

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

Volume LXXXIII, NO. 38, Issue 4283

\$ 2.00

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

## State House Armenian Genocide Commemoration on April 19

BOSTON – Each April for the past 28 years, members of the Armenian community along with state legislators and guests have filled the House Chamber at the State House to commemorate the Armenian Genocide. This year marks the 98th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and the commemoration will take place on Friday, April 19 at 10:30 a.m. with a pro-

gram of speakers and honorees.

Following the ceremony and pending final permitting, attendees will be invited to march from the State House to the Armenian Heritage Park on the Rose Kennedy Greenway for additional remarks, music and a catered lunch. The march

will include a stop along the way to place a wreath at the New England Holocaust Memorial.

The event is both solemn and celebratory, recognizing the genocide of 1.5 million Armenians between 1915 and 1923 by the Ottoman Turkish government, as well as honoring survivors and looking forward as descendants commit themselves to preserving their culture and working for humanitarian projects.

Former US Ambassador to Armenia John Marshall Evans, who served from 2006 to 2008, will deliver the

keynote address. Armenian Heritage Park architect Donald Tellalian will be honored with a Joint House and Senate Resolution. Dedicated in May 2012, the park is a gift to the Commonwealth from the Massachusetts Armenian-American community. The split dodecahedron abstract sculpture, constructed by A&A Industries, rests atop a 16-foot-diameter reflecting pool. It is designed to be reconfigured each year and symbolizes those

who were pulled apart from their country but reestablished themselves in new countries. Visitors can also walk along a labyrinth symbolizing the journey of life.

“We are very excited this year to introduce the march from the State House to the Armenian Heritage Park,” said Lalig Musserian of Belmont who is coordinating this year’s celebration. The committee see **COMMEMORATION**, page 8



### Billboards from Peace of Art Ask for Genocide Condemnation

WATERTOWN – During the month of April, Peace of Art, Inc., will display the Armenian Genocide commemorative billboards to honor the victims of the Armenian Genocide, calling for recognition and condemnation of the Genocide.

see **BILLBOARDS**, page 8?

## SOAR Continues Mission to Aid Orphans

By Gabriella Gage  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

PHILADELPHIA – When George S. Yacoubian Jr., and his wife, Erica, began the process of adopting a child from Armenia in 2005, they knew that their lives and the life of a child without a home would forever change. They did not know, however, that they were

beginning a journey that would affect the lives of countless children in the process.

While visiting Armenia during the adoption process, they toured several orphanages and experienced first hand the conditions in which the children were living. It was there that they met their daughter, Lilianna, whom they would bring home on April 23, 2006, but their connection to the orphans of Armenia did not stop there.

see **ORPHANS**, page 9



The faithful gathered outside Holy Echmiadzin Cathedral on Easter Sunday.

### Pageantry of Easter at Holy Echmiadzin

ECHMIADZIN – On Sunday, March 31, the Armenian Apostolic Church celebrated the Feast of the Glorious Resurrection of Jesus Christ with great solemnity throughout the world. In Holy Echmiadzin, Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, celebrated a Pontifical Divine Liturgy in the Mother Cathedral in honor of the church’s most important feast.

see **EASTER**, page 16

## Hovannisian Ends Hunger Strike

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The six-week standoff between Armenian President-elect Serge Sargsian and his closest challenger, Raffi Hovannisian, may have run its course – or simply entered a new phase.

On March 31, Easter Sunday, Hovannisian ended the hunger strike he had embarked upon three weeks earlier to demand that the authorities recognize him as the legitimate winner of the February 18 ballot in which according to official returns he polled 37 percent compared with 58 percent for the incumbent, Sargsian.

A leading member of Sargsian’s Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) hailed Hovannisian’s decision as “prudent” and indicated that it could pave the way for talks between the two men.

Having vowed that Sargsian’s inauguration on April 9 would take place over his dead body, and after rejecting on March 26 an appeal by Sargsian to end his hunger strike, Hovannisian told supporters during a rally on Yerevan’s Liberty Square on March 29 that he had decided “to go on living for the sake of the future of my Motherland.”

Hovannisian also said on March 29 that he plans to continue his campaign of protest. The following day, he set out on a tour of the provinces (where his support based is greater than in the capital) prior to convening a further rally in Yerevan on April, at which he will unveil his future plans.

