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In Our 80th Year

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

Armenian Genocide Suit Tossed, Again, In Latest Circuit Appearance

By Tim Hull

SAN FRANCISCO (Courthouse News Service) – A California law that allows state courts to hear insurance claims by victims of the Armenian Genocide cannot stand, a full panel of the Ninth Circuit ruled Thursday, finding that the statute intrudes on policy territory reserved for the US government.

The decision by an 11-judge panel in San Francisco sealed the fate of a long-suffering class action for insurance benefits filed by survivors of the World War I-era slaughter of more than 500,000 Armenians living in the former Ottoman Empire. Turkey has resisted calling the killings a genocide, and the issue is politically touchy among its US and European allies in NATO.

California legislators passed a law in 2000 that gave victims until the end of 2010 to file insurance claims related to the mass extermination of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923.

Referencing the little-used theory of “field preemption” or “dormant foreign affairs preemption,” the judges found that section 354.4 of the law intrudes on the federal government’s exclusive right to handle foreign affairs.

“The existence of this general foreign affairs power implies that, even when see LAWSUIT, page 20

Top French Court Strikes down Armenian Genocide Law

PARIS (AFP) – France’s top court ruled Tuesday that a law backed by President Nicolas Sarkozy to punish denial of the Armenian Genocide was unconstitutional

forward the bill, swiftly vowed to draft a new version of the law that has plunged France’s relations with Turkey into crisis.

France had already recognized the killings as a genocide, but the new law sought to go further by punishing anyone who denies this with up to a year in jail and a fine of 45,000 euros (\$57,000).

However, the Constitutional Council labeled the law an “unconstitutional attack on freedom of expression” and it said it wished “not to enter into the realm of responsibility that belongs to historians.”

Turkey’s EU Affairs Minister Egemen Bagis said France had averted a “historical mistake” and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu called the decision “an important step that will legally avert future exploitations.”

However, Sarkozy’s office quickly put out a statement saying the president “has ordered the government to prepare a new draft, taking into account the Constitutional Council’s decision.”

Sarkozy noted “the great disappointment and profound sadness of all those who welcomed with hope and gratitude the adoption of this law aimed at providing protection against revisionism.”

see FRANCE, page 5



Patrick Ollier (left), parliamentary relations minister, speaks during the Senate vote session for a bill criminalizing the denial of the genocides, including the Armenian Genocide.

as it infringed on freedom of expression.

Turkey welcomed the ruling – but Sarkozy, whose right-wing party had put



Former *Mirror-Spectator* Editor Ara Kalaydjian Dies

WALTHAM, Mass. – Ara Kalaydjian, the former editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* and a respected figure in the community, died on February 26.

He leaves his wife, Shoushanig (Hovsepien) Kalaydjian; siblings Antranig Kalajian and his wife, Rose, of Germany, Alex Kalaydjian and his wife, Annie, of Watertown and Arek Kalaydjian and his wife, Lisa, of North Andover; Brothers-in-law John Hovsepien and his wife, Carol, of Florida and Joe Hovsepien and his wife, Rosin, of New Jersey, and sister-in-law Angele Vosgerichian and her husband, Nick, of Connecticut. He also leaves Mayda Yetimian and many other nieces and nephews.

see ARA KALAYDJIAN, page 8

Israel Inks \$1.6 Billion Arms Deal With Azerbaijan

JERUSALEM (AP) – Israeli defense officials this week confirmed \$1.6 billion in deals to sell drones as well as anti-aircraft and missile defense systems to Azerbaijan, bringing sophisticated Israeli technology to the doorstep of archenemy Iran.

The sales by state-run Israel Aerospace Industries come at a delicate time. Israel has been laboring hard to form diplomatic alliances in a region that seems to be growing increasingly hostile to the Jewish state.

Its most pressing concern is Iran’s nuclear program, and Israeli leaders have hinted broadly that they would be prepared to attack Iranian nuclear facilities if they see no other way to keep Tehran from building bombs.

Iran denies Israeli and Western claims it seeks to develop atomic weapons, and says its disputed nuclear program is designed to produce energy and medical isotopes.

In Jerusalem, Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said Iran’s nuclear program will take center stage in his upcoming talks with US and Canadian leaders.

see WEAPONS, page 5

NEWS IN BRIEF

Vietnam, Armenia Eye Strong Trade Ties

HANOI, Vietnam (Vietnamese News Agency) – Economic and trade links between Vietnam and Armenia have yet to tap their potential, said President Truong Tan Sang while receiving Armenian Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian on February 24.

Despite some developments in bilateral cooperation, Sang suggested the two sides should review hurdles in their joint policies in order to promote bilateral relations.

Sang particularly thanked Armenia for training Vietnamese cadres and students in the past.

He also said that Vietnam would be willing to act as a bridge to link Armenia with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries.

ICG Calls for Increased Efforts to Settle Karabagh Conflict

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The International Crisis Group (ICG) called on the international community to intensify efforts over the settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict and establishment of peace in the region. According to the ICG website, the group underscores the necessity to continue negotiations within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

The group also stressed the importance of developing ways to investigate of incidents on the line of contact between Karabagh and Azerbaijan.

President Marks Legrand Birthday

YEREVAN (Tert.am) – Armenian President Serge Sargisian congratulated French composer, arranger, conductor and pianist Michel Legrand on his 80th birthday.

In an address sent to the musician earlier this week, Sargisian commended Legrand for his talent and contribution to modern music. “It is thanks to outstanding personalities like you that your two homelands – Armenia and France – have been able to strengthen their ties,” he wrote.

Legrand was born on February 24, 1932 in Paris. He is a prolific composer, having written more than 200 film and television scores in addition to many memorable songs.

He is best known for his -haunting film music and scores, such as “The Umbrellas of Cherbourg” (1964) and “The Thomas Crown Affair” (1968).

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Key to Survival

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Celebrating 80 Years and Beyond

Benefit for the Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Thursday, May 24, 2012



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenian Singers Want Azerbaijan Eurovision Boycott

YEREVAN (AFP) — A group of Armenian pop singers last Friday launched a campaign to boycott the 2012 Eurovision song contest which will be hosted by Azerbaijan.

“We refuse to appear in a country that is well-known for mass killings and massacres of Armenians, in a country where anti-Armenian sentiments have been elevated to the level of state policy,” said the statement signed by 22 singers including three former Armenian Eurovision contestants.

They hope to pressure the authorities into pulling out of the European pop extravaganza in the country with which Armenia fought a war after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Armenia has applied to take part in the contest, but has yet to choose a singer to represent the country, according to Eurovision’s official website.

The influential director of Yerevan’s State Song Theatre, where many successful Armenian singers have studied, was the first signature on the boycott petition.

“How can we sing in a country that has caused us so much loss?” director Artur Grigorian said on Armenian television.

But several Armenian bloggers have questioned the proposed boycott.

Azerbaijani singers Ell and Nikki won Eurovision in Duesseldorf in May 2011, giving that country the right to host the pop contest this year.

2012 to Be Year of Seismic Improvements

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The weekly meeting of the Emergency Situations Ministry took place February 20, conducted by Minister Armen Yeritsyan. The press office of the ministry said that Yeritsyan declared 2012 as a year of improvement and development of seismic protection and meteorological services.

The first step will be improving the Garni watchtower, as well as an upgrade and re-operation of the demographic device there. The minister reported that during the recent days with heavy snow, rescuers registered and helped many people stuck in vehicles lodged under the snow. Wide-scale works have been conducted in the provinces of Aragatsotn and Shirak. The minister said that in order to effectively help those stuck in snow jams, the ministry will acquire a few new off-road vehicles.

Catholicos Familiarizes UK Ambassadors with Armenian Church

YEREVAN (news.am) — The Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II received at the Holy See of Echmiadzin Jonathan James Aves and Catherine Jane Leach, the United Kingdom’s newly-appointed ambassadors to Armenia.

The catholicos expressed confidence that the close ties between the British Embassy and the Holy See, will continue.

The parties specifically reflected on the British-Armenian community, and the activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church’s diocese in the UK.

Police Investigate Election Bribery

HRAZDAN (Hetq) — Kotayk police report that they have launched an investigation based upon a news report that appeared in Hetq’s February 12 edition.

The report stated that according to eyewitnesses, individuals were handing out 5,000-dram bribes from the office of a local real estate board during the recent mayoral election in the town of Hrazdan.

Noting the presence of reporters, the individuals in question assaulted them.

The police are requesting that eyewitnesses share their information with them.

Armenia, EU Open Visa Facilitation Talks

By Tigran Avetisian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia and the European Union (EU) began on Monday the first round of official negotiations that should lead to the easing of visa requirements for Armenian citizens planning to visit EU countries.

Officials from the Armenian govern-

rate “readmission agreement” with Brussels that will commit it to helping EU immigration authorities expedite the repatriation of Armenian illegal immigrants.

Deputy Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanian, the chief Armenian negotiator, said the two agreements stemming from the EU’s Eastern Partnership program would make Armenia’s relationship with the 27-

None of the officials participating in the talks would say when the visa deal is likely to be concluded. “Both sides are committed to engage in [the] speediest process,” said Traian Hristea, head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan.

Hristea also declined to speculate on whether the Armenian authorities’ handling of the upcoming parliamentary elections could affect the process. “That’s a very speculative connection,”



Officials from Armenia and the European Union negotiated for easier visa requirements.

ment and the EU’s executive European Commission launched the negotiating process on two relevant agreements after more than a year of preparations. One of them would enable Armenian nationals to receive visas for the Schengen zone encompassing much of Europe with fewer documents and at a lower cost.

Yerevan will also have to sign a sepa-

nation union “truly comprehensive.” He also emphasized their “political significance.”

“We are part of the same value system. Our state and society is committed to building a democratic state and elections are one of the pillars of that system,” Mnatsakanian told a joint news conference with EU officials held after the opening session of the talks.

he said.

Armenia and the EU are also expected to open talks next month on the creation of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), another key element of the Eastern Partnership. “The opening of free trade negotiations marks a turning point in our trade relations with Armenia,” EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht said last week.

Armenians Mark General Andranik’s 147th Birthday

YEREVAN (Tert.am) — February 25 marks the 147th birthday of the legendary Armenian freedom fighter and general, Gen. Andranik Ozanian.

Ozanian was born in the church quarter of Shabin Karahisar, Ottoman Empire (present-day Sebinkarahisar, Giresun Province, Turkey).

His mother died when he was 1. As a result, his elder sister, Nazeli, raised him. Ozanian finished the local Musheghian School and became an apprentice in his father’s carpentry shop.

After losing his wife and son at an early age, Ozanian joined the Armenian freedom movement in the Ottoman Empire and participated in various political parties, including the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. He met the military commander, Aghbiur Serob, and joined his fedayeen. After the death of Serob (1899) he became the common leader of Armenian fedayee groups of Vaspurakan and Sassoun. All of Ozanian’s lieutenants accepted that their leader possessed undisputed authority and superiority in military matters and that he was “primus inter pares” (the first among equals). Due to Ozanian’s popularity among the men he led, he was referred to always by his first name — even formally, when he later held a general’s rank in the Imperial Russian Army.

During World War I, he participated in the Caucasus Campaign and was appointed as general of the Armenian volunteer units of the Russian army. He took part in 20 different offensives where he gained fame due to his courage and the tactics he employed to defeat the opposing forces. The Russian authorities made Ozanian a major general in 1918 and decorated him six times for gallantry.

He was the commanding officer of the Armenian volunteer units, which helped the Van Resistance take control of Van on May 6, 1915. He helped recapture the city from Ottoman forces during the Battle of Van. He was also



Gen. Andranik Ozanian

the commander of the battalion that took the city of Bitlis (see: Battle of Bitlis) from the Ottoman forces that was under control of Halil Pasha. Between March 1918-April 1918, he was governor of the administration for Western Armenia (The Armenian provisional government of a progressive autonomous region that initially set up around Lake Van). His military leadership was instrumental in allowing the Armenian population of Van to escape the Ottoman Army and flee to Eastern Armenia, then controlled by Russia.

The territory later became the Democratic Republic of Armenia.

After the formation of the Democratic Republic of Armenia (DRA), he organized and fought alongside volunteer units to combat the Ottoman army. Ozanian was leading his army in combat against the Ottomans during the signing of the Treaty of Batum, and refused to accept the borders stated by the treaty. As the commander of Armenian forces at Nakhichevan, he “has protected in the name of the Armenian Army against the peace treaty with Turkey, and has

declared that his army is determined to continue the war against Turks. His activities were concentrated at the link between the Ottoman Empire and the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic at Karabagh, Zangezur and Nakhichevan. Ozanian struck back at the Ottoman Fronts. He was particularly prominent in the destruction of Muslim settlements and in the planned ethnic homogenization of regions with once mixed population through populating them with Armenian refugees from Turkey.

Ozanian tried several times to seize Shusha. Just before the Armistice of Mudros was signed, he was on the way from Zangezur to Shusha, to control the main city of Karabagh. In January 1919, with Armenian troops advancing, the British forces, under Gen. William M. Thomson, ordered Ozanian back to Zangezur and gave him assurances that a favorable treaty would be reached at the Paris Peace Conference, of 1919.

In 1919 he left Armenia amid political turmoil and power struggles and went into exile in Fresno, Calif. The *New York Times* reported that among the passengers who arrived on November 22, 1919 from Le Havre on the French liner Savoie to ask the US for a mandate “was Gen. Ozanian Antranik, the hero of Armenia, who held out at Zangezur with a handful of troops against the Turkish Army until he was relieved on December 13, 1918, by a British expeditionary force, more than a month after the armistice was signed, and saved 30,000 starving refugees.” He was accompanied on the Savoie by Gen. Jaques Bagratuni, Captain Haig Bonapartian and Lt. Ter-Pogossian.

Ozanian lived in Fresno for five years until his death on August 31, 1927, at the age of 62. According to county records, he died at Richardson Springs, Chico, in Northern California. According to the *New York Times*, more than 2,500 members of the Armenian community attended memorial services



ARMENIA

Diaspora Investors Square off with Armenia's Tax Officials during Live TV Link-up

By Kristine Aghalaryan

YEREVAN (Hetq) — On February 24, a special live TV link-up between Armenia and the US brought together diaspora investors, lawyers and tax authorities from Armenia to take a look at the issues involved regarding doing business in Armenia.

The link-up was organized by a group in Armenia that come out in support of interests of diaspora investors.

One such investor, Edmond Khutyan, related how his company Arin Capital, had been criminally charged with tax evasion and premeditated bankruptcy eight months ago but he has yet to be questioned by Armenian tax officials on the matter.

Khutyan lawyer Nikolai Baghdasaryan noted that this negatively reflects on Armenian tax officials.

"If they don't call the director in, while at the same time charging the company, doesn't it leave the impression that a double standard is at work?" Baghdasaryan asked.

Participating in the discussion was Armen Alaverdyan, first deputy to the president of the Republic of Armenia State Revenue Committee (SRC).

Alaverdyan confessed that he didn't know the details of the Khutyan case. He only said that if the SRC has taken the matter to court it would definitely see it to its conclusion. The tax official promised to look into the matter, adding that if premeditated bankruptcy is the charge he didn't believe that it would take a mere one or two months to resolve.

Alaverdyan stressed that diaspora investors cannot only take advantage of the same rights as local Armenian businesspeople but aspects of foreign legislation as well. He sounded more optimistic than the lawyers representing diaspora investors and pointed to several success stories like VivaCell, Tufenkian and even Parisian Coffee. (The latter establishment was recently sold by its diaspora owner after she complained of heavy-handedness by Armenian tax officials.)

Alaverdyan noted that oftentimes diaspora investors are not adequately informed as to Armenian tax laws and this leads to a feeling that they are operating on an un-level playing field. He said the government must do more to assist investors in this area.

He added that diaspora investors procrastinate in terms of petitioning the SRC and other agencies when problems arise. "They want to use the tax agency as a tool to force people to assume their obligations," Alaverdyan said.

Also on hand was Vardan Marashlyan, deputy minister for Diaspora Affairs, who said that the ministry was doing all it could to assist diaspora investors and businesspeople who sought help.

Heritage Party Member of Parliament Stepan Safaryan countered by saying that the ministry

needs to be more pro-active in this regard and offer more outreach and information to prospective investors.

Marashlyan noted that the ministry was not involved in the Nareg Hartounian case since no one had asked for their assistance.

(Hartounian and his family's GH Storage Enterprises has been charged with tax evasion.)

Safaryan recounted a recent visit to Armenia by a group of US congressmen. Safaryan noted that during meetings with the Armenian president and speaker of the parliament, the congressmen declared outright that Armenia was sliding backwards due to the lack of a favorable investment environment and that even diaspora investors didn't want to do business in the country.

Safaryan said what is at issue isn't the case of one or two individual investors but a more widespread and systematic lack of faith in getting a fair shake.

He warned outside investors not to be taken in by sweet-talking local Armenian con artists who apply for a job, present a good face, and then take the investor for a ride.

Safaryan noted that problems are exacerbated since Diaspora Armenians can't really understand the way business works in Armenia and avoid settling matters in ways traditionally done there.

