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US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Adopts Armenian Genocide Resolution

WASHINGTON – On Thursday, April 10, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved S. Res. 410, affirming the US Record on the Armenian Genocide. In addition to the Armenian Genocide resolution, a bill commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide was also adopted.

S. Res. 410, the Armenian Genocide resolution, was introduced by Committee Chairman Robert Menendez (D-NJ), a long-time champion of Armenian issues, along with Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL), who previously served as co-chair of the Armenian Caucus during his tenure in the House of Representatives. In addition to Menendez and Kirk, the resolution was cosponsored by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Diane Feinstein (D-CA), Edward Markey (D-MA), Jack Reed (D-RI), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Richard Durbin (D-IL).

“We applaud the leadership of Chairman Menendez,” stated Armenian Assembly of America Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, who was on hand when the resolution was adopted. “Today’s vote reaffirms America’s commitment to genocide awareness and prevention,” added Ardouny. “As Chairman Menendez said, the Armenian Genocide is a fact and one cannot simply pick and choose their genocides.”

Prior to Thursday’s vote, the Assembly had sent a letter to all Members of the Committee which read in part: “As we reflect on the continuing problem of genocide, certainly the 20th century stands out as one marred by mass killings on a scale never before seen in history. From the Armenian Genocide at the start of the century, to which Adolf Hitler infamously stated: ‘Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?’ before he unleashed the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust – to the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the atrocities see RESOLUTION, page 16



JIRAIR HOVSEPIAN PHOTO

Students from the Armenian Sisters’ Academy and St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School sang America the Beautiful and the Armenian National Anthem.

Emotional State House Program Remembers Genocide, Boston Marathon Bombings

BOSTON – A large contingent of Armenian-Americans and their supporters gathered at the State House’s Great Chamber to mark the 99th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. The program was noted by poignant remembrances of the Boston Marathon bombings, which had forced the cancellation of last year’s commemoration, the attacks on the town of Kessab in Syria, as well as the recent death of a fixture in the

community, Very Rev. Raphael Andonian.

Participating in the program was outgoing Massachusetts governor, Deval Patrick, who

By Alin Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator staff

entered the chamber to thunderous applause and a standing ovation. “There is no better governor that we have had in the Commonwealth,” said House Speaker Robert DeLeo (D-Winthrop) in his introduction, as a visibly touched Patrick addressed those assembled.

“I wanted to offer an official gubernatorial welcome to the Armenian community,” he said. “I am struck by how poignant it is” to attend the commemoration program in his last year as governor, he added.

see COMMEMORATION, page 9

Governor Patrick Pays Tribute to Armenian-Americans in Massachusetts

Goodbye, Ambassador Nazarian



PATERSON, N.J. – Nazar Nazarian, a community activist and supporter of many organizations and programs, on Tuesday invited a group of benefactors, community leaders and friends to a farewell reception at Anahid Armenian Kitchen in honor of Armenia’s outgoing United Nations ambassador, Garen Nazarian.

Seated from left, are, Harry Toufayan, Ambassador Garen Nazarian, Nazar Nazarian, Dr. Raffy Hovanesian, Vahe Nalbandian, Shahe Jebejian; standing: Dr. Ted Chaghllassian, Andreas Roubian, Moses Kazanjian, Hirant Gulian, Sarkis Bedevian, Nazareth Festekjian, Alex Markarian, Khoren Nalbandian, Hagop Kouyoumjian, Dr. Harout Mekhjian, Vartan Abdo, Hagop Vartivarian and Norair Megerdichian.

Menendez, Royce Headline Capitol Hill Genocide Commemoration

WASHINGTON – The 99th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide was commemorated on Capitol Hill last week, hosted by the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, the Embassy of Armenia, the office of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic and Armenian-American organizations. The

Turkish Author Ragip Zarakolu Delivers Keynote Address

annual event attracted more than 20 members of Congress, foreign dignitaries, Armenian American community leaders, religious figures and dozens of congressional staff and foreign policy experts from throughout the greater Washington, DC metropolitan area.

This year’s keynote speaker was Ragip Zarakolu, a Turkish author, human rights activist and outspoken champion of Turkish acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide. “It is horrible what see SENATE, page 16

NEWS IN BRIEF

Yerevan-Van Flights to Begin in July

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The initial launch date of Yerevan-Van flights is scheduled for July 15, but there are still unresolved organizational questions, the President of the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen (Employers) of Armenia Arsen Ghazaryan said. “The first flight is expected to take place on July 15, but it is a preliminary arrangement,” said Ghazaryan, adding that the negotiators have not yet come to terms with the complicated organizational issues (including the choice of aircraft), which are expected to be clarified within the next 10-15 days.

One Dead, 60 Injured In Damascus Armenian School Bombing

DAMASCUS (Armenpress) – Two rockets fell on Paros College by the Armenian Katoghike Church in Bab Touma region of Damascus. Our source of Damascus reported about it noting that in the result of the rockets an Armenian pupil martyred, there are also injured pupils and teachers. The source also informed that the injured people were moved to the French Hospital in Damascus. Rockets spread fear among the residents. Besides the human injuries, the College bore material damages. The number of the injured people exceeded 60.

Damascus reporter of Gandzasar weekly published in Aleppo Mosik Inchechikian reported about two Armenian pupils and two teachers’ names: the injured pupils are Narek Marashlian and Hakob Khtrlarian. The teachers are Silva Lulechian and Fransu Teshoghlanian. Rupa Arisian also received an injury when visiting the college.

Armenian Killed in Ukraine Standoff

KYIV (ArmeniaNow) – An ethnic Armenian has been killed in the standoff between the pro-Russian eastern parts of Ukraine and the central government, reports News.am.

Father Husik Nurjanyan, the Armenian church leader in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine, told the Armenian news website that Ruben Avanesyan died of a gunshot wound he received on Sunday in the town of Slavyansk, which became one of the recent flashpoints of confrontation between local protesters seeking federalization and Ukrainian security forces.

According to preliminary information, the 29-year-old citizen of Ukraine who lived in Donetsk was shot by gunmen when he was driving and refused to stop when flagged down. Nurjanyan said this was only one of the versions, while investigation is underway.

At a rally in Donetsk on Monday Avanesyan was presented as the first victim on the side of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic.

INSIDE

FACS Program

Page 10

INDEX

Arts and Living	10
Armenia	2
Community News	4
Editorial	14
International	3



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Prosperous Armenia Leader Meets with US Ambassador

YEREVAN (News.am) – Prosperous Armenia Party (PAP) leader Gagik Tsarukyan on Tuesday met with US Ambassador to Armenia John Heffern.

US Deputy Chief of Mission Clark Price, Political Officer Christopher Anderson, secretary of PAP parliamentary faction Naira Zohrabyan, MPs Vartan Oskanian and Stepan Margaryan participated in the meeting.

A number of issues of mutual concern were discussed, PAP spokesperson Iveta Tonoyan said.

President Reappoints Nalbandian, Ohanyan to Foreign Affairs and Defense

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – By a decree, President of the Republic of Armenia Serge Sargsian Edward Nalbandian has been appointed the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia. The President's Office, by another decree of the President Seyran Ohanyan has been appointed the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia.

Karabagh President Meets Members of Republican Party

STEPANAKERT (Armenpress) – On April 7, the President of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic Bako Sahakyan received members of the Women's Council of the Armenia's Republican Party headed by the Armenia's National Assembly Vice Speaker Hermine Naghdalyan. The press service of the Artsakh President's Office informed Armenpress that at the beginning of the meeting President Sahakyan congratulated the women on the Maternity and Beauty Day wishing them success and all the best.

Issues related to deepening and expanding ties between the Armenian and Artsakh parliaments were discussed as well. Vice speaker of the NKR National Assembly Arthur Tovmasyan, other officials were present at the meeting.

President Names Speaker as New Premier

YEREVAN (Reuters, Armenpress) – Armenian President Serge Sargsian appointed parliament speaker Hovik Abrahamyan as the new prime minister on Sunday, replacing a six-year veteran who resigned after protests against his pension reform.

Former reformist Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian, who was the central bank governor before taking over the government in 2008, stepped down earlier this month after the pension protests and a court ruling declaring part of the reform unconstitutional.

"I'm sure that everyone will understand very quickly that Armenia has a very effective new prime minister," President Sargsian told his ruling Republican Party after announcing Abrahamyan's appointment.

"I will do my best to help Mr. Abrahamyan to reach this goal," he said. The new prime minister does not need to be confirmed by parliament.

Abrahamyan, 56, who is the president's deputy in the Republican Party and an economist by training, had been parliamentary speaker since 2008.

Former Prime Minister Sargsian is expected to take up a diplomatic post, the Republican Party spokesman said.

Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians on April 14 hosted Abrahamyan at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.

In his speech the catholicos spoke about the difficulties that the country and its people face, adding that he hoped the new premier would make improvements.

Ceasefire 20: Two decades of 'Neither War, Nor Peace' after Cessation of Karabagh Hostilities

By Gohar Abrahamyan

STEPANAKERT (ArmeniaNow reporter) – Next month will mark the 20th anniversary of the establishment of ceasefire in the Karabagh conflict zone that put an end to hostilities and bloodshed in a war that lasted for nearly three years.

"For two decades our army and the entire Armenian people have lived in a state of 'neither war, nor peace.' It is a particularly difficult situation for any army and for every soldier and officer taken separately. But during this whole period our army has fulfilled its mission with honor," President Serge Sargsian said in his congratulatory address on the occasion of Army Day marked on January 28.

But after two decades of the "neither war, nor peace" state, the still simmering conflict continues to hang as a Sword of Damocles over the heads of the peoples in the region.

The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict that originated still at the beginning of the 20th century, but was 'frozen' during the Soviet period, burst out in 1988, devouring thousands of lives, whose blood has drawn the current borders in the region.

In the active phase of the conflict that lasted from 1988 to 1994, including the 1992-1994 military operations, the Armenian side, including the armed forces of Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabagh defense army and self-defense units, lost 6,500 lives. According to the data released by Baku in January, the number of victims on the Azerbaijani side was 11,557. But still back in 1993, Azerbaijan's then-President Heydar Aliyev spoke about 16,000 victims. And in February 2007 a number of Azerbaijani non-governmental organizations and experts reported about 24,000 victims and 4,000 missing soldiers.

Ruined towns and villages, displaced people, distorted fates, but also a liberated homeland and achieved independence... Finally, a cease-fire agreement was reached in May 1994. The document signed first in Bishkek between representatives of Armenia, Nagorno-Karabagh, Azerbaijan with Russia's mediation and then reaffirmed in Moscow marked the beginning of a new period of tensions – a war of nerves.

On May 5, 1994, in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek, heads of the parliamentary structures of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh signed what later became known as the Bishkek protocol that called for a ceasefire beginning on May 9. The same day, the Russian president's authorized representative to Nagorno-Karabagh Vladimir Kazimirov arranged a ceasefire agreement for an indefinite period of time that was signed by Azerbaijan's Defense Minister Mamedrafi Mamedov; on May 10, in Yerevan, it was signed by Armenian Defense Minister Serge Sargsian, and on May 11, in Nagorno-Karabagh it was signed by Nagorno-Karabagh Army Commander Samvel

Babayan. The written ceasefire agreement entered into force on May 12, at midnight.

Many believe that the absence of major hostilities between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabagh in the past 20 years is the single biggest achievement of international mediation set up to broker a durable solution to the conflict.

But nearly 20 years after the conclusion of the agreement the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in its annual report for 2013, acknowledged that the search for a lasting political settlement to the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict remains "one of the most complex challenges" in the OSCE region.

"Despite the declaration of a ceasefire in 1994, shooting incidents in the area are frequent and violations of the ceasefire are reported on an almost daily basis. Five civilians and 32 servicemen were reported shot and wounded in 2013 and another 14 servicemen killed. In that same period, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk's team visited the Line of Contact 16 times, and the border nine times," the OSCE report released earlier this month said.

Armenian Defense Ministry spokesman Artsrun Hovhannisyanyan said that the 1994 ceasefire agreement was important for Armenia, but he regrets that it is not viable and has not become a full legal document.

"Our decisions and opinions are always the same: we want peace and we have always advocated this position. It would be good if the opponent also had this approach," said Hovhannisyanyan, noting with regret that after the signing of the ceasefire agreement the Armenian side has annually had up to a dozen victims because of violations by the Azerbaijani side.

"However strange it may be, but the opponent has forgotten that in 1994 it was the one that asked for the ceasefire, we have the copies of that appeal," the Defense Ministry spokesman added.

Years ago former Russian co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group Vladimir Kazimirov wrote about this on the Russian Regnum news agency's website. He said that Azerbaijan's then

Parliament Chairman Rasil Guliyev, Deputy Chairman Afiyatdin Jalilov stated in Moscow and Bishkek that it was urgently necessary to sign a ceasefire agreement. According to Kazimirov, in 1994 Baku was only thinking about how to keep Terter and Barda to stop the Armenians from reaching the Kur river.