Yet for all Hovannisian’s efforts to put a brave face on his decision not to put his life at risk, it is Sargsian who has emerged the stronger from the protracted stand-off – at least in the short term.

First, he has reacted consistently, with reason and restraint, and without recourse to violence, to Hovannisian’s shifting and sometimes populist demands, offering counterproposals that would have guaranteed Hovannisian’s Zharangutiun (Heritage) party greater input into shaping the political agenda, and possibly also a handful of portfolios in the new government.

see **HUNGER STRIKE**, page 2

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Armavia Airline Goes Bankrupt

YEREVAN (Bloomberg) – Armenian businessman Mikayel Baghdasarov’s Armavia, the country’s only airline, declared bankruptcy last week and ceased flights on April 1.

The company, founded in 1996, was unable to pay debts owed to the Zvartnots Airport and to its contractors, Armavia said in a statement. According to Baghdasarov, the total debt was close to \$50 million.

Europe’s debt crisis has curbed travel and made governments reluctant to aid airlines amid the region’s deepest cost cuts in a generation.

Armavia’s owners said they have been diverting funds from other businesses to fund the airline for the past three years.

Armavia had 14 aircraft and was the first operator of Sukhoi’s Superjet 100.

### Several Armenians Wounded in Aleppo

ALEPPO (Armenpress) – Clashes between the governmental forces and armed rebels escalated this week, resulting in the wounding of several Armenians, stated Press Secretary of the Armenian National Prelacy Jirair Reisian.

Reisian stated that the clashes were concentrated in the Sheikh Makhsood district, which neighbors several Armenian areas. The district is mostly populated by Kurds, along with a small number of Armenians. Most local Armenians have migrated to other regions for security reasons.

During a press conference, Reisian noted that the rebels tried to breach Armenian districts and a number of bombs exploded in these areas wounding Armenians. He stated that their injuries were not serious.

Reisian also noted that the city had been deprived of electricity for five days.

### Restorations Launched At St. Norashen, St. Minas Churches

TBILISI (Armenpress) – Restoration projects to fortify walls and clean building exteriors were recently launched at two Armenian churches, St. Norashen and St. Minas.

Georgian historical expert, Joni Melikyan, said, “A library was opened in St. Norashen Church during the Soviet years. After a huge amount of debris collected there, a commission under the Ministry of Culture of Georgia launched cleaning activity.”

The ministry began a project to fortify the walls of St. Norashen after the dome of the church cracked – a structural condition which could have led to the collapse of the church.

A number of representatives of public organizations and patriarchate members have been included in the commission to restore the churches.

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Parliament Trespasser Jailed for Two Months

YEREAN (ArmeniaNow) – A man who attempted to enter the parliament building with a knife has been arrested for two months, a Prosecutor General's Office spokesperson said.

Vrezh Galstyan, a 25-year-old resident of the town of Masis said to be suffering from mental disorders, has been charged with the use of violence against a representative of law under Article 316 of Armenia's Criminal Code.

On March 22, Galstyan, who was armed with a knife, made an attempt to enter the parliament reception. To the request of security personnel to name himself he said he was Jesus Christ. Further warnings by the security officers on duty did not stop him from trespassing, nor did the man obey orders to stop even after a shot was made in the air. Eventually, a guard had to use his gun to stop the intruder.

Galstyan was wounded in the leg and was taken to hospital where urgent treatment was administered to him.

Last week, a court in Yerevan allowed Galstyan's preliminary detention for two months.

## Armenpress and Kuwait State News Agency Sign Cooperation Agreement

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The state news agencies of Armenia and Kuwait reached an agreement to promote bilateral cooperation on April 2 between Armenpress and Kuwaiti National News Agency.

According to the agreement, the two sides should implement news and experience exchange, support each other's reporters, assist the coverage of events of bilateral interest held in Armenia and Kuwait, implement photo exchange and promote professional cooperation.

Armenpress Director Aram Ananyan thanked the Armenian ambassador to Kuwait for contributing development of bilateral relations.

Board Chairman and Director General of the Kuwait News Agency, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah expressed gratitude for the invitation to Armenia and for the warm reception. He noted that the agreement would promote deeper knowledge of each other's countries.

