members, to teachers, professors and even intellectual figures whom Pilibosian came to know not in person but through their writings, the story really is about Pilibosian herself. The many quotations from authors, artists, writers, teachers and thinkers, such as Arshile Gorky, Prof. Howard Mumford Jones, the poet Paul Engle, that she presents provide a taste of those who influenced her intellectual and artistic life. Pilibosian came to know many of these individuals while she was a student studying humanities at the Harvard Extension School. Others were leading Armenian intellectual figures whom she



met while traveling with her husband to his native Lebanon or in Europe to visit family members and fellow Armenians. Still others were caregivers, psychologists and physicians who supported her through a nervous breakdown in her 20s and through other health issues later in her life.

In writing this memoir, Pilibosian bares her deepest secrets. She tells the story of her struggles with depression, as well as the shock treatments she underwent, her weeks in hospitals under the care of a psychiatrist, her cardiac

arrest and near death, with honesty and forthrightness. These are stories that many would want to keep hidden, and, I would bet, many of her Armenian readers never knew of them. Yet Pilibosian sees them as critical to her intellectual and emotional development as a person and a poet. And thus she shares them in an honest, direct and unapologetic style. These things happened to her – and thus they shaped her.

What strikes the reader throughout the narrative is the love and support Pilibosian received throughout her life – especially from her husband – that enabled her to overcome these challenges and lead a productive and prosperous life, one in which she never ceased exploring the world of ideas and emotions, and one in which she never stopped giving. While this memoir is clearly her story, it is in no way self-centered or narcissistic. Rather, it strikes this reader as an honest attempt at self-understanding, and one that she hopes will provide strength, comfort and encouragement to those who read her work ... whether in the form of this personal narrative or through her several volumes of poetry. It is, ultimately, a story of survival and healing made possible by love and the transformative quality of poetry.

(Dr. Mary A. Papazian, newly-appointed president of Southern Connecticut State University, wrote this review in the *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, Volume 19:2, and it is here reprinted with the permission of the editors.)

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 31 – AGBU New England District Presents: Performing Artists in Concert, 8 p.m. Under the artistic direction of mezzo-soprano Solange Merdian and conductor Aram Demirjian, the inaugural program will feature young Armenian artists who are recipients of scholarships from AGBU in the performing arts. They will perform the works of both Armenian and non-Armenian classical composers. Details to follow.

MAY 24 – Celebrating 80 and Beyond, Benefit for the Armenian Mirror-Spectator. Royal Sonesta Hotel. Details to follow.

MICHIGAN

APRIL 14 – Tekeyan Cultural Association and ADL present Annual Gourmet Dinner Dance and Program, celebrating 20 years of Tekeyan's cultural and educational mission in Armenia. Honoring Man of the Year Mihran Hoplazian. Entertainment by violinist Harry Hovkimian and his ensemble. 7 p.m. Open bar, mezza and gourmet dinner, \$75/person. For tickets, call: Ara Belian (248) 200-8030, Diana Alexanian (248) 334-3636 or Pam Coultis (248) 646-7847. At St. John's Armenian Church Cultural Hall, 22001 Northwestern Highway, Southfield. To benefit Komitas Choir of St. John's Armenian Church, Tekeyan Sponsor a Teacher Program and the Orphans' Higher Education Fund in Armenia.

NEW JERSEY

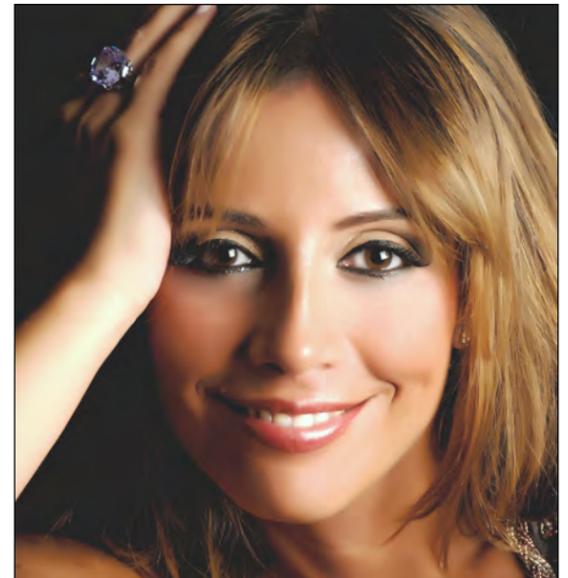
MARCH 31 – CARS presents Armenian singer Sibil from Istanbul at 7 p.m. Special guest performance by Shushi Armenian Dance Ensemble. Bergen County Academics, 200 Hackensack Ave., Hackensack. For information, call Hilda (516) 496-0248, Margit (914) 686-0840, Adi (973) 761-1544. Tickets, depending on seats: \$50, \$30 and \$25.

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

OCTOBER 28 – Save the date. The Armenian American Support and Educational Center, Hye Doon, celebrates its 35th anniversary. Felician College, Lodi. With the participation of Akh'tamar Dance Ensemble and other talented guest performances. Details to follow.

NEW YORK

MARCH 11 – Holy Martyrs Fundraising Committee sponsors



On March 31, singer Sibil, will perform, along with the Shushi Armenian Dance Ensemble, at 200 Hackensack Ave., Hackensack, NJ, presented by CARS. For information, call Hilda (516) 496-0248, Margit (914) 686-0840, Adi (973) 761-1544. Tickets, depending on seats: \$50, \$30 and \$25.

Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megertchian Theatrical Group's "The Flatterer," by Hagop Baronian, a musical comedy. 3 p.m., Cardozo High School, 57-00 23rd St., Bayside. Tickets: \$35 and \$25. For info, call Bertha, (718) 423-8523.

APRIL 28 – Rebirth Concert: dedicated to the 20th anniversary of both the Armenian National Military and Armenia's membership to the United Nations. Organized by the Tekeyan Cultural Association of NY/NJ. With the participation of renowned artists from Armenia and the Philharmonic Symphonic Orchestra of Rhode Island, to take place at 8 p.m.; the Merkin Concert Hall of Kaufman center, 129 West 67th St., New York City. Save the date. Details to follow.

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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Armenian Jerusalem in Limbo

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Two Armenian patriarchs in vegetating states – one in Istanbul and the other in Jerusalem – do not augur well for the Armenian Church in general. Those two patriarchates are major hierarchical seats within the structure of the Armenian Church and they are both paralyzed by a tragic stroke of nature. But what is more tragic is the eerie silence reigning throughout the Armenian world about these two alarming situations. Both patriarchates are situated in countries where there is no love lost for the Armenians.