Political analyst Tigran Abrahamyan thinks that war is still not the way for settling the conflict and from this viewpoint alone concluding the ceasefire agreement was necessary and important for all parties. By that time, said Abrahamyan, the conflict had taken huge resources from both Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as from Nagorno-Karabagh where major problems had been accumulated as well.

"The signing of the agreement established relative peace in the region, which, however, was not yet a guarantee against renewed hostilities. Nevertheless, the agreement allowed the parties to the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict to shift the settlement process onto the field of peaceful negotiations," said the analyst.

Director of the Armenian Center for National and International Studies Manvel Sargsian, who in 1992-95 was Karabagh's permanent representative to Armenia and in 1994 was also advisor to the NKR foreign minister and participated in the post-war negotiations, said the war has never ended, as it started with Turkey and will probably continue indefinitely.

"We were able to create the most important thing – the army. We managed to keep the balance on the basis of the army power, which is very essential. It is an unprecedented situation in the history of Armenia when we managed to defend ourselves. If you allow another party to enter the territory, they will disarm you and you won't be able to do anything," said Sargsian.

According to Armenian political analysts, the number of ceasefire violations along the Line of Contact increases and decreases depending on Azerbaijan's attempts to show to the international community that the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict is not frozen.

VivaCell-MTS and Fuller Center Continue Partnership to Bring Housing to 25 Families

VAZASHEN, Armenia – VivaCell-MTS and Fuller Center for Housing Armenia joined forces to build homes in the border village of Vazashen, Tavush province, to mark the official launch of the new project sponsored by VivaCell-MTS addressed to assisting 25 low income families from bordering villages of Tavush and Armavir regions to build and renovate their homes.

Today Armenia's bordering villages face critical challenges, such as the need for decent housing, the lack of jobs, which, in its turn brings forth emigration, low natural reproduction that threatens the existence of these villages. VivaCell-MTS made an investment of 55 million drams and Fuller Center for Housing Armenia undertakes the implementation of a new program through which 10 families from bordering villages will be assisted to complete their half-built homes and 15 will be assisted to renovate their homes.

The partnership between VivaCell-MTS and Fuller goes back to 2007. Already 25 families in Armenia enjoy decent housing with the help and dedication of VivaCell-MTS. This serves as an example of corporate social responsibility.

"Our people on the borders are our country's live shield, and it is our duty to give them a helping hand. Every stone we build here, every roof we enhance is a strong armor for our country. Together with Fuller Center for Housing Armenia, we will help these people realize their dream – finish their homes and raise their children in safe and decent conditions," VivaCell-MTS General Manager Ralph Yirikian stated.

"The productivity of the partnership with VivaCell-MTS has been proved through the experience of many years, through the real difference made in the lives of many Armenian families. This is a unique partnership based on corporate social responsibility towards the communities, the families who are living side by side with us in a community that we ourselves are a part of. Through the support of VivaCell-MTS, 25 families from bordering villages will have better housing conditions. Instead of thinking of emigrating from Armenia in search of better standards of living they will remain in their homes and foster the security of the country borders," shared the president of the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia, Ashot Yeghiazaryan.

Correction

An event that was scheduled to take place on Capitol Hill, hosted by Rep. Adam Schiff, on the Armenian Orphan Rug, and about which an article appeared in the *Mirror-Spectator*, was canceled because of a snow storm in Washington. It will be rescheduled for sometime in May.



INTERNATIONAL

Turkey 'Aided Islamist Fighters' in Attack on Syrian Town

By Ruth Sherlock

BEIRUT (*Telegraph*) – Turkey facilitated an attack carried out by Islamist fighters against the Armenian town of Kessab inside Syria, eyewitnesses have told the Telegraph.

In an operation that was months in the planning, Turkish authorities gave rebel groups the mandate they needed to attack, allowing them access through a heavily militarized Turkish border post, whose location was strategically vital to the success of the assault.

"Turkey did us a big favor," said a Syrian activist with the rebel group, whose name the Telegraph knows but has been asked not to reveal. "They allowed our guys to enter from their border post.

"We needed to hit the regime from different sides and this was the only way from near the coast, so it was a big help."

Turkey to Build Separate Prisons for Gay Criminals

ISTANBUL (AFP) – Gay rights groups in Turkey have expressed alarm at a government-led project to build prisons only for criminals who declare themselves gay, saying it would lead to more discrimination in a largely homophobic country.

Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag announced at the weekend that plans were underway to construct separate prisons for openly gay inmates in a bid to "protect convicts" with different sexual orientations.

"Convicts who stated that they are gay will not mix with other convicts in the communal area or during social activities in the new prison facilities," Bozdag said in a written answer to a parliamentary question.

Unlike other Muslim countries, same-sex relationships are not criminalized in Turkey, a formally secular nation where prostitution and sex change operations are legal.

But traditional Islamic values hold sway over large sections of society in Turkey.

Gay rights groups voiced dismay last year that proposed legislation failed to make it a hate crime to target people because of their sexual orientation.

The situation is especially dire in existing prisons where, according to the justice ministry, homosexuals are effectively kept in solitary confinement.

"This is a medieval-age practice. This kind of segregation is nothing but a punishment" said Murat Koylu, a spokesman for the Ankara-based gay rights group Kaos GL.

"Instead of creating public areas where people from all sexual orientations can live together, the government has once again chosen to ostracise homosexuals," he said.

"This will lead to the profiling of gay prisoners, as well as their families and the prison itself. How will the government be able to protect those prisoners who are not openly gay?"

Residents were woken on the morning of the attack, on March 21, to screams and cries.

"We woke to the sounds of the shelling. There was no time even to get dressed," remembered Bedros, 45, an Armenian resident who asked not to be identified by his real name. "I grabbed my wife and my children. We had no time to take our things. Some people fled in their night gowns."

Two days later Kessab was in the hands of an alliance of Islamist groups, including the jihadist Jabhat al-Nusra, aligned with al-Qaeda. Almost all of the villages approximately 2,000 inhabitants had fled.

The night of the attack a relative of Bedros had gone to one of the main border posts with Turkey, which is only lightly armed with Syrian troops, reportedly because of an agreement signed decades before the war.

"By the time he arrived the attack had begun. He saw the Islamist fighters standing with the Turkish army. They started launching their shells from the border".

The Turkish foreign ministry has issued a statement stating that the claims that the government aided the opposition in the attack are "totally unfounded and untrue".

However, the findings of investigation by Human Rights Watch (HRW), which included interviews with local eyewitnesses, directly contradict this claim.

"It is not feasible that these groups could have crossed into Syria from where they did without the knowledge of the Turks," Lama Fakih, the Syria and Lebanon researcher at HRW told the Telegraph.

"One of the areas they used was an official border crossing that residents say has a Turkish military presence."

The entry through the Kessab border crossing allowed the rebels to attack the Syrian military positions near village

from several sides, making it key to the rebel assault.

Rebel groups had wanted to attack Kessab for a long time, said the female activist, but Turkey had previously denied them access.

"In the past the Turks refused to give us passage, because they said that in order to succeed in the attack we needed to be united," she said, referring to the battles that took place at the end of last year between the extremist Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, and other rebel groups in the area.

The attack on Kessab sparked dark memories of the Ottoman massacres for its inhabitants, and a hysterical flurry across social media from pro-government sources claiming horrific massacres in the town.

Residents themselves brought up memories of massacres in 1909, and the genocide in 1915, when Kessab villagers were slaughtered in their thousands by the Ottomans.

"We always thought the Turks would attack us one day," said Bedros, the fellow family members who he is sharing his new lodgings in Lebanon, nodding as he spoke. "And with the attack on Kessab it was clear that Turkey helped. The attackers came from Turkish territory."

Kessab was however the Syrian regime's "Achilles heel" in the well defended coastal province of Latakia, where many Alawites, the same religious minority as President Assad, live.

Al-Nusra and the Islamic Front have pushed deeper into the terrain, taking control of Samra, giving them access to the coastline and engaging in fierce battles for 'observatory 45', the highest mountain point in the area, and a strategically vital military position.

"You can see why we needed to take Kessab," said Dr Mahmoud, diplomacy envoy for the Islamic Front. "You can see what has happened. Now the regime is very very afraid."

Union of Armenians of Russia Pays Tribute to Victims of Syria

MOSCOW (Armenpress) – At the initiative of the Union of Armenians of Russia, a ceremony of placing wreaths was held on April 5 in front of the Syrian Embassy to the Russian Federation. The ceremony was dedicated to the memory of the victims who died in Syria.

The Ambassador of Syria to the Russia Riad Haddad attending the event stated that they want to protect their people from various terrorist groups. Haddad underscored: "It's not strange that Turkey supports the terrorists. Turkish aircrafts helped the terrorists to intrude Kessab."

The armed incursion began on Friday, March 21, with rebels associated with Al-Qaeda's al-Nusra Front, Sham al-Islam and Ansar al-Sham crossing the Turkish border and attacking the Armenian civilian population of Kessab. The attackers immediately seized two guard posts overlooking Kessab, including a strategic hill known as Observatory 45 and later took over the border crossing point with Turkey. Snipers targeted the civilian population and launched mortar attacks on

the town and the surrounding villages.

According to eyewitness accounts, the attackers crossed the Turkish border with Syria openly passing through Turkish military barracks. According to Turkish media reports, the attackers carried their injured back to Turkey for treatment in the town of Yayladagi.

Some 670 Armenian families, the majority of the population of Kessab, were evacuated by the local Armenian community leadership to safer areas in neighboring Basit and Latakia. Ten to fifteen families with relations too elderly to move were either unable to leave or chose to stay in their homes.

On Saturday, March 22, Syrian troops launched a counteroffensive in an attempt to regain the border crossing point, eye-witnesses and state media reported. However, on Sunday, March 23, the extremist groups once again entered Kessab, took the remaining Armenian families hostage, desecrated the town's three Armenian churches and pillaged local residences.

International News

Armenian Embassy in Syria Transfers Aid to Kessab Armenians

DAMASCUS (Armenpress) – On April 13, \$63,060 dollars raised by "Hayastan" All-Armenian Fund to help the Kessab Armenians was transferred to the relief body of Latakia via the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Syria.

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'Parajanov' Receives Prize at Bucharest Film Festival

BUCHAREST, Romania (Armenpress) – Bucharest held the third annual international film festival, Cinopolitica, on April 8-13. "Parajanov," a film by Serge Avedikian and Olena Fetisova, was shown and received the Special Prize of the Jury.

Collaborators Avedikian and Fetisova were guests at Cinopolitica 2014 International Film Festival and with their participation the Romanian premiere of the film was held in a crowded hall on April 10. It received a warm reaction from the Romanian audience and after watching it the participants had a chance to talk with the two.

Speaker Addresses Parliament Chairmen of EU Member Countries

VILNIUS (Armenpress) – The delegation headed by the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia Hovik Abrahamyan on April 7 participated in the consultation of the Parliament Chairmen of European Union member countries in the Lithuanian Parliament building in Vilnius. The chairmen of the Parliaments of the Eastern Partnership member countries were also invited to the consultation.

In his speech Abrahamyan stated that the role of national parliaments has significantly grown in the world during the latest decades, complementing traditional diplomacy. "We appreciate each opportunity of meetings in the parliamentary format. I am glad that as representatives of the Eastern Partnership member countries, we have an opportunity to discuss jointly issues related to the Inter-Parliamentary cooperation prospects, as well as issues on the challenges we face," he said.

He added that because of expanding ties between the European Union and the Eastern partner countries, a wide range of opportunities have been created for the development of the bilateral Inter-Parliamentary cooperation and exchange of best practices in the European Parliament.

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Community News

Armenian American Medical Society Gala To Benefit Local Outreach Projects

GLENDALE – On Saturday, May 3, the Armenian American Medical Society (AAMS) and the community of supporters will come together at the Langham Huntington Hotel and Spa, in Pasadena, to celebrate the work of the organization, recognize distinguished honorees and raise funds to support its local community outreach projects, such as the Glendale Health Festival and community health education programs.

The event will feature a cocktail reception, dinner and dancing. Entertainment will be provided by Allen G. & Band. “We look forward to this event every year,” said Serineh Melidonian, MD, president of the AAMS. “Not only is it an opportunity to gather together to celebrate our achievements, we also raise much-needed funds to advance our society’s mission. This year we will dedicate the funds towards our outreach programs and pay tribute to those who have contributed so much to our goal of improving the health and wellbeing of the Armenian community in the Diaspora and Armenia.”

This year’s event will honor Frieda Jordan, CHS, PhD; Vartan Tachdjian, MD and Ara Tekian, PhD, MHPE.

Jordan, a biochemist and medical researcher, combined her expertise in the field of immunogenetics with her deep commitment to the Armenian community to co-found the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) in 1999. This pan-Armenian nonprofit organization brings the hope of life-saving bone marrow stem cell transplantation to thousands afflicted by blood-related illnesses.