The Heritage Party legislator pointed to the Lincy Fund backing out of further investment in Armenia and the Millennium Challenge Grant, stopping further aid as two glaring examples of the problem.

Alaverdyan pointed to the case of Parisian Coffee as a success story, noting that when owner Askhen Gortzounian launched the business in 2007 it got off to a promising start. The official noted that in 2010 the business (newly registered as Parisian Coffee Factory) had sales of 90 million drams and 320 million in 2011.

He said that if the company, say, imported 92 million drams worth of product in 2010 and paid 6.5 percent in tax, in 2011, the company

had imports of 171 million and paid 31 million in tax. Alaverdyan claimed that such figures pointed to a profitable business.

Alaverdyan argued that most of the problems faced by diaspora investors stemmed from getting involved with unscrupulous individuals who are placed in positions of management. This, he said, oftentimes leads to civil disputes regarding property and ownership issues.

The SRC official advised prospective investors to get in touch with his agency first before actually starting any commercial enterprise in Armenia.

Alaverdyan conceded that tax agencies in Armenia needed to improve the way complaints are handled and to make the process all the more transparent.

Armenian Revolutionary Federation Member of Parliament Ara Nryan said these issues are faced not only by diaspora investors but everyone dealing with the tax agencies, court system and property registry (Cadastre).

Nryan cited the example of George Tomasyan, a resident of Germany who managed a business in Armenia and was swindled out of 70 million.

Emotions flared when Asya Asatryan, a reporter from the States, got into the discussion.

She argued that if Armenia got its act together on this issue, people in the diaspora wouldn't be raising such a fuss.

"You won't find one American-Armenian who wants to discredit Armenia. If the name of Armenia is being dragged down, it's the fault of the government's failure to set things right," Asatryan charged.

Alaverdyan responded by saying that individual cases of corruption by Armenian official or citizens should be reported, rather than taking cheap swipes at the entire government.

"I am proud that I am a citizen of Armenia. Twenty years ago we had nothing and now we are discussing these matters out in the open. I'd say we're on the right track," Alaverdyan said.

International Conference Takes Place in Stepanakert

STEPANAKERT, Karabagh — Between February 17-19 an international gathering of historians, political scientists, international lawyers and government officials took place here for a conference dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the independence of Nagorno Karabagh (NKR).

Journalist Emil Sanamyan and historian George Bournoutian were invited from the US. Most of the conference took place in the well-equipped main hall of the National Assembly of NKR with simultaneous translation provided in Russian, English and Armenian. Participants came from Artsakh, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Armenia, United Kingdom and Greece. Sanamyan presented his paper on "The Karabagh Conflict in the Context of National Issues," and Bournoutian gave a talk on the "1823 Russian Population Census of Karabagh as the Basic Argument Against Azerbaijan's Historical Claims."

Both Sanamyan and Bournoutian were also invited to speak to the students at the University of Stepanakert. Among some of the three-dozen papers presented were: "The Kosovo Precedent and the International Recognition Perspectives of the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic," by Khachik Galstyan; "Legal-Political Analysis of the 1993 UN Security Council Resolutions on Nagorno-Karabagh," by Hovhannes Nikoghosyan; "Statehood Criteria in Contemporary International Law: Their Application and the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic," by Levon Gevorgyan; "The Nagorno-Karabagh Issue in the Context of International Law," by Shahen Avagyan; two papers on "Karabagh and the American Great Middle East Project," by Stanislaw Tarasov (Russia) and Mateusz Piskorski (Poland), and the activities of the AGBU in Artsakh; "Security Challenges in the South Caucasus and the Black Sea Region," by James Nixey (UK), and "Strategy, Independence and Artsakh Constitution," by Nikos Ligeros (Greece).

The well-organized conference, which despite the terrible weather and road conditions, managed to bring many individuals from faraway lands to Stepanakert. Their superb hospitality, trips to Gandzasar and the newly-discovered Tigranakert, as well as the special concert arranged for the participants left a positive impression of the capabilities and talents of this new republic.

— George Bournoutian

Raising Four Children in a Roadside Trailer

By Kristine Aghalaryan

YEREVAN (HETQ) — The Karakhanyan family lives in this trailer alongside the Tbilisi Highway on the outskirts of the capital. Four children are being raised inside; they range in age from 3 to 12.

Due to the heavy snow of recent days, the door is opened with difficulty.

The kids sit on a makeshift couch made from wooden pallets. The trailer is divided into a sleeping area, kitchen and living room. There's no room to move around.

Gohar, the mother, says that the children are used to the cold and don't get sick. A wood stove is burning in the living room. An electric heater nearby is never turned off.

After going without electricity for years, technicians strung a cable from an outside street lamp.

There are no closets to store anything. The family's belongings are scattered about.

The kitchen/bath area is freezing. The window has no glass.

In addition to the four kids and their parents,



Inside the trailer that is home to the family



One of the children with a stray dog outside the trailer

Gohar and Armen, there's a fifth lodger; Armen's brother. When his sister is released from the psychiatric hospital, she will be moving in as well.

The family gets by on state assistance and handouts. Armen used to work in the metal trade but health issues prevent him from working.

The local district council occasionally helps out with food. Other charitable organizations

have provided clothes for the children. The Armenian Church has assisted with repairs to the trailer.

Last year, the eldest child, 12-year-old Galust, got hit by a car. Internal bleeding forced doctors to remove one of his kidneys and spleen. The family receives no medical pension despite the boy's health issues.

Gohar says that when she went to the Arabkir Children's Clinic for a medical reference, she was told that she would have to pay a fee. She didn't have the money.

The mother has gone to the Yerevan Municipality in the hope of getting another apartment somewhere but was told there are no available homes.

Gohar has given up hope of ever moving from this trailer on the side of the road and getting her four kids out of harm's way.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Accordions Return to Their Vienna Roots

VIENNA (*Vienna Times*) – It is a little-known fact that the accordion was invented here, and, in tribute to this, the city is hosting its annual international accordion festival, February 25 to March 25.

The accordion was patented in 1829 by Cyrill Demian, of Armenian origin, in Vienna, and today the city still has several internationally-renowned accordion players.

Among them is Otto Lechner, who opened the festival on February 25 together with the Windhunde and friends.

There was also a preview concert on February 18, with 20 artists who demonstrated why the accordion is rightly described as one of the most versatile instruments around. In fact, its repertoire ranges from traditional Viennese songs to tangos to electronic sounds.

Italian accordionists will be a particular focus this year. Musicians such as, Daniele di Bonaventura, the Simone Zanchini Duo and Riccardo Tesi and Banditaliana will be bringing a touch of “Bella Italia” to Vienna.

Artists from Germany, France and Finland will also perform.

Chitechyan Appointed Ambassador to Holy See

PARIS (Armradio.am) – President Serge Sargisian signed a decree appointing Armenia’s ambassador to France, Vigen Chitechyan, as ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the Holy See (seat in Paris), the president’s press office reported.

Armenia Offers Accommodation for Syrian Refugees

YEREVAN (Vestnik Kavkaza) – Armenia is ready for Syrian refugees, Gagik Yeganyan, head of the Migration Agency of the Ministry for Territorial Administration of Armenia, said, lin.am reports.

Armenia adopted a system of protecting people threatened in their own states starting in 2000. The system has proven efficient. More than 1,000 refugees requested aid during the war in Iraq in 2002, the war in Lebanon and the Russian-Georgian war in 2008.

Sumgait Pogroms Remembered in Ukraine

KIEV (PanARMENIAN.Net) – On February 28, at 11 a.m., the Organization Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) office here hosted a morning rally in memory of the victims of the Sumgait and Baku pogroms.

Representatives from international organizations, Ukrainian politicians, human rights advocates, members of the Cossacks and the Armenian Diaspora participated in the event.

Georgian and Iranian youth representatives also participated.

The rally participants’ address conveyed in detail the history of the Armenian pogroms in Azerbaijani towns as well as Armenians’ stance on the Nagorno Karabagh issue.

The embassy of Armenia in Georgia organized a series of events in Tbilisi mark the anniversary. The Georgian Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church held a service in memory of the victims.

The Hayartun Cultural Center’s event for the victims was held with participation of non-governmental organization representatives and public figures. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Armenian Ambassador to Georgia Hovhannes Manukyan also attended the event.

In his remarks, the ambassador emphasized that Artsakh has the right to self-determination. He also touched upon Azeri aggression.

Head of the local Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church Bishop Vazgen Mirzakhanyan spoke at the event as well and called for tolerance between the people and voiced hope for peace in the Caucasus.

Hate Messages Fill Rally in Istanbul

ISTANBUL (Combined Sources) – Tens of thousands of Turks, waving Azeri flags, rallied on Sunday in Taksim Square to mark the anniversary of “the Khojaly genocide,” which is what they called the deaths of 600 civilians during the war for the liberation of Karabagh (Artsakh).

Turkey’s Interior Minister Idris Naim Sahin made an impassioned nationalist speech at the rally, estimated to have between 20,000 and 50,000 participants, which underlined the deep tensions with neighboring Armenia.

Armenian forces, backed by Armenia, drove Azerbaijani troops out of Nagorno-Karabagh in the 1990s during the war that killed some 30,000 people and sent 1 million fleeing from their homes. A cease-fire was reached in 1994, but the final status of the enclave is unresolved.

The protesters, including members of labor unions and nationalist groups, denounced Armenia and expressed solidarity with close Muslim ally Azerbaijan. Thousands of Turks also staged similar protests in Ankara and several other cities across Turkey.

Armenian forces do not deny the attack, but say the death toll is exaggerated. Turkey and Azerbaijan has called for world recognition of the killings as a crime against “humanity.”

(Armenians last week commemorated the anniversary of the pogroms in three Azeri cities, in which the Armenian populations were decimated.)

Some protesters in Istanbul shouted

“Nagorno Karabagh will be a grave for Armenians.”

The protest was heavy with ultranationalist sentiment, with some groups in the crowd promising “revenge,” shout-

crimatory expressions that are hateful. We made amendments to the penal code in 2005. The law states the terms for those who commit overt discrimination. However, because prosecutors don’t act on these [laws], racist and discriminatory expressions are still used. They want us to pass a law against hate crimes. Yes, we should do that. But first, we should apply the laws that we have.”

He also stated that the “ugly signs” held up by protestors during the demonstration invalidated what was being done. “Whatever is necessary [for justice regarding Khojaly] should be done, but that crowd shouldn’t have used those expressions. It completely

devalued what was being done.”

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Association (IHD) filed a criminal complaint on Tuesday against the organizers of the rally and Sahin for displaying “signs with racist and hateful content.”

Armenians living in Istanbul were concerned during the run-up to the rally, *Agos* weekly reported. According to the paper, during the days prior to the rally, all central squares, subway stations and trade centers in Istanbul were covered with the message: “Do not be indifferent to the Armenian lie.”

The posters in Istanbul, which were anti-Armenian, were used to urge potential protesters to gather at Taksim square.

(Reports from *Agos*, the Associated Press, *Hurriyet* and *Today’s Zaman* were used to compile this story.)



Thousands attended the rally.

ing “We are all Turks, what about you?” referring to those who protested the murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink with the slogan “We are all Armenians.” One banner carried by dozens of protestors said, “You are all Armenians, you are all bastards.”

Security forces took extreme measures around the Greek and French consulates, which were located on the route of the march.

The head of Parliament’s Human Rights Commission, Ayhan Sefer Üstün, has called on the country’s prosecutors to take action against protesters who displayed racist and discriminatory signs.

Üstün, speaking to journalists on Monday, said some of the slogans at Sunday’s rally praised the murderer of Dink and were about Armenians. “The posters there had completely racist, dis-

Jerusalem Christians are Latest Targets in Recent Spate of ‘Price Tag’ Attacks

By Nir Hasson

JERUSALEM (*Haaretz*) – “Price tag” graffiti was spray-painted in Jerusalem again Sunday night, with vandals this time targeting a downtown church.

The attack on the Narkis Street Baptist Congregation marks the latest in a series of price tag attacks that have targeted Muslim, Christian and leftist institutions in the capital over the last two months. But police believe most of the vandalism is not the work of an organized group; rather, they say, the spray-painted slogans are largely copycat actions carried out by lone individuals.

The original price tag attacks, in contrast, were thought to be the work of a group of settlers seeking to set a “price tag” on house demolitions in the settlements via retaliatory attacks on Palestinians and/or Israeli soldiers.

The attacks during the past two months have included: the torching of cars belonging to Arab residents of Jerusalem’s Kiryat Moshe neighborhood; spray-painting slogans on a Christian cemetery on Mount Zion; spray-painting slogans on Peace Now’s office in the capital, as well as the house of Peace Now activist Hagit Ofran; threats against Peace Now secretary general Yariv Oppenheimer and an arson attack on an ancient mosque in the city’s Geula neighborhood. Over the last week alone, a bilingual school

and two churches have been vandalized, including the Baptist church vandalized Sunday.

In both church attacks, the vandals spray-painted slogans denouncing Christianity, Jesus and Mary, such as “Jesus is dead,” “Death to Christianity” and “Mary was a prostitute.” They also included the by-now customary “price tag” slogan.

The Jerusalem police said they have arrested several suspects in this spate of attacks, including one for the attacks on Peace Now and one for the vandalism of the bilingual school. The latter suspect, arrested last week, said he vandalized the school to avenge the Beitar Jerusalem soccer team’s loss to two Arab teams two weeks ago, according to police. Police believe that many of the other attacks are similarly motivated by ordinary hooliganism, rather than ideology.

“It’s intolerably easy,” one senior Jerusalem police officer said. “Any child can take a spray can and spray it and people know it will be broadcast. Not every case is really nationalistic.”

But to victims, the motive is irrelevant. 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 almost daily.

“It’s almost impossible to pass through Jaffa Gate without this happening,” said a senior priest at one

Jerusalem church.

The spitting has become so prevalent that some priests have simply stopped going to certain parts of the Old City.

The Baptist church has been attacked twice before: It was torched in 1982 and again in 2007. “We mainly feel sad” about the attacks, said the church’s pastor, Charles Kopp. “It hurts us that anyone could even think we deserve such treatment. They don’t know us, but they apparently oppose anyone who doesn’t identify with them. I wish them well; I have no desire for revenge.”

Baptist priests don’t normally walk around in priestly garb, but Kopp said he would be afraid to walk through the Old City if he did.

Jacob Avrahami, the mayor’s advisor on the Christian community, visited the Baptist church on Monday to condemn the attacks. “They feel besieged; you can see it on them,” he said.

Dr. Gadi Gevanyahu, whose Banish the Darkness organization works to combat racism, said his big fear is that “one day, they’ll attack a mosque or a church with people inside and there will be a terrible conflagration here.”

“Over the last two years, 10 mosques have been torched here, and today it’s clear that it’s not just aimed at Palestinians or Muslims, but at foreigners in general,” he said.

Gevanyahu also offered a practical suggestion: Security cameras, he said, should be installed on every sensitive building in the city.



INTERNATIONAL

80th Anniversary of AGBU AYA Aleppo Celebrated

ALEPPO, Syria – The 500-seat KH Nazarian Hall was filled beyond capacity on December 25, 2011, as the Consul General of the Republic of Armenia Karen Grigorian, high-ranking clergy from three Armenian churches, representatives from all Armenian organizations and Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Aleppo Armenian Youth Association (AYA) members and supporters gathered for the celebration of the 80th anniversary of AGBU AYA, first founded here by refugee orphans bearing League of Nation passports. AGBU leaders in attendance included Syria District Chairman Nerses Nersoyan, AYA Aleppo Executive Committee Chairman Viken Attarian, Aleppo Chapter Chairman Hagop Mikayelian and members of their respective committees.

After observing a moment of silence for Syria's recent martyrs, opening remarks were delivered in Armenian and Arabic by Raffi Tchaghlassian, with Tamar Khabaian serving as the mistress of ceremonies for a rich cultural program that brought to life the wonderful and far-reaching achievements of AGBU AYA in Aleppo for the past eight decades.

Shahan Jebejian narrated a video giving particular emphasis to AYA's cultural and athletic activities, with other historical clips accompanied by poetic recitations projected intermittently.

The program offered a full repertoire of diverse musical performances: the much beloved AYA

Big Band, conducted by Viken Tchalian, led the way with a song dedicated to this 80th anniversary, followed by classical selections from AYA's Gomidas Chamber Orchestra. Under the direction of conductor Shahe Keshishian, the AYA Spondarian Choir performed several songs.

Next on the stage was the AYA Antranik Dance Ensemble, directed by Lutfik Poghosian from Armenia, after which a comedy skit was acted out by three members of the AYA Attamian Theater Group, which included Hagop Mikayelian. He also gave remarks during the program.

Attarian, Vice Chairman Robert Musali and Secretary Henry Arslanian presented 14 silver medals and 15 gold medals to AYA members in recognition of their decades-long dedication, which included a gold award to Nersoyan.

Bishop Shahan Sarkissian, prelate of the Diocese of Aleppo, spoke on behalf of the



The AYA Aleppo Antranik Dance Ensemble receives applause

three Armenian Christian denominations and offered a benediction dedicated to AYA's 80th anniversary.