Armenian Ambassador to Kuwait Fadeh Charchoghlian praised the Kuwaiti agency.

## ARF Condemns Murder Of Proshyan Mayor

PROSHYAN, Armenia (Hetq) – Commenting on the murder of Proshyan village mayor Hrach Muradyan, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) issued a statement that the killing was "premeditated" and a consequence of the intolerance and immunity from prosecution that reigns in Armenia.

Noting that Muradyan was a longstanding member of the ARF who fought on the frontline in the Nagorno-Karabagh War, the party said that it was regrettable that, "in our country the safety of citizens isn't protected and that a criminal ethic was an inseparable part of our lives."

The ARF demanded a quick and thorough investigation into the crime and that the culprits be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

## National Soccer Coach Offers to Resign

YEREVAN (Arka) – Vardan Minasyan, head coach of Armenia's national soccer team, submitted his resignation this week to Ruben Hayrapetyan, president of the Armenian Football Federation, after Minasyan's squad sustained a 0-3 defeat from the Czech national team in a World Cup 2014 qualifier on March 26.

According to a statement released by the federation, Hayrapetyan did not accept the coach's resignation.

This was the fourth consecutive defeat of Armenia's national team and prompted widespread criticism of the team on social media.

## AGBU Initiates a New Long-Term Project in NKR

### Commits \$575,000 to AUA To Implement Joint Program

YEREVAN – In October 2012, on the occasion of AGBU's 87th General Assembly in Yerevan, a new AGBU educational and cultural initiative was announced by Nagorno Karabagh Republic (NKR) President Bako Sahakyan and AGBU President Berge Setrakian.

Today, plans are already underway for the development of the Armenian General Benevolent Union's (AGBU) cultural, educational and artistic complex in Stepanakert – the AGBU NKR Campus. This dynamic initiative will provide new and innovative opportunities to the scholastically diverse urban and rural communities

throughout NKR. The Center will serve students of all ages, Members of Parliament, Government officials and other entities, and offer courses in English language improvement, preparatory classes for university



AGBU President Berge Setrakian presents a special medal from the Union to Nagorno Karabagh President Bako Sahakyan for his outstanding leadership of the republic.

entrance exams, and creative and media technologies (animation, video game design, web development and

more). In addition, classes in music, management, tourism development and more will be offered.

Setrakian remarked, "AGBU is pleased to announce the latest AGBU program in Nagorno Karabagh. We are convinced that education and culture are key factors in the development of any nation. The AGBU NKR Campus will become a hub of learning activity that will provide people of all ages in Nagorno Karabagh new opportunities."

Sahakyan commended AGBU for making education in Karabagh a priority.

To realize this initiative, AGBU signed an agreement with the American University of Armenia (AUA) in February, to develop a Continuing Education Program (CEP), through its Extension Program. This program will begin operations in April 2013 at a temporary location while the AGBU NKR Campus is being built in Stepanakert and it is expected to serve several hundred students. AGBU has committed to supporting the CEP in the amount of \$575,000, over the course of five years.

## Hovannisian Ends Hunger Strike

HUNGER STRIKE, from page 1

Sargisian rejected the initial demands put forward by Hovannisian just days after the election, including holding a pre-term parliamentary ballot in which all 131 seats would be allocated under the party-list system.

The following week, parliament speaker Hovik Abrahamian (who had managed Sargisian's election campaign) invited Hovannisian to present "prudent proposals on behalf of voters and call for serious reforms and changes in staffing policies."

"I think that's the way to go, if we care about our country's progress," Abrahamian added.

Abrahamian further implied that the government could offer ministerial posts to Hovannisian or other Zharangutian members. "I am convinced that Serge Sargisian would be ready to discuss such issues with Mr. Hovannisian," Abrahamian said. "I would consider that a reasonable proposal."

Some Yerevan papers subsequently reported that Sargisian was prepared to offer Zharangutian ministerial posts in sports, culture, youth affairs and social welfare in the new government.

Hovannisian rejected Abrahamian's overture, however. Then, on March 13, he retracted his post-election proposals, only to present one week later what he termed a "final offer" in the form of five conditions that Sargisian should meet if he wanted "to carry on as de facto president after the stolen, rigged, and unconstitutional election, without a popular mandate."