Jordan, president of the organization, has inspired health awareness and championed healthcare in Armenian communities for the past 15 years. To date, under Dr. Jordan’s leadership, the ABMDR has worked across four continents, recruiting more than 25,000 donors in 18 countries, identifying 2,135 patients, and facilitating 18 bone marrow transplants. Her work has earned her numerous accolades from the Republic of Armenia, the State of California, as well as community-based organizations.

Tachdjian has dedicated much of his distinguished medical career in service to impoverished communities. He was born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1933, the son of Genocide survivors. A board-certified pediatrician, Tachdjian served as medical director of the Community Health Foundation of Los Angeles, the second largest homeless care clinic in the country. He joined the Community Health Centers of the Central Coast of California, where he continues to treat the areas’ underserved population. In addition, he serves as a consultant for Doctors Without Borders.

Tachdjian has also been integral to the success of the Armenian American Medical Society, as an active member and past treasurer and vice president. In 1974, Tachdjian co-founded the Armenian Medical World Congress in Lebanon. His son, Dr. Raffi Tachdjian, is also a pediatrician, now serves as a board member of AAMS.

His service to the Armenian community includes work as a pediatrician of the Tekeyan School in Lebanon, Educational Committee Advisor for the AGBU Middle East Chapter, as well as Chairman of the AGBU San Fernando Valley Chapter of California.

Tekian is an internationally-recognized scholar and leader in health professions education. Tekian is an associate professor and the director of International Affairs at the Department of Medical Education, and the associate dean for the International Affairs at the College of Medicine, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).

Prior to joining UIC, Tekian was the founding director of the Medical Education Department see GALA, page 7



Vice Chairman of the Board Parsegh Kartalian and Board Member Osheen Keshishian, and Chairman of the Board George Mandossian present Gia Aivazian with a plaque for her hard work and dedication. Shirley Kandralyan is on far right.

TCA-ADS Annual Dinner Dance Raises More than \$20,000 for School

LOS ANGELES – On Saturday, March 22, guests, parents, teachers, students and supporters of the Tekeyan Cultural Association’s (TCA) Arshag Dickranian School (ADS) gathered at the Walter and Laurel Karabian Hall for the school’s 33rd annual dinner dance. The event was sponsored by the Board of Trustees and organized by the Parent-Teacher Organization and included a Mediterranean menu catered by Kitchen X and diverse dance music by DJ Chris. Among those attending the event were benefactor Hmayak Baltayan, special guests Armen and Nora Hampar and Lena Sarkissian from Toronto, as well as the school board members.

The celebration started with the opening remarks of ADS alumna from Class of 1999, Ojean Sinanian, who acted as the MC of the event. In her welcoming message, Sinanian made a point to expound on the purpose of the evening and encouraged all attendants to enjoy their evening. Marine Topalian, a member of the Class of 1998 and now of the PTO, also took the podium and greeted guests, informing them that as an ADS alumna who also sends her children to this school, she looks forward to seeing future generations graduate from the school. Rev. Archpriest Manoug Markarian was then invited for the invocation.

First on the program was an Armenian folk dance performance by the Hamazkayin Ani Dance Group, whose members were dressed in traditional Armenian costumes and mesmerized attendants with their moves. Next, 2011 ADS alumna, Ani Nercessian, performed a song in English.

As the evening progressed, Sinanian invited Principal Dr. Manoug Seraydarian to the podium. Seraydarian welcomed attendants and talked about his experiences growing up in Aleppo at an institute partially founded by the late Arshag Dickranian, stressing how proud he is to be now working at a school bearing his name.

Board Chairman George K. Mandossian spoke next. He praised the efforts of his fellow board member, Gia Aivazian, who has served as a Board Member for more than 30 years. He invited Aivazian to the podium, where he, along with Board Vice Chairman Parsegh Kartalian and board member Osheen Keshishian, awarded her with a plaque, honoring her hard work and dedication to the school. Aivazian, in accepting the prize, thanked her fellow board members, reminiscing about her see FUNDRAISER, page 5



The Hamazkayin Ani Dance Group entertaining guests with Armenian folk dance

Los Angeles Community to Honor Prof. Cowe on 30th Anniversary of Teaching Armenian Studies

LOS ANGELES – A newly formed Cowe Anniversary Committee, along with the Friends of UCLA Armenian Language and Culture Studies, will honor Prof. S. Peter Cowe at its annual banquet on June 1, marking the 30th anniversary of his research and instruction in Armenian Studies. The event will take place at The London, a landmark hotel in West Hollywood.

“We are delighted to honor Professor Cowe, one of the world’s foremost scholars of Armenian studies, at our banquet this year,” said Dr. Hagop Gulludjian of the Anniversary Committee, which comprises UCLA professors, graduate students and community activists. “Along with his students, our colleagues, friends, and the Armenian community as a whole, we look forward to saluting a remarkably affable teacher appreciated for his brilliant intellect, continually positive attitude, and extraordinary dedication to the field of Armenology.”

Before coming to UCLA, from 1984 to 1996, Cowe taught Armenian language and literature at Columbia University, where he also established the Visiting Professorship in Armenian Studies program through the support of philanthropist Dr. Nikit Ordjanian.

In 1987, Cowe was invited to deliver the keynote address in Armenian at the 30th-anniversary celebration of his predecessor, Prof. Avedis Sanjian, for his contribution to the field of



Prof. Peter Cowe

Armenian studies. Cowe’s formal association with UCLA began in 1996, when he was appointed visiting associate professor of Armenian Studies, teaching all three standards of the Armenian language (classical, modern Eastern and modern Western) as well as literary history. Two years later, Cowe established the Friends of UCLA Armenian Language and Culture Studies as a conduit for fostering community involvement through academic and cultural events, and raising financial support to expand Armenological offerings at UCLA. In 2000, he was named holder of the Narekatsi Chair in Armenian Studies.

Commenting on Cowe’s qualities as a teacher, Shushan Karapetian, a UCLA Armenian Studies Program graduate student who will be completing her doctoral dissertation later this spring, said: “Over 10 years ago, after a week into my first undergraduate course with Professor Cowe, I was hooked – enrolling in every class he offered – and my future was determined. Without a second thought, I embarked on a journey into Armenian studies under the captivating direction of my guardian. As a scholar, he is simply unparalleled; as a teacher and mentor, he is versatile and open-minded, extremely supportive and engaged. My experience at UCLA would not be the same without his matchless imprint.”

The banquet will take place at the Kensington Ballroom of The London Hotel’s Gordon Ramsay Restaurant. “It is interesting to note that celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay is of Scottish descent,” said Dr. Hrach Khudatyan of the Friends of UCLA Armenian Language and Culture Studies and added: “In view of Professor Cowe’s Scottish descent, our banquet will feature a number of special surprises.”



COMMUNITY NEWS



Board of Selectmen Chair Mark Paolillo, left, with Jirair Hovsepian

Belmont Selectmen Adopt Genocide Resolution

BELMONT, Mass. — At its March 6 meeting, the Belmont Human Rights Commission approved member Jirair Hovsepian's motion that they request a proclamation from the town's Board of Selectmen recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

The Board of Selectmen issued the Armenian Genocide proclamation at their March 31 meeting.

In his comments, Hovsepian said, "On behalf of the Belmont Human Rights Commission I would like to thank the Board of Selectmen for honoring the memories of the 1,500,000 victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923, by the Ottoman Empire, with this Proclamation. I would also like to personally thank the members of the Belmont Human Rights Commission who unanimously voted to spearhead the request for this Proclamation from the BOS."

He added, "There are thousands of documented and eyewitness accounts from survivors, American missionaries, foreign diplomats including US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, German soldiers, and many others who were there, including photographs of marches and the atrocities."

"Armenians survived and adopted their alternate communities throughout the United States and the rest of the world including Belmont and Massachusetts, bringing their talents to improve their new communities. Today there are only about 60,000 Armenians remaining in Turkey, but there is evidence that there might be around 300,000 Islamized Armenians living there also, the descendants of those who were forcibly apostatized," he added.

He also spoke about the situation of Armenians now in Syria, who are being attacked by Al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist who are apparently crossing back and forth into Turkey at will. Finally, in his comments, he paid tribute to the late Very Rev. Raphael Andonian.

Annual Holocaust, Armenian Genocide Commemoration in Michigan, April 30

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich. — Prof. Maud Mandel will address the question of how genocide influenced the religious, ethnic and national affiliations of survivors by comparing Armenians and Jews in France, the only Western European nation to provide homes to substantial survivor communities after the first and second World Wars.

The program will take place at the Holocaust Memorial Center, Zenkelman Family Campus, 28123 Orchard Lake Road, on Wednesday, April 30, at 7 p.m.

Both Armenian and Jewish populations faced a similar paradox after their respective genocides. The persecutions of World War I and II seemed to prove that modern nation-states, even those committed to democracy, could never really tolerate ethnic minorities in their midst. And yet, both Jewish survivor communities re-building after Vichy and Armenian survivor communities building anew in France remained just that, minorities within a larger nation-state. This talk will investigate how those targeted for destruction due to their ethnic affiliations confronted the ideological onslaught against them once the conflicts had

ended.

Mandel is associate professor of Judaic Studies and history and director of the program in Judaic Studies at Brown University. Her book, *In the Aftermath of Genocide: Armenians and Jews in Twentieth Century France*, was published by Duke University Press in 2003. Her most recent article, "Negotiating Difference: French Jews and Immigrant Jews in the aftermath of the Holocaust," will appear in the volume *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945-55*, in 2014. Her research focuses primarily on the impact of policies and practices of inclusion and exclusion on ethnic and religious minorities in twentieth-century France, most notably Jews, Armenians, and Muslim North Africans.

Sponsored by the Armenian Research Center of the University of Michigan-Dearborn; Cohn-Haddow Center for Judaic Studies at Wayne State University; Holocaust Memorial Center, Zenkelman Family Campus; and the Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive at the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

Admission is free. A reception will follow the talk.

Connecticut Capitol Hosts Genocide Commemoration

HARTFORD, Conn. — Ruth Thomasian, a photo archivist and historian, will be the keynote speaker at the annual 99th Armenian Genocide Commemoration, which will be held in the House Chambers at the State Capitol on Saturday, April 26, starting at 11 a.m.

The announcement was made by state Rep. Christopher Wright (D-Bristol), chairman of the Armenian Genocide Commemoration event.

"The April 26th ceremony will be held to remember our martyrs and honor our survivors," Wright said. "We invite everyone to join us and following the commemoration event all participants are invited to gather in the Hall of the Flags for refreshments."

For 39 years, Thomasian, a photo archivist and historian, has dedicated herself to saving the photographic heritage of the Armenian community as founder (1975) and executive director of Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc. During the 1970s, while pursuing a career as a theatrical costume designer in New York City, she became aware that visual material to research costumes for Armenian plays set in Historic Armenia was extremely scarce.

Thomasian received her bachelor's in history and education from Albion College in Michigan,

and a master's in communications management from Simmons College, Boston. She is a past president of the Photographic Historical Society of New England, former co-editor of the society's *New England Journal of Photographic History* and current board member. She is a member of the New England Archivists and the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and has participated with colleagues in workshop presentations for each organization.

In addition to the commemoration event, there will be an Armenian Heritage Day program honoring Genocide survivors and a flag raising open to the public on Thursday, April 24, in the North Lobby of the State Capitol from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The celebration will include traditional Armenian dishes, desserts and drinks.



Ruth Thomasian

Never Again!



99th Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

a program for Metro Detroit Armenians presented by
The Detroit United Committee

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TCA-ADS Annual Dinner Dance Raises More than \$20,000 for School



ADS alumna Ojean Sinanian who acted as the MC of the event welcoming guests

FUNDRAISER, from page 4

experiences at ADS throughout the years and recognizing the efforts of her colleagues there. Next, board members Shirley Kandalyan and Keshishian spoke about the accomplishments of the school and their hopes for the near future. Keshishian then started the fundraising activities of the event.

The event continued with guests enjoying the food and music.

The grand raffle prize of the event was a vacation home in Palm Springs for two nights, which was won by Hagop and Suzy Mazloumian.

Next, Sinanian invited Aivazian and the members of the PTO to cut the cakes, after which she took the podium again and thanked all those who participated in the fundraising.

Over the years, the PTO has been instrumental in holding various educational and social functions and, most importantly, organizing the annual banquets, whose sole purpose is to aid the school.

The traditional take home memento of the event was the special booklet printed for the occasion, which contained the messages of the chairman of the Board of Trustees, the principal, as well as the congratulatory remarks of sister-chapters and supporters.

Next, young and old filled the dance floor as they danced to lively music of DJ Chris.



OBITUARY

John Zakarian

Longtime Editorial Page Editor for Hartford *Courant*

HARTFORD, Conn. (*Courant*)

— John J. Zakarian, a respected opinion writer who served as head of The *Courant's* editorial page for 27 years, died in March at the age of 76.

Zakarian had been diagnosed with ALS, often called Lou Gehrig's disease, 18 months ago, his son Paul Zakarian said. He died late Friday at Hartford Hospital.

"Aside from the fact he was just wonderful man and a great editorial writer, I don't know what else I can say," former governor, Lowell Weicker said. "He really knew what was going on in the state of Connecticut, and he had the ability to express what should be done in terms of the best results."