In the case of Istanbul Patriarchate, the community proved to be ineffective in steering to a normal situation when it was revealed that Patriarch Mesrob Mutafian was incurably incapacitated. Two different proposals were submitted to the Turkish government: to elect a new patriarch or to elect a coadjutor patriarch to run the affairs of the Patriarchate. The authorities preferred the stalemate, which benefited Bishop Aram Ateshian, with a poor standing in the community but in a good position to contribute to Turkey's political agenda.

In the case of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, the handwriting was on the wall. The aging Patriarch Torkom Manoogian had already failed more than once to defend the patriarchate's interests in some real estate deals, and it was very obvious that he could further compromise the Patriarchate's properties against the sharks vying for those valuable pieces of property.

Armenians have lived in Jerusalem from time immemorial. In 95 BC, Jerusalem became part of Tigranes II's empire. But the Patriarchate was established in the seventh century (638 AD) when the Caliph Umar Ibn Khattab proclaimed Abraham I, senior bishop of the Armenian Church, as the patriarch of the Armenian Church and the leader of the Eastern Orthodox denominations (Assyrian, Coptic and Abyssinian) to neutralize the authority of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Sophronius. It is no coincidence that another Muslim ruler, namely Fatih Sultan Mohammed, helped the creation of the Istanbul Patriarchate, after he conquered that city in 1453, exactly with the same political motivation, i.e. to neutralize the power of the Byzantine church. Of course, Armenians benefited from these rivalries, but they gained the perpetual hostility of Greek Orthodox Church, even to this day. Incidentally, recent rapprochement between Israel and Cyprus (and by extension Greece) might further fuel the Greek Patriarchate's churches rivalry with the Armenians in the Holy City.

But Armenians do not need foreign enemies. They are perfectly capable of destroying themselves and their institutions.

It is believed that after the 1948 partition, there were 16,000 Armenians living in Jerusalem. That number reached 25,000 at its peak. Today, their count is less than 1,000. One can rightfully ask if these people felt secure and enjoyed the prospects of prosperity in the "only democratic country in the Middle East," why they would seek opportunities in far away lands.

The answer to this question appeared in one of the Israeli papers (*Ha'aretz*) by a reporter named Nir Hossan who wrote:

"Jerusalem's Christian community increasingly feels under assault, and that is especially true for Christians living in Jewish neighborhoods. Priests in the Old City, especially Armenian priests who must often transit the Jewish Quarter, say they are spat on daily."

Spitting may yet be the least offensive act against the Armenians, who are sitting on a gold mine, in terms of property they own. The creeping appetite of the Jewish settlers and developers will eventually expropriate the Patriarchate of its real estate holdings, under the benevolent eyes of the Israeli authorities.

Yet, against these raging appetites, we have a comatose and moribund Patriarch and a divided Brotherhood unable to manage its affairs.

Although the smallest of the quarters in Jerusalem, along with Jewish, Christian and Muslim quarters, the Armenian Quarter covers one-sixth of the Old City. But the Patriarchate also owns property outside the limits of the Old City, which it has notoriously mismanaged over the centuries.

Armenians have sporadically faced "Jerusalem crises" alarming the world Armenian community to run for rescue, but then, transparency and accountability are not in the lexicon of the Patriarchate.

The treasures and properties accumulated over the centuries are the gifts of the Armenian people entrusted to the Brotherhood, who are supposed to act only as the custodian of that wealth. But very few spiritual leaders have realized that role; most of them have acted as if they owned the holy places.

That is certainly not a criticism directed toward any particular patriarch or brotherhood.

A case in point was another historic crisis erupted in 1914, just before World War I and the Armenian Genocide. At that time the Jerusalem Patriarchate was under the tutelage of the Armenian National Central Council in Istanbul, which decided to dispatch a delegation headed by two prominent leaders to resolve the crisis. One of those leaders was Archbishop Malachia Ormanian, himself a historic figure as a former patriarch and maker of history through his masterful studies on the history of the Armenian Church and its theology. The other leader was Vahan Tekeyan, a world-class poet and a public figure of impeccable integrity.

As soon as the delegation arrived in Jerusalem, Archbishop Ormanian connived with the clergy of the Brotherhood to make the presence of Tekeyan irrelevant. Then the war started and everything fell into further disarray.

This is an endemic problem; every time a higher body tries to exercise some authority to put the house in order in Jerusalem, the clergy gang up and they declare their fierce independence, with an arrogance that "we know better."

But that bravura is exercised only against Armenian authority, lay or spiritual. When it comes to any ruling authority, the brotherhood is docile and pliant. That is where we lose.

The Russian church in Jerusalem benefited tremendously from Moscow even during the Soviet period. But our clergy are loath to encourage any protective move by the Armenian government or even by the Supreme Spiritual head of the Armenian Church or any other entity.

This overreaction to any outside advice or help is protected by a law, which governs the holy places. That law was promulgated in 1852 through a decree by the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Majid, known as the Status Quo, which regulates the rights, privileges and the authority of different religions. The law has been exercised by the Ottoman, British Colonial, Jordanian and Israeli authorities.

On the one hand, it protects different religions and entities against encroachments by the ruling powers and on the other hand it leaves the destiny of a huge wealth in the hands of a beleaguered Brotherhood.

The last few years there was talk to convince the St. James Brotherhood to plan a smooth succession, as the Patriarch's health was deteriorating. During the last year, a convocation of the Brotherhood was cancelled twice. Its major agenda was to elect a coadjutor patriarch.

This tricky succession requires an amendment to the Patriarchate's by-laws, and one was prepared. However, the procrastination of the Patriarch led to the present impasse.

Today the Grand Sacristan of the Patriarchate, Archbishop Nourhan Manoukian, has assumed the responsibility of running day-to-day operation of the Patriarchate.

Unfortunately, the Patriarch's recovery is not in the cards. There is a worldwide silence, which is very dangerous. The candidates who can succeed and stabilize the situation do not seem interested. On the other hand, candidates who are ready to ascend the throne and emulate the late Patriarch Yeghishe Derderian's extravagant lifestyle are ready to seize the opportunity.

It is not only the material wealth of the Patriarchate that is at stake, but also its cultural and historic treasures. The attempted sale of 28 illuminated manuscripts at Sotheby's in London some years ago is still a searing memory. Turkish and Israeli authorities also keep a watchful eye on the archives of the Istanbul Patriarchate transferred to Jerusalem for safe keeping during World War I. They contain incriminating documents about the Genocide.