The attendees then moved to the Angele Kavafian Hall of the multi-story AGBU Calouste Gulbenkian Center, where the unveiling of the newly-published, 320-page AYA commemorative book took place. This substantial large-folio volume was edited by Hagop Mikayelian, who was assisted by Zepure Ghibligian Tamerian. The Armenian traditional ceremony of pouring wine on the first copy followed, as did an anniversary cake cutting.

Support Builds for Jailed Zarakolu

ANKARA (Bianet.org) – Turkish and international defenders of freedom of expression came together on Saturday, February 26, to demonstrate their solidarity with detained writer and publisher Ragip Zarakolu. The Ankara Initiative for Freedom of Thought and the Friends of Belge group organized an evening reception at the Ankara Arts Theatre.

Zarakolu is the founder of the Belge Publishing Company that has been at loggerheads with the judiciary several times in the past. He was arrested on October 31 in the course of an operation related to the Union of Kurdish Communities (KCK), an organization founded by Abdullah Öcalan, imprisoned leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PPK).

The event was hosted by poet and photographer Mehmet Özer who was himself in police custody and later released in February. Journalist Dogan Özgüden showed a movie about Zarakolu, and the bands Bandista and Kaldirim performed on stage.

Lecturer Dr. Sibel Özbudun said in her opening speech that solidarity would overcome these difficult days.

"The Tekel workers left us a slogan when they passed through Ankara: 'We are the people, we will win.' Yes, we are the people and we are going to win."

William Nyegaard, from the Freedom to Publish Committee of the Norwegian Publishers Association, sent a message as he was not able to attend the event in person. He expressed the committee's solidarity with Zarakolu and with the values and mission he represented.

"It is our wish and our opinion that Ragip Zarakolu has to be together with his books again as soon as possible and that the obstacles before this have to be removed immediately."

Eugene Schoulgin, general secretary of PEN International, also sent a message, saying that Zarakolu's imprisonment was a shame for those who put him behind bars.

The event was also attended by journalist and academic Baskin Oran, Kurdish politician Akin Birdal and Öztürk Türkdogan, chairman of the Human Rights Foundation (HD).

Pakistani President: 'Islamabad Will Support Azerbaijan in Nagorno Karabagh Issue'

By Aris Ghazinyan

UNITED NATIONS (ArmeniaNow) – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairman Eamon Gilmore, who is also deputy premier and minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland, presented a report at the UN Security Council (SC) on February 9 in New York, stressing his pursuit of "long-term settlement of protracted conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabagh."

Addressing the Karabagh issue, Gilmore praised the work of the OSCE Minsk Group (MG). "We welcome the efforts of OSCE Minsk Group for the settlement of the Karabagh conflict and expect close cooperation with the co-chairs during this year."

After Gilmore's speech, Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev, Azerbaijan's ambassador to the United Nations, urged OSCE to deal with the issue more actively and recognize Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

On the same day, Islamabad criticized the lack of efficiency of American, Russian and French diplomats (Minsk co-chairs) and spoke for the necessity of involving also other countries in the OSCE MG.

Pakistani Ambassador to Azerbaijan Inayatullah Kakar stated: "OSCE Minsk Group has been working over the issue for a long time, but that work has not been productive. One of the reasons, I believe, is double standards. I think, in order to raise the work efficiency of Minsk Group, it should be expanded to include also other states."

Pakistan is a country that has never recognized the independence of the Republic of Armenia.

In this connection the ambassador said: "As you know Pakistan is the only country that has not recognized Armenia as a state. Pakistan has always recognized, and always will, Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. In the Nagorno-Karabagh issue Azerbaijan can always rely on Pakistan's support, just like Azerbaijan is supporting Pakistan in the Kashmir issue."

Yet Benazir Bhutto, during her premiership talked about Pakistan's readiness to get engaged in the Karabagh conflict settlement.

It was during her second term as a premier (1993-1996) that Taliban brigades were formed in Azerbaijan, which fought against the Defense Army of Nagorno Karabagh and declared jihad against all Armenians. Pakistan's current president, Asif Ali Zardari, is the bearer of Bhutto clan's pan-Islamic course and the spouse of Bhutto who was assassinated in a bombing in December, 2007.

Recently Ali Zardari stated: "The relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan are based on common historical, cultural and religious grounds. Islamabad will always support Azerbaijan in the Nagorno Karabagh issue."

Pakistan is the second country after Turkey to have recognized Azerbaijan's independence in 1991. It is Azerbaijan's most important military partner, along with Turkey.

Azeri officers are currently undergoing training in Pakistan. Further, the Pakistani diplomatic academy offers education courses in Azeri diplomacy.

Israel Inks \$1.6 billion Arms Deal With Azerbaijan

WEAPONS, from page 1

Speaking to the Israeli Cabinet on Sunday, Netanyahu said a UN nuclear agency report last week buttressed Israelis warnings that Iran is trying to produce a nuclear bomb. The agency said Iran has rapidly ramped up production of higher-grade enriched uranium over the last few months.

Netanyahu said the report provided "another piece of incontrovertible evidence" that Iran is advancing rapidly with its nuclear program.

It was not clear whether the arms deal with Azerbaijan was connected to any potential Israeli plans to strike Iran. The Israeli defense officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not at liberty to discuss defense deals.

Danny Yatom, a former head of Israelis Mossad spy agency, said the timing of the deal was likely coincidental. "Such a deal ... takes a long period of time to become ripe," he said.

He said Israel would continue to sell arms to its friends. "If it will help us in challenging Iran,

it is for the better," he said.

Israelis ties with Azerbaijan, a Muslim country that became independent with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, have grown as its once-strong strategic relationship with another Iranian neighbor, Turkey, has deteriorated, most sharply over Israelis killing of nine Turks aboard a ship that sought to breach Israelis blockade of the Gaza Strip in 2010.

For Israeli intelligence, there is also a possible added benefit from Azerbaijan: Its significant cross-border contacts and trade with Iran's large ethnic Azeri community.

For that same reason, as Iran's nuclear showdown with the West deepens, the Islamic Republic sees the Azeri frontier as a weak point, even though both countries are mostly Shiite Muslim.

Earlier this month, Iran's foreign ministry accused Azerbaijan of allowing the Israeli spy agency Mossad to operate on its territory and providing a corridor for "terrorists" to kill mem-

bers of Iranian nuclear scientists.

Azerbaijan dismissed the Iranian claims as "slandorous lies." Israeli leaders have hinted at covert campaigns against Iran without directly admitting involvement.

Israel, meanwhile, recently claimed authorities foiled Iranian-sponsored attacks against Israeli targets in Azerbaijan. Such claims have precedents: In 2008, Azeri officials said they thwarted a plot to explode car bombs near the Israeli Embassy; two Lebanese men were later convicted in the bombing attempt. A year earlier, Azerbaijan convicted 15 people in connection with an alleged Iranian-linked spy network accused of passing intelligence on Western and Israeli activities.

Iran has denied Azerbaijanis latest charges of plotting to kill Israelis, but a diplomatic rupture is unlikely. Azerbaijan is an important pathway for Iranian goods in the Caucasus region and both nations have signed accords among Caspian nations on energy, environmental and shipping policies.

Top French Court Strikes Down Genocide Law

FRANCE, from page 1

After winning passage in the National Assembly and Senate, the law was put on hold in January after groups of senators and members of parliament opposed to the legislation demanded that its constitutionality be examined.

The groups gathered more than the minimum 60 signatures required to ask the council to test the law's constitutionality.

At least two ministers, Foreign Minister Alain Juppe and Agriculture Minister Bruno Le Maire, had spoken out against the bill.

Ankara has already halted political and military cooperation with France and had threatened to cut off economic and cultural ties.

Trade between the two states was worth 12 billion euros (\$15.5 billion) in 2010, and several hundred French businesses operate in Turkey.

There was no immediate reaction to the ruling from Armenia, which had saluted the bill's passage. President Serge Sargsian has twice thanked his French counterpart, Nicolas Sarkozy, for helping to enact what the "historic" law.

Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian reaffirmed Yerevan's strong support for criminalizing Armenian Genocide denial in an interview with the Austrian magazine Der Standard publicized earlier last Tuesday. He said the bill reflects "the view of all French people" and "can only be useful for the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations."

(Radio Free Europe contributed to this report.)



Community News

Greater Washington DC Youth Mark Azerbaijani Massacres in Sumgait, Kirovabad and Baku

WASHINGTON — Greater Washington-area Armenian Americans braved the cold and rain last week to mourn the victims of Azerbaijani aggression and stand in solidarity with the people of the independent Republic of Nagorno Karabagh, in their effort to secure a fair and lasting peace.

The silent protest, organized by the Greater Washington, DC Armenian Youth Federation “Ani” Chapter and the St. Mary’s Armenian Church Youth Organization (ACYO), coincided with the 24th anniversary of the Azerbaijani pogroms against the Armenian population of Sumgait, which set the stage for attacks in Baku in 1990, outright Azerbaijani aggression and a cycle of anti-Armenian violence that continues to this day. The demonstrators also called special attention to Azerbaijan’s destruction of the 1,300-year-old Armenian cemetery in Djulfa, Nakhichevan, demolishing thousands of intricately carved cross-stones (*Khachkars*).

“We gathered at the Azerbaijani Embassy to remember those who perished in Sumgait and Baku, but to also condemn the Aliyev regime’s ongoing threats and attacks against Artsakh and Armenia,” said AYF Ani Chapter Chairwoman Tevin Polatian. “Just this week, another Armenian soldier was killed by an Azerbaijani sniper — an all too common occurrence resulting from an international community that turns a blind eye to Aliyev’s military build-up and attacks. We will continue to stand strong with the Republic of Karabagh, as they continue to defend their right to self-determination — a fundamental value the US was founded upon.”

Following the vigil, Soorp Khatch Armenian Church pastor, Fr. Sarkis Aktavoukian, and St. Mary’s Armenian Church pastor, Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan, led activists in a prayer in honor of the Sumgait, Kirovabad and Baku victims. Participants lit candles and brought pictures of those who perished in the massacres — making a memorial in front of the Azerbaijani Embassy.

In what has now become an expected practice at annual Armenian Genocide and Sumgait/Baku pogroms commemorative protests, flag-wearing Azerbaijani and Turkish protesters jovially celebrated the atrocities, dishonoring the memory of those who perished.

AIWA Chapter Founded in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO — Immediately following the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA) conference held here in October 2011, a group of young professional Armenian women took the initiative to establish an affiliate in this city. They started groundwork in late November 2011, and the AIWA San Francisco affiliate was officially recognized by the Central Board of Directors on January 3. Dr. Susanne Moranian welcomed the group on board, wishing them success in promoting AIWA’s goals in the years ahead.

Eight out of the 10 women who launched the San Francisco affiliate were born and raised in Armenia and moved to the United States to pursue their graduate studies or fulfill their career aspirations. Today, they all are ambitious, successful young professionals, ready to give back to their country by empowering women in Armenia.

The affiliate is currently developing its internal structure and planning a launch event in September 2012.



Rafik Abelian

Rafik Abelian: Armenian Math Whiz Now Cool Ice Cream Entrepreneur

SANTA CRUZ, Calif. (*Santa Cruz Sentinel*) — When Rafik Abelian was growing up, his ice cream choices were limited to chocolate, strawberry and vanilla.

Born and raised in Yerevan, Armenia, Abelian also could only enjoy ice cream in the summertime, the only time of year it was available.

Now 54, Abelian has truly broadened his ice cream horizons. In 2003 he opened a Cold Stone Creamery store on Pacific Avenue. As part of a franchise, Abelian has eight flavors of ice cream that he must make fresh daily, but there are between 100 and 150 additional flavors that he can select to be made as well.

“What I’m eating the most of right now is a combination of dark chocolate and coffee ice creams with walnuts, pecans and almonds swirled together — yum, yum, yum,” said Abelian, a Scotts Valley resident.

Opening and operating an ice cream franchise was a career move Abelian never anticipated.

His affinity for mathematics was what brought him to the US at the age of 21, but he left Cal Poly Pomona a few credits shy of earning his degree in industrial engineering to take an entry-level position at Silicon Systems, Inc.

He was transferred from the company’s Tustin-based wafer-fabrication plant to one on Santa Cruz’s Westside in 1995. Texas Instruments bought Silicon Systems in 1997, and when the plant closed in late 2001, Abelian held the title of planning manager.

Abelian turned down an offer to transfer within the company to remain in the area. Unable to find similar work, Abelian began to contemplate changing careers. When a friend suggested he open a Cold Stone Creamery store, Abelian didn’t even know what she was talking about.

“The former Watsonville store hadn’t opened then, so I had never heard of it,” Abelian said. “But then just a few days later my wife and I happened to be at the Great Mall in Milpitas, and there was a Cold Stone Creamery. I thought it was the best thing ever.”

Founded in 1988 by Donald and Susan Sutherland, Cold Stone Creamery began as one store in Tempe, Ariz. The franchise is known for its freshly-made ice cream that has “mix-ins” consisting of dry and/or wet toppings folded into it. The toppings are mixed together on top of a five-foot-long frozen granite stone.

“Any mix-in that goes into the ice cream, whether it is bananas or strawberries or walnuts or chocolate chips, should have its own flavor,” Abelian said. “We want a freshly-roasted almond in chocolate ice cream to still be crunchy and taste like a freshly-roasted almond while the ice cream tastes like chocolate. That’s what makes our ice cream so good.”

Krikorian Hopes For Win among 2nd District Democrats

By Amanda Seitz

MIAMI TOWNSHIP, Ohio (*Cincinnati Enquirer*) — Democrat David Krikorian faces his clearest shot yet at a seat he has sought twice before.

For the third time, Krikorian is running for the second Congressional District seat currently held by Republican Rep. Jean Schmidt, (R-Miami Township).

Krikorian, who is facing William R. Smith in the March 6 Democratic primary, said he believes he has a “clear shot” at winning the primary against an opponent who is doing little active campaigning. Smith did not respond to *The Enquirer*.

In 2010, Democrat Surya Yalamanchili beat Krikorian in the Democratic primary by just 2 percentage points. (Yalamanchili lost to Schmidt in the general election, getting only 34 percent of the vote.) Krikorian ran in 2008 too, as an independent, getting 17 percent of the vote.

“I’ll have a clear shot, me vs. Schmidt, and I’ll win,” Krikorian said. “I’m not sure that she’ll win her primary. Her primary is going to be difficult.” Schmidt faces three other Republicans, including former Cincinnati mayoral candidate Brad Wenstrup.

In 2010, just before the primary, three top Democratic officials denounced Krikorian for allegedly making fun of Yalamanchili’s name, a charge Krikorian denied.

This time Krikorian has the support of the Hamilton County Democratic Party, Director Caleb Faux said. “David Krikorian and Jean Schmidt have a long history, so it will make for an interesting race, if it turns out (that Schmidt wins her primary),” Faux said.

If Krikorian does face Schmidt in the fall, he believes his recent legal run-ins with her will help. “When you consider the tremendous legal battle that has been waged by Mrs. Schmidt against me, I think I’ve defended myself very well,” Krikorian said.

Schmidt filed a defamation lawsuit against Krikorian in 2009 after Krikorian alleged during the 2008 campaign that Schmidt “took \$30,000 in blood money to deny the genocide of Christian Armenians by Muslim Turks.” Schmidt denied that claim. During the lawsuit against Krikorian, Schmidt accepted money from the Turkish Coalition of America to help cover costs.

Krikorian then filed an ethics complaint against Schmidt, which launched a year-long investigation into the representative. Although she broke House Ethics rules, the committee decided she didn’t “knowingly” do so.

Krikorian said jobs and the economy — not his feuding with Schmidt — are the biggest issues for the 2012 election. He thinks his background in entrepreneurship could be an asset to the second district and Congress.

He owns Parody Productions, which produces playing cards.

“I think Congress could benefit a little bit from entrepreneurial thinking,” Krikorian said. “My background is in creating successful enterprises, so I’ve got a pretty good understanding of the root problems affecting our financial system.”



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenia Fund USA Continues with Healthcare Projects in 2012

NEW YORK – Armenia Fund is continuing its healthcare initiatives in Armenia and Karabagh in 2012.

The implementation of healthcare initiatives in regions across Armenia and Karabagh has always been a focus of Armenia Fund's. Now with more water being brought to villages across Karabagh, the building and renovating of healthcare facilities will be met with greater success in 2012 and into the future.

The construction of a new hospital in the town of Martuni is expected to be completed this year. The new facility will be able to treat close to 1,000 inpatient and 1,400 ambulatory patients on a yearly basis. This will mean great things for the residents of Martuni and the surrounding villages.

In December 2011, the fund completed the reconstruction of Kapan Town Medical Center's pediatric department. The department has undergone a complete makeover including a full hydro isolation, which will ensure a clean and sterile environment for the patients. It is expected that the number of doctors and support staff will increase from 15 to 25, and the department will be able to serve up to 600 to 650 patients annually.

Every healthcare facility Armenia Fund builds or renovates is complete with new heating, water, sewerage and electric systems, which are all mandatory components of a healthcare facility. With hospitals being established in both Kapan and Martuni, these two strategically-located facilities, as well as other smaller quick-care centers throughout the regions, will be vital to the residents of surrounding villages who will now have access to improved healthcare treatment.