Zakarian received many awards over the course of his career, including the Walker Stone national award for editorial writing and an Overseas Press Club award for a series on the Middle East in 1987. He was a Nieman fellow and a past president of the National Conference of Editorial Writers.

In 1981, Zakarian led a delegation of editorial page editors on a tour of the Middle East, arranging interviews with leaders including Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Lebanese official Bashir Gemayel.

Under Zakarian, the *Courant's* opinion pages won many national, regional and state awards

By Kelly Glista and Julie Stagis

and expanded to include the six-page Sunday section. His "27 years as editorial page editor epitomize the best of journalism and the best of The *Courant*," then-publisher Jack Davis said in 2004, when Zakarian announced his retirement.

"Discovering that my new job as publisher meant I could work every day with John Zakarian was one of the great pleasures of my newspaper life," Davis said in an email recently. "I thought he was being relentlessly ethical, exactingly moral and courageous and eloquent, but John just thought all that was normal, just the way the editorial page editor was supposed to be."

Though Zakarian was a citizen of the world — a native of the Armenian quarter of Jerusalem who was fluent in Arabic, Armenian and English — he cherished American principles of free speech and the separation of church and state. On the wall of his office hung the Norman Rockwell poster titled "Freedom of Speech" depicting a plainly dressed citizen speaking to an enthralled audience at a town meeting.

Zakarian came to the US aboard the Queen Elizabeth in 1957 with scholarships from

Southern Illinois University and San Francisco State University, according to a 2004 *Courant* story about Zakarian's retirement. Going to the ticket window at Penn Station in New York, he told the clerk: "I want to go to Carbondale, Ill., or San Francisco, whichever is closer."

He ended up in Carbondale at Southern Illinois University, supporting himself partly by working as a janitor.

Before landing at the *Courant*, Zakarian's career included covering horse races as a cub reporter for the Associated Press in Chicago and work for various other news organizations.

He became the *Courant's* editorial page editor in 1977, and guided the page through a number of public battles. He led the newspaper's support for a state income tax in the early 1990s, for welfare reform later in the decade and for President Clinton's resignation in 1999.

Under Zakarian's leadership, the board championed the city of Hartford, supporting issues that encouraged developers and government officials to pay attention to the city's revitalization.

Before he retired, Zakarian said he tried to avoid putting a particular ideological stamp on the *Courant's* editorial page.

"I came to the *Courant* when it was known as a very conservative, Republican paper," Zakarian said in the 2004 story. "It has changed."

Despite the difference in the paper's stance, Zakarian and the editorial board continued to take positions on issues that could be characterized as conservative, such as endorsing Ronald Reagan in 1984 and



John Zakarian

George W. Bush in 2000.

"You always recognize that not everything is black and white. You give the other side the benefit of hearing them out," Zakarian said in 2004, describing the philosophy he grew up with. "But, ultimately, you can't go along with somebody just to go along with them."

Zakarian "was a great man, a brilliant man," current opinion editor Carolyn Lumsden said. "And he was a wonderful editorial page editor."

"He was a newspaperman who was optimistic about the industry's future. And he was a kind and generous boss," said Robert K. Schrepf, who succeeded him as vice president and editorial page editor.

Zakarian is survived by his wife, Kay, and his two sons and their families, including his five grandchildren.

Funeral services will be private.

Very Rev. Raphael Andonian

BELMONT, Mass. — The Very Rev. Raphael Andonian, pastor of Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church in Belmont, died on Sunday, April 6, in the morning, after battling cancer for seven months.

The Very Reverend Raphael Andonian was born in Aleppo, Syria, on January 14, 1941. After his preliminary studies in his native country he arrived to St. Lazarus in Venice, Italy, on March 8, 1953 at the Mekhitarist monastery. He took his perpetual vows in 1962, hence, becoming a member of the Mekhitarist Order on the feast of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

He was ordained a priest in 1965 at the completion of his philosophical and theological studies, at the Gregorian University in Rome.

His first mission assignment was to serve at the Samuel Mouradian College in Paris as vice-principal and later principal of the school. He also served as teacher, assistant director and director of Mourad-Raphaelian College in Venice.

He served as chief financial officer of the Mekhitarist religious order of St. Lazzarus in Venice.

His last ministry was to shepherd the Armenian Catholic parish of Boston to which he was totally devoted the last 20 years of his life.

His major accomplishment was relocating and building the new church and parish center of Holy Cross Armenian Catholic parish in Belmont.

Andonian contributed to the armenological Mekhitarist periodical, *Pazmaveb*, with numerous articles. He also translated several pastoral letters and encyclicals into Armenian: "Redeemer of Mankind" by Blessed John Paul II and both "God is Love" and "Gate of Faith" by Pope Benedict XVI.



Very Rev. Raphael Andonian

Condolences were received on Wednesday April 9 and Thursday April 10 f at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church (200 Lexington St., Belmont, MA 02478.) Funeral Mass was held on Friday, April 11, at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church.

Respecting the wishes of Andonian, his body was transported to St. Lazarus, Mother Monastery of the Mekhitarist Order in Venice, where funeral and burial services are to take place.

In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy may be made to Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church. Contributions will be dedicated to benefit the displaced Armenian families of Kessab.

(A shorter announcement regarding the Very Rev. Andonian's death appeared in last week's issue of the *Mirror-Spectator*.)

Alice Andonian

LEVITTOWN, Penn. — Alice Andonian died on Thursday, March 27, in Aria Torresdale Hospital. She was 89.

She was born in the Bronx, NY. She was a graduate of Walton High School and the Juilliard School (Music Division). She taught piano for 58 years. She was a member of the Daughter's of Vartan, Greater Trenton Choral Society, Piano Teacher's Association and the Holy Trinity Armenian Church Choir and Sunday School.

She was a seamstress, who also enjoyed arts and crafts. She crocheted hats and scarves for the orphans. She also enjoyed music, theater and travel.

She leaves her husband of 63 years, Harry A. Andonian; and one son, Leon and his wife, Yong.

The funeral mass was at the Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 101 Ashmead Road, Cheltenham. Interment was in Lawnview Cemetery, Philadelphia.

Donations in her memory may be made to the Parkinson's Foundation, 200 S.E. 1st St., Suite 800, Miami, FL 33131.



Alice Andonian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Eastern Diocese Congratulates Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II

TEANECK, N.J. — Clergy of the Eastern Diocese were among the guests welcoming Ignatius Aphrem II Karim, the newly elected patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church, to St. Mark's Syriac Orthodox Cathedral, on Saturday, April 5.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Diocesan Primate; Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, the Diocese's Ecumenical Director and the Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, director of the Diocese's Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, were among those gathered to welcome Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II to the cathedral where he has served for nearly two decades.

On March 31, the former Archbishop Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim, Metropolitan and Patriarchal Vicar at the Archdiocese of the Syriac Orthodox Church for the Eastern United States, became the 123rd Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. He will serve in Damascus, Syria, where the Holy See of the Syrian Orthodox Church is based.

At St. Mark's Cathedral, a prayer of thanksgiving was said by Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem. He went on to speak about the plight of Christians in Syria, and called on people to "pray for our beloved Syria to have peace again."

The Syriac patriarch also stressed the importance of Christian unity, and said he looks for-

ward to working with other church leaders in the region. "This divine calling does not come without divine help," he added.

Archbishop Barsamian delivered remarks congratulating Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem on behalf of the Armenian Church of America. He also conveyed the well wishes of Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

"You exemplify the best qualities of the Christian heritage of the East; and you have given these virtues exemplary life and vitality here in the West," Barsamian said. "I know that your experience here in America, and your leadership on the ecumenical stage, have given you the knowledge and ability to govern wisely in a church that now straddles the East and the West, the ancient and the modern."

A native of Syria, Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem studied in Lebanon, Egypt and Ireland. During his tenure in the United States, he helped establish new parishes, launched a youth organization, and was an active member in the ecumenical arena.

Throughout his ministry in the US, he has been a close friend of the Eastern Diocese, frequently joining Diocesan clergy in ecumenical meetings, in efforts to advocate on behalf of Christians in the Middle East and in other initiatives.

He has served on the Standing Conference of



Archbishop Vicken Aykazian (left) and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian with Ignatius Aphrem II Karim.

Oriental Orthodox Churches, the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches in the USA. He was also among the founding members of the ecumenical organiza-

tion Christian Churches Together, and has co-chaired the Oriental Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation.

He succeeds Ignatius Zakka I, who died on March 21.

Among other clergy present at Saturday's welcoming service were Metropolitan Tikhon of the Orthodox Church in America, Archbishop Mor Titus Yeldho of the Malankara Orthodox Church, Bishop David of the Coptic Orthodox Church, as well as representatives of the Antiochian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox churches.

AJR 32 Moving Forward in California State Assembly

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — On April 7, a delegation of more than 100 members from the Armenian Council of America (ACA) participated in a day of advocacy to gain support for Assembly Joint Resolution 32 during the annual Armenian Genocide Commemoration sponsored by the California State Senate and Assembly at the State Capitol.

The delegation, made up of members from all throughout the Golden State, met with several elected officials discussing Assembly Joint Resolution 32 and effectively gaining support from a large number of Assembly members.

Some of the State representatives the ACA met with, included, Speaker of the State Assembly John Perez, Scott Wilk, Mike Gatto, Katcho

Achadjian, Chris Holden, Ed Chau, Adrin Nazarian, Roger Dickinson, Tim Donnelly and several others.

AJR 32 calls for the United States to recognize the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic as a sovereign state, invokes strong language from the United States' own history regarding the rights of the people to "self-determination and democratic independence." If Gatto's resolution passes, it would make California the most populous governmental entity to call for Nagorno-Karabagh's recognition or to recognize it outright.

Assembly member Mike Gatto, announced this week that through the collaborative efforts of the ACA, AJR 32 will move forward

in the policy committee and will be on its way to get full consideration by the State Assembly. The Resolution is projected to be heard on the Assembly floor after the spring recess around April 28. Four other states have passed similar legislation, including Louisiana, which was spearheaded by the ACA Louisiana Chapter.

The day-long activities featured a reception where dignitaries, including Senator de Leon and Lara, Assembly members Gatto, Achadjian, Wilk, Gomez, Brown, Nazarian and others, reiterated their supportive stance towards recognition of the Armenian Genocide and applauded the audience for all their efforts in working towards the Armenian Cause.

Armenian American Medical Society Gala To Benefit Local Outreach Projects

GALA, from page 4

at King Saud University, College of Medicine in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. His impressive resume also includes consultant to the World Health Organization Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office and consultant to the Ministries of Health and Education in most of the Eastern Mediterranean countries.

Tekian has organized and conducted more than 150 workshops worldwide, focusing on curriculum development, assessment, program evaluation and patient safety. His scholarship in health professions education is reflected in his publications in premiere medical education journals.

For tickets to the 29th Annual Gala, or to become an event sponsor, or visit https://www.aamsc.com/images/gala_sponsorship.jpg.

Reporter Wanted

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is seeking an assistant editor, working 20-25 hours a week.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Emotional State House Program Remembers Genocide

COMMEMORATION, from page 1

"You welcomed me as a candidate nine years ago. It was a moment in the campaign where my human rights [credentials] were called into question," he said. "I was overwhelmed by the experience and the attacks on who I was and what I was."

He recalled that when he came to the commemoration as a candidate nine years ago, he received a warm welcome from the Armenian community and that reenergized him. "I wanted to come and thank you. You made our Commonwealth a better place and I am here to say that you have made this man a better man," he said.

He praised the members of the Armenian community for their efforts toward funding and completing the Armenian Heritage Park in Boston, a first-of-its-kind private and public collaboration, the designer of which, Donald Tellalian, received the joint House and Senate Resolution.

State Sen. William Brownsberger (D-Belmont) introduced honoree Tellalian and praised him for coming up with the concept and design of the park and working for years on the

North End communities for "their unwavering support."

The park came about, he noted, as a result of language introduced by Peter Koutoujian into the Big Dig project.

Koutoujian, who in turn introduced the keynote speaker, spoke first about the Boston Marathon Bombing last year, which saw him in the thick of the action in Watertown. He also got choked up as he paid tribute to Andonian, calling him "an amazing friend to our community, always smiling and always willing to join with us." A moment of silence was observed for Andonian.

He praised Geragos for his legal victories in the courts against insurance companies that sold policies in the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide, resulting in winning a total of \$37.5 million. Now, he said, Geragos is suing the government of Turkey itself.

Geragos started off by joking, "You guys are the original Glendale." He added, "The Armenian Heritage Park speaks volumes to that. It is just amazing."

He then spoke about the importance of having the US government and the president affirm and acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. He said once they pass resolutions, his job of litigating and seeking justice is that much easier. Armenians, he said, need to focus on the "three 'R's, recognition, restitution and reparation."

The Turkish government, he said, "fears reparations. Why do you think they pay retired legislators to work against [recognition]?"

He encouraged more Armenians to get involved with politics so as to get the community's concerns addressed.