Jerusalem is everybody's concern and, yes, every Armenian's business. The Brotherhood needs to reach out to the world Armenian community, over and beyond the Status Quo provisions and elect a worthy successor and also enlist the cooperation of real estate and financial experts to salvage our legacy in the Holy Land.

Let us pray for the good health of our ailing Patriarch but above all let us pray for the endangered future of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, which is in limbo.

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LETTERS

Dating back to 1933, Reader Loves the *Mirror-Spectator*

To the Editor:

My name is Lucy Tufenkjian, and, in 1933, your reporters attended a production of "Anoush," performed by Union City Armenian School children. Mrs. Siranoush Katchaznuny was our teacher. She chose me to play the part of Anoush. I was only 15 years old, and now I am 94 years old, and for the first time, I found on my computer a copy of the article and was very happy that the "reporter" was very complimentary.

I don't know his name and whether he is alive, but I wanted thank him.

I've seen later productions done by older performers, and now I have a DVD by Parseghian studios. To see this I don't believe I was able to perform at 15 years old.

Just thought I could let you know how I appreciate your paper.

— Lucy Tufenkjian Jamie
Tamarac, Fla.

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COMMENTARY

Artist Feels Solidarity with Haitian Quake Victims

By Anoush Ter Taulian

After the 2010 Haitian earthquake, I thought of a friend who was under the rubble for three days before she was rescued during the 1988 Armenian earthquake in Spitak. In solidarity with the Haitian earthquake victims, I wrote the poem "I Am Sailing On A Raft Of My Bones," which I read at many Haitian benefits and on Haitian radio always mentioning how in 1915 while the US was invading Haiti, the Ottoman Turks were committing the 1915 Armenian Genocide. I also said that Armenians had nothing to do with slavery in America and in fact during the Genocide many Armenian women were forced to become slave brides of the Turks. When I mentioned that Turkey denies the Armenian Genocide and doesn't want to pay reparations, many of the African-Americans I talked to felt the US denies the African Holocaust and does not want to pay reparations.

I started doing research on the African Holocaust (Maafa). I went to the Shomberg Library in Harlem where the librarian said the Maafa took place during the trans-Atlantic slave trade (1562-1807) with estimates of 40 to 100 million deaths. When I asked her how there really could have been 100 million deaths, she said that many Africans died during capturing or deportation and sometimes whole ships of slave cargo sank during the Middle Passage. Also, she said the numbers include the slave trade to Central and

South America and over hundreds of years it might even be more.

I also read this poem at "The Tribute To Our Ancestors Of The Middle Passage," which takes place annually in Coney Island as a memorial to all the Africans that died during the slave trade in the Atlantic, which is the largest graveyard in the world. At the memorial after the cultural presentations everyone goes to the ocean to put flowers in the water while people drum and dance.

In 1791 the Haitians planted the seeds of the first successful slave rebellion in the Americas and in 1804 became the first post-colonial independent black-led nation in the world. But Haitian independence came at a high price because France demanded 150 million francs. It took Haiti more than 120 years to pay off this debt, which greatly impoverished the country. Now many Haitians are demanding France return this extorted money. The Haitians have had little chance for self-determination because foreign powers have been supporting corrupt politicians to gain control over Haiti's resources. The US boycotted Haiti and didn't recognize the Haitian government from 1804 to 1865. The US invaded Haiti in 1915 because they wanted to dominate the region under the Monroe Doctrine. The US military stayed until 1934 after the US had taken over the banking systems, stole the gold and changed the constitution so foreigners could own property.

Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since The Earthquake, edited by Mark Schuller and Pablo Morales, discusses the impact of foreign intervention on Haiti. Now two years after the earthquake there are still over a million homeless living in squalid tent camps, while aid organizations like the Red Cross are not accountable to the aid recipients. Bill Clinton's foundation contracted a company that was being sued for formaldehyde in trailers it sold FEMA after Hurricane Katrina instead of using a local firm to create job in Haiti. Grassroots Haitian organization like Ligue Feminine (Feminine League) and SOFA have organized themselves to do things like distribute food and help protect women from violence in the camps, but they don't have the funding they need. Meanwhile there needs to be a class action suit against the Red Cross to show where all the money has gone and there needs to be a system where the disaster victims themselves have a say in aid distribution.

Here is my poem:

I Am Sailing On A Raft Of My Bones

Quivering fingers are a sign
 Quivering fingers are a sign of life
 Stretching up through the concrete coffins
 Pressing on my breasts
 Come closer
 Breathe your caring into me
 So that I can inhale the sunrise
 It is so hard for us to breathe
 Mother Earth is also suffocating under
 millions of tons of real estate developers rape concrete
 We are cracking, exploding, tumbling
 Releasing into each other becoming
 Scattered parts of an infinite universe

Inside my eyelids oceans roar
 I am sailing on a raft of my bones
 In the choppy sea I can see 250,000 Haitian bone rafts
 Guided by the luminous skeleton parts
 Sunk deep in the Atlantic, of the 100 million
 Africans killed in the Middle Passage
 Our bones fuse together, the yearning, returning
 Crashing on the shores of the motherland
 While the daily unnatural disasters Caused by
 Conquerors - Genocide, Slavery, Poverty continue
 In an instant your life can change for the worse
 In an instant your life can change for the better
 Ayibobo Ayiti, Hail to the Spirits
 Successful slave rebellion, Voodoo Queen, 1st Black Republic
 Ayibobo Ayiti shackled to corrupt governments
 Backed by US imperialism, but Ayiti you are still fragrant
 With the spirit of justice and resistance
 Ayibobo Ayiti Hail to the Spirits
 Hail to the Spirits

(Born in California, the author is an artist who has also participated in Karabagh's struggle for independence.)

Khojali Demos in Istanbul Show True Colors of Turkish Government

By Raffi Bedrosyan

The posters were placed throughout Istanbul, Turkey, on all prominent billboard locations and in subway stations, more than a week before the planned event in Taksim Square in the center of the city: "Don't ever be deceived by Armenian lies!" This was the call for a protest march on February 26, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Khojali massacre of Azeris by the Armenian forces during the Karabagh conflict.

Who organized the event? Who financed it? Why now all of a sudden, after 20 years of silence about Khojali in Turkey?