Once the actual structures are built and all water and heating systems are in place, new state-of-the-art equipment and medicine can be delivered to the healthcare facilities, as well as training programs for doctors and medical staff. Each completed project allows another project to be born. Providing world-class healthcare in



The new hospital will be completed in 2012 and will treat close to 1,000 inpatient and 1,400 ambulatory patients on a yearly basis.

Armenia and Karabagh is the goal, and every step made in enhancing all healthcare amenities, from establishing 24-hour running water to delivering modern medical equipment, will

ensure a greater degree of success in the treatment of patients.

Better hospitals mean better care, and better care means more productive lives for the resi-

dents of Armenia and Karabagh.

Martuni Hospital project is co-funded by Armenian Medical Fund and the government of Karabagh.

San Mateo, Foster City Schools Receive Grant from Former Teacher

SAN MATEO, Calif. (Patch.com) – The family of a former San Mateo-Foster City School District teacher has donated \$20,000 to the district to help fund programs for the students.

Each year, a group of teachers who taught with Dorothy Grace Boyajian get together and review how the funds should be spent, according to the district.

This year, the money was used for six \$50 scholarships for fifth grade poetry, literacy and writing and one \$100 scholarship for highest academic achievement in literacy at Sunnybrae Elementary.

The school also uses the money to fund their Soul Shoppe program (Lifeskills assemblies, Peacemaker support and parent education). It is also a source for library books, student writing books, postage for letter writing, class field trips, and teacher supply money to support instruction.

In addition, a yearly donation is made to the North Central Neighborhood Association in support of the Martin Luther King Jr. Speech and Essay Contest and \$500 is given to the IMC to

buy something that would benefit all teachers in the San Mateo-Foster City School District.

These are all programs or resources that Boyajian would support while she was a teacher, according to the district.

Financial contributions are just one part of Boyajian's legacy. She instilled a love of literature and poetry in her students and she brought the world and its events into her classroom.

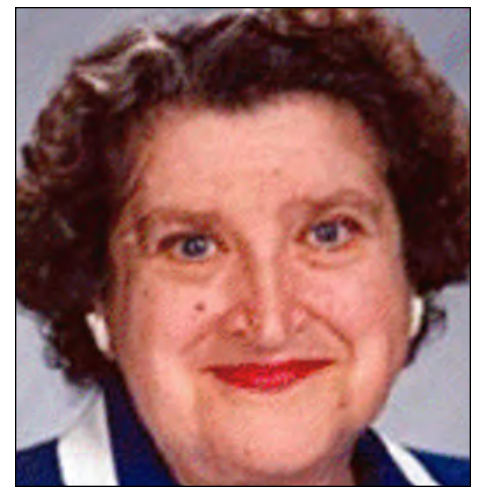
A favorite quote from St. Jerome was, "Good, better, best. Never let it rest. 'Til your good is better and your better is best."

For 52 years, Boyajian inspired students to "do your best."

Boyajian taught in the San Mateo-Foster City School District for 52 years at Turnbull, North Shoreview and Sunnybrae Elementary Schools.

She was known as the "poet laureate" of the school district, writing and presenting poems on many occasions. Sunnybrae Principal Heather Olsen says she was involved in offering students enriching experiences, paying for her whole class to attend the ballet.

She retired in 2004 and died in 2008. A pro-



Dorothy Boyajian

fessional portrait of Boyajian hangs above Heather Olsen's desk. Olsen says that Boyajian is, "making sure that I am doing good work for Sunnybrae!"

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OBITUARY

Anthony M. 'Artie' Barsamian

BOSTON — Anthony M. "Artie" Barsamian of Boston died in Florida on February 22, at the age of 83.

He was the son of the late Mihran and Antaram (Manoogian) Barsamian.

He leaves behind his wife of 58 years, Cynthia (Hamparian) Barsamian, children, Laura Barsamian and her husband, Michael Szymanowski, and Arthur Barsamian and his wife, Debra; grandchildren, Michael and Anastasia Barsamian; siblings, Virginia Tashjian and her husband, Jake, Varney Haroutunian and her husband, Edward, Mike Barsamian and his wife, Kaye, and Edward J. Barsamian. He also leaves many nieces, nephews, friends and fans.

A brother, Vahan Barsamian, predeceased him.

Barsamian touched the lives of many with his inspiration and musical talent.

He was an army veteran who served in World War II.

At the age of 9, Barsamian decided to study the clarinet. He not only mastered the clarinet, but also the saxophone and flute. His father, a violinist, realized that his son had a special talent and encouraged him to study privately.

During World War II, he was asked by the school faculty to be part of their show. He was a sensation, 17 years old with a 17-piece orchestra. After graduating in 1946, he traveled through the Mid-West playing gigs during 1948-49. He returned home in

the early 1950s and with his father, put together the original Artie Barsamian Orchestra. He recorded his first record, "Haigagan March" and received favorable reviews. In the late 1950s, his father died suddenly. Losing his father made Barsamian determined to dedicate the rest of his life to fulfill his father's wishes to keep the music of his ancestors alive in America.

He recorded numerous singles in the form of 78-RPM discs, and then finally formed an orchestra to record his first full album, the legendary "Seventh Veil." The group became popular in Armenian-American communities from coast to coast. Barsamian was dubbed the "King of Armenian Swing," with the band recording 14 albums of Near-Eastern music. His band performed at venues which included the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas and the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC.

Barsamian's heritage of Armenian and American culture made his music and talent unique.

The funeral was held at St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, 38 Elton Ave., Watertown on Wednesday, February 29. Interment followed in Mt. Hope Cemetery, Boston.

Arrangements were made by the Giragosian Funeral Home.

Expressions of sympathy may be made in his memory to the Armenian Women's Welfare Association, (Nursing Home), P.O. Box 191, Belmont, MA 02478.



Anthony M. "Artie" Barsamian

Former *Mirror-Spectator* Editor Ara Kalaydjian Dies

ARA KALAYDJIAN, from page 1

Kalaydjian, born in Jerusalem in 1938, was the son of Karnig and Mary (Chinchinian) Kalaydjian, both from Marash, who survived the Genocide, eventually settled in Jerusalem, Palestine. He was educated at Sourp Tarkmanchatz School in Jerusalem. During the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948, his family moved to Zahle, Lebanon, where for two years he attended the Armenian Mekhitarist School. Upon returning to Jerusalem, he resumed his studies at Sourp Tarkmanchatz and graduated in 1951. That same year, he left for Cyprus and enrolled at the AGBU Melkonian Educational Institute in

Nicosia. He graduated in 1957 and started teaching at the local Melikian School.

In 1965, he returned to Jerusalem. In addition to being the personal secretary to Patriarch Yeghishe Derderian, he was the editor-in-chief of *Sion*, the official publication of the patriarchate, and director of the printing press of the monastery. He also taught Armenian literature at the seminary and at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

From an early age, he contributed to various Armenian publications and newspapers. In 1967 he compiled and published a catalog of the manuscripts of the Monastery of Moush. That same year he published two works of the poet Bedros Tourian: *Daghk* (poems) and *Namagani* (the letters of the poet). He edited and published the first volume of Arpiar Arpiarian's *Complete Works*. He researched and edited the letters of Patriarch Krikor the Chainbearer of Jerusalem. He prepared a complete catalog of the earliest printed Armenian books and also translated into English Krikor Keusseyan's book on Carzou.

In 1978, he and his wife, Shoushan, emigrated to the United States and settled in Boston, where he assumed the position of managing editor of the *Baika Weekly*, published by the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party. For 10 years, from 1987-1997, he was the editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

For a brief period, he taught Armenian at the University of Massachusetts/Boston. In 2000, *Ore Orin* (Day to Day), a compilation of many of his writings about contemporary national and international subjects was published.

He was a member of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party and the Knights of Vartan.

Services were held at St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, on Friday, March 2. Interment followed in Grove Hill Cemetery, Waltham.

Expressions of sympathy may be made in his memory to St. James Armenian Church or the AGBU Educational Projects in Armenia, 55 East 59th St., New York, NY 10022. Arrangements were made by the Giragosian Funeral Home.

To light a candle in his memory, visit www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

Roseann V. Kurjian Johns

SHERMAN, N.Y. (*Post-Journal*) — Roseann V. Kurjian Johns, 60, a summer resident of Sherman, died on February 12, in Los Angeles, after a short illness.

Johns was born in Detroit, Mich., and spent her summers on the Kurjian family farm on Armenian Road from the time she was a young girl. Although she lived primarily in Los Angeles, she loved Sherman, and took great pleasure in introducing her sons to "summers on the farm."

She is survived by her husband, Gary D. Johns; two sons, Penn and Dominic, and siblings, Vartan Kurjian and his wife, Natasha, of Los Angeles and Dickran Kurjian and his wife, Mona, of Detroit.

She was the daughter of the late Haroutun and Anna Kurjian of Detroit and was predeceased by sibling, Suki Kurjian, of New York City.

On Sunday, February 19, she was interred next to her father, mother and sister in the Sherman Cemetery.

Memorial tributes to AGBU Alex-Marie Manoogian School, Southfield, Michigan or Doctors Without Borders.

Arrangements were made by the Simon Javizian Funeral Home.

Giragosian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Spinach Soup Makes Tasty Lent Dish

Throughout many centuries, Armenian mothers (and a few fathers) have passed on to their children wonderful traditional Armenian foods. Lent is a special time to prepare for Easter. Try some of the recipes here and spend a very special mealtime with the family – helping everyone observe Lent and prepare for Easter, the most important religious observance in the Armenian Church calendar.

Spinach Soup (Shomini Aboor)

4 cups hot water
1/2 cup lentils, picked over to discard residue
1/2 cup cracked wheat, large
1-2 cloves garlic, mashed
1-2 teaspoons salt to taste
1 16-ounce canned whole tomatoes, broken up
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 10-ounce package whole-leaf frozen spinach (or its equivalent in fresh spinach leaves)
1 teaspoon crushed, dried or 2 tablespoons fresh, minced basil

Preparation

1. Bring water to a boil, add lentils and wheat, bring to a boil again and let simmer for 20 minutes.
2. Add garlic, salt, tomatoes and tomato paste and simmer additional 20 to 30 minutes until lentils are soft.
3. Add spinach and basil during last 5 to 10 minutes of cooking time. Remove from heat and serve piping hot.

Yields: six servings
Note: Leftover soup will thicken as it cools so one might have to add some boiling water when reheating.

(This recipe was from *The 40 Days of Lent: Selected Armenian Recipes*, by Alice Antreassian)

Robert A. Semonian for Re-Election To the Republican State Committee

WATERTOWN – Robert A. Semonian has announced his candidacy for re-election to the Massachusetts Republican State Committee from the second Suffolk and Middlesex Senatorial District, which comprises Belmont, Watertown and parts of Boston.

Semonian is state chairman of Ethnic Outreach for the Massachusetts Republican Party, which has led to more involvement with the GOP by ethnic Americans. Semonian has held leadership roles in state and national Republican campaigns over the years.

“I am most proud of the policy and program initiatives that have proven important to the state Party’s outreach to the recruitment and training of dozens of qualified candidates who have represented the Republican Party with integrity, can-do spirit and electoral success.

I take great pride during my many years on the State Committee with uniting various political factions and helping to create a positive forward-looking agenda for action. I do not believe and never resorted to name calling and negative attacks on my opponents or adversaries of the Republican Party.”

Semonian’s years of contribution to the Republican Party include serving in leadership positions on behalf of the re-election of US Sen. Scott Brown and the presidential campaign of Gov. Mitt Romney.

Semonian is treasurer and director of the *Improper Bostonian* magazine. Also, he has served as trustee of MassBay Community College. While in this position at MassBay, he was on the president’s Evaluation Committee, Nominating Committee and served as a liaison to the Foundation Board.

He has also served as deputy chairman of the Massachusetts Republican Party, chairman of Watertown Republican Town Committee, state



Robert Semonian with Mitt and Anne Romney

vice chairman and state nationalities chairman of Massachusetts Reagan for President Committee, Massachusetts state co-chairman for the Bush/Quayle presidential campaign and delegate to the last eight Republican National Conventions.

St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School Launches Campus Expansion Project

WATERTOWN – The St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School, a private, bilingual educational institution, is planning an important campus expansion project to be completed by the start of the 2012/2013 school year. The planned improvements will include the addition of a new two-story building next to the current nursery school that will encompass up to four new classrooms, a learning center and a recreation area.

Over the years, the school has excelled and grown from a preschool with only eight students to an enrollment of 180 students in 2012. “We are very excited by the launch of this project, which will allow us to meet the growing demand from our community and enhance the programs and activities for our students,” stated Houry Boyamian, the school’s principal. “Over the last few years, we have had a waiting list of students for entry into our preschool program, and this expansion will provide us with the additional capacity to accommodate these students.”

Fundraising for the project has already begun and more than 60 percent of the project cost has been secured. “We are very encouraged by the generous donations and pledges already made for this much-needed expansion and look

forward to everyone in our community coming together to play a pivotal role in this next phase of our school’s history,” stated Avak Kahvejian, chairman of the school’s Board of Directors.

To find out more about the expansion project and inquire about ways to contribute, contact the school at info@ssaes.org.

Founded in 1984, the St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School has distinguished itself with its bilingual curriculum, academic strength, devoted staff and low student-to-teacher ratio. St. Stephen’s is accredited by the Association of Independent Schools in New England (AISNE), the accrediting body for independent elementary schools. AISNE has commended the school for “creating an environment where all the students love to read and appear committed to academic excellence,” and for recruiting a dedicated staff. The AISNE accreditation puts St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School academically on par with other prestigious private schools in the region.

To learn more about St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School, visit www.ssaes.org or contact the principal at houry_boyamian@ssaes.org or St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School, 47 Nichols Ave., Watertown, MA 02472.

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Dr. Sebouh Aslanian to Speak on New Julfa Armenians at Armenian Society of LA

GLENDALÉ — Dr. Sebouh D. Aslanian, the Richard Hovannissian Term Chair of Modern Armenian History, established by the Armenian Educational Foundation at UCLA, will speak on Sunday, March 18, at 4 p.m., at the Armenian Society of Los Angeles Main Hall, 117 S. Louise St. The lecture, which is free and open to the public, will be cosponsored by the Armenian Society of Los Angeles, the Armenian Educational Foundation, the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

Aslanian's lecture, "From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa," will draw on his recently-published book of the same name, issued by the University of California Press.

From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean was selected by the Committee of the "California World History Library" as the first book to appear in their new series, "Author's Imprint," that celebrates and recognizes "exceptional scholarship by first-time authors." It received the 2011 Houshang Pourshariati Book Award in Iranian Studies and the PEN literary award for outstanding first book of the year from UC Press.

Drawing on a rich trove of documents, including correspondence not seen for 300 years, Aslanian's groundbreaking study explores the emergence and growth of a remarkable global trade network operated by Armenian silk merchants from a small outpost in the Persian Empire. Based in New Julfa, Isfahan, in what is now Iran, these merchants operated

a network of commercial settlements that stretched from London and Amsterdam to Manila and Acapulco.

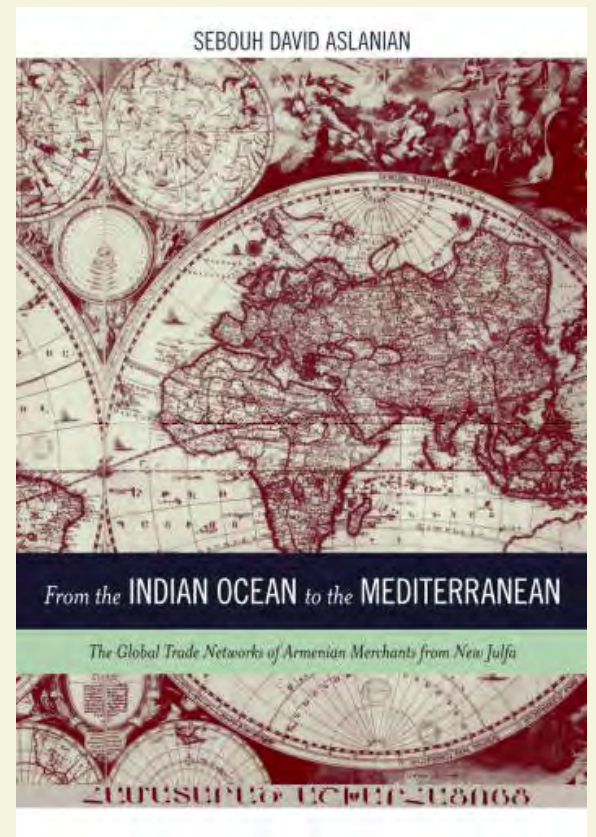
Aslanian brings to light the trans-imperial cosmopolitan world of the New Julfans, the effects of long distance trade on the organization of community life, the ethos of trust and cooperation that existed among merchants and the importance of information networks and communication in the operation of early modern mercantile communities.

Prof. George Bournoutian of Iona College has praised *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean* as "the most researched and original work" on the subject that "exceeds, by far, all previous scholarship on the Armenian merchants of New Julfa."