State Rep. Jonathan Hecht (D-Watertown), opened the program. "Every year, for nearly three decades the State Legislature has convened this event to honor the survivors of the Armenian Genocide," he said. "We are here to celebrate the resilient spirit of the Armenian people."

Hecht paid tribute to the late speaker of the house, George Keverian, under whose watch the annual State House Armenian Genocide Commemoration had started.

He praised DeLeo for his unwavering support in his introduction, and lauded him "as a person and as a leader."

DeLeo was one of the many who recalled the events of one year ago, which had caused a lockdown of the city and the cancellation of the commemoration.

As for the Armenian Genocide, he said, "We will never forget the 1.5 million Armenians killed. We will carry on their legacy by ensuring the world does not forget."



Rev. Joe Matossian delivered the opening prayer, with Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, state Rep. John Hecht and state Sen. William Brownsberger behind him.

He added that he was proud to support the resolution that Massachusetts Rep. James McGovern (D-Worcester) had proposed, condemning the attacks in Kessab, Syria.

DeLeo paid tribute to the Armenian community for its contributions to various sectors, including the construction of the Armenian Heritage Park. "We have to consider the grati-

Wilmington, Mass., who have studied the Armenian Genocide, writing essays and even a symphony on the subject.

Many other human rights organizations and three consuls were present for the commemoration, but thunderous applause and a standing ovation was reserved for four survivors of the Rwandan Genocide.



St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School Principal Houry Boyamian shakes hands with Gov. Deval Patrick.

project as a volunteer. "Each part [of the abstract sculpture and pool] symbolizes the immigrant experience," he added. He said the park was a "beautiful public space and a generous gift" to the state by the Armenian people.

The humble Tellalian thanked everyone. "I really am most honored. This 12-year effort began as a mere possibility," he said. It came

He added that he was proud to support the resolution that Massachusetts Rep. James McGovern (D-Worcester) had proposed, condemning the attacks in Kessab, Syria.

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State Rep. Jonathan Hecht (D-Watertown), opened the program. "Every year, for nearly three decades the State Legislature has convened this event to honor the survivors of the Armenian Genocide," he said. "We are here to celebrate the resilient spirit of the Armenian people."

Hecht paid tribute to the late speaker of the house, George Keverian, under whose watch the annual State House Armenian Genocide Commemoration had started.

He praised DeLeo for his unwavering support in his introduction, and lauded him "as a person and as a leader."

DeLeo was one of the many who recalled the events of one year ago, which had caused a lockdown of the city and the cancellation of the commemoration.

As for the Armenian Genocide, he said, "We will never forget the 1.5 million Armenians killed. We will carry on their legacy by ensuring the world does not forget."

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He added that he was proud to support the resolution that Massachusetts Rep. James McGovern (D-Worcester) had proposed, condemning the attacks in Kessab, Syria.

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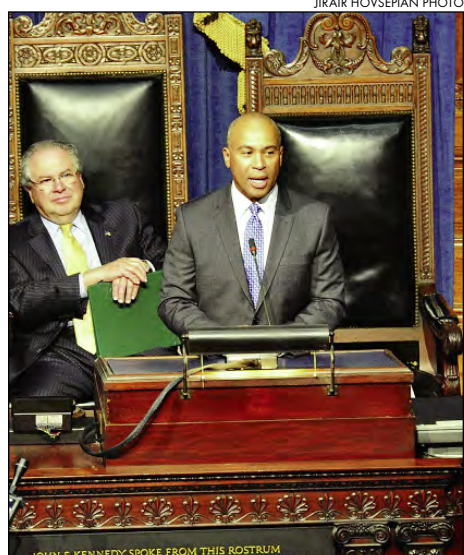
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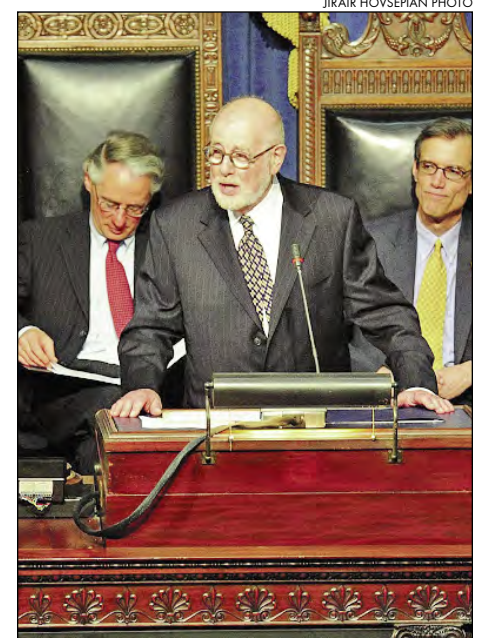
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Gov. Deval Patrick, with Speaker DeLeo, left



Sheriff Peter Koutoujian and keynote speaker Mark Geragos embrace, as state Sen. William Brownsberger look on.



Recipient of the Joint House/Senate Resolution Donald J. Tellalian

about, he said, "as a result of extraordinary collaborations" between the Armenian Heritage Park Foundation, the professional team assembled and city and state bodies.

In addition to those named above, he thanked specifically the Rowes Wharf and

Arts & Living

Armenian Night at Pops to Feature Saxophonist Hayrapet Arakelyan

BOSTON – The Friends of Armenian Culture Society will present the 63rd annual Armenian Night at the Pops on Friday, June 13, at 8 p.m. at Symphony Hall.

The evening will feature young saxophonist Hayrapet Arakelyan from Germany. He will join Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops Orchestra in performing selections from the *Tango Suite* by Argentinian composer Astor Piazzolla, along with other selections and Pops favorites. Also featured on the program is Grammy- and Oscar-winning American rock singer-songwriter Melissa Etheridge, who will join the Boston Pops for her first-ever appearance with a symphony orchestra, showcasing “The Very Best of the Boston Pops.” Arakelyan studied at the Alexander Spendarian Music School in Yerevan and at the Music University in Cologne, Germany. He was awarded First Prize at the



Hayrapet Arakelyan

Saxophone International Competitions in Nantes and Carquefou, France and Grand Prix at the Yamaha Competition in Yerevan. He represented Germany in the finals of the Eurovision Young Musicians competition in 2010. Arakelyan has performed as a soloist with numerous orchestras across Europe and has appeared at many music festivals in Europe and the United States. He is currently a D'Addario Performing Artist in Cologne, Germany.

Tickets for this concert are available for purchase online at www.FACSBoston.org

Armenia and Karabakh Named Finalist for Book Of the Year Award

LOS ANGELES – *Armenia and Karabakh: The Stone Garden Travel Guide* is one of the best independently published books of the year, according to an announcement by *Foreword Reviews*, a magazine dedicated to the independent book publishing industry.

Armenia and Karabakh is one of just four travel books that were recognized as “ground-breaking” by the magazine’s 16th Annual Book of the Year Awards. The subjects of the other finalists were Germany, Switzerland and the Holy Land.

A panel of more than 100 librarians and booksellers reviewed books published during the past year to determine the finalists. Winners will be recognized at the American Library Association’s Annual Conference in Las Vegas, on June 27.

Matthew Karanian, a lawyer in Pasadena, Calif., is the author of *Armenia and Karabakh*. He and Robert Kurkjian, a scientist in Los Angeles, illustrated the book with their original photography. Karanian and Kurkjian are both Armenian Americans.

Armenia and Karabakh was published by Stone Garden Productions in 2013. Further details about the book is available at www.ArmeniaTravelGuide.com.



Unveiling of Hadjin Orphan Dress by Kevin Blowers curator of Bethel College Library in Mishawaka, Indiana.

International Conference Honors Those Who Helped Rescue a Generation of Armenian Survivors

MISSION HILLS, Calif. – On March 22, at the Ararat Home of Los Angeles in Mission Hills, where our surviving elders still reside, the Ararat-Eskijian Museum hosted an all-day International Conference, “Honoring Those Who Helped Rescue a Generation of Armenian Survivors 1915-1930”. The event was well attended by the community. Dr. Carla Garapedian, director of “Screamers,” was mistress of ceremonies for the day. The conference opened with pre-recorded speeches addressed to the Armenian community by United States Rep. Adam Schiff and California Assembly member Mike Gato.

The purpose of the conference was to pay tribute to all those countries, individuals and organizations that had sacrificed so much to aid a perishing nation. Diplomatic representatives were invited from 20 countries, including New Zealand, China, Japan, Philippine, South Korea, Switzerland, Sweden, France, Britain, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Canada and South Africa, with three diplomatic deputies attending, those of Greece, Norway and Australia.

Martin Eskijian, representing the Eskijian family, whose father, Luther Eskijian, founded the museum, spoke about his father and the legacy of his grandparents. Rev. Hovhannes Eskijian and his wife, Gulenia, who labored to save Armenians during 1915 and 1916 in the city of Aleppo. Rev. Eskijian perished at the age of 34 of typhus one day before he was to be hanged publicly for saving the lives of thousands of orphans from death.

Leading scholars from around the world discussed the manner in which the international community, including the American Red Cross, American Near East Relief, and the League of Nations, participated in making the first major humanitarian effort of the 20th century.

Missak Kellehian described the Near East Relief (NER) humanitarian organization, in which the “world united in selfless service to humanity.” Through trauma relief, education, empowerment, self-reliance, parenthood by proxy, education, and nutrition, the NER assisted an entire generation of Armenian orphans to maintain their heritage and reintegrate into society. “Quite literally,” Kellehian emphasized “Near East Relief kept an entire nation alive.”

Shant Mardrossian has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Near East Foundation since 2002 and its chairman since 2007, in turn, discussed the continuation of the Near East Relief’s work in many areas in the Middle East and Armenia today. “Ninety-nine years later the NER is still prominent throughout the world.” The Near East Relief has kept alive its principle of honoring the past and continuing our national legacy with many humanitarian projects. Prof. Vahram Shemmassian (director of the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Northridge) described the work of the American Red Cross in rescuing and rehabilitating survivors in the Arab Near East, in nations such as Syria and Lebanon, and author Dr. Rubina Peroomian spoke of the various missionaries that served in the Armenian provinces in the Ottoman Empire and became witnesses to the mass atrocities against the Christian Armenian population. Missionaries from Sweden, Germany, United States, and other nations sent letters, telegrams and other communications to their governments warning of the humanitarian crisis in the Ottoman Empire, and were also instrumental in saving thousands of Armenian children from a tragic fate.

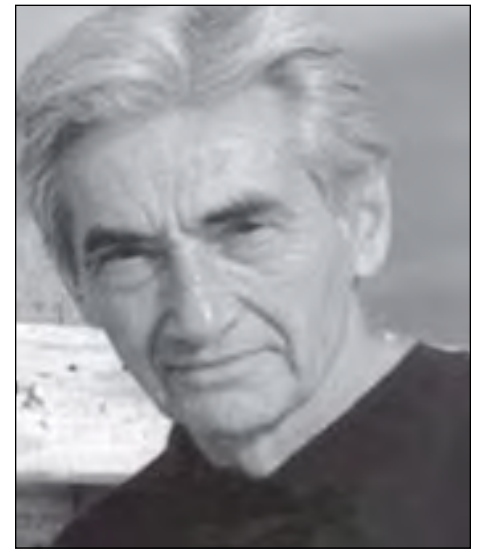
Guests of the conference were moved with emotion at the “Orphan dress from Hadjin,” a patchwork of a deported child’s sole garment, and an unfinished rug created by the orphans, which Mennonite Missionary Sister Dorinda Bowman brought with her on her return to the United States from Turkey in 1914. The items are on loan from Bethel College in Indiana to the Ararat-Eskijian Museum for two years. Also on loan for the day of the conference from a San Francisco patron was a jewelry box made by the orphans of Sivas.

see CONFERENCE, page 11

‘The Time of Our Lies,’ a Play about Howard Zinn, to Open at Edinburgh Fringe Festival

LOS ANGELES – “The Time of Our Lies,” a play about the life and times of historian Howard Zinn written by playwright Bianca Bagatourian, will play at the Gilded Balloon, one of Edinburgh’s top venues, during the entire Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland this August. Howard Zinn, author of the best-selling and influential, *A People’s History of the United States*, was a local Bostonian and wrote extensively about the civil rights and anti-war movements and labor history of the United States before he passed away in 2010. His memoir, *You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train*, was also the title of a 2004 documentary about Zinn’s life and work.

The play unravels through Zinn’s personal story as a young bombardier and goes on to depict how his life was shaped from there as



Historian Howard Zinn

well as examining the stories of other soldiers and the horrors of war. It speaks to Zinn’s message about how more peaceful solutions can be sought in these turbulent times.

“A wonderfully imaginative play that uses my father’s words as the unifying thread. Songs, nursery rhymes and tapped-out rhythms add a playful lightness and humanness that illuminate the horrors of war,” commented Myla Kabat-Zinn, his daughter.

“Having directed Howard before, I share his desire to connect with our ancestry and dig deep into history,” said director Josh Chambers from New York who has worked with Zinn previously on other projects.