It appears that the purpose of the event and answers to these questions go back quite some time, back all the way to 1915. Yes, 1915 again, dreaded by the Turks, about which the Armenians keep on spreading lies non-stop, lies that most of the world outside Turkey believes in, and what is even worse, lies that many Turks have also started to believe in. And these lies have got to be stopped before it is too late, before more Turks get deceived by Armenians, before the upcoming 100th commemoration of the 1915 events. Until recently, if you spread these lies in Turkey you would get labeled as a "traitor," convicted for "insulting Turkishness," get beaten up or jailed, or worse, if you happened to be named Hrant Dink, you would be silenced with a bullet to the back of your head. But many Turks have now started believing these lies, and have started empathizing with the Armenians, with Hrant, even carrying signs declaring, "We are all Armenians," "We are all Hrant."

Just a month ago, when the trial of Hrant Dink's murderers ended with a preposterous-

ly covered-up verdict, when the presiding judge declared: "No evidence of organized murder, even though I sense there is a deep organization behind the murder," the "traitorous" Turks had poured into the streets carrying these dreaded signs declaring themselves to be "all Armenian, all Hrant," demanding justice, demanding the state to face its past.

In the meantime, the French who had believed in the Armenian lies for a long time, had gone one step further, again about a month ago, and dared to pass a law about the Armenian lies, which proposed to punish anyone who denied these lies. In fact, a Turkish minister, ironically the one responsible for European Union accession talks, had decided to challenge this law by declaring that there was never a "so-called" Armenian Genocide and had gotten into trouble by Swiss authorities, who continued to believe in these lies.

Therefore, the time had come for the "real" Turks to act - to show the "traitorous" Turks, and the rest of the world, that they will not be deceived by these lies, that only they know the truth, and that they will make sure the Armenians will also stop lying and learn the truth, or else... And the posters came out on February 26, in Taksim Square in central Istanbul, with the following humane messages, addressed to the Armenians and the "traitorous" Turks:

"You are all Armenians, you are all Bastards," "Today Taksim, tomorrow Yerevan, we may suddenly come there one night," "Grey Wolves are here, Where are the Hrants? (Grey wolf is the symbol of the ultranationalist/ racist Turks)," "Grey wolf Ogun (Hrant's killer)," "Grey wolf Catli (mobster ordered by Turkish state to go after ASALA)," "Hrant's bastards cannot scare us,"

"Agri Mountain (Mount Ararat) will be your graves," "Let Armenia be wiped out," "No more quiet to the Armenian lies" and so on.

The French were also remembered, as rolls of toilet paper marked "Sarkozy toilet paper" were distributed to the protesting crowds... And yes, there were also some messages about the Azeri Khojali victims. But it was apparent that the rabble-rousers were more pre-occupied with hatred toward Armenians' and traitorous Turks' 1915 stand, grief and justice demands for Hrant. The Khojali incident was just the instrument to vent hatred and anger.

The event could have been regarded as routine, as another one of the regular and spontaneous anti-Armenian hate shows so common among the Turkish people, brainwashed with the racist Ittihadist ideology for several generations. Usually, the elite "brainwashers" stay hidden behind curtains during these events. But during this event, the brainwashers did not see the need to hide. The governor of Istanbul attended the event, and it became obvious that the multitude of expensive posters on city-owned billboards were financed or subsidized by the city government, using taxpayers' money, including the Armenian community of Istanbul. But even more remarkable at the February 26 event was the presence of the Minister of Interior of Turkey, who was at the forefront of the rally, with statements instigating hatred and discrimination against the Armenians. After defining Armenians as "blood suckers, heartless, pitiless murderers," he continued that "The spilled Azeri blood is Turkish blood, and as long as the Turkish nation lives, we will seek revenge for this spilled blood." And then, he must have remembered the real objective of the event, and somewhat relevantly announced that,

"The Turkish nation has absolutely nothing to be ashamed of its past history, not in Turkey, not in the Balkans, Azerbaijan nor Kazakhstan!" While Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan insists on a historic commission to investigate the 1915 events, and the US State Department parrots the same position, the minister of interior already knows the truth and has announced the conclusion of the investigation.

It seems that the ever-changing Turkish state policy on how to deal with the 1915 events, is changing again. The evolving official position over the past 90 years, which ranged from complete silence to historic theses of "Armenians never lived in Turkey," "Armenians massacred Turks," "Armenians and Turks killed each other during the war," "Armenians were only deported on the eastern war front," "Armenians died of hunger and disease" and so on, now seems to be "Armenians committed genocide." Of course, the other new thesis is that "the French also committed genocide." But there are also two official positions which seem not to change much, no matter how contradictory they are with each other, and no matter who controls the Turkish government, whether it is the state or the deep state, military or civilian, leftist or rightist, Ittihadist or nationalist, secular or moderate Islam. These are "Denial: We never committed genocide, we never hurt any Armenians" and "Threat: But if you keep on with genocide claims, you know we have killed in the past, and if necessary, we will kill again." The "threat policy" also applies to foreign countries, such as stopping trade or closing bases.

If Prime Minister Erdogan is serious about showing that his regime is different than the past, he would start by asking for the immediate resignation of his interior minister.



COMMENTARY

A New Kind of Armenian-Turkish Reconciliation

By Jennifer Manoukian

In October 2011, the newly-renovated Sourp Giragos Armenian Apostolic Church reopened in Turkey's south-eastern province of Diyarbakir. Among the hundreds gathered to celebrate its first mass in more than 90 years were local men and women who had chosen the occasion to be baptized into the Armenian Apostolic Church. Raised as Sunni Muslims, these men and women were the children and grandchildren of Armenians who had converted to Islam to escape persecution in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire.

Living in a society that glorified cultural homogeneity and in a country that still bore the scars of its Ottoman past, the first generation of converts often kept their Armenian heritage hidden from their children. They integrated into the communities around them and adopted, at least outwardly, a new language, religion, culture and identity.

Less encumbered by the fear that silenced their parents and grandparents, the grandchildren of these Armenians have recently begun to dig into their family histories and to discuss their backgrounds with a kind of pride uncharacteristic of previous generations.

This growing trend in Turkey that values multicultural identities – and, in the process, exposes the absurdity of purity as a cultural ideal – rails against the Turkish nationalist model of identity that has become familiar to those who follow Turkish politics. But it is not the government that is fostering change; it is members of the civil society who are taking the matter of identity into their own hands.