Aslanian has previously taught in the department of history at CSU-Long Beach as an assistant professor in fall 2010 after serving a year at Cornell University as a Mellon Foundation postdoctoral fellow in world history. He received his PhD (with distinction) from Columbia University in 2007. Aslanian specializes in early modern world and Armenian history and is the author of numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals such as the *Journal of World History*, the *Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient*, the *Journal of Global History* and *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*.

From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean will be on sale at the talk and available for signing by the author.

More information about Aslanian's lecture may be had by contacting the Ararat-Eskijian Museum at Ararat-eskijian-museum@netzero.net or NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



Author Michael Bobelian to Give Two Lectures in Boca Raton

BOCA RATON, Fla. — Author Michael Bobelian will give a pair of lectures here on March 15 and 18, in connection with his acclaimed book, *Children of Armenia: A Forgotten Genocide and the Century-Long Struggle for Justice* (Simon & Schuster). He will present "America and the Armenian Genocide" on Thursday, March 15, at 7 p.m. at Florida Atlantic University, Wimberly Library, fifth floor, 777 Glades Road. On Sunday, March 18, at 1 p.m., he will speak at St. David Armenian Church, 2300 Yamato Road. Both talks are co-sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and

Research.

From 1915 to 1923, around 2 million Armenians were driven from their ancestral homeland and some 1.5 million of them were killed. While there was an initial global outcry and a movement to aid the "starving Armenians," the promise to hold the perpetrators accountable was never fulfilled and a curtain of silence soon descended on one of the worst crimes of modern history. Now, almost a century later, the Armenians are still fighting for justice.

The grandson of Genocide survivors, Bobelian struggled to rationalize how an event

as widely reported as the Armenian Genocide could fade from public consciousness. Why was the Genocide ignored, forgotten and, worse, relegated to fiction for so long? What role did America's national self-interest play in helping Turkey evade public accountability? Why did decades of silence pass before a new generation of activists arose who would renew the fight for justice?

Based on years of archival research and personal interviews, Bobelian's groundbreaking *Children of Armenia* is the first book to trace this post-Genocide history and reveal the events that have conspired to eradicate the "hidden

holocaust" from the world's memory and the story of the Armenians who struggled to seek redress in the face of recalcitrant perpetrators and an indifferent world.

Bobelian is a graduate of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. A lawyer and journalist, he has written for *Forbes.com*, *American Lawyer* and *Legal Affairs* magazine and has been featured on NPR's "Leonard Lopate Show."

He lives in New York City with his wife and daughter.

Children of Armenia will be on sale at both lectures and available for signing by the author.

TCA Arshag Dickranian School to Hold 31st Annual Dinner Dance

LOS ANGELES — The 31st annual dinner dance of the Tekeyan Cultural Association's Arshag Dickranian School will be held on Friday, March 16, at 7:30 p.m., at the Taglyan Cultural Center, 1201 N. Vine St.

The annual dinner dance is a traditional event organized by the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), where parents, teachers and students along with alumni, friends and guests gather to enjoy an evening of merriment highlighted with music and entertainment.

For more than 30 years, the Arshag Dickranian School has put into place a diverse and comprehensive educational program preparing future leaders for the Armenian community. The event is one of the most important fundraising functions in support of the school's educational and extracurricular programs. The honorary guests this year are Vardan and Kristina Mkryan.

Tickets are at \$75 for adults and \$50 for students, which may be acquired by contacting the school office at (323) 461-4377 or PTO Vice-Chair Armine Gasparyan at (323) 428-4747.

For more information visit the school's website, www.dickranianschool.org.

Young Families of St. David Armenian Church Embrace Lay Ministry Program

BOCA RATON, Fla. — The Mr. & Mrs. Club of St. David Armenian Church hosted a "Yerevan Night" on Saturday, February 18, and invited all the young couples of the community to enjoy a social evening. Since it was declared as the year of "Lay Ministry," Fr. Nareg Berberian expanded the committee on Sunday, January 8, to organize this evening of fun.

The newly-appointed Executive Committee members include: Marieta Agopyan, Vartuhi Malkhasian, Anahit Sarkisyan, Karine Markaryan, Arusiak Stambolyan, Dr. Nona Kalfayan, Araksia Manvelyan, Sona Khachatryan, Armine Mnatsakanian, Armenui Grigoryan, Ashken Azatyan, Liliya Boghossian, Hasmig Davtyan and Alla Gularyan. Together they coordinated an event that was attended by more than 150 people.

The committee members donated the food and other expenses related to this event. Mr. and Mrs. Hratch Boghossian covered the expenses for the DJ and the entertainment for the children. For more pictures of this event, visit the Facebook page of St. David Armenian Church.

Berberian thanked everyone for coming to this event and encouraged the people to be



Fr. Nareg Berberian with the executive members of the Mr. & Mrs. Club

involved in the ministry of the church. Since the organization's goal is to welcome young

couples into the community, they planned to organize another event in the near future.


New York
METRO

Armenian Singer from Turkey, Sibil, to Perform on March 31

Shushi Dance Ensemble Will Interpret Her Music

HACKENSACK, N.J. — Constantinople Armenian Relief Society (CARS) presents the talented young Armenian vocalist Sibil, whose soothing voice has been enjoyed by many in her native Istanbul. Her East Coast debut concert will be held on March 31, at Bergen County Academies. The program includes a live orchestra and a special guest performance by Shushi Dance Ensemble of St. Vartan Cathedral, NY.

Sibil discovered her love for music in the Armenian Church at a young age. She realized her lifelong dream when she released her first CD with the help of a very talented group of musicians led by director and composer Majak Tosikyan, who will be a special guest at this event. Most recently, Sibil's unique voice echoed in the historic Holy Cross Armenian Church on



Singer Sibil



Shushi dancers

the island of Akhtamar and captivated the audience at the opening and closing ceremonies of the Pan Armenian games in Yerevan. Her TV appearances and music videos attracted thousands of fans and exposed her to a larger audience all over the world. Soon, she will be performing in Los Angeles with her pianist, Burak Bedikyan, at an event sponsored by the Organization of Istanbul Armenians.

Under the volunteer leadership of artistic director and choreographer, Seta Paskalian-Kantardjian, Shushi Dance Ensemble has had numerous performances both in the United States and abroad with renowned musicians and vocalists. Shushi has performed in Armenia three times, Karabagh, Montreal, Toronto, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Armenian Heritage Cruise and across the United States. In July, Shushi will conclude its 20th anniversary celebration with a South American tour, with performances in Argentina and Uruguay, hosted by their local Armenian General Benevolent Union chapters.

(For ticket information, see the calendar section of the newspaper.)

HMADS Gala Dinner Dance: A Celebration 45 Years in The Making

BAYSIDE, N.Y. — Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School (HMADS) first opened its doors to the New York community as the Hye Bardez in 1967. For 45 years, HMADS has upheld a tradition of excellence in education while inspiring a love of Armenian heritage in its students. HMADS supplements its curriculum, which surpasses mandated New York State education standards, with daily lessons in Armenian language, history and culture.

HMADS has cultivated a spirit of cooperation and unity, treating all of its members as family. The celebration of this anniversary allows the members of this close-knit family to reflect upon more than four decades of service as the community's leading Armenian-American educational institution. With 29 graduating classes, the school has seen the fruits of its labor, producing a colorful bouquet of close to 250 alumni who blossomed in this garden of knowledge. The alumni have distinguished themselves with academic and professional honors and as active and respected members of their Armenian communities. Many of the earlier alumni are returning home to HMADS as parents



The members of the HMADS Friends Committee

and members of the PTO, School Board and Friends fundraising committee. By returning to their alma mater, these HMAD alumni nurture and assure its continuity.

Working to help the school achieve and maintain these goals is a dedicated group of supporters known as the Friends of HMADS. The Friends Committee has encouraged and coordinated fundraising activities since 1994, with tremendous support from the greater Armenian community. This generosity has amazed the school, allowing HMADS to maintain its high academic levels while keeping the tuition affordable for families. Chaired by School Board Treasurer Hovannes Malikyan, the Friends Committee meets frequently to plan social and cultural programs. In addition to garnering donations, these programs help foster the Armenian heritage.

This year's annual Gala Dinner Dance will be held on Saturday, May 19. It is a fundraising event for the school and an elegant affair at the Garden City Country Club. The festivities will begin at 7:30 p.m. with a cocktail hour, followed by dinner at 9 p.m. The Kevork Artinian from Montreal will provide the evening's entertainment.

Hratch Arukian is the honorary booklet chairperson of the 45th anniversary gala dinner dance.

For further information on the dance and how to be a part of this organization, call the school office.

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Arts & Living

Young Musicians to Perform at Musical Armenia Program At Carnegie Hall

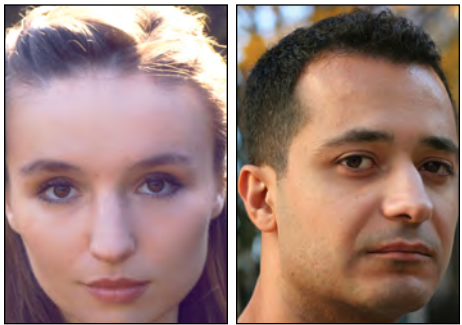
By Lucy Ishkanian

NEW YORK – A musical evening will take place at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Friday, March 30, at 8 p.m., featuring two young musicians, Marta Bagratuni, cellist, and Hayk Arsenyan, pianist-composer.

This cultural evening is being presented by Musical Armenia, the concert series project under the auspices of the Armenian Prelacy in New York. It began in 1982 with its inaugural concert, dedicated to the purpose of introducing to the public talented young Armenian musicians, as well as encouraging the performance of music by Armenian composers.

The impressive roster of Musical Armenia artists presented annually during the last 30 years includes: pianist Sergei Babayan, baritone Rodion Pogossoy, cellist Suren Bagratuni, soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian, cellist Ani Aznavoorian and violinist Catherine Manoukian, among others, who have also achieved successful careers.

Bagratuni (daughter of the cellist Suren Bagratuni) gave her first performance at the



Marta Bagratuni and Hayk Arsenyan

age of 5, her international debut at 8 and orchestral and recital debuts at the age of 12. Since then, she has become a versatile artist as a recitalist across five continents, performing a diverse repertoire of solo, chamber and orchestral works. Bagratuni has appeared as soloist with the Leopolis Chamber Orchestra, Detroit Civic Symphony, Lansing Symphony and several orchestras across the Midwest. In 2010, Bagratuni graduated magna cum laude from the University of Michigan and is currently studying for a master's degree in cello and voice performance. She made her operatic debut in September 2011, with the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra. Bagratuni will include in her program works by Vahe Sharafyan and Adam Khudoyan.

Arsenyan, a native of Armenia, is a laureate of international piano and composition competitions. He made his orchestral debut at the age of 17 with Radio France Symphony and was awarded a platinum medal by the city of Paris. He has appeared in recitals in the United States, Armenia, Russia, France and other countries of Europe, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. In 2007, Arsenyan received the professional studies performance certificate from The Manhattan School of Music. He holds a master's degree from the Gnessin Music Academy in Moscow, and a doctor of musical arts degree in piano performance and pedagogy from the University of Iowa. At present, Arsenyan is on the faculty at New York's University's Tisch School of the Arts. His program for the Musical Armenia concert will feature *Visionary Landscapes* by composer Alan Hovhaness.

The tickets for the concert are available at the Carnegie Hall box office or through the Prelacy office.

The Musical Armenia concert committee has already scheduled next year's concert. All future applicants can contact the Prelacy for further information.



A seventh-century sundial with Armenian numbers from Zvartnots Cathedral in Echmiadzin, Armenia

The Key to Armenia's Survival: An Exhibition Review

VENICE (*New York Times*) – Armenian civilization is one of the most ancient of those surviving in the Middle East, but for large parts of its history Armenia has been a nation without a country. This has given the spoken and written word, the primary means through which Armenian identity has been preserved, enormous prominence in its people's culture.

Over the centuries this emphasis has fostered a particular regard for books and the means of producing them. Scribes added notes on the proper care and conservation of books and advice on hiding them during dangerous times, even on "ransoming" them should they fall into the wrong hands. A late 19th-century English traveler observed that the Armenians prized the printing press with the same "affection and reverence as the Persian highlanders value a rifle or sporting gun."

In 1511 to 1512 (the exact date is uncertain), the first Armenian book was printed in Venice. The event was especially significant for this scattered nation, which did not acquire a modern homeland until 1918 and then only in a small part of its ancestral lands.

The anniversary is the occasion for "Armenia: Imprints of a Civilization," an impressive exhibition organized by Gabriella Ulluhogian, Boghos Levon Zekian and Vartan Karapetian of more than 200 works spanning more than 1,000 years of Armenian written culture. These range from inscriptions and illuminated manuscripts to printed and illustrated books, including many unique and rare pieces from collections in Armenia and Europe.

The show opens with the atmospheric painting of 1889 by the Armenian artist Ivan Aivazovski, "The Descent of Noah From Mount Ararat," from the National Gallery in Yerevan. It shows the Old Testament patriarch leading his family and a procession of animals across the plain, still watery from the subsiding flood, to re-people the earth.

The extraordinary grip that this mountain has had on the Armenian imagination is tellingly demonstrated by subsequent sections on sculpture, the Armenian Church and the Ark – the conical domes of Armenian churches seeming eternally to replicate this geographical feature that symbolizes the salvation of the human race.

Christianity reached Armenia as early as the first or early second century. And Armenia lays claim to having been the first nation that adopted the faith as a state religion, sometime between 293 and 314, a date traditionally recorded by the Armenian Church as 301.

There followed, in around 404 or 405, an initiative that has been one of the cornerstones of the endurance of the Armenian ethnos: the invention of a distinctive alphabet capable of rendering the language's complex phonetic system. This made possible the translation of the Bible – the majestic 10th-century *Gospel of Trebizond* is on show here – and the foundation of Armenian literature in all its manifestations, sacred and secular.

The desire to illustrate the gospels and other Christian texts was the primary impetus for the development of Armenian art, which drew on an unusually wide

see EXHIBIT, page 13

Cellist Narek Hakhnazaryan Captivates at Strathmore Mansion

By Cecelia Porter

BETHESDA, Md. (*Washington Post*) – The Strathmore Mansion on Thursday was chock full of patrons (including cellists and other string players) to hear the 23-year-old Armenian cellist Narek Hakhnazaryan give a phenomenal account of some musical thrillers by Cesar Franck, Frederic Chopin, Dmitri Shostakovich and Mstislav Rostropovich. Franck's late *Sonata in A*, the evening's opener, and Shostakovich's *Sonata in D minor, Opus 40*, call on every dimension of a performer's technique and expressive means.

Hakhnazaryan impresses one with a degree of freedom that comes from a hard-won discipline of the highest order. And he had a brilliant pianist, Noreen Cassidy-Polera, to support that level of artistry.

The cellist won first prize at last year's International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. He is already a seasoned performer in first-rate concert halls with major orchestras around the world.

Hakhnazaryan's talent was obvious from the opening phrase of Franck's late *Sonata* (originally for violin). Whether *pianissimo* or triple *forte*, his bow was ever emphatic and his emotive power and subjective intensity captured the listener immediately, never letting go. The thrust of the piece – especially the third movement – is a monumental fantasia, requiring the cellist to hurl through its wavering thematic transformations while seeming to improvise. (Franck himself was a master organist famed for his improvisations.)

Shostakovich's *Opus 40* demands control and fortitude from both players. On Thursday it was all there with both players evenly matched. *Opus 40* is a marvel of alternating passages of sublime, liquid lyricism with depths of astringent harmony and textures. Throughout the sonata, the musicians underscored the music's overwhelming sense of inevitability.

This was most obviously felt in the driving pulse of the outer *allegros* and most subtly in the *largo*, charging forward with the epic breadth of the Russian steppes. The finale's jaunty contrapuntal interplay erupted into a blazing firestorm, as if endlessly toying with a listener's expectations.

Chopin's *Introduction and Polonaise Brillante, Opus 3* and Rostropovich's *Humoresque, Opus 5* are not simply display pieces, though they both leave the performers to tackle every technical trick of the trade at a whirlwind pace.

Hakhnazaryan's two blazing encores weren't enough for the audience, who clamored for more.



Narek Hakhnazaryan



ARTS & LIVING

BBC to Broadcast Armenian Poem by Charents

LONDON — “The Written World,” a poetry project of the Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburgh will present broadcasts of 204 poems for the BBC, each poem representing one of the 204 competing Olympic nations.

The poems chosen for broadcast will be in English and in the language of origin, with historic and visual materials. Translations will also be produced as postcards and posters. Representing Armenia will be Yeghishe Charents’s “I love the Sun-Baked Taste of Armenian Words,” as translated by Diana Der-Hovanessian. The broadcasts will be presented between March and September of this year.

The Charents translation, done with Der-Hovanessian’s father, first appeared in *Translation Magazine* at Columbia University in 1977; then in *The Anthology of Armenian Poetry*, Columbia University Press. It appears in the new *Armenian Poetry of Our Time* published this year by California University Press, Fresno, a new volume with many additional translations.