Top Hollywood entertainment lawyer and principal producer from Fringe Management, Michael Blaha, and artistic director Nigel Miles-Thomas have been taking hit plays to the Edinburgh Festival for the past 14 years.

To learn more about the play, watch a video, or contribute towards this project, go to Indiegogo: <http://igg.me/at/howard-zinn-play/x/6756330>



A reading of “The Time of Our Lies,” at La Mama Theater, NYC, November 2013



ARTS & LIVING

Boston Celtics' Great JoJo White at Holy Trinity Armenian Church, April 27

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – “We at Holy Trinity are so excited to welcome Boston Celtics' Great JoJo White to our church on Sunday, April 27,” stated Fr. Vasken Kouzouian, pastor of the Holy Trinity Armenian Church. The luncheon, book talk and signing, sponsored by the Holy Trinity ACYOA Seniors and the Parish Council, will be held at noon, in the Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall of the church complex at 145 Brattle St., following church services.

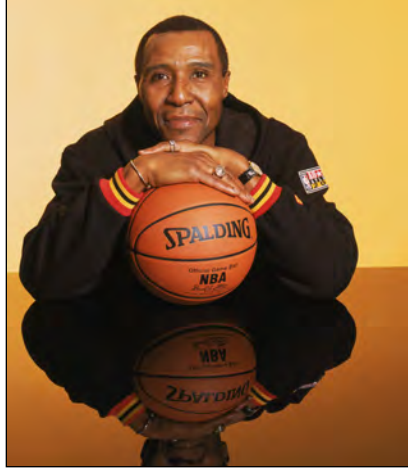
Joining the basketball great will be the author of his biography, *Make It Count*, Mark C. Bodanza. The book's description reads: “In an age dominated by over-hyped athletes who are sometimes short on character, JoJo White's story offers a refreshing look back at one athlete's career – a career that was the product of genuine good values. In *Make It Count*, the author presents a biography of a man who triumphed both on and off the basketball court.”

The Boston Celtics' Great began his career at the University of Kansas, scoring 1,268 points during his four years at the school. He went on to win an Olympic Gold Medal at the 1968 Olympics held in Mexico, as part of the USA Olympic basketball team that went undefeated (9-0). JoJo White was drafted by the Boston Celtics in 1969, and was part of two championship teams, one in 1974 and in 1976 when he was named the most valuable player of the NBA Finals. He was considered one of professional basketball's first “iron men,” playing in all 82 games for five consecutive seasons. JoJo White's number 10 was retired and subsequently hung from the rafters at the Boston Garden in 1982.

Off the court, White's involvement in the community is widespread. He is a motivational speaker at civic groups, corporations, colleges, commencement exercises and youth organizations. He also is involved with many Boston Celtics community programs such as the Stay in School and Read to Achieve programs that provide recognition and incentives for youth to heavily consider furthering their education.

“When I read the book *Make It Count*, stated Kouzouian, “I was so impressed with JoJo White's inspiring life story based on family and faith. From childhood, his parents instilled certain attributes in him that Armenians will understand immediately – hard work, family values, character building and holding on to hope – all of these were sustained by what can only be explained as a thriving Christian faith. Family was always first and, within his family, JoJo received the building blocks that would allow him to navigate the waters of life. He is a role model for the Christian faith.” He noted that for JoJo White, Sundays were for church followed by family dinners celebrated by all generations. “This is so familiar to the Armenian family experience,” concluded Kouzouian, “that I strongly feel that listening to his story will remind us that faith and family in the 21st century are worthy of celebrating even if the world around us thinks otherwise.”

The donation for the luncheon is \$12 for adults and \$8 for children under 12. Reservations are required by April 23. Contact the church office at office@htaac.org.



JoJo White

Valentina Calzolari Bouvier to Speak at NAASR On Martyrdom of Rhipsimian Virgins

BELMONT, Mass. – Dr. Valentina Calzolari Bouvier, professor of Armenian Studies at the University of Geneva, will present an illustrated lecture titled “Dying to Bring the Armenians Close to God: A New Reading of the Martyrdom of the Rhipsimian Virgins,” on Thursday, May 1, at 7:30 p.m. at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), 395 Concord Ave. This lecture is co-sponsored by the Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University, the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) and NAASR.

The history of the conversion of Armenia by Agathangelos (5th c.) is focused on the core idea that the Armenians are a chosen people and that they are inscribed in the providential plan of God. For its author, writing Armenian history was not only a way to build a collective memory and to give a coherent portrait of the past, but also a means to renew the covenant between the Armenians and God. In this account, two martyrdoms are at the origin of the shift of the Armenians from the “mist of darkness” of paganism to Christianity: the martyrdom of Gregory the Illuminator, a martyr who did not die, but who “entered the gates of death and returned by the will of God” and the martyrdom of some consecrated women, the Rhipsimian virgins. According to the text, by the shedding of the blood of these virgin women, “the land of Armenia has been visited” and “the Armenians were brought close to God.”

This lecture will attempt to understand the complex relationship between the valorization

of female virginity in Late Antiquity, martyrdom, and collective salvation. The bodies of the Rhipsimian virgins are called “Temples of God” and their murder by the king Trdat is considered as the profanation of a sacred space, the punishment of which was the loss, for the king, of his human nature.

Calzolari Bouvier is professor of Armenian literature and language at the University of Geneva, where she established the first Swiss chair in Armenian Studies, offering a full curriculum in both ancient and modern (western and eastern) Armenian languages and literatures, at the BA, MA and PhD levels. She is the current president of the Association Internationale des Etudes Arméniennes and of the Association pour l'Etude de la Littérature Apocryphe Chrétienne, and is a visiting scholar at Harvard's Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

More information about this program may be had by e-mailing hq@naasr.org.



Prof. Valentina Calzolari

Conference Honors Those Who Helped Rescue a Generation of Armenians

CONFERENCE, from page 10

Dr. Hayk Demoyan, the director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan, spoke about Aurora Mardigian – “Why was America's Heroine was Condemned to Oblivion?” Demoyan presented newly revealed and unknown materials related to Aurora Mardigian and movie “Ravished Armenia.” Aurora was a girl from Chmshkatsag in the Ottoman province of Kharpert, the daughter of a wealthy family who was kid-

napped on the piano of the works of Father Gomidas. Before his performance he gave tribute to his family members, the Mankerians from Hadjin. More than 300 family members perished and only handful survivors.

Finally, Dr. Robert Fisk, a British writer and Middle East correspondent for *The Independent*, flew in from Damascus to participate in the conference. A century ago, Ottoman Armenians were marched to their deaths in the Syrian Desert. Now, with the recurring



Robert Fisk and Dr. Hayk Demoyan

napped during a death march and sold into the slave markets of Turkey. She eventually escaped, and with the help of the Near East Relief made it safely to New York. Aurora authored *Ravished Armenia*, the story of her survival, which led to the creation of the silent film, *Auction of Souls*. This was the first movie about the Armenian Genocide. Aurora played the leading role herself.

Bared Maronian, the award-winning director of the documentary of “Orphans of the Genocide” screened a brief portion of his documentary. He showed an emotional visual journey through never-before-seen archival footage and recently-discovered memoirs of orphans who lived through the last century's first, fully documented, and least recognized genocide.

Dr. Vatche Mankerian gave a powerful perfor-

accounts of massacres in the Syrian conflict, including the killings of Armenians on Syrian soil, Fisk explored the comparisons between the 1915 Genocide and the current Syrian catastrophe.

Former governor of California, George Deukmejian, presented the participants and European and Australian diplomats that were present with awards replica of “Mother Armenia” for their unprecedented humanitarian assistance to the Armenian Orphans from 1915-1930. Fisk also received several resolutions, and a gold medal of “Franz Werfel” from Demoyan, the director of the Genocide Museum in Armenia, for Dr. Fisk's selfless contributions to the Armenian cause, as Franz Werfel did with his pen when he wrote *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*.

– Hasmik Piliposyan

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All rates are per person based on double occupancy and includes cruise, all taxes and ACAA registration fees.





ARTS & LIVING

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CALIFORNIA

MAY 4 – Sunday, Armenia Tree Project 20th Anniversary Celebration at the historic Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino. Reception 6 p.m.; Dinner 7 p.m. For information contact: Maral Habeshian, maral@armeniatree.org, 818 913-2563, visit www.ArmeniaTree.org.

MASSACHUSETTS

APRIL 24 – Several Armenian youth organizations are collaborating to commemorate the Armenian Genocide at Armenian Heritage Park, at 7 p.m. The vigil will include a prayer, poetry reading and singing. The greater Boston community is invited to participate. One bus will be provided, leaving from the Armenian Educational and Cultural Association (ACEC) at 6:30 p.m., with seats on a first-come, first-serve basis.

APRIL 27 – Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee of Merrimack Valley observance, 3 p.m., North Andover High School, 430 Osgood St., Arev Armenian Folk Ensemble performing; joint requiem service by MV Armenian churches; reception to follow; complimentary admission.

APRIL 27 – The Armenian Museum of America, Inc., will present "Genocide: A Joint Commemoration," on the Armenian Genocide, the Tibetan Genocide and the Genocide in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Sunday, 2 p.m., Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main St., Watertown, 3rd Floor Gallery. Admission: Free and open to the public. Reception following program.

APRIL 27 – "Make it Count" Luncheon, book talk and signing with Celtics' great Jojo White, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, noon, Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Luncheon donation: \$12 for adults and \$8 for children under 12. RSVP required by April 23 to Church office, 617-354-0632 or email office@htaac.org

MAY 1 – Avak luncheon, noon, St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church, 158 Main St., North Andover, MA. Speaker, Tom Vartabedian, A 50-year Retrospective on Armenian-American Journalism, with stories and photos.

MAY 2 – St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School will host its 28th annual bazaar, noon to 9 p.m. There will be carnival games for children, 3 to 7 p.m. Beef, losh and chicken kebab dinners will be served with rice and salad. Also, cheese boregs and gourmet pastries will be available. Foods will be available on site or to go. Armenian Cultural and Educational Center, 47 Nichols Ave., Watertown.

MAY 3 – Spring Food Festival, Armenian Church at Hye Pointe, 110 Main St., Haverhill. Dinner served noon to 7 p.m., choice of losh or Kheyma with pilaf, salad and bread. Adults \$15, children \$7. String cheese, choreg, cheers boereg, spinach pie, Armenian pastries and more for sale. For information, call the church at (978) 372-9227.

MAY 8 – Cocktails and Conversation, sponsored by Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, 6:30 p.m., Karoun Restaurant, 839 Washington St., Newton, complimentary mezza & cash bar; free and open to the public; prelude to 40th anniversary next year.

MAY 10 – The Armenian Churches of Worcester County (Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Church of Our Saviour and Soorp Asdvadzadin) present the Third annual benefit dance, 7 p.m. to midnight, Armenian Church of Our Saviour Cultural Center, 34 Boynton St., Worcester. Live music featuring Der Mugrditchian Ensemble with special guest appearance by Miss Massachusetts Outstanding Teen Kristina Ayanian. Music, Mezza, cash bar, raffle. Donation \$30, students \$25. All proceeds to Mrgashen Village School, Akhourian Mother and Child Clinic and Armenians in Syria. For tickets contact Dr. Robert Babigian (508) 842-7231.

MAY 10 – Unveiling of a new genocide memorial by Lowell City Hall, sponsored by the Armenian Genocide Monument Committee of Merrimack Valley; 10 a.m., downtown procession, followed by program at City Hall and reception in St. Ann's Church Hall at noon. Musical interlude by soloist Sevan Dulgarian; Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, MC.

MAY 21 – Chefs Party for Our Park! Benefit for the Armenian Heritage Park's Ongoing Care., Wednesday, 6:30 p.m., Royal



On April 27, The Armenian Martyr's Memorial Committee of Rhode Island will observe the 99th Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. Starting at 12:45 p.m. at the North Burial Ground, Branch Ave., Providence, RI. Requiem service with representatives of the three local Armenian Churches and clergy will be followed by remarks from Sheriff Peter Koutoujian of Middlesex County, Ma.

Sonesta Hotel Boston, Cambridge. Celebrate with Boston's Top Chefs presenting signature dishes inspired by parents, grandparents or mentors for you to taste while you mix, mingle and enjoy. and mingle. Advanced Reservations required. To receive the invite, email info@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

MAY 24 – 96th anniversary celebration of Armenian Independence sponsored by Lowell "Aharonian" ARF, 6 p.m., St. Gregory Church, 158 Main St., North Andover; dinner, entertainment and speaker, Baku pogrom survivor Anna Turcotte, author, *Nowhere, a Story of Exile*. \$20 adults, \$10 students.

SEPTEMBER 26, 27 – Armenians and Progressive Politics Conference returns to Boston. Keynote speaker will be Noam Chomsky. Details to follow.

MICHIGAN

APRIL 19 – Hagopian World of Rugs will host local author Mike Kadian at a book signing event, 7 p.m., 850 S. Old Woodward, Birmingham (between 14-15 Mile Roads on West side of Woodward). Attendees will hear his inspiration for his recently released book *Anahid played Soorp: The Finding of Aran Pirian*, based on a true story as told to him by his Grandmother. Books will be available for sale and a reception will follow. Open to the public.