These themes have been most notably explored through personal accounts of the grandchildren of converted Armenians. In examining the impact that the discovery of Armenian ancestry has had on their own identity construction, the grandchildren attest to the possibility of multiple belongings. This is a concept that unhinges the common adversarial depiction of Armenian and Turkish nationalism advanced by states and leaders and inspires a more fluid, inclusive understanding of identity, where both Turkish and Armenian elements can coexist within an individual.

Crypto-Armenians: Then and Now

While the international community is well acquainted with the plight of Armenians driven from Anatolia in 1915, it has only been in the past decade that attention has been focused on the Armenians who stayed in Turkey – known as “crypto-Armenians,” “Islamicized Armenians” or, more disparagingly, as “leftovers of the sword.”

Although a small fraction of the pre-1915 Armenian community preserved its language and culture in Istanbul after Turkey's founding in 1923, most Armenians who remained in Turkey faded into the social fabric of rural towns and villages across Anatolia. But, in recent years, these men and women are being pulled from obscurity with increased momentum, thanks in part to the 2004 publication of Fethiye Çetin's memoir, *Anneannem* [My Grandmother].

In this groundbreaking text, Çetin – a Turkish human rights activist and lawyer best known abroad as legal counsel for the family of slain Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink – recounts her grandmother's personal history. Her grandmother, born Heranoush to an Armenian family, was taken from her mother and siblings by a Turkish gendarme during the death marches in 1915. She was renamed Seher, was raised as a Turk, and repressed all memory of her Armenian past until the very end of her life.

Çetin's pioneering account reverberated across Turkey, resonating particularly with families who had uncovered similar stories in their own personal histories. In some cases, *My Grandmother* prompted these families to discuss their Armenian ancestry openly and without shame, leading to the publication of another unparalleled work, written with Ayse Gül Altınay, *Torunlar* [The Grandchildren], published in French as *Les petits-enfants*.

Les petits-enfants is a series of personal accounts by 25 grandchildren of converted Armenians, originally published in Turkish in 2009 and translated into French by Célin Vuraler in 2011. In these interviews, the grandchildren piece together what they know about their grandparents' childhoods and families, explain how their grandparents were integrated into Sunni or Alevi communities, and describe their relationship with them.

The startling, often brutal way that the grandchildren discovered their grandparents' Armenian ancestries, rattling whatever clear conception they had of their identities up until that point, is a key feature of each account. For example, one grandchild, the celebrated poet Bedrettin Aykin, remembers first learning of his family's past unexpectedly when a friend's mother referred to his mother as “the young infidel,” leading him to question his mother about their origins. Having been treated as a secret within their families and a source of shame within their society, the dis-

covery of Armenian heritage often came as a shock to these grandchildren and forced them to reevaluate the way they understood themselves and their relationships to their communities.

These painful recollections are nevertheless interspersed with bittersweet indications – obvious only in hindsight – of the past their grandparents kept hidden from view. One granddaughter recalls that her grandmother preferred to be called Satenig rather than Süreyya, the Turkish name on her identity card; only when talking about her grandmother to an Armenian friend did she realize that Satenig was, in fact, an Armenian name. Another grandchild remembers coloring eggs with her grandmother every year in the early spring, entirely unaware, at the time, of the insight it gave into her grandmother's Christian upbringing.

Grappling with Latent Armenian Identity

The grandchildren – raised as Turks, Kurds or Alevi, speaking Turkish, Kurdish, or Zaza, and practicing, to varying degrees, Sunni Islam or Alevism – reacted to the news of their grandparents' Armenian heritage in ways representative of the diversity among them. Most took the opportunity to read more about Armenians; a great number of grandchildren cited the work of novelists Migirdiç Margosyan, Elif Şafak and Kemal Yalçın as fundamental in humanizing an unfamiliar yet vilified group of people. Many also began to read about Ottoman Armenian history, and in the process, challenged the depiction of Armenians as wicked traitors, which had been instilled in them at school and in their larger society from an early age.

Some grandchildren were intrigued by the religious piece of their Armenian ancestry, which prompted them to study the intersections between Christianity and Islam or, like those baptized at Sourp Giragos last October, to convert to the faith in which their grandparents were raised.

Although the conclusions that each grandchild drew from his or her discovery varied considerably, each was compelled to reflect on his or her identity and how this new revelation would impact it. For some, their grandparents' past had no effect on how they conceived of their identity. One grandchild reflects: “I was born in Turkey. I am Turkish. I am Muslim. Should I, all of a sudden, become Armenian and go to Yerevan?” Or: “Up until today, I have never felt Turkish, Kurdish or Armenian, even after learning of my family's history. I don't identify with any of these nationalities. I don't want to be attached to anywhere.”

The absence of a single, dominant identity and the significance of multiculturalism are themes repeated in a significant number of accounts. After an initial period of crisis and uncertainty, many of the grandchildren came to value belonging to an eclectic mix of communities: “I have Armenian, Kurdish and Turkish cultures. I know all of them well and I am the product of what they represent. But I don't know how to respond when one asks me if I am Turkish, Kurdish or Armenian. I am a bit of all three.” This emphasis on multiple affiliations illustrates a flexible, more inclusive understanding of identity – a break with the prevailing nationalist conceptualization that so often attempts to place people into neat categories that do not represent reality.

Hybrid Identities

There is something hopeful to be said about a generation that can see beyond artificial constructs of nationhood and has the confidence to formulate identities based on its own individual experiences. After successful attempts by their grandparents to assimilate into the dominant culture, and desperate attempts by their parents to conceal any suggestion of their otherness, these grandchildren are bravely rejecting their society's taboos by acknowledging and, in many cases, embracing their Armenian ancestry. In his interview, one grandchild eloquently comments on the dangers of identity suppression so common in past generations:

I don't wish for anyone to hide their true identity or to mask past errors. I think that people become much more extremist when they hide their pasts and protect themselves by diverting attention. [Bülent] Ecevit, wanting to erase his Kurdish origins, became a Turkish nationalist politician; my uncle, hoping to make people forget his Armenian ancestry, immersed himself fervently in Islam. People who are sure of themselves would not exist in such contradiction.

The shift towards self-acceptance is promising because it indicates that identities no longer need to be understood as mutually exclusive. One granddaughter, who considers herself a devout Muslim and has chosen to wear the hijab, celebrates the fact that she is not a “pure Turk” and credits her converted Armenian grandmother with teaching her about the faith. She shows us that a variety of seemingly irreconcilable identities can coexist harmoniously with one another.