Left, Yeghishe Charents; Right, *The Anthology of Armenian Poetry*

The Key to Armenia’s Survival: An Exhibition Review

EXHIBIT, from page 12

range of sources thanks to the country’s position at the crossroads of several civilizations.

As Dickran Kouymjian writes in his essay in the exhibition’s substantial and wide-ranging catalog, which is available in English, French and Italian: “Armenian artists were remarkably open to artistic trends in Byzantium, the Latin West, the Islamic Near East and even Central Asia and China.”

A sumptuous display of these illuminated books brings together some of the finest surviving examples from the ninth to the 15th centuries, and it is curious to discover that even after the advent of printing, the tradition of illumination continued in Armenian monasteries for a further two and a half centuries.

The acme of the Armenian miniature was reached in the 13th century, during the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, which ruled over a substantial part of Asia Minor (1198-1375), until it was overthrown by the Mamluks of Egypt.

Armenian contacts with Venice date to the period when the nascent lagoon republic was a remote western outpost of Byzantium, where Armenians held senior positions in the administration and the military. In the sixth century

the Armenian governor Narses is credited with introducing the cult of Theodore, or Todor, Venice’s first patron saint and Isaac the Armenian is recorded as the founder of the ancient Santa Maria Assunta basilica on the island of Torcello.

Contacts became frequent during the

Kingdom of Cilicia as Venetian merchants expanded their activities in the Levant and their Armenian counterparts sought opportunities in Europe.

In 1235 the Venetian nobleman Marco Ziani left a house to the Armenian community at San Zulian near Piazza San Marco, which came to

tion led to the setting up of a host of Armenian presses all over the world. The fruits of these — from locations as far-flung as Amsterdam, Paris, Vienna and St. Petersburg to Istanbul, Isfahan, Madras and Singapore — form the absorbing last section of the exhibition.

Venice was given a further boost as the global center of Armenian culture by the arrival in the lagoon of Abbot Mekhitar and his monks in 1715. This visionary was born in Sivas (ancient Sebastia) in Anatolia, and had spent time in Echmiadzin and Istanbul. Later he took the community he had created to Methoni in the Peloponnese, which had been conquered by the Venetians in the 1680s. But the prospect of the town’s recapture by the Ottomans led to Mekhitar’s decision to take refuge in Venice. In 1717 he and his followers were granted a lease on the island of San Lazzaro, which has been their headquarters ever since.

Under Mekhitar, San Lazzaro became the epicenter of a worldwide Armenian cultural revival. The community created a study center and library, was responsible for printing scores of books in Venice and elsewhere, and established an international network of schools, where a high proportion of Armenia’s religious and secular elite received an education into modern times.

The Armenian Academy of San Lazzaro has published *Bazmavep*, a literary, historical and scientific journal since 1843, one of the oldest continuous periodicals of its kind. And the first Armenian newspaper-magazine was *Azdar* (The Monitor), founded in Madras in 1794.

San Lazzaro’s most famous foreign student was Lord Byron, who learned Armenian there with the scholar Harutiun Avgerian, with whom he collaborated on the production of an Armenian and English grammar, containing translations by the poet.

“Armenia: Imprints of a Civilization” will be shown at the Correr Museum in Venice through April 10.



An Armenian Merchant portrayed by Giovanni Grevembroch in the 18th century

be called the Casa Armena and provided a focal point for Venice’s ever more numerous Armenian residents and visitors.

The testament drawn up in 1354 by the governess of this house, “Maria the Armenian,” indicates that by that time there was not only a thriving community of merchants, but also clerics and an archbishop, to whom she left three of her six peacocks. Later the church of Santa Croce was founded on the same site, still today an Armenian place of worship. Both Marco Ziani and Maria’s wills are on show.

A precious copy of the first Armenian book printed in 1511-1512, a religious work titled the *Book of Friday*, is also on display. The innova-

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Gospel dating from 1331 with an illumination of St. Matthew with the artist himself, Sargis Pitzak, kneeling at the feet of the evangelist



ARTS & LIVING

A New Kind of Armenian-Turkish Reconciliation

By Jennifer Manoukian

ISTANBUL, Turkey (jadaliyya.com) — In October 2011, the newly-renovated Sourp Giragos Armenian Apostolic Church reopened in Turkey's southeastern province of Diyarbakir. Among the hundreds gathered to celebrate its first mass in over 90 years were 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, the 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 Ayşe Gül Altınay and Torunlar, published in French as *Les petits-enfants* (*The Grandchildren*).

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 Catilin 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 relationships 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 discovery 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 Sarreyya, 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 Alevis, 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 Shafak 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. Bulent 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 *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 Syrians, Armenians and Muslims. My aunts — my mother's sisters — married Syrians and live as Syrians. 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 and Argentinean-Armenian: hyphenated identities 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.

(Jennifer Manoukian is a recent graduate of Rutgers University, where she received her bachelor's in Middle Eastern Studies and French. She is currently an intern with the Arab Studies Institute. Her writing on these topics has appeared in ianyanmag.com and zohrabcenter.com. She also translates from Western Armenian and has had her translations of writer Zabel Yessayan featured in araratmagazine.org. Jadaliyya is an independent e-zine produced by the Arab Studies Institute, the umbrella organization that produces *Arab Studies Journal* and runs the Documentary Film Collective, Quilting Point.)



ARTS & LIVING

Avant-garde Novel *Journey to Virginland* Wins 2012 Written Art Award

LOS ANGELES – California author Armen Melikian won one of the two 2012 Written Art Awards in the General Fiction Category for his novel, *Journey to Virginland: Epistle I*.

Journey to Virginland is “a nihilistic sojourn through fictional Virginland in search of enlightenment,” wrote Monique Muro of the *Long Beach Book Examiner*. Muro added: “Every once in a while, a book comes along that shakes up the foundation of what we know to be true. Armen Melikian accomplishes just this in *Journey to Virginland*. Everything we know about the evolution of religion, war and social mores, are all up for grabs in Melikian’s biting satire.”

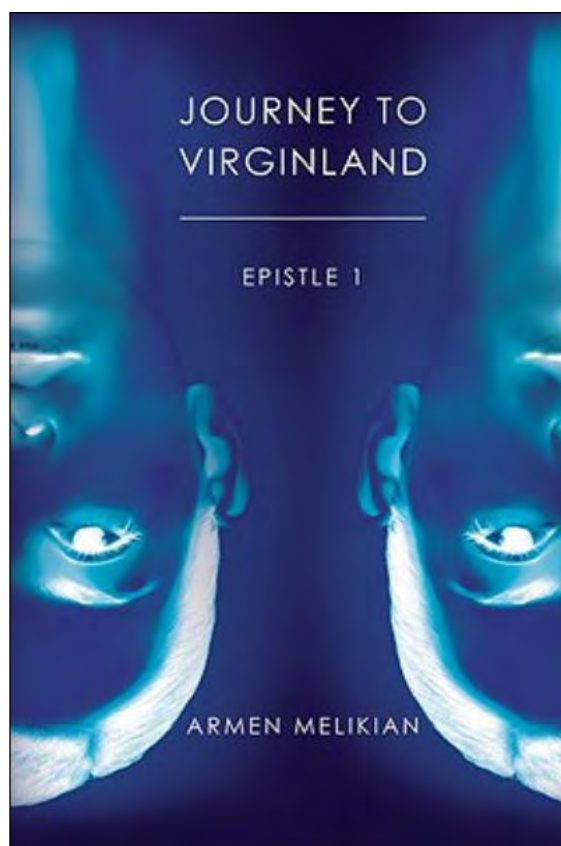


Armen Melikian

“I am honored that *Journey to Virginland* was chosen for this award from among hundreds of books,” said Melikian, who has garnered three other literary awards this year.

The anti-hero of the author’s novel, named simply Dog, travels through a fictional replica of the known world and recounts his experiences, contextualizing them with powerful commentaries on history, religion, mythology and the gender wars. Critic Kam Aures of *Rebecca’s Reads* writes of Dog’s odyssey: “In this unique work there exists Dreamland, which contains locales such as Pharaohland, Allahland, Socratesland, WhiteBearland and Napoleonland, [while] the physical United States as we know it is named Satanland. In Virginland resides God, in Satanland resides Satan.”

Aures adds: “Melikian has created a very intelligently written original work of fiction. *Journey to Virginland* is a book quite out of the ordinary.”



In addition to Aures’ review, Melikian has received praise from a cross section of prestigious critics. *Publishers Weekly* wrote: “Dog vs. God. In an iconoclastic story, Dog demolishes the foundations of Western civilization.” *ForeWord Reviews* stated: “An engrossing, brilliantly crafted read. A searing commentary on the earth and its

inhabitants through the canine eyes of Dog. Melikian is an astonishing writer who teaches his reader about the world and the human condition through tragedy and humor.” And Paige Lovitt of Reader Views wrote: “*Journey to Virginland* is a novel that is completely different than anything that I have ever read before.”

Commenting on the significance of the Written Art Award, Melikian said, “It is uplifting to see that the literary community as a whole is embracing a book that may best be categorized as anti-literature, one that gleefully inverts the conventions of the novel.”

Melikian continued: “I applaud the courage of the Written Art Awards judges for bestowing one of only two prizes in General Fiction to an avant-garde work, a novel that detonates a nuclear bomb at the very foundations of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Without a doubt, this is a clear indication of the judges’ open-mindedness and impartiality.”

Book blogger Katie Hale of Arkansas wrote of *Journey to Virginland*: “From the first page I was pulled in and intrigued by the oddities I was reading. Not a typical romance, mystery or even suspense novel – this book takes a look at things from a level I’ve never went to. Imagine complete blatant honesty without worry of censorship about religion, sexuality, war, politics and relationships and you will have a good idea of the book I am speaking of.”

Hale continued: “I am shocked to read a book of this honesty, this literary caliber, this level of brilliance, in our time. I only wish it could become the *Twilight* of this time – a book that sweeps across the social classes and impacts everyone opening their eyes to the destruction we have created in our world – the lies we have covered up and the hypocrisy that plagues what used to be Christianity and Faith.”

Journey to Virginland is available at Barnes & Noble, Amazon and several other booksellers.

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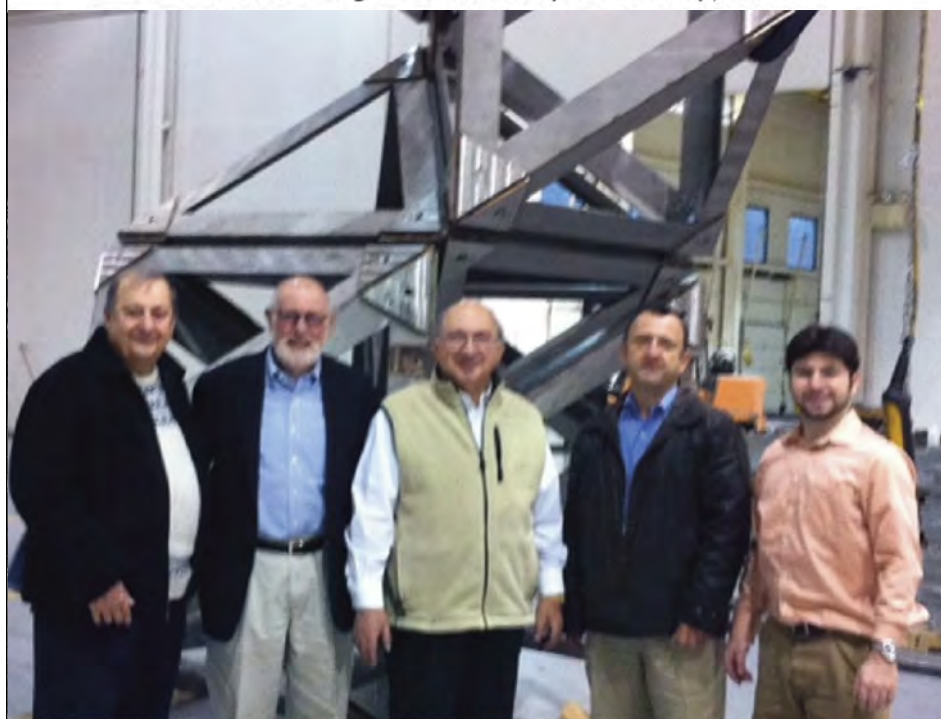
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ARTS & LIVING

Los Angeles Turkish Film Festival Debuts At Egyptian Theater on March 1-4

LOS ANGELES — The first Los Angeles Turkish Film Festival (LATFF) is hosting Turkey's top films and directors, which began March 1 and will run through March 4 at the Egyptian Theater in Hollywood. Five award-winning features will be shown at the festival, including Semih Kaplanoglu's "Honey," winner of the Best Film Award at the 2010 Berlin Film Festival. There will also be question-and-answer sessions and a short film competition, culminating with a red carpet and awards ceremony on Sunday, March 4.

"Turkish cinema has received a lot of international recognition in recent years," said Mehmet Gungoren, general manager of LATFF. "We wanted to bring it to the heart of the film industry and give LA's cinema lovers a chance to see the work of these exciting filmmakers." The festival will kick off with a screening of

Dervis Zaim's "Shadows and Faces," which won the Best Film Award at the International Ankara Film Festival, followed by a question and answer. Zaim, who is head of this year's LATFF jury, is regarded as one of the founders of the New Turkish Cinema and has received worldwide acclaim for his work.

The other feature presentations are Seren Yuce's "Majority," winner of the Lion of the Year at the Venice Film Festival; Mahmut Fazil Coskun's "Wrong Rosary," winner of the Best Film Award at the Rotterdam Film Festival and Yesim Ustaoglu's "Pandora's Box," winner of Best Film at the San Sebastian Film Festival. The festival will wrap with Kaplanoglu's "Honey" followed by an awards presentation.

Judging the shorts competition is a prestigious line-up, including Barbara Boyle, long-time producer and chair of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Film, TV and Digital Media Department; Elvis Mitchell, film critic and host of "The Treatment" on KCRW; Kathy Evelyn Smith, chair of the Animation and Digital Media Department at the University of California (USC); and Alin Tasciyan, a Turkish-Armenian film critic and vice president of the International Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESCI).

The 10 short film finalists will be screened throughout the festival and there will also be a special Short Shorts Corner of Japanese films.

Schedule and tickets may be found at www.latff.org.



Richard Tashjian, a painter originally from Watertown, Mass., who now makes his home in Santa Fe, NM, has had deep ties with his ancestral homeland of Armenia. In fact, he learned just recently that one of his paintings, "Minas Going Home," shown above, is going to be on permanent display at the National Gallery of Yerevan. The painting was done in 1976 as a tribute to painter Minas Avetisyan, who is generally known by his first name only. Avetisyan has been a huge influence on Tashjian, who went to Armenia to present a documentary he had made on the painter. Incidentally, present at the screening of the documentary in Yerevan was William Saroyan.

ALMA to Host Family Day

WATERTOWN, Mass. — The Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) will transform into a children's center for ALMA's annual Family Day on Sunday, March 18. This free event will take place from 2 to 4 p.m. and is open to all families looking for an afternoon packed with family-friendly programs.

ALMA's Contemporary Art Galleries will feature a range of engaging activity stations that teach children about the life, history and culture of the Armenian people.

At the "Costume Corner," children will have an opportunity to try on vibrant traditional Armenian costumes. An assortment of paint, crayons, crafts paper, colored pencils and other supplies will be provided to those who will prefer to practice their art skills at the "Craft Center."

ALMA curators Susan and Gary Lind-Sinianian will teach children and their family basic steps of traditional Armenian dances. There will also be face painting.

To keep up the kids' energy, a snack station will be provided with varieties of pizza, cookies and other kid-friendly foods.

Alan Hovhaness' Work to Be Performed at University of Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS — The University of Minnesota, Morris Symphonic Winds has announced two upcoming spring concerts.

The first, "Music from Distant Shores," will take place on March 4. Joaquin Rodrigo's *Adagio para orquesta de instrumentos de viento* precedes two works featuring soloists Gustav Mahler's powerful *Um Mitternacht*, for soprano and winds, and Spanish composer Luis Serrano Alarcon's *Concertango* for alto saxophone, jazz trio and symphonic band. The program concludes with the Armenian-inspired *Three Journeys to a Holy Mountain*, by Alan Hovhaness.

The second concert, "The Maestro Factor," on Wednesday, March 7, will feature Bernard Gilmore's entertaining *Five Folksongs* for mezzo-soprano and winds in addition to a number of shorter well-known works by Malcolm Arnold, Ron Nelson, Fergal Carroll and Howard Hanson, according to the university web-site.

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 2 — "Night and Day: A Cole Porter Celebration," presented by the Andreassian Music Fund and the New England Light Opera with four singers, including June Baboian. Great cabaret show. \$30, includes table seating with wine during performance and post-performance reception. 8 p.m. at Emmanuel Parish Hall, 15 Newbury St., Boston. For info., Armand (617) 962-0049.

MARCH 31 — AGBU New England District Presents: Performing Artists in Concert, 8 p.m. Under the artistic direction of mezzo-soprano Solange Merdinian 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.

NEW JERSEY

MARCH 8 — Hovnanian School Open houses The doors of your child's future are open, come see for yourself from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at Hovnanian School, 817 River Road, New Milford. For information: (201) 967-5940.