APRIL 27 – The 99th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide will be commemorated at a program for Metro Detroit Armenians, titled "Never Again!" and presented by the Detroit United Committee, composed of the Armenian Assembly, ADL-Ramgavart Party, AGBU, Armenian Research Center, U of M Dearborn, CSAI, Detroit Armenian Womens Club, Daughters of Vartan, Knights of Vartan, Nareg Shavarshan Lodge, Tekeyan Cultural Association, Wayne State University Society of Armenian Students. Keynote speaker will be Raffi Bedrosyan of Toronto, a prominent columnist and advisor to the Zoryan Institute. Program starts at 2 p.m., AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School, 22001 Northwestern Highway, Southfield. A reception will follow.

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is now accepting all calendar items for free. All items should be sent to mirrorads@aol.com. Calendar items may be edited to fit the space.



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

State Department's Band-Aid for The Genocide Wound

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Almost every year, Armenians in the US and around the world go through the same motions as the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide nears. Imaginations are fired up, hopes are inflated and political realism is compromised, sometimes with good reason.

This year does not seem to be an exception, especially in view of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's favorable vote in addition to some halfhearted statements by the State Department. However, after so many near misses, the situation warrants a more objective assessment.

We still retain fresh in our memories when House Speaker Dennis Hastert refused to bring to the floor of the House for a vote a motion on the Armenian Genocide, at the behest of President Clinton. He had counted the supporters and realized that the measure would pass. The Republican Hastert was at odds on almost every important issue with the Democrat head of state, but somehow, there was bipartisan agreement to bury the Genocide resolution. Later on, Mr. Hastert landed a lucrative job bankrolled by the Turkish government.

Similarly, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who had made so many statements in support of the Armenian Genocide earlier, failed to bring the resolution to the floor for a vote, always citing the mysterious political adage that "it is not the right time."

When politicians run out of excuses, they resort to that trite line, never clearly indicating when the proper time is. Once again, during the recent vote discussion, dissenting Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) stated, "I don't think it's a good time to bring this type of a resolution up [although] I agree with the scholars that a genocide took place. It is a terrible tragedy."

We Armenians have always been under the illusion that the Genocide was perpetrated in full view of humankind and that we lost 1.5 million souls, along with our 3,000-year-old homeland, in addition to the generations who would be born and multiply our numbers to 20-25 million, like the Kurds did. Therefore, the world powers had to adopt or support our cause. But history proves that politics does not work that way. The cause of any ethnic group — no matter how just — can only be used by the great powers as political football to serve their own interests. No cause is taken seriously on its intrinsic merit.

Having said that, we need to focus on two important actions which complement each other and perhaps have appeared on the political radar deliberately at the same time. Actually, almost one hour before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed its resolution, State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki said at a press briefing, "Our position has long been that we acknowledge — clearly acknowledge as historical fact — and mourn the loss of 1.5 million Armenians who were massacred or marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire."

When questioned about President Barack Obama's statement as a candidate, Psaki said candidate Obama has his own personal views about the issue.

To evaluate the above statement, we have to take note of the following:

- That President Obama's personal views as candidate are divorced from state policy.
- That Ms. Psaki "mourns the loss of 1.5 million Armenians" but skillfully skirts the use of the "g" word.
- That we don't know who perpetrated the crime.
- That "our greatest interest on this issue is to see Armenia and Turkey heal the wounds of the past and move forward together in a shared future of security and prosperity in the region, and our policy is, of course, guided by that goal."

That policy will not yield any results unless the US pressures Turkey to lift the illegal blockade of Armenia and unless the US recognizes the Genocide without any equivocation, to pave the way for Turkey to come to terms with its dark history, as President Obama reminded the Turkish parliament during his first trip to that country.

As we can see, the State Department policy can only serve as a Band-Aid for the Genocide wound.

There was more commotion and reactions to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's resolution on the Armenian Genocide. Resolution 410 was adopted by a vote of 12 to 5. Following the vote, Chairman Robert Menendez made a powerful statement which angered Ankara and elated Yerevan, when he said, "I think the Armenian Genocide is a horrifying factual reality that can never be denied. I just don't think you can pick and choose your genocides. Genocide is genocide."

While Armenia's Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian sent a message of appreciation, Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu placed an angry call to Secretary of State John Kerry, warning him of the deterioration of US-Turkey relations, if Turkey's interests are not considered on the Genocide issue.

Writing in *Al Monitor*, the Turkish correspondent of London's *Economist*, Amberin Zaman, said, "Turkey denies that there was a genocide and has pumped millions of dollars in a largely unsuccessful campaign to peddle its own narrative, which proposes that, swept in a chaos of the collapsing Ottoman Empire, the Armenians mostly perished as a result of famine and disease."

Genocide Resolution 410 will be voted on by the entire Senate and there will be a tug of war between the Turkish lobby and Armenian interests to influence the final count of the votes.

In his turn, the Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone Jr., (D-NJ) stated, "Today's vote by the Foreign Relations Committee is an important chapter in the effort for official recognition by the US government of the Armenian Genocide. ... It is now time for the House to act on H. Res. 227, calling on the President to acknowledge the facts and ongoing consequences of the Armenian Genocide."

Kessab raids organized by Turkey once again reminded the world of Turkey's treatment of Armenians over the last full century and countered Ankara's well-oiled PR machine without much cost to the Armenians. A list of high-profile celebrities like Cher and Kim Kardashian gave a boost to the campaign. The irony of PR is that Kardashian's sex appeal has a broader impact on public opinion than, say, Taner Akçam's scholarly treatment of the issue in his book, *A Shameful Act*.

The question now arises about why the Senate Foreign Relations Committee would take such an initiative, which it had ignored for a quarter of a century?

Speculations are rife about the initiative. But one thing is certain: there is a marked deterioration in US-Turkish relations. Armenians may brag about their input, but that contribution would not weigh much if US-Turkish relations stayed strong like before.

The US has expressed its displeasure about Erdogan's dictatorial actions. But those actions would not mean much if his foreign policy blunders did not harm the US goals in the region. Despite some improvements in Turkish-Israeli relations, Erdogan and Davutoglu have been more assertive in their positions. And that is a crucial cause for the US to seek ways to pressure Ankara. The Genocide issue has been a perennial Sword of Damocles over Turkey's head and it is being used today. Israel has also used that issue on and off without any real intent to recognize the Armenian Genocide. The fierce public conflict between fanatically Islamist Erdogan and pro-Israel Gulen is also a reason to corner Erdogan.

If we believe whistle-blower Sybil Edmonds, the time has come for the US to dump Erdogan, who has outlived his usefulness.

After Armenia switched sides in its negotiations with the European Union and decided to join the Russian-led Customs Union, Washington surprisingly restrained its anger and resorted to a policy of carrot and stick. Indeed, some US investments provided welcome relief for Armenia's economy. The Genocide initiative may also be in line with that policy. It looks like alienating and isolating Armenia completely will not best serve the West's interests.

We do not need to be wrapped in cynicism and we have to be appreciative to the senators who took the initiative and made appropriate statements, calling a spade a spade.

After the votes are counted and the fate of the resolutions are revealed, we will understand whether the entire movement was a political ploy or to make right a historic wrong.

If we are duped once again, at least we will entertain the consolation that we have a Band-Aid for our collective bruised egos.

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Erdogan Waves Finger at Obama During Heated White House Talk

Pulitzer-prize winning American journalist Seymour Hersh, in a sensational article “The Red Line and the Rat Line,” published in the *London Review of Books*, discloses that the Turkish government had secretly orchestrated the August 21, 2013 sarin gas attack in Syria, killing hundreds of civilians. Prime Minister Recep Erdogan had hoped that the Syrian regime would be blamed for that chemical attack, leading to a retaliatory US strike on Syria, since President Obama had warned Syrian leaders that using chemical weapons against rebel fighters would cross a “red line.”

Erdogan’s plot almost worked. In the aftermath of the sarin attack, President Obama began planning a massive US strike on dozens of Syrian targets, even though British intelligence had informed the US joint chiefs of staff that samples of the sarin gas obtained from the site of the attack did not match the chemical weapons in Syria’s possession. A former US intelligence official told Hersh that “Erdogan was known to be supporting the al-Nusra Front, a jihadist faction among the rebel opposition, as well as other Islamist rebel groups.” Hersh revealed that the US Defense Intelligence Agency had issued “a highly classified” document on June 20, 2013, confirming that “Turkey and Saudi-based chemical facilitators were attempting to obtain sarin precursors in bulk, tens of kilograms, likely for the anticipated large scale production effort in Syria.”

Last May, several members of the al-Nusra Front were arrested in Turkey with two kilograms of sarin. A Turkish court accused the group of planning to acquire other related materials to launch a chemical attack in Syria. Five of

the arrestees were freed shortly, while the rest were released pending trial. They were not seen again.

After a special UN mission went to Syria to investigate two earlier chemical attacks in spring 2013, a person with close knowledge of UN’s activity told Hersh that “there was evidence linking the Syrian opposition to the first gas attack, on March 19 in Khan al-Assal, a village near Aleppo.... It was clear that the rebels used the gas.”

Just before launching the joint US, British, and French attack on Syria in September 2013, President Obama suddenly decided to postpone the strike, using the excuse that he needed congressional approval. The real reason for the delay was the President’s discovery that he was being set up by Turkey for an ‘unjustified’ attack on Syria, but did not want to publicly acknowledge his near blunder with potentially catastrophic consequences for the entire Middle East. Ironically, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was the one who rescued President Obama from embarrassment by securing Syria’s agreement to hand over its chemical stockpile, thus providing the President a cover for canceling his threatened attack.

Hersh further revealed that the chemical weapons had reached the Syrian rebels through a CIA operation code named “rat line” – a secret Turkish-US agreement in 2012 to funnel weapons and ammunition from Libya to Syria through Turkey. After the terrorist attack on its consulate in Benghazi, Libya, the hub of this clandestine activity, the US pulled out of this covert arrangement, yet Turkey continued to supply Libyan weapons to the Syrian rebels.

By the end of 2012, as the rebels were losing the battle against the Assad regime, a former US intelligence official told Hersh that “Erdogan was pissed,” leading him to concoct a scheme to have the rebels use sarin gas and falsely blame the Syrian government, thus instigating an attack by the United States on Syria.

To personally plead his case for a US attack on Syria to save the rebels from defeat, Turkey’s Prime Minister flew to Washington. On May 16, 2013, Erdogan, along with Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and head of intelligence Hakan Fidan, had a working dinner at the White House, with President Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, and National Security Advisor Tom Donilon. Infuriated by

Obama’s unwillingness to take military action against Syria, Erdogan “f@#*ing waved his finger at the president inside the White House,” Donilon recounted the shocking episode to a foreign policy expert who reported it to Hersh. “The American decision to end CIA support of the weapons shipments into Syria left Erdogan exposed politically and militarily,” Hersh explained. “Without US military support for the rebels, the former intelligence official said, ‘Erdogan’s dream of having a client state in Syria is evaporating and he thinks we’re the reason why. When Syria wins the war, he knows the rebels are just as likely to turn on him – where else can they go? So now he will have thousands of radicals in his backyard.’”

After the August 2013 sarin attack near Damascus, a former intelligence official told Hersh: “We now know it was a covert action planned by Erdogan’s people to push Obama over the red line.... The deal was to do something spectacular.... The sarin was supplied through Turkey.” Another indication of Turkish officials’ complicity was Hersh’s report that phone calls intercepted by the US revealed their joy with the success of their orchestrated chemical attack.

Hersh concludes his exposé by relaying a most worrisome observation from a former US intelligence official: “I asked my colleagues if there was any way to stop Erdogan’s continued support for the rebels, especially now that it’s going so wrong, the answer was: ‘We’re screwed.’ We could go public if it was somebody other than Erdogan, but Turkey is a special case. They are a NATO ally. The Turks don’t trust the West. They can’t live with us if we take any active role against Turkish interests. If we went public with what we know about Erdogan’s role with the gas, it’d be disastrous. The Turks would say: ‘We hate you for telling us what we can and can’t do.’”

For almost a century, successive US governments have failed to understand a fundamental geostrategic truth – Turkey needs the US much more than the United States will ever need Turkey. There is indeed something terribly wrong when the tail wags the dog!

[Part 2 of last week’s article on the Turkish deportation of Jewish settlers from Palestine will be published at a later date.]

Rep. Adam Schiff Delivers Open Letter to Turkish People on House Floor on the Armenian Genocide

WASHINGTON – This week, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), the lead sponsor of the Armenian Genocide resolution, went to the House of Representatives floor to deliver an open letter to the Turkish people on the Armenian Genocide:

The full text of the speech is below:

An Open Letter to the Turkish People:

Today, I write to you on a topic of great importance to both of our nations. It is on a subject that many of you, especially the younger generation, may know little about because it concerns a chapter of world history that your government has expended enormous efforts to conceal.