We see this emphasis on coexistence again in the accounts of grandchildren with extended families whose

members belong to communities often understood to be in perpetual conflict with one another:

I like this diversity very much because my two families, Armenian and Kurdish, mutually respect each other. For example, when my mother visited my Armenian family, we would always make them a prayer rug. And my mother, during Christian holidays, would always make a meal for the occasion. This proves that it's completely possible for the two cultures to cohabitate. Communication and common ground is all that is needed.

Another grandchild shared a similar experience:

In our family, there are Syriacs, Armenians and Muslims. My aunts – my mother's sisters – married Syriacs and live as Syriacs. My sister married an Armenian. As for my maternal grandparents, they are still Muslim and pray five times a day. It is a mix of different lifestyles.

These stories are models of exceptionally productive understandings of identity. Rather than being used as a way to create divisions among people, these families see identity as a personal code that provides comfort and a sense of belonging, but that resists politicization and spurns the idea of boundaries and limitations.

Implications for the Armenian Diaspora

The struggle to formulate identity is not foreign to Armenians living in the diaspora, who are also exposed to a variety of different cultures and identities from which to choose. The accounts of these grandchildren are in fact quite relevant to diasporic experiences and provide an alternative approach to Armenian identity construction, which encourages a kind of inclusivity that does not often characterize Armenian communities.

The Armenian Diaspora today is composed of descendants of Ottoman Armenians who, despite having lived in exile for almost a century, still feel a close connection to their heritage; in some cases, they continue to speak Western Armenian, a linguistic branch distinct from the one spoken in the Republic of Armenia today. Scattered in large part across Europe, the Middle East and the Americas, the people who comprise the Armenian diaspora have, to varying degrees, retained aspects of their ancestral culture while at the same time participating in the societies in which they were raised.

Despite what seems to be fertile ground for the development of dual identities, Armenians in the diaspora have internalized the idea that identity fusion makes their Armenian experience somehow inauthentic. A hierarchy of “Armenianness” – based on the degree to which a person adheres to a perceived, yet undefined paragon of ethnic perfection – is born from these feelings of inauthenticity. This hierarchy is dangerous because there is no ideal way to understand identity or the factors that influence it; the sole requirement is for it to have value to the individual. For some, language may be the most important building block; for others, it may be food, religion or music.

Identity is personal, but it becomes public when people create an environment welcome only to those who subscribe to the same brand of identity. General feelings of exclusion from the Armenian community are illustrated in a comment from Behçet Avcı, one of the grandchildren baptized at Sourp Giragos last October: “We have been ostracized by both Sunni Muslims and Armenians. It is a very emotional moment for me and I'm a bit upset because unfortunately we do not belong to either side.”

Understanding that identity is not static, but rather that it is evolving – constantly being defined and redefined – would encourage others to see the value in multiple belongings, ease feelings of alienation and eliminate the idea that there is a certain kind of ideal Armenian identity for which to strive.

The accounts of the grandchildren in *Les petits-enfants* can teach the diaspora that hybrid identities are not corrosive or threatening; they enrich one another and, most importantly, they represent reality. Egyptian-Armenian, American-Armenian, French-Armenian, Syrian-Armenian, Argentinean-Armenian are hyphenated identities that describe lived experiences and should be appreciated rather than tinged with guilt.

The accounts in *Les petits-enfants* also implicitly encourage readers to view each person as an individual with his or her own complex identity and not as a representative of a country or a culture. They show us that prejudices wear away with personal contact, with time and, most importantly, with knowledge. The grandchildren were forced to come to this realization abruptly, but by learning from their stories, both Turks and Armenians can come to this realization more gradually by transcending the hostility fueled by the nationalist rhetoric on both sides and seeing one another as individuals above all else.

(This commentary originally appeared in *jadaliyya.com*. It appeared in the *Mirror-Spectator* last week, but because several errors crept in, we are reprinting it.)



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Constitutional Council's Scandalous Rejection of French Genocide Bill

Armenians in France and throughout the world reacted with utter indignation against the Constitutional Council's scandalous decision rejecting the genocide denial bill.

The National Assembly and Senate recently adopted a bill that would set a penalty of a year in jail and \$60,000 fine for anyone denying the genocides recognized by the French government. France officially recognizes the Jewish Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide.

Even though the bill did not specifically mention the Armenian Genocide, the Turkish government did everything short of declaring war against France to undermine its adoption, thereby identifying itself as the perpetrator of one of the two genocides. After failing to block the adoption of the bill by the two chambers of the French legislature, Turkey and Azerbaijan, its junior partner in the crime of genocide denial, left no stone unturned to have the law declared unconstitutional.

Turkey applied all kinds of pressure on French legislators to collect the necessary 60 or more signatures needed to

appeal the adopted bill to the Constitutional Council. Ironically, while the Turkish government was announcing a boycott of French companies, a Turkish group was hiring a high-powered French lobbying firm to assist in the hunt for signatures. Azerbaijan joined in this sinister lobbying effort by inviting six French senators to Baku to collect their rewards for having signed the appeal! By hook or crook, the Turkish authorities and their French surrogates succeeded in enticing 142 of more than 900 members of the French legislature to file an appeal with the Constitutional Council on January 31, 2012.

Clearly, this was an unacceptable intrusion into France's domestic affairs. Rather than allowing the Turkish ambassador to pressure members of the legislature to sign the appeal to the Constitutional Council, France should have expelled him for violating his diplomatic mandate. Turkey should not be permitted to dictate French laws.

The Constitutional Council is a hodge-podge of 11 retired individuals of various backgrounds. It includes two French presidents, two judges, three legislators, and four government officials. A major controversy erupted when a French newspaper revealed that several members of the Council, including its chairman, had serious conflict of interest problems in reaching a fair decision. Some had made prejudicial statements on this issue while serving in the legislature, others have business ties with Turkey, and most shockingly, one of them, Hubert Haenel, is a member of the Bosphorus Institute – a French-Turkish “think tank” that lobbied against the genocide denial bill.

Under such scandalous conditions, most Council members should have disqualified themselves from sitting in judgment on this issue. After these embarrassing disclosures, two Council members withdrew from deliberating on the genocide bill and former President Jacques Chirac was

reportedly too ill to attend the session.

The Constitutional Council's eight remaining members ruled on February 28 that the bill penalizing genocide denial approved by the Parliament and Senate was unconstitutional because it violated French laws on freedom of speech.