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 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.



AGBU New England District presents its inaugural performing artists in concert program, at 8 p.m., on March 31, under the artistic direction of mezzo soprano Solange Meridian, pictured above, and conductor Aram Demirjian. Works of both Armenian and non-Armenian classical composers will be performed. Details to follow.

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.

MAY 12 — Shushi hosts a Gala Dinner Dance for an evening of "Celebration," 20th anniversary of Shushi's liberation, Mother's Day. Anniversary of Shushi Dance Ensemble, Kavookjian Hall, 630 Second Ave., New York City. Details to follow.



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Prospects of a Putin Comeback

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Azerbaijan has decided to hold war games on the Nagorno Karabagh borders. Turkey has joined the same games on Armenia's borders. They both have planned to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Khojaly "genocide" with many provocative manifestations. In Istanbul's Taksim Square, the state-sponsored demonstrations were headed by Turkey's interior minister. At the same demonstrations, the ultra-nationalist group, the Grey Wolves, hoisted banners with these threatening slogans: "Today in Taksim, Tomorrow in Yerevan." Of course a full-page ad in the *New York Times* "commemorating" the Khojaly incident intended to bring the war drumbeat to the US shores. Oil money can buy anything but the truth.

Why all of a sudden is this war-mongering orchestrated by a country whose foreign minister was claiming that he had reduced Turkey's problems with its neighbors to zero?

Furthermore, aggravating the situation is Israel's saber rattling against Iran, rendering the entire region to a powder keg.

Within the context of war rhetoric and the rising tensions, Armenia has to consider its security arrangements. Armenians have shed too much blood to give any credence to lofty slogans, which the West is showering over the region, under the umbrella of nuclear warheads.

Many people had been questioning the wisdom of extending Armenia's security arrangement with Russia to another 49 years. Even some politicians in Armenia had joined that chorus. Today the significance of the Russian base in Armenia comes through more vividly.

Russia may not exercise the best brand of democracy as far as the West is concerned. That it has the nuclear deterrent to keep Armenia's enemies at bay is the difference between life and death for our beleaguered ancestral land.

March 4 is a crucial date for Russia and its allies, because the presidential elections will take place in that country then. Vladimir Putin is the front-runner in those elections much to the chagrin of the West. In fact, despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cold War has not ended. It still continues, admittedly at a lower intensity.

Former President Boris Yeltsin was the darling of the West who was in the perfect position to keep Russia in disarray. That is why President Bill Clinton supported him and befriended him to forestall or delay Russia's return to the world political scene.

Enter President Putin. Under his leadership, Russia shaped up to assume its former role, although not with full potential.

The two-million-strong Armenian community in Russia, goaded with a sense of security, has rallied around the Putin candi-

dacy. Both lay and religious organizations have mobilized their forces in support of Putin, because they see in him the guarantee of a strong hand to keep Russia's social and economic life in order. Unfortunately, the economic upheaval and the political about-face in Russia in the past two decades, has given a free-hand to the rise of fascists, neo-Nazis, extreme right groups and skinheads, who have descended on those from the Caucasus, harassing and even murdering them. Armenians are also ranked alongside those "undesirable" minorities be targeted for murder. Putin's strong-arm policies will keep those gangs in check.

The Russian-Armenian community is the strongest economic resource for Armenia. That community tops all other communities in making cash remittances to families and friends in Armenia. Putin himself has engineered many investment and joint economic projects for Armenia. He is a proven hand, which does not have an alternative for the Armenians. Russia extended \$500 million to Armenia to weather the recent economic crisis.

In a simplistic view, no US citizen should wish a competing power to rise to challenge US policies around the world. But throughout the Cold War, a bi-polar political system has kept the world in balance, unfortunately, through a balance of terror. But ever since the crumbling of the Soviet Union and the creation of a uni-polar system, many countries have fallen victim to so-called "democratization" and the trend continues.

Our Mid-East foreign policy, to no one's surprise, is not formulated at Foggy Bottom. It was hijacked leading to the Iraq war, where blood is still spilling, and "democracy," the stated goal of the neo-conservatives behind the scenes of the Bush II administration, is no closer than when Saddam Hussein ruled with impunity. It was hijacked to destroy a sovereign country like Libya and the drum beat is continuing to launch an aggression against Syria. Russia and China voted at the UN Security Council against an invasion of Syria, infuriating parties eager to bring regime changes in the Middle East for their own selfish needs, at the cost of US tax payers and the blood of uniformed citizens. There is no doubt that democracy is not a quality peddled – or valued – by the Assad clan in Syria. The killing of innocent civilians is deplorable. However, those who want to topple the regime, do so not to bring democracy there, but to put on the throne their puppet. As seen in Egypt and Libya, when the powerful leader is toppled, the ensuing chaos claims even more lives. The US is not a beneficiary of those wars, for which it pays the price. It only wins more enemies.

March 4 will prove to be a watershed for Russia where traditionally strong leadership is favored. It will be a watershed for Armenia too and hopefully will induce some balance in the world politics run berserk.

Fundamental Questions

By Etyen Mahcupyan

It is not easy to understand historical events and evaluate them impartially. We are obliged to learn history from the historians. However, the historians are always quoting other historians and at the end quoting people that are not contemporaneous with the events. It is unlikely that all these people have no prejudices and knowingly or unknowingly do not distort the truth. Under these circumstances, history is transmitted from a confused past to become a "story" that is understandable, logical and is agreeable to our ears. The honor of a historian requires that all available facts and information, without exception and intentional manipulation, be presented. Without these, we are presented with different versions of the same events, and we are left confused.

One of the things left to do is consider whether or not these histories take into account all the known facts that have reached us. There are three fundamental questions in the case of the 1915 deportation of the Armenians to test whether or not truth is ignored or distorted to achieve internal consistency.

First question: "Where are the men?"

It is recorded in the notebook of Talaat Pasha – and there is general consensus –

that Armenians were marched from Thrace to Kars in convoys. The convoys consisted of women, children and the elderly. On the other hand, according to Turkish nationalist historians, at the same period the Armenian guerrillas were in rebellion and had killed hundreds of thousands of people. Why did these men not try to save their wives, children, mothers and fathers who were being escorted to their exile by a small number of gendarmes? Why did not they fight the band of brigands who attacked the convoys? Or, why did these guerrillas not unite for an insurrection? Consider that the population of Armenians at that time were one-and-a-half million and there were approximately 300,000 men who could bear arms. The answer to this question is that the Armenian men had already been conscripted into the army. However this answer is not satisfactory; because if their families are being driven to deserts it is not believable that the Armenian soldiers would not go AWOL to try save them. What could be the reason then? Perhaps they were unable to help them. Perhaps most of them were no longer alive. In short, the definition of genocide should be considered to apply not only to the exiled but also to what had happened to those who were conscripted into the army.

Second question: "What happened to the properties?"

Historians are naturally focused on the

events of 1915. However, the Turkish/Armenian question dates back to earlier times. The subject question did not only alter the human, personal and the cultural composition of Anatolia, but also permanently changed the balance between social classes and communities. Prior to 1915, an important segment of Armenians lived in the center of Anatolian cities and their population ratio at the center was very high. Hence, a large portion of the buildings and the lands at the center as well as large tracts of land surrounding the center containing monasteries and cemeteries were owned by the Armenians. At present, these surrounding lands have become part of the central hub and constitute now the most valuable part of the building sites. By what mechanism was this wealth transferred? Who got them? What is the connection between them and the Republican notables and the ruling class? Isn't it reasonable to conclude that the Unionists, according to whom the "abandoned properties" were "very fastidiously" confiscated, gave them to "deserving" persons as booty? In short, the subject of genocide is not only what is done to people but also how the perpetrators acted in creating a "new distribution" system, and for this reason the issue becomes also a "Turkish Problem" that awaits resolution.

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COMMENTARY

Our Organizations Should Respond to Turkish Attacks In Press

With France poised – barring intervention from the judiciary – to criminalize denial of the Armenian Genocide, American-Armenians should anticipate a spate of recriminations from American-Turkish organizations, apologists and revisionists. [This commentary was submitted before the February 28 decision by the top court in France.]

And not only to the mass media, but, given their Pavlovian response to any mention of the crimes committed by their forefathers, to any venue, however innocuous, with no regard for its discipline or dimension.

By George S. Yacoubian Sr.

Germantown Chronicle/Northwest Philadelphia by Nurten Ekin. Just as a point of information, if in fact a resident of Hamilton Sq., NJ,

Mr. Ekin resides perhaps as many as 50 miles distant from Germantown and I would venture to suggest he’s never read or even seen the Chronicle.

The *Chronicle* is a Northwestern Philadelphia publication. Ordinarily, its contents include issues, primarily of local interest, but also those relative to Philadelphia and state. That a resident of New Jersey would select this particular newspaper not only bears examination, but confirms the means traveled by those determined to distort a documented genocide memorialized by nations, American states and international tribunals.

In any event, the elderly editor and publisher of the *Chronicle* is a gentleman by the name of Jim Foster and to his credit, he graciously and patiently explained all this to Ekin but agreed to print his editorial but only if accompanied by a rebutting article.

We can only assume that as the 2015 Centennial Commemoration of the Genocide, approaches, this type of offensive tactic – the malicious distortion of what occurred back then – will accelerate exponentially requiring due diligence. We should all be alert and forward whatever material we discern to those qualified to respond, in particular the Armenian Assembly or the Armenian National Committee.

We do not want to provide a forum for Mr. Elkin, but the following paragraph is just a small part of the inaccurate piece he submitted:

“The WW I era atrocities in Eastern Turkey were never tried under any competent international tribunal; the intent to exterminate Armenians was never established or proven; no court verdict characterizing the events in terms of the 1948 United Nations Convention on Prevention and Punishment of Genocide was issued. The mentioned UN convention is not retroactive and even the major Nazi war criminals were never tried under it, but rather under the Geneva (1864, 1929) and The Hague (1899, 1907) conventions on the laws of war. Hence, the French lawmakers are essentially reinventing the definition of genocide and criminalizing its denial in circumvention of a well established legal process.”

My son, George Yacoubian Jr. sent the following response to the letter:

On January 23, 2012, the French Senate approved a measure that would criminalize the denial of the 1915 genocide of Armenians by Ottoman Turks. France has already recognized the acts themselves as genocide, but the new bill would punish genocidal “denialists.”

Mr. Ekin’s article is troubling in several respects, but most disturbing is his inability to grasp the reality of genocide scholarship and his convoluted attempt to engage in genocidal denialism under the guise of preserving free speech. A history lesson seems in order.

When the First World War broke out in 1914, leaders of the Young Turk regime sided with Germany and Austria-Hungary. The outbreak of war provided the perfect opportunity to solve the “Armenian question.”

The entire population came directly from the ruling triumvirate of ultra-nationalist Young Turks. By the time the killings had been completed, more than 1.5 million Armenians had been slaughtered, and the Armenian Question in Eastern Anatolia had been resolved.

The decision to annihilate

The First World War ended in November 1918. Shortly before the War ended, Young Turk leaders abruptly resigned their government posts and fled to Germany, where they had been offered asylum. In the months that followed, repeated requests by Turkey’s new moderate government and the Allies were made asking Germany to extradite the Young Turks to stand trial on violating the laws of war. All such requests were declined.

Many governments, international organizations and historians recognize the Armenian Massacres as “genocide.” For example, 42 of the 50 US states have made individual proclamations recognizing the events of 1915 as genocide. The Parliament of the State of New South Wales, Australia, passed a resolution in 1997 acknowledging and condemning the Armenian Genocide. In 2001, the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and then, in 2004, the government of Canada itself, recognized the Armenian Genocide.

In recent years, parliaments of several countries, including France and Switzerland, have formally recognized the events as genocide.

Countries officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide include Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland Russia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Moreover, prosecutions for genocide denialism are not new. On March 8, 2007, Turkish nationalist Dogu Perinçek became the first person convicted by a court of law for denying the Armenian Genocide, found guilty by a Swiss district court. Perinçek appealed the verdict, but the conviction was upheld by the Swiss Federal Supreme Court on December 12, 2007.

The modern-day Turkish government denies that there was an Armenian Genocide, claiming that Armenians were only removed from the eastern “war zone.” The Armenian Genocide, however, occurred all over Anatolia (present-day Turkey) and not just in the “war zone.” Deportations and killings occurred in the West, in and around Ismid and Broussa; in Central Turkey, in Ankara; in the Southwest, in and around Konia and Adana; in Central Anatolia, near Diyarbekir, Harpout, Marash, Sepastia, Shabin Kara-Hissar, and Ourfa; and on the Black Sea coast, in and around Trebizond, all of which were not part of a “war zone.” Only Erzeroum, Bitlis and Van, in the East, were in the “war zone.”

Did the Turkish Government manifest the intent, through word or action, to commit atrocities against its Armenian population that today would be considered genocide? The consensus across the international community and among reputable legal experts, historians, and genocidal scholars, is yes. That there was no tribunal convened, at a time when the term “genocide” had not even been coined, is dispositive of nothing except an immature international criminal justice system. Mr. Ekin’s suggestion that a formal prosecution be necessary to evidence a genocidal event, would, by definition, eliminate dozens of accepted genocides from historical consideration.

The French proposal does not challenge the underlying existence of the Armenian genocide, but rather addresses what steps the international community should take to safeguard historical accuracy. A more appropriate debate would be whether the French law is an affront to those who value basic civil liberties. The punishments proposed are certainly not draconian. There is nothing inherently cruel about a short incarcerative sanction, and the law itself simply criminalizes a behavior as a way of preserving historical fact.

The proposed French law does not revisit the existence of the genocide. That issue has been decided. The international community generally, and the French legislature specifically, have taken the next step in genocide preservation. While I suspect that Turkish supporters will continue to ignore consensus and historical reality, I hope that, someday, they will be able to overcome their intellectual crudeness and focus on issues that are worthy of serious debate.

The New Cold War Has already Started – in Syria

If Iran obtains nuclear weapons capability, “I think other nations across the Middle East will want to develop nuclear weapons.”

Thus thundered our beloved Foreign Secretary, William Hague, in one of the silliest pronouncements he has ever made. Hague seems to spend much of his time impersonating himself, so I’m not really certain which of Mr. Hague-Hague’s personas made this statement.

Flaw number one, of course, is Hague-Hague’s failure to point out that there already is another Middle East “nation” that has, in fact, several hundred nuclear weapons along with the missiles to fire them. It’s called Israel. But blow me down, Hague-Hague

didn’t mention the fact. Didn’t he know? Of course, he did.

What he was trying to say, you see, was that if Iran persisted in producing a nuclear weapon,

Arab states – Muslim states – would want to acquire one. And that would never do. The idea, of course, that Iran might be pursuing nuclear weapons because Israel already possesses them, did not occur to him.

Now as a nation that sells billions of pounds worth of military hardware to Gulf Arab nations – on the basis that they can then defend themselves from Iran’s non-existent plans to invade them – Britain is really not in a position to warn anyone of arms proliferation in the region. I’ve been to the Gulf arms fairs where the Brits show alarming films of an “enemy” nation threatening the Arabs – Iran, of course – and the need for these Arab chap-pies to buy even more kit from British Aerospace and the rest of our merchants of death.

Then comes the historical killer in Hague-Hague’s peroration. He warns of “the most serious round of nuclear proliferation since nuclear weapons were invented” which could produce “the threat of a new Cold War in the Middle East” that would be “a disaster in world affairs”. Now, I know that Hague-Hague sits in the throne room of Balfour and Eden – both pseudo-experts on the Middle East – but does he really have to mess up history so badly? Surely the most serious round of nuclear proliferation occurred when India and Pakistan acquired the bomb, the latter a nation which is awash with al-Qa’ida chaps, home-grown Taliban and dodgy intelligence men.

Still, it was good to be reassured that “we are not favoring the idea of anybody attacking Iran at the moment”. Maybe later, then. Or maybe after President Assad eventually falls, thus depriving Iran of its only – and valuable – ally in the Middle East. Which is, I suspect, what a lot of the roaring and raging against Assad is all about. Get rid of Assad and you cut out part of Iran’s heart – though whether that will induce the crackpot Ahmadinejad to turn his nuclear plants into baby-milk factories is another matter. For here’s the rub. The mighty voices calling for Assad’s departure grow louder every time they refuse to involve themselves militarily in the overthrow of the same man. The more they promise not to “do a Nato” on Syria – every time they claim there can be no “no-fly” zones over Syria – they get angrier and angrier at Assad. Why doesn’t he just go off to retirement in Turkey, end the theatre once and for all and stop embarrassing us all by bludgeoning his country with shells and sniper fire, killings thousands – journalists among them – while we rage on innocently from the stalls?

Needless to say, Hague-Hague waffles on and on about Syria, too, while presumably not “favoring the idea of anybody attacking Syria at the moment.” And this is a real stinker for the

see SYRIA, page 20

Fundamental Questions

QUESTIONS, from page 17

Third question: “Where are the documents?”