Those conditions included Hovannisian's postelection demand for

a pre-term parliamentary election by the end of 2013, plus amendments to the election law to preclude falsification and the right to nominate the justice and foreign ministers, the head of the tax service and the National Security Service, and the prosecutor-general.

Sargisian responded in a letter to Hovannisian saying that while some of those demands were unconstitutional, they could nonetheless serve as the basis for dialogue, provided that Hovannisian ended his hunger strike.

"I am sure that if we start working purposefully, relying on our shared ideas, then we will certainly be able to achieve the result," the presidential press service quoted Sargisian as saying.

Hovannisian, for his part, implicitly rejected that offer of dialogue by refusing to end his hunger strike and insisting – in defiance of official protocol – that he would talk to the president-elect only if the latter came to the square in central Yerevan where Hovannisian was based during his protest.

Hovannisian's tactic of formulating his successive proposals and challenges to Sargisian in terms, and with pre-conditions, that virtually guarantee their rejection has increasingly led pundits to question precisely what he hoped to achieve.

For example, *Nor Zhamanakner* (New Times) party chairman Aram Karapetian argued that Hovannisian's actions are "devoid of all logic. If he was certain he won the ballot, he should have acted more decisively, and if he wasn't, he should have tried from the very start to reach an agreement with the president."

Second, Sargisian managed to expose, if not to exploit, differences in opinion and tactics between Hovannisian and other senior Zharangutian members.

On February 28, the latter entered into talks with the HHK, which has a 70-seat majority in the 131-member parliament, and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation – Dashnaksutiun (HHD), which did not field a presidential candidate.

Those three parties tried but failed to reach consensus on convening an emergency parliament session to discuss ways

to resolve the post-presidential standoff, including holding parliamentary elections within the next 12 months; and appointing Hovannisian to chair a multi-party commission, which would draft constitutional reforms over the next two years that would, among other things, curtail the president's powers.

Hovannisian distanced himself from those talks even before they collapsed due to the HHK's rejection of the other two parties' proposals.

Sargisian has not commented publicly on Hovannisian's decision to end his hunger strike. But senior HHK member Hovhannes Sahakian has hailed it as "a prudent step" and predicted it will open the door to a face-to-face meeting between the two men.

Meanwhile, with just one week to go before Sargisian's inauguration, the political focus is already shifting to the May 5 elections for the Yerevan municipal council.

Former Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian recently underscored the political significance of that ballot, given that between one third and one half of Armenia's population lives in the capital.

Oskanian, who was elected to parliament in May 2012 on the ticket of the Bargavach Hayastan (Prosperous Armenia) Party (BHK), will head the BHK's list of candidates for the Yerevan ballot. He had expressed support last month for Hovannisian's hunger strike, telling RFE/RL's Armenian Service that what the opposition leader was doing "is totally justified and legitimate."

Nonetheless, according to HHD member Armen Rustamian, that party's proposal that either Hovannisian or Oskanian head a broad-based opposition bloc to contest the Yerevan ballot proved a nonstarter because the two men could not reach agreement on which of them should head the joint list of candidates.

Instead, Hovannisian will head a coalition named Barev (Hello) Yerevan composed of Zharangutian and five smaller parties, two of which were previously aligned in former President Levon Ter-Petrosian's Armenian National Congress.

## Correction

A story which ran in the March 30 issue of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* about the film, "Hove," and the release of its DVD, had a misspelling in the website name, where those interested can purchase a copy. The website is [www.hovethewind.com](http://www.hovethewind.com).



## INTERNATIONAL

## Turkey Cancels Flights to Armenia after Azeri Resistance

YEREVAN (Reuters) – Turkey has canceled the first ever scheduled flights to Armenia, days before the first plane was due to take off following opposition from Turkey's ally and energy partner Azerbaijan.

The twice-weekly flights between Turkey's eastern city of Van and the Armenian capital Yerevan were scheduled to begin April 3 and had been encouraged during US rapprochement talks with the two nations.

The flights were meant to boost bilateral tourism and trade, but with tickets already on sale, Turkey's civil aviation authority stepped in and ordered the flights to be suspended.