Turkey has been at the center of human civilization from Neolithic times to the present, and your arts, culture and science have enriched the world.

But interwoven with all of Turkey’s remarkable achievements is a dark chapter that too many of today’s Turks know little or nothing about.

Were you aware that your grandparents and great-grandparents had many Armenian neighbors and friends – that twenty percent of the population of today’s Istanbul was Armenian? Did you know that the Armenians were well integrated into Turkish society as celebrated intellectuals, artists, craftsmen and community leaders? Have you ever wondered, what happened to the Armenians? Have you ever asked your parents and grandparents how such a large, industrious and prosperous people largely vanished from your midst? Do you know why your government goes to such lengths to conceal this part of your history?

Let me tell you a part of their story. The rest you must find out for yourselves.

Ninety-nine years ago this month, in the dying years of the Ottoman Empire, the Young Turk government launched a campaign of deportation, expropriation, starvation and murder against the empire’s Armenian citizens. Much of the Armenian population was forcibly removed to Syria, where many succumbed during brutal forced marches through the desert heat. Hundreds of thousands were massacred by Ottoman gendarmes, soldiers and even ordinary citizens.

By the time the slaughter ended in 1923, one and a half million Armenians had been killed in what is now universally acknowledged as the first genocide of the Twentieth Century. The survivors scattered throughout the Middle East and the wider world with some making their way to

the United States, and to Los Angeles.

It is their grandchildren and great grandchildren whom I represent as a Member of the United States Congress. There is a vibrant community, many tens of thousands strong, with schools, churches and businesses providing a daily link to their ancestral homeland. And it is on their behalf that I urge you to begin anew a national conversation in Turkey about the events of 1915-23.

As a young man or woman in Turkey, you might ask: What has this to do with me? Am I to blame for a crime committed long before I was born. And I would say this: Yours is the moral responsibility to acknowledge the truth and seek a reconciliation with the Armenian people that your parents and their parents could or would not. It is an obligation you have inherited and one from which you must not shrink. For though we cannot choose our own history, we decide what to do about it – and you will be the ones to shape Turkey’s future.

At the end of World War II, Germany was a shattered nation – defeated in battle and exposed as history’s greatest war criminal. But, in the decades since the end of the war, Germany engaged in a prolonged effort to reconcile with the Jewish people, who were nearly exterminated by the Nazis during the Holocaust. The German government has prosecuted war criminals, returned expropriated property, allied itself with Israel, and made countless apologies to the victims and to the world. Most important, Germany has worked to expunge the cancer of dehumanizing bigotry and hatred that gave rise to the Holocaust.

This path, of reflection, reconciliation and repentance must be Turkey’s path as well. It will not be easy, the questions will be painful, the answers difficult, sometimes unknowable. One question stands out: How could a nation that peaceably ruled over a diverse, multicultural empire for centuries have turned on one of its peoples with such ruthlessness that an entirely new word had to be invented to describe what took place? Genocide.

As in Judaism and Christianity, the concept of repentance or *tawba* is central to Islam. Next year will mark a century since the beginning of the genocide and Armenians around the world will mourn their dead, contemplate the enormity of their loss, and ask, why? Answer them, please, with words of repentance.

Sincerely,

Adam Schiff
Member of Congress

Turkey’s Actions in Syria See PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan Go from Model Middle East ‘Strongman’ To Tin-pot Dictator

Recep Tayyip Erdogan used to be one of Barack Obama’s cuddliest allies. Religious but secular, powerful but democratic, independent but a reliable NATO chum, he was the kind of guy the White House and the Pentagon could rely

By Robert Fisk

on to provide a guiding hand in the Arab part of the old Ottoman empire – and a channel for rebels who could bring down the hated Bashar al-Assad of Syria.

The American think-tank mountebanks – taking their cue as usual from the US ‘official sources’ – even proclaimed Turkey as a “role model” for the post-dictatorship Arab world.

Queue in hollow laughter. Was a nation which still mistreated its Kurds, acted as a Holocaust denier in refusing to acknowledge the 1915 Armenian Genocide, and which even trashed the trial of those who killed the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in an Istanbul street in 2007, really the kind of mirror into which the Muslim world should stare with approval? Yeah, now the mask has fallen.

Erdogan sent in the police to crush the demonstrators of Gezi Park last year, went berserk when it was suggested his party and relatives were involved in corruption scams, and fired or removed hundreds of police and security officers. Then he promised to wipe out “social media” – Facebook and YouTube were the new “terrorists,” it seemed – before the municipal elections which he inevitably won, and uttered the kind of threats against Turkey’s ever more compliant press in words that might have come from the late Saddam Hussein. It turned out that the only role model Turkey was a role model for was – well, Turkey.

So had yet another Middle East ‘strongman’ turned into a tin-pot (and dangerous) dictator? Or had a conservative, level headed democrat suddenly shown his true colors? When the Arab awakening began to destroy the local dictators in 2011, Erdogan was the first Muslim leader to grasp its significance and praise its revolutionaries. Who would have believed that the old Ottoman flag – or the current

see ERDOGAN, page 16



Turkey's Actions in Syria See PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan Go from Model Middle East 'Strongman' To Tin-pot Dictator

ERDOGAN, from page 15

Turkish version of it – would be flown once more with pride over Arab homes in Gaza and Egypt? Even when the latter's elected president Mohamed Morsi was chucked out by that wonderful democracy-loving Egyptian deputy prime minister, defense minister and chief of staff – Erdogan could scarcely bring himself to pronounce General al-Sissi's name – the Turkish prime minister, like Qatar, insisted that Morsi was still the leader of Egypt.

Next on his target list, I suspect, will be the Daily Zaman, one of the most feisty and provocative of Turkish newspapers which will soon – its journalists fear – feel Erdogan's lash. The paper this week trashed the prime minister's attacks on his Islamist antagonist Fetullah Gulen, currently residing in Pennsylvania, as having no basis in law, approvingly quoting a retired supreme appeal court prosecutor as saying that Erdogan was trying to influence the justice system. The paper, regarded as close to Gulen ideologically, has carried articles asking if corruption and bribery contributed to Erdogan's 45 percent Justice and Development Party election victory. And in an unprecedented report, it also wrote that Armenians driven on 16 March from their homes in the Syrian town of Kassab by Islamist rebels supported by Turkey, were drawing parallels with the 1915 mass killings – which the paper was not quite brave enough to call a genocide.

Turkey denies all this, just as it denies the genocide. Both statements are nonsense. The Jabhat al-Nusra men who stormed into Kassab did not come from Iraq or Jordan. The town, in which thousands of Armenians lived in the very last part of what had been Ottoman Armenia, is only a few miles from the Syrian border where the Turks have been furnishing their Syrian rebel allies – both Islamist and secular – with arms. The Armenian expulsions have provided ample opportunity once again for the Assad regime to demonstrate the cruelty of its oppo-

nents.

But there is growing evidence that Turkey's – or rather Erdogan's – involvement with the revolt against Assad is critical to his relationship with Obama. The Syrian government were, of course, the first to claim that the sarin gas which killed hundreds of Syrian civilians in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta last August had come from Turkey – and had then been used by Islamist groups in the hope that the West would blame Assad and turn its strategic weapons against the regime. When The Independent enquired about the attacks in Syria, Russian sources stated that the chemicals had not been sold to Assad. They had come from stocks sold by Moscow to the former Gaddafi regime in Libya.

Syrian army officers and one figure close to Assad complained to me, too, that when the US and its allies insisted the regime was to blame for the gas attack – which of course they did at once – no heed was paid to public evidence that sarin gas was being transported through part of Turkey for rebels in the north of Syria. They constantly referred to a 130-page Turkish indictment of ten al-Nusra men accused of transporting through southern Turkey what local police identified as chemical precursors for sarin. They were correct. The ringleader of the group, Haytham Qassab, appeared in court where a Turkish prosecutor demanded 25 years imprisonment, but he was later released "pending trial". They have all since disappeared, while Turkey's ambassador to Moscow was later to dismiss the arrests, claiming – with almost Saddam-like conviction – that the 'sarin' was "anti-freeze."

That most controversial of American investigative journalists, Seymour Hersh – I confess he is an old mate of mine even though he often uses my most hated phrase, anonymous "officials" and "experts" as his sources – has now published his own disturbing and compelling research on the use of chemicals in Syria and

points the finger at Turkey for allowing rebels to use sarin in an earlier chemical attack against the Syrian village of Khan al-Assal.

Far more explosively, he claims that the British Porton Down defense laboratory examined the sarin used in Ghouta (courtesy of a Russian military intelligence operative) – this was the attack that propelled Obama and his administration into paroxysms of rage against Assad – and that British intelligence confirmed to the Americans that the gas did not come from stocks in the Syrian army's chemical weapons' arsenal.

This, according to Hersh – who naturally has his own detractors – was enough to persuade the US Joint Chiefs of Staff to tell President Obama that he must not use the Ghouta attack as an excuse for a military strike against Syria. Obama finally agreed – although he used a sudden (and still unexplained) decision to seek congressional approval for a bombardment of Syria – permission he knew he was unlikely to get. The Turks – and here comes the Erdogan connection – were outraged that the Americans had not fallen into their trap of destroying Assad.

Erdogan, according to Hersh, had allowed the Americans to ship a 'rat line' of weapons from Libya via Turkey to the Syrian rebels – hence the connection to earlier shipments of sarin to Libya from the then Soviet Union. Hersh says that for months after the Ghouta attack occurred, this 'rat line' continued. So did permission to the Turks to trade in gold with Iran – a profitable enterprise which created a slush fund of billions of dollars, the very same corruption money which later appeared to fall

into the hands of senior figures around Erdogan.

One Turkish journalist insisted to me in Istanbul this week that Erdogan's "madness" – although already evident – reached ferocity pitch after the Ghouta sarin attack in Damascus which was supposed to drive Obama to attack the Assad regime, but which ultimately failed to do so. If the US bombardment had taken place, Turkey would have been the 'kingmaker' in any new Syria, and that ancient nation might even have become part of a putative, enlarged, Ottoman-style empire. This is taking things too far. Erdogan is, like Yossarian in Catch 22, a very odd person. There are signs of political megalomania.

But Hersh does detail a dinner on 16 May last year between Erdogan and Obama – and a senior Turkish intelligence official called Hakan Fidan – at which Obama angrily pointed at Fidan and said: "We know what you're doing with the (rebel) radicals in Syria." The dinner took place. No-one, of course, will reveal on the record what was said. Turkey's meddling in the Syria war will continue, whatever the Americans do. Obama believes the rebels are both untrustworthy, dangerous and are being beaten. But one of the tapes which so enraged Erdogan when it appeared on YouTube – hence the ban – showed an apparent conversation between Turkish officials seeking an excuse to stage their own attack on Syria. "Manipulated," screamed the Turkish government. No doubt.

(This column by Robert Fisk originally appeared in *The Independent* newspaper on April 10.)

Menendez, Royce Headline Genocide Capitol Hill Commemoration

SENATE, from page 1

my state has done to you," Zarakolu said as he opened his remarks. Zarakolu's Belge print house has published more than 10 volumes on the Armenian Genocide, for which he and his family have been consistently harassed and jailed by Turkish authorities under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, which criminalizes discussion of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey. Interestingly, the penalty for Turkish citizens who discuss the Armenian Genocide outside of Turkey is three times greater. Zarakolu's participation symbolizes the strength and courage that all anti-genocide activists embrace as the Turkish wall of denial continues to crumble.

The annual commemoration featured key dignitaries and religious leaders such as Armenia's Ambassador to the United States, Tatoul Markarian, Nagorno Karabagh Representative to the United States, Robert Avetisyan,

Diocesan Legate of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), Archbishop Vicken Aykazian and Bishop Anoushavan Tanielian. Dr. Ara Chalian from Pennsylvania served as master of ceremonies.

More than 20 Members of Congress participated in the commemoration, including Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Menendez (D-NJ), along with Senators Jack Reed (D-RI), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Ed Markey (D-MA). Also on hand were Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA), Armenian Genocide lead sponsor Adam Schiff (D-CA), Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus Jon Conyers, Jr. (D-MI), and Reps. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Judy Chu (D-CA), David Cicilline (D-RI), Katherine Clark (D-MA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Danny K. Davis (D-IL), Janice Hahn (D-CA), Jim Langevin (D-RI), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Linda

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US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Adopts Armenian Genocide Resolution

RESOLUTION, from page 1

in Rwanda, and now in the 21st century, the decimation of the population of Darfur, the trail of crimes against humanity painfully continues."

The Armenian Genocide resolution was adopted by a vote of 12-5. Senators voting in favor were Chairman Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Benjamin Cardin (D-MD), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Christopher Coons (D-DE), Richard Durbin (D-IL), John McCain (R-AZ), Tom Udall (D-NM), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Tim Kaine (D-VA), and Edward Markey (D-MA). Senators voting against were Ranking Member Bob Corker (R-TN), James Risch (R-ID), Ron Johnson (R-WI), Jeff Flake (R-AZ), and John Barrasso (R-WY). Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) was not present.