All of us talk for the opening of the archives. But we do not ask why the Central Archives of the party of the Union, the archives of the Special Organization and the archives of the Ministry of the Interior of the period are lost. Documents written immediately after 1915 describe, citing examples, that these archives have been deliberately destroyed. Why did the leaders of the Ottoman state, famous for keeping archives, not preserve such sensitive documents? Why was it preferred to keep the remaining documents in the archives of the General Staff? In short then, the question of genocide is related not only to past occurrences but also to the present mentality of the state and the status quo.

This subject has long ceased to be an “Armenian question.” It has become the indispensable condition for democratization, for building a new Turkey and a prerequisite to look at each other face to face.

(Etyen Mahcupyan is a writer living in Istanbul. This article was published in the Turkish newspaper Zaman on February 23. This commentary was translated from Turkish by Arutun Maranci.)



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

How to Counter Appeals Court's Ruling Against Insurance Claims

The federal Court of Appeals issued a shocking decision last week. In a unanimous ruling, it struck down a California law that had allowed heirs of Armenian Genocide victims to sue life insurance companies for unpaid claims.

Acknowledging its reliance on the “rarely invoked doctrine” of “field preemption,” the Court judged the state law to be unconstitutional, claiming that it intruded into the federal government’s foreign policy prerogative.

The Appeals Court thus annulled a law passed by the California legislature in 2000, which had extended first to 2010 and then to 2016, the deadline for Armenian Genocide heirs to sue life insurance companies. On the basis of that law, California attorneys filed lawsuits against the New York Life and French AXA insurance companies. Both lawsuits were settled out of court for a total payment of \$37.5 million.

In 2003, Armenian plaintiffs filed a class-action lawsuit in US federal court against German life insurance companies. Rather than fulfilling their long overdue contractual obligations, these companies sought the lawsuit’s dismissal, arguing that the reference to the Armenian Genocide in the state law was an encroachment on the federal government’s

foreign policy powers. After several appeals, a panel of 11 federal judges dismissed the lawsuit against the German companies on February 23. This decision, however, does not undo the settlements reached earlier with New York Life and AXA.

I believe the Appeals Court’s decision is highly flawed for the following reasons:

1) The Court took the unusual position that the State law constituted an intrusion into the federal government’s foreign policy domain, even in the absence of any conflict between the two. In fact, the State of California and the federal government are in agreement on the genocide issue, since the House of Representatives recognized the Armenian Genocide in 1975 and 1984, President Reagan acknowledged it in a Presidential Proclamation in 1981, and most importantly, the US Justice Department cited the Armenian case as an example of genocide in an official report submitted to the World Court in 1951.

2) The Appeals Court overstepped its judicial bounds by paying undue attention to Turkish denials, pressures and blackmail and charging that the California statute “imposes the politically-charged label of ‘genocide’ on the actions of the Ottoman Empire (and, consequently, present-day Turkey) and expresses sympathy for ‘Armenian Genocide victims.’” This assertion is totally untrue, as the California law makes no reference to “present-day Turkey.” Delving further into political arguments rather than sound legal judgments, the Appeals Court quoted from newspaper articles – that were not part of the court record – to illustrate Turkey’s angry reaction to the French bill on penalizing genocide denial and Ankara’s rejection of the genocide label.

3) The Court could have severed the reference to genocide from the California statute, while keeping valid the legitimate demands of life insurance claimants, since the

purpose of the lawsuit was the recovery of insurance benefits, not asserting genocide.

Armenians should not be discouraged and not give up the struggle for their legitimate rights, despite this temporary legal setback. Here are some possible steps that could be taken to remedy the situation:

1) File an appeal to the US Supreme Court, even though the High Court hears only a very small percentage of the cases submitted to it.

2) Ask the California legislature to pass a new law that would broaden the category of possible claimants, in order to overcome the Appeals Court’s objection that the existing law is “for a narrowly defined class of claims.”

3) Lobby the US Congress to pass similar legislation allowing lawsuits against delinquent insurance companies.

4) Launch a new Armenian political initiative at the federal level, seeking the establishment of a “Presidential Advisory Commission on Armenian Genocide Assets,” similar to the existing commission on the Holocaust, which would use US governmental channels rather than the courts to recover genocide-era assets.

5) Embark on a worldwide campaign to protest and boycott German insurance companies that refuse to live up to their financial and moral obligations. Stage demonstrations in front of German companies’ offices in different countries until they realize that they would lose more business by ignoring the Armenian claims than paying the amounts owed to heirs of life insurance beneficiaries. Furthermore, Armenians must demand that Germany, Turkey’s ally during World War I, passes a law mandating that German companies pay delinquent insurance claims.

Clearly, the pursuit of Armenian demands is more of a marathon than a sprint. Armenians must persist in their struggle and overcome all obstacles until their long overdue quest for justice is realized.

Teaching Armenian School Keeps Me Vibrant, Says This Teacher

By Tom Vartabedian

While many are catching a few extra winks on a Sunday morning or taking their kid to a sporting event, I find myself indulging in what I enjoy best.

Paving the way for the next generation whether it is spiritual, historical, cultural or geographical. There is no rest for the weary when it comes to being a committed Armenian School teacher.

So what will it be today? The alphabet? Conversation? Church history? Current events? Genocide education? How about Armenia’s contributions to world civilization?

Wonder how many students realize that an Armenian named Moses Gulezian saved the USS Constitution from becoming scrap metal and prevented the Turks from turning it into a

warship by raising thousands of dollars and preserving what has become Boston’s top tourist attraction?

Or that the father of plastic surgery was an Armenian (Dr. Varaztad Kazanjian) who was the most honored graduate of Tufts Medical School and often called the “miracle man of the west?”

Students enjoy hearing things that fascinate them. “I didn’t know that” is the best four words any instructor could hear.

It has been a long ride over an emotional roller coaster track these past 30 years. I’m not alone inside my church school. Assisting me these days are students I taught three decades ago whose children are now enrolled.

Classes were more regimented back then. Students were more disciplined. If there is any link to the past, it is still the path of resistance. Even with my own kids, it was a hassle getting them to attend Armenian School, no matter how much they

were told it was for their own good.

I was taught Armenian School by a priest who later sent me to a monastery. There was no debating my parents, both of whom were Genocide survivors. No Armenian lessons meant solitary home confinement. Today they “ground” you.

Just when you think you are at wit’s end with your students, wondering what a 71-year-old schoolteacher is doing in a place like this, along comes that burst of sunlight after a storm. For every child that defied the system, there was another who welcomed it.

Had you been at our church anniversary this year, you would have noticed a cluster of students impeccably reciting their Armenian. Looking on with unadulterated pride were their parents and grandparents. As teachers we have a moral responsibility to challenge students.

Over the years, I have come to learn that one of the most important duties of an Armenian

school teacher is to keep a roomful of live wires grounded. Sometimes, you become a keg of dynamite and explode.

And I have come to learn that some of the worst-behaved schoolchildren usually have the best attendance record.

In a sense, we do not need a classroom in which to teach our children. We can do it in the convenience of our homes, whenever the time dictates. Teachers need not be certified, only willing.

One parent I know plays Armenian Church music in her car as a way to expose her children. An hour a day of conversational Armenian has also become a ritual.

As a teacher, I also learn from my pupils.

I have also discovered another gift as a schoolteacher – the fountain of youth. Hanging around younger citizens keeps me rejuvenated. You get to act their age and that is bound to have an uplifting effect.

We are usually an unsung breed, which is our preference. And wealthy, not monetarily but spiritually and morally.

Armenian schoolteachers watch the clock, not to hurry the time along, but to hold it back. An hour a week just doesn’t seem like sufficient time to cover an entire heritage. Dividing your agenda with religious education on a harried Sunday morning might be rather tricky.

I find a better alternative to be the Saturday day schools in which teaching Armenian is a priority. But even they have conflicts with outside activities. Come Sunday and there is school once more. Asking a child or parent to devote an entire week to class might be stretching the cord a bit.

An Armenian school teacher must be able to empathize and sympathize. They must stand prepared to condone a vigilant act as we all have done over time. They must endure a sense of humility and humiliation when a student upstages them. A bad day in class must be better than a good day of golf or fishing.

Armenian school teachers must be resilient, courageous and bold. In the end, it is the fine art of imparting knowledge without always possessing it. If all else fails, go to the nearest pew and say a prayer.

God always listens ...

(Tom Vartabedian worked for 40 years as a writer and photographer at the *Haverhill Gazette* before retiring. He is a regular contributor to many Armenian newspapers.)

LETTERS

Subverting the Truth of Genocide

(Editor’s Note: The *New York Times* printed this letter on February 27, in response to an earlier article.)

To the Editor:

Regarding “Defuse the lexicon of slaughter” (Views, February 24), David Scheffer’s proposal to avoid political conflict by labeling the murder of over 1.5 million Armenians as “atrocious crimes” amounts to an unacceptable diminu-

tion of historic and legal standards. Raphael Lemkin coined the term “genocide” with two mass slaughters in mind: the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust. Winston Churchill referred to the extermination of the Armenians as a “holocaust.” From the pre-Lemkin description of the killings as “race extermination” by the US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, to the categorization of the elimination of the Armenians as “genocide” by

the International Association of Genocide Scholars, the nature of the destruction of the Armenians has been well-established for nearly 100 years. Attempts to recast the 20th century’s seminal instance of genocide only serve those who seek to subvert the truth of what happened to the Armenians.

— Antovk Pidedjian
White Plains, NY

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

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

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— Photos will be published without charge at the discretion of the editors and art director.

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



Armenian Genocide Suit Tossed, Again, In Latest Circuit Appearance

LAWSUIT, from page 1
the federal government has taken no action on a particular foreign policy issue, the state generally is not free to make its own foreign policy on that subject,” Judge Susan Graber wrote for the unanimous panel. “Field preemption is a rarely invoked doctrine. Supreme Court jurisprudence makes clear, however, that field preemption may be appropriate when a state intrudes on a matter of foreign policy with no real claim to be addressing an area of traditional state responsibility.”

The ruling marks the third time the Ninth Circuit has considered the issue, and it reverses a previous panel’s revival of the underlying class action last year.

Since 2003, Vazken Movsesian and other Californians of Armenian descent have tried to use the law to win damages for bad faith, breach of contract and constructive trust from two German insurers owned by Munich Re.

A federal judge who first heard the case rejected the insurance companies’ contention

that the foreign affairs doctrine pre-empted the state law, but a three-judge appellate panel reversed, finding that it infringed on federal foreign policy. On rehearing, however, the panel found “no express federal policy forbidding states to use the term ‘Armenian genocide,’” and reversed.

The court then agreed to rehear the issue before a full panel.

That group reversed again and ordered dismissal of the class action on Thursday.

“Section 354.4 expresses a distinct point of view on a specific matter of foreign policy,” Graber wrote. “Its effect on foreign affairs is not incidental; rather, section 354.4 is, at its heart, intended to send a political message on an issue of foreign affairs by providing relief and a friendly forum to a perceived class of foreign victims. Nor is the statute merely expressive. Instead, the law imposes a concrete policy of redress for ‘Armenian Genocide victim[s],’ subjecting foreign insurance companies to suit in California by overriding forum-selection provisions and

greatly extending the statute of limitations for a narrowly defined class of claims.” Thus, section 354.4 “has a direct impact upon foreign relations and may well adversely affect the power of the central government to deal with those problems.” Section 354.4 therefore intrudes on the federal government’s exclusive power to conduct and regulate foreign affairs.”

“Turkey has no right to hold all three branches of the US government hostage to its irrational and hateful denial of the Armenian Genocide, a crime that has already been broadly recognized by American civil society and government, once by a US president, at least twice by the House of Representatives, 42 times by separate US states, and hundreds of times by municipal governments in nearly every state of our union.”

Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) released the following statement after the Ninth Circuit ruling: “I am deeply disappointed and mystified by this decision and cannot see how the 9th Circuit could have reached such a flawed legal

conclusion. I will be studying the decision in the coming days and will be working with my friends in the Armenian-American community to determine next steps. I was proud to submit an amicus brief on behalf of genocide victims and their families, and I am more than willing to do so again with the United States Supreme Court.”

The Armenian National Committee of America concurred. “This ruling opens the door for foreign governments to try to roll back the clock on human rights, potentially putting at peril American grassroots efforts – along the lines of the anti-Apartheid, Darfur genocide and Free Tibet movements – that so often start at the state and local level, sometimes even against opposition at the federal level, before winning broad acceptance by the American people and the US government,” the committee’s executive director, Aram Hamparian, said in a statement. The ruling can be viewed at www.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinions/2012/02/23/07-56722.pdf.

US Sponsors Armenian-Georgian Nonproliferation Drills

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenia and Georgia have held US-sponsored joint exercises aimed at improving their ability to prevent illegal transit of weapons of mass destruction through their territories, it was announced last Friday.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry said the three-day “command-and-staff” exercises, which drew to a close last Thursday evening, brought together law enforcement and other officials from the two neighboring states as well as “US specialists.”

A ministry statement said they focused on procedures for “detecting and averting smuggling of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and WMD components through the Armenian-Georgian border.” It said they also looked into “nuclear and radiological dangers” and ways of countering illegal trafficking of dual-use commodities.

The ministry added that the Armenian and Georgian governments would hold “field exercises” for the same purpose in June.

The drills appear to reflect US concerns stemming from several instances of enriched uranium confiscated by the Georgian authorities in recent years. In one such case, two Armenians were arrested in Tbilisi in March 2010 for allegedly trying to sell 18 grams (0.6 ounces) of uranium for \$1.5 million.

Another Armenian national, Garik Dadayan, was detained in Yerevan at the time on charges of supplying the radioactive material to the two men. Dadayan was already arrested by Georgian borderguards in 2003 while entering the country with 200 grams of highly-enriched uranium. He was subsequently tried by an Armenian court and sentenced to 2.5 years in prison.

Armenia’s National Security Service (NSS) said in November 2010 that it has closely cooperated with Georgian law enforcement authorities in their secret probe of the alleged uranium smuggling. Nuclear energy officials in Yerevan insisted, meanwhile, that the uranium confiscated by the Georgians had not been stolen

from the nuclear power station at Metsamor.

The fact that Armenia borders on Iran might also explain why the United States is interested in closer Armenian-Georgian cooperation against WMD trafficking.

In 2002, the US State Department blacklisted an Armenian businessman who had allegedly sold biochemical equipment to an Iranian-linked company registered in the United Arab Emirates.

The equipment was dismantled from a Soviet-era Armenian factory that used to grow special

bacteria for the production of lysine, an amino acid added to animal fodder. Scientists say they can also generate other biochemical substances.

The incident prompted the Armenian government to tighten, with Washington’s assistance, export controls at Armenia’s main border crossings. Over the past decade, Armenian border guard and customs services have been supplied with US-made radio-communication systems, border sensors, metal detectors, cargo truck scales and X-ray devices.

The New Cold War Has already Started – in Syria

SYRIA, from page 18
Foreign Secretary. He was rightly denouncing the killing of Marie Colvin this week – I last saw her in the final, joyous days of the Egyptian revolution, heading, as usual, towards the crack of tear-gas grenades – but hundreds of other innocent human beings have been cruelly killed in Syria without so much as a whisper from Hague-Hague. And some of these were killed by the armed opposition to Assad; the murder of Alawites by Sunnis is becoming gruesomely familiar, just as the slaughter of civilians by Syrian government shellfire has become a template for this terrible war.

No, we are not going to involve ourselves in Syria, thank you very much. Because the new Cold War in the region which Hague was blathering on about has already started over Syria, not Iran. The Russians are lined up against us there, supporting Assad and denouncing us. Just what reaction Putin expects from any Assad replacement is a mystery. Nor will a “new” Syria necessarily be the pro-Western democracy that Hague-Hague and others would

like to see.

The Syrians, after all, will not forget the way in which the Brits and the Americans silently approved of the infinitely more terrible massacre of 10,000 Syrian Sunni Muslims at Hama in 1982. Indeed, today marks the 30th anniversary of that onslaught, staged by the Defence Brigades of Bashar al-Assad’s Uncle Rifaat.

But, like Hague-Hague, Rifaat also has a dopelgänger. Far from being the killer of Hama – a term he fiercely disputes – he is now a friendly and retired gentleman, living in style and protection quite close to Hague-Hague’s desk. Indeed, if Hague-Hague turns left outside the Foreign Office and nips through Horseguards Parade, he can drop by and meet the man himself in – where else would he live? – Mayfair. Now that would be a disaster in world affairs, wouldn’t it?

(Robert Fisk is a commentator and reporter for the British newspaper, the *Independent*. This commentary originally appeared in the February 25 edition of the *Independent*.)

Armenians Part of Astronomical Team

YEREVAN (a1plus.am) – An international group, which includes astronomer Garik Israelyan, has found that the chemical structure of Earth-like planets can be different from Earth. This can have an impact on the biosphere, as well as the presence and formation of life on those planets.

The research group includes: Jade Carter-Bond and David O’Bryan (Planet Research Institute, Arizona), Elisa Delgado Mena and

Nunu Santush (University of Portu, Portugal), Israelyan and Jonay Gonzales Hernandez (Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands). The results were published in the *Astrophysical Journal Letters* magazine on March 1.

These studies help astronomers study the structure and composition of the extra-solar planets.



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