This was a shocking decision for two reasons: 1) Several members of the Constitutional Council violated the law themselves by sitting in judgment on an issue in which they had a clear bias or conflict of interest; and 2) They ruled the genocide denial bill to be unconstitutional supposedly because it restricted free speech, while leaving intact another law that penalized denial of the Holocaust. The Council members failed to explain why penalizing denial of the Armenian Genocide was a restriction on freedom of expression while penalizing denial of the Jewish Holocaust was not! All genocide victims merit equal protection under the law. There should be no double standards!

Unlike the United States, France has several laws that restrict freedom of expression. Why is that when it comes to punishing deniers of the Armenian Genocide, the Council members all of a sudden become staunch defenders of free speech?

French Armenians should take up all legal and political measures to reverse the Council's unfair and illegal decision. They could file a lawsuit with the European Court of Human Rights against the Constitutional Council as well as introduce a new bill in the French legislature.

Since the two leading French presidential candidates have pledged to bring up this bill again after the upcoming elections, this issue will not go away until a law is adopted penalizing Armenian Genocide denial. Turkey must not be allowed to export its denialist policies to European shores.

And the Racism Button of the Day Was Pressed

By Azad Alik

Two weeks ago in an article written with Silva Bingaz, titled “April 24, 2011,” we asked the civil society establishments engaged in disseminating information in Turkey about the Armenian Genocide, how were we to approach a situation, when one side was commemorating the events of April 24, while on the same day the other side killed Sevan Balıkcı, an Armenian conscript in the military. In particular, we had pointed out that the law adopted in France punishing the denial of genocides would cause racist repercussions that

were cause for concern and asked how it could be dealt with. We had

written this message two weeks ago, however last week with posters appearing all over Istanbul stating “Don't Believe The Armenian Lies,” we saw that the Armenians were being targeted wholesale by racists. While wondering who had printed these posters, we learned from the *Radikal* newspaper that a group called “Volunteers for the commemoration of the Hodjali [Khojali] Genocide” was responsible, and we read the interview of Mesut Ulker who was a member of the group. The news report was not signed. Simple questions such as: Who is Mesut Ulker? How long has this volunteer group been in existence? And who are the

members? were left out of the interview. Be that as it may, nothing was easier than accessing the website of Ulker. According to his website, “He has worked as a planner and educator in the training and strategy units of the Turkish Armed Forces. He has been a member of the faculty of the Academy of National Security. He has been in 20 countries for study and investigations and has participated in conferences and symposia.” That is, Mesut Ulker has been a central figure in the higher circles of the state apparatus and continues to maintain his ties with it as a political operative. There is an important point in the *Radikal* article. It does not reveal the source who financed the posters. I thought it was important to find out about the financing of the billboards that flooded the whole city and the cost of full-page advertisements in the *New York Times* and other papers. But apparently the sources are unimportant because financing has not been difficult. When the state pushes the racist button, identities of persons or financing stops being an issue. In fact, in the demonstration for the Hodjali, professionally-made placards announced: “Armenian Murderers,” “You all are Armenians. You are all bastards,” “One night, suddenly we will come upon you,” “Armenian! Don't be mistaken. Our patience has a limit!” Apparently, demonstrations had been planned in 60 cities including Baku, Brussels, Paris, Munich and Kyrenia (Cyprus). In Istanbul, the call of the Minister of the Interior, Idris Nail Sahin, for revenge showed the support of the government for

Turkey working together with Azerbaijan sought to internationalize its response to April 24 commemorations taking place for the past five-six years and to the reaction to the verdict reached in the Hrant Dink murder trial.

this demonstration. Even if the minister resigns, what remains scary is the widespread presence of the mentality he represents.

It appears that preparations for this campaign started in January during a visit of the friendship group of the parliamentarians of Azerbaijan in Turkey. In responding to the French law and the calls made to Turkey to face its past the two countries agreed to unite and to support each other as the 100-year anniversary of 1915 was approaching. They agreed to give a belligerent and racist

answer. Thus, Turkey working together with Azerbaijan sought to internationalize its response to April 24 commemorations taking place for the past five-six years and to the reaction to the verdict reached in the Hrant Dink murder trial. That is, the state, which up to now had tolerated commemorations, decided to clamp down and appealing to the usual nationalistic and racist sentiments, as in the last 100 years, planned to extend its will from the state level to the streets. What took place last Sunday clearly shows how denial of the past in Turkey will be played out in the future.

While these events were taking place, Azerbaijan has intervened to stop the showing of “Grandma's Tattoos,” by Suzanne Khardalian in the FilmMor Festival, and Azerbaijan News Agency has asked whether or not the organizers of the festival have obtained the permission of the Turkish government to show the film. What a coincidence!

We also should not forget the coverage given by TRT, the state television, to the Hodjali demonstrations, and also remember that the mainstream newspapers represented in yesterday's events as a “commemoration” of Hodjali. To publish news such as the *Hurriyet* newspaper has, that “the Hodjali massacre was protested,” or as Sabah newspaper in its front page, “The Hodjali account will be settled,” and *Milliyet's* report, written by Musa Kesler, comparing the demonstration to “festive May Day celebrations” is not only a cover up for racism but becomes a part of it, to become its instigator.

This is not the first time the government has pushed the racism button. We have not forgotten how the events of September 6-7, 1955 were planned and implemented. If we do not, by using existing political and social structures, oppose the racism that is being fanned, we would face a much worse situation when the one hundred year anniversary of 1915 approaches. One does not have to be a soothsayer or a doomsday prophet to predict this. The history of the last 100 years and the pride felt for that history guarantees what the future promises to be.

(Azad Alik is a blogger. His website is <http://azadalik.wordpress.com>. The article was published on February 28. The translation from Turkish is by A. Maranci.)

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- All submissions should include the name of a contact person and a

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- Telephone numbers, ticket prices and other details (at the discretion of the editors) will not be included in press releases.



Armenian Genocide: The French Constitutional Council's Mistake

By Bernard-Henri Levi

The power belongs to the law.

And to the institutions of the Republic.

Thus the Constitutional Council's invalidation of the law voted by the two Houses aiming to penalize the denial of genocides is, in the eyes of the law, and until the same two Houses reconsider it, the last word.

Nonetheless.

Respect for the constitutional State and its rules should not blind its citizens to a certain number of facts that are rather disturbing.

These include, for example, the pressure exerted by representatives of Turkey before submission of the case to the Council, and the busloads of nationalist demonstrators gathered beneath the windows of the French Senate, demanding the right to quite freely violate the memory of the dead and the honor of the survivors.