Officials at Turkey's transport min-

istry confirmed the flights had been stopped, but declined to give a reason. BoraJet, the private Turkish carrier set to fly the 45-minute route, has also declined to comment on the stoppage. One BoraJet official denied the Van-Yerevan flights had ever been planned, even though the route was still available as a booking option on the firm's website last week.

Narekavank Tour, a Yerevan-based travel agency that has spent the last three years organizing the flights together with a Turkish travel agency in Van, said the reason was political.

"The organizers were keen on staying away from politics. It is very sad and discouraging that Turkish author-

ities were not able to do the same and finally let politics interfere with this promising initiative," it said in a statement.

Turkey, which has never opened an embassy in Armenia, closed its land border in 1993 in a show of solidarity with Azerbaijan, a Muslim and Turkic-speaking ally which also supplies Ankara with billions of cubic meters of Caspian natural gas each year.

Turkey has sought to ease Azerbaijan's concerns over previous reconciliation moves by Turkey and Armenia since rapprochement efforts have alarmed Azerbaijan, which has yet to resolve the Nagorno-Karabagh dispute with Armenia.

## Turkey's Islamized Armenians Grapple with Tragic Roots

By Sibel Utku Bila

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (*Al-Monitor*) – Abdurrahim Zorarslan's world turned upside down at age 25 when his Kurdish clan revealed to him he was Armenian. His father, a survivor of the Ottoman massacres, saved and Islamized by a Kurdish couple, had already died – without uttering a word about his son's identity. After much soul-searching, Zorarslan "listened to something inside" and "secretly" embraced his Armenian identity.

Now 53, he boldly speaks out and introduces himself as a Christian with the typical Armenian name, Armen.

The self-rediscovery, however, has come with a cost. The retired driver is now at odds with his children and Kurdish wife, a devout Muslim wearing the black chador, but still believes that "one can reach nowhere with fear of his roots."

Zorarslan is among a small but growing number of individuals in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast who have come to openly embrace their Armenian origins, emboldened by the breaking of the Armenian taboo in Turkey over the past several years and the message of pluralism spread by the Kurdish political movement in the region.

The reconnection is a painful process – not only because of deep-rooted fears over the 1915-17 massacres, but also the distinct fabric of the impoverished, rural southeast, where strict patriarchal norms rule closely-knit clans and Islam remains a powerful social glue.

At the turn of the 20th century, Kurds and Armenians dominated the population of eastern Anatolia. Bonded to Turks in Islamic fraternity, Kurds joined the massacres orchestrated by their Ottoman rulers and seized the properties of slain or deported Armenian neighbors. Many Armenian children escaped death in the refuge of Muslim homes: Some were saved out of compassion, others were abducted to be raised as laborers or wives. The adoptees were Islamized and assimilated into Kurdish or Turkish culture. It is unknown how many survivors lived on as Muslims, with estimates ranging from tens of thousands to several hundred thousand.

According to the accounts of descendants in Diyarbakir, Turkey's largest Kurdish city, some survivors kept memory of their Armenian identity, sought out other Islamized Armenians to marry and let their children know their roots. Others sank into silence and tried to obliterate their past, haunted by the horror of the massacres and eager to shield their progeny against persecution.

Neighbors, however, never forgot. A

common childhood memory of descendants is how their peers would taunt them as "gavur" or "infidels" in street games. Relatives would often give away the secret in the heat of household quarrels, calling a father or a grandmother a "dirty Armenian."

Some complain that because of their Muslim faith they are often ostracized also by Turkey's Christian Armenians, who are concentrated in cosmopolitan Istanbul and number about 60,000.

"The [descendants of] Islamized Armenians are 100 percent assimilated. But there is always someone to remind them who they are. They are not fully accepted by either side. It's dramatic," Gafur Turkay, the grandson of an Armenian survivor, said in the yard of the ancient Surp Giragos Church in Diyarbakir, a reminder of the city's once-thriving Armenian community.

After decades of silent awareness, Turkay now introduces himself directly as "an Armenian." His father remains a devout Muslim who has made the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Out of 18 siblings, only he and a brother have converted to Christianity.

The 47-year-old insurer also sits on the board of the foundation that runs the Surp Giragos Church, rebuilt from ruins and re-opened for worship in October.

He estimates that at least one million people in Turkey's southeast bear Armenian blood today, even though mixed marriages and natural population growth have diluted Armenian ancestries. The acknowledgement of Armenian roots, he explained, is a difficult matter since descendants remain strongly bound to Islam and equate Armenianness to Christianity.

"More often than not those people are rigid Muslims – a trait they probably developed in order to gain acceptance and dispel suspicion. Let them be Muslims, but I wish they could at least accept their Armenian origins," Turkay said. "But I can't persuade even my own sister. 'God forbid! You can't make me call myself an Armenian' is all she says."

For Zorarslan, the resentment of his own family is no match to his resolve to discover his roots. On his mobile phone, buzzing with the ringtone of an Armenian tune, he proudly displays pictures of cousins he has tracked down in France, the Netherlands, the United States and Istanbul. He recounts how some relatives were happy to reconnect, but others refused to answer letters and return calls. "Is it about religion? Do they worry we may not be really relatives or do they think I am after money? I'm still trying to figure out," he said.

Behcet Sayan, 47, remembers how his grandfather would keep company with six other survivors in their native village near Diyarbakir and how the

elderly men would chat in Armenian. A former construction worker who now greets visitors at Surp Giragos, Sayan says he has endorsed Christianity "at heart." He wishes other family members follow suit but is pessimistic. "My elder brother is a haji. You cannot change his mind even if you shred him to pieces. I wish my children follow me, but I know life will be difficult for them if they do. Let everybody make their own decision," he said.

Surp Giragos, one of the largest Armenian churches in the Middle East, is still without a priest and a congregation. Nestled behind stone walls on a narrow cobbled street in the ancient heart of Diyarbakir, the edifice serves mostly as a tourist attraction.

Al-Monitor's interview with Turkay in the churchyard was occasionally interrupted by young people, who, after touring the church, wanted to say hi and confide they also had an Armenian ancestor. Some inquired about the Armenian language courses launched in the city last year.

Kevoork Calis, the Armenian teacher who flies every week from Istanbul to teach the course, politely turned down a request by a reporter to attend one of the classes. "I have about 20 students. They are all descendants of Islamized Armenians. Many are attending secretly," he explained.

Compared to Turks, Kurds have been more forthcoming in efforts to reconcile with Armenians, driven by their own suffering in post-Ottoman Turkey and eager to advance their cause for pluralist democracy. Diyarbakir's Kurdish-held local administration, for instance, provided financial assistance to renovate the Surp Giragos Church and sponsored the Armenian language courses in the city.

In February, prominent Kurdish politician Ahmet Turk admitted that "our grandfathers have blood on their hands" and apologized to Armenians. The apology, however, backfired as the veteran lawmaker appeared to reject direct Kurdish responsibility in the massacres, saying that Kurds were "manipulated" by Turks.

Armenian opinion leaders cast further doubt over Kurdish sincerity, irked by remarks that jailed Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan made in his fledgling peace process with Ankara. In a transcript leaked to the media in late February, Ocalan emphasized Islamic bonds between Kurds and Turks, and spoke in hostile terms about Armenians and other non-Muslims.

Amid the soured climate, the Diyarbakir municipality is preparing for a fresh gesture. A monument dedicated to communities that have suffered persecution in Anatolia is expected to be unveiled in the city in the eve of April 24, the Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day.

## International News

### First Yerevan-Stepanakert Flight to Take Place in Spring

PARIS (Armenpress) – During a press conference here, Prime Minister of Nagorno-Karabagh Ara Harutyunyan said the first Yerevan-Stepanakert flight will take place as early as the spring.

Harutyunyan said the construction of the Stepanakert airport has already been completed, but the schedule of the flights has not yet been finalized.

"This problem needs humanitarian rather than political solutions, as each person has the right to move freely on the land and in the air," Harutyunyan said.

Armenian President Serge Sargsian had previously stated that Stepanakert-Yerevan flights would begin despite Azerbaijan's threats to shoot the planes down.

"If Azerbaijan opens fire, there will be a new war," Harutyunyan said, adding that Nagorno-Karabagh has air defense systems.