The amazing letter of January 30 is signed by one of the magnates of the CAC40, named, for the occasion, "co-president of the scientific committee," of the main Franco-Turk pressure group, the Institut du Bosphore: in it, M. de Castries, who is also the boss of Axa insurance company, implored the legislators to resist the request of French citizens of Armenian origin.

And the very composition of the Council, whose impartiality, wisdom and distance, imperative when confronted with a deliberation of this nature, were seriously damaged by a series of stands opportunely recalled by the irreverent French weekly, *Le Canard enchaîné*.

• Such as former Senator Haenel, the "wise man" whose affiliation with the Institut du Bosphore has never been a secret and who, for this reason, was prevented from participating in

the vote. Before that, however, he did have the time to produce a report deploring the fact that the first law, that of October 2001, recognizing the Genocide, "undermined bilateral economic exchanges" between France and Turkey;

• Such as attorney Jacqueline de Guillenchmidt, prevented from voting as well due to her signature, in 2008, of the famous appeal of Blois "for the freedom of History" (whose love of freedom, by the by, does not go so far as to demand that Ankara release Ragıp Zarakolu, the Turkish editor incarcerated for having published works by historians denouncing the systematic extermination of the Armenians);

• The ineffable Michel Charasse, former minister under Mitterrand, whose reputation for "wisdom" is not particularly well established, and whose hostility to the text was a matter of common knowledge at the time the negationist lobby began its campaign; and

• The President of the Council and no less hilariously entertaining Jean-Louis Debré who, as Mayor of the city of Evreux in 2006, went so far as to have an inscription mentioning the victims of genocide sawn off a plaque honoring Franco-Armenian friendship.

And I am not mentioning the conditions of the submission of the case, which, in the opinion of several jurists, could amount to abuse of procedure.

The point, I repeat, is not to call into question the principle of a decree that, like every decision of every republican body, is reputed to be authorless and transcending motifs, virtues or, unfortunately, the absence of virtue of those who have inspired it.

But the policy of spreading confusion in people's minds is such that it is by no means forbidden to recall that this high body of delibera-

tion is not so very high as we are told and, in any case, not this Supreme Court à la française so highly spoken of. We may remind ourselves that it has taken several liberties with Article 3 of the order of November 7, 1958, defining its operational rules and demanding that its members "swear" to "carry out their duties" with all "impartiality," to "keep its deliberations and votes secret," to "take no public position" and "to give no consultation concerning the questions relevant to the competence of the Council."

And it is especially not forbidden to encourage those the ballet of interests and influence around this noble cause that is the truth has led to despair; it is not forbidden to hope that the last word will not be that of the partisans of a free speech who have already given themselves away, in their haste, the day after the vote, to requalify the Armenian Genocide as a "massacre" and request "historical commissions" (we've seen it all before) to establish the "reality

of the facts." A discredited Council, even if it is constitutional, is not the guardian of truth, and, fortunately, the decision it has just taken cannot judge in advance the outcome of a battle the historians of genocides have long since won.

Not, I have said it a hundred times, the battle for I don't know what "memorial laws," the specter of which is brandished before us every time.

But the battle for recognition of the radical singularity of occurrences of genocide – these events are characteristic of modern times.

A law for humanity.

A law for the respect of these very rare truths, the transgression of which is a threat to each of us, because they aim at the heart of the human race.

A just and eminently universal law we count on the next president, whoever he may be, to put back on the agenda.

(This commentary originally appeared in the March 6 edition of the Huffington Post.)

Schiff Presses Clinton on Armenian Genocide During Congressional Hearing

SCHIFF, from page 1

Armenian Genocide and facilitate redress to the victims."

In the letter to Clinton, Schiff and his colleagues noted that her "historically inaccurate description of the Armenian Genocide as an open question, in addition to the offense it represents to Armenian Americans and other victims of genocide, provides American encouragement to the Republic of Turkey in its shameful campaign of denial." It also notes that, as a senator, Clinton joined with then-Senator Barack Obama in writing a letter explaining to President George W. Bush that the Armenian Genocide was a "systematic and deliberate campaign of genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire in 1915... The victims of the Genocide deserve our remembrance and their rightful place in history... It is in the best interests of our nation and the entire global community to remember the past and learn from these crimes against humanity to ensure that they are never repeated."

Mediators Visit Karabagh Amid More Deadly Fighting

MINSK, from page 1

The mediators discussed the issue with Karabagh President Bako Sahakian in Stepanakert on Saturday. But they gave no details of that discussion.

"We also discussed the situation on the Line of Contact," Robert Bradtke, the US co-chair, told reporters in the Karabagh capital.

Later on Saturday the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry reported that two of its soldiers were shot dead overnight at the westernmost section of Azerbaijan's long border with Armenia. It said Azerbaijani troops stationed there came under intense automatic gunfire from Armenian army positions.

The Armenian Defense Ministry blamed the Azerbaijani side for the incident. "The ceasefire regime is always violated by the Azerbaijani side," the Regnum news agency quoted ministry spokesman Davit Karapetian as saying.

Azerbaijani news agencies reported that another Azerbaijani soldier was gravely wounded early after a truck driven by him hit a landmine at a frontline section northeast of Karabagh on Monday.

The Armenian-Azerbaijani truce violations appear to have been the main focus of the mediators' activities in recent months, reflecting their concerns about the possible resumption of large-scale hostilities and the parties' lingering differences on the basic principles of Karabagh peace.

Aliyev and Sargsian reportedly came close to overcoming those differences when they met in another Russian city, Kazan, last June. Prospects for a near-term solution to the Karabagh conflict have dimmed since then. Forthcoming elections in Armenia and Azerbaijan are widely seen as another impediment to a breakthrough in the protracted peace process.

Bradtke insisted in Stepanakert, though, that the difficult search for a mutually acceptable peace deal will continue despite the elections.

Armenian Rep. to UN Calls Attention To Misleading Azeri Statements

STATEMENTS, from page 1

release the Azerbaijani journalists and human rights activists who had questioned the version of the Azerbaijani government regarding Khojalu events.

Armenia reiterates its position, according to which progress in the negotiations for the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh issue depends, inter alia, on the establishment of tolerance and restraint from hate propaganda. The Azeri initiative does not bode well for such objectives."

Nazarian requested to the UN secretary general that the present letter and the attached statement of the Foreign Ministry of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic, in response to the letter of the representative of Azerbaijan, be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 35 and 39, and of the Security Council, the Nagorno Karabagh Ministry of Foreign Affairs press service reported.

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