### Hayrikian Receiving Medical Treatment in The Netherlands

AMSTERDAM (Arminfo) – The leader of the Self-Determination Union Paruyr Hayrikian announced through social media that he is in the Netherlands, receiving treatment for the gunshot wounds he received in January while running for president.

He lashed out against those who condemned him for receiving money from the government for the treatment.

He said the money was necessary as his injuries were grave. He said one doctor in Amsterdam told him it was a miracle he had survived the injuries.

The Armenian authorities decided to provide 20 million drams (about \$50,000) for his treatment abroad after local efforts did not help his pain. Another presidential candidate, Vardan Sedrakyan, has been arrested on suspicion of being the organizer of the attack.

### Aronian Finishes Fourth In London Tournament

LONDON (ArmeniaNow) – Armenian grandmaster Levon Aronian beat Teimour Radjabov of Azerbaijan in the 14th and final round of the FIDE World Chess Candidates' Tournament to finish fourth among eight participants.

Co-leaders in the tournament, Magnus Carlsen of Norway and Vladimir Kramnik of Russia, both lost their games, but eventually Carlsen, who currently ranks as FIDE's top player, was named the winner.

Aronian yielded the third position to Russia's Peter Svidler, despite having the same number of points. Aronian and Carlsen were the only to players to score five victories.

### EU Delegation Promotes Silk Road Program

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Members of a European Union (EU) delegation convened recently to discuss the Black Sea Silk Road Corridor program.

The program is aimed at fostering tourism development, cross-border cooperation and economic development in 173 communities across four countries of the Black Sea Silk Road Corridor – Armenia, Georgia, Greece and Turkey.

The head of the EU delegation, Traian Hristea, noted, "We are hopeful that it will create favorable conditions for the improvement."

US Ambassador to Armenia John Heffern discussed the project's goals. "The first one is partnership, when Armenia, Georgia, Turkey and Greece work together for the welfare of their peoples. The second is the development of village communities. Then come tourism and IT."

Armenian Deputy Minister of Economy Garegin Melkonyan, Deputy Minister of Culture Arev Samuelyan and President of the Armenian International Council on Monuments and Sites Gagik Gyurjian were in attendance.



# Community News

## LA-Area Armenian Students Achieve Victory In Armenian Engineers And Scientists of America 12th Science Olympiad

BURBANK, Calif. – Woodbury University was the site again for the 12th Science Olympiad on Sunday March 10. This annual event organized by the Science Olympiad Committee of the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESA) brings together young Armenian students from different middle and high schools to showcase their completed science projects.

A total of 90 students in grades 6 through 12, with 73 projects, participated in this year's competition. These students were representing nine schools at this event: AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian, Chaminade High School, Charlotte and Elise Merdinian Armenian Evangelical, Holy Martyrs Ferrahian, Rose and Alex Pilibos School, St. Gregory Alfred and Marguerite Hovsepian, TCA Arshag Dickranian, Toll Middle School and Vahan Anoush Chamlian.

The project entries were divided into four categories: junior life sciences, junior physical sciences, senior life sciences and senior physical sciences. These projects were judged by eighteen volunteer scientists and engineers based on creativity, scientific thought and data analysis, thoroughness, presentation, as well as clarity.

Besides showcasing their science projects, the Science Olympiad Committee this year had chosen a wonderful activity to promote teamwork and principles of engineering. The students were divided into groups of five, each group was handed a bag of materials which included 30 sheets of paper, one cardboard (30" x 12"), four pencils, one marble, one roll of tape, a pair of scissors and one ruler (12"). From these materials, they were asked to construct a roller coaster that had a loop and a funnel. They were given one hour to construct and then the roller coasters were judged on creativity, design, and length. A team of five students won based on the complexity of their roller coaster and the length of time it took the marble to get down the track. Each was awarded a movie ticket gift certificate.

The award ceremony started by a presentation by Beatrisa Boyadzhyan, PhD, a research scientist at Quest Diagnostics who talked about the DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) molecule with a fascinating video about DNA's transcription and translation and how DNA may become the hard drive of the future, opening a new way of information data storage and recovery.

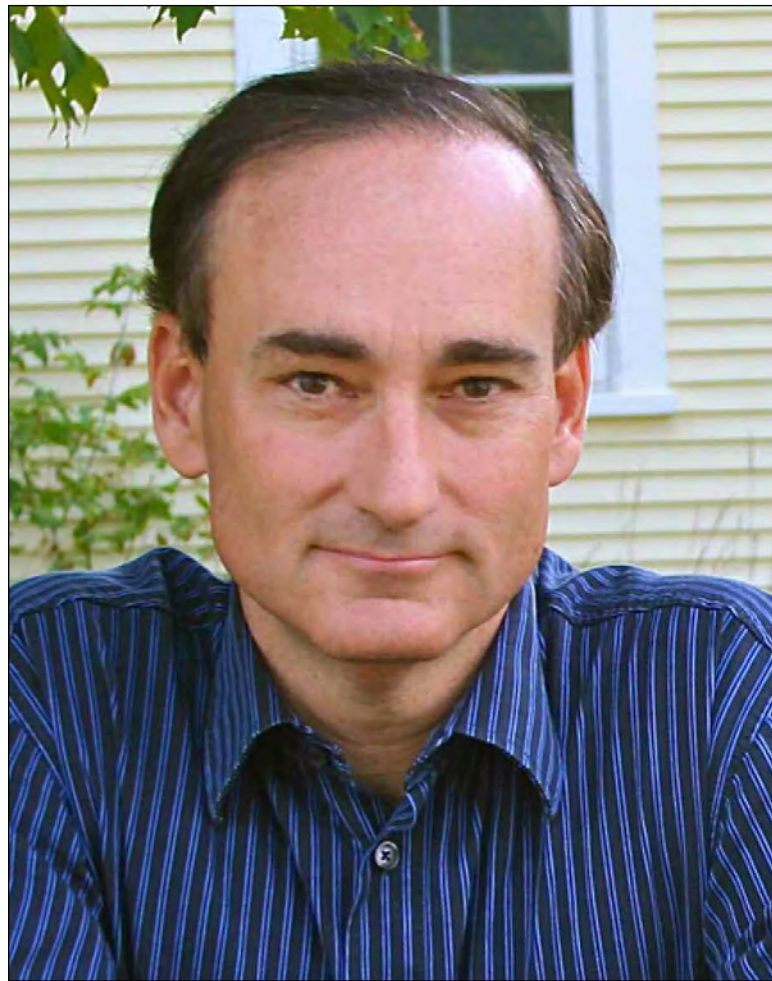
After congratulatory remarks by AESA President Dr. Mardy Kazarians, Jenik Gharabegian, committee chairwoman, welcomed everyone and praised all the participating students for their hard work and dedication in completing their science projects, the participating schools, principals, vice principals, teachers and parents who had been instrumental in students taking part in this science competition.

Dr. Marina Guevrekian was praised for being instrumental in increasing the Science Olympiad endowment fund by \$10,000 by being named the recipient winner of Johnson & Johnson 2012 Volunteer Recognition Grant Program out of 150 worldwide Johnson & Johnson employee applicants.

Anna Patatanyan of St. Gregory Alfred and Marguerite Hovsepian School was the recipient of the teacher award this year. The recipient of the school award was the Elise Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School, represented by their science teacher, Fredrick Sayadian.

"We would like to acknowledge the Science Olympiad Committee members, Emma Abrahamian, Arpi Arman, Sarkis Barkhoudarian, Mariyetta Madatyan, Louisa Manasyan, Talin Petrosian and Arsine Vardanyan for their dedication and devotion," said Kazarians. "In addition, we commend all the sponsors and the scientists and engineers who had visited the schools for mentoring the students at the schools' science fairs along

see OLYMPIAD, page 7



Chris Bohjalian

## Bestselling Author Chris Bohjalian to Speak at Columbia University

NEW YORK – For years, the stories were told in hushed voices. The tragic true-life tales would escape the lips of the survivors in the privacy of their homes as they revealed their struggles to family members, not only to ease the burdens of their harrowing pasts, but to make sure one of the most mournful chapters in the history of their people would never be forgotten.

**By Taleen Babayan**

told to the world. The latest of these is *New York Times* bestselling author Chris Bohjalian's critically-acclaimed novel, *The Sandcastle Girls*. Bohjalian will lead a book discussion at Columbia University on Thursday, April 18, in an event hosted by the Armenian Center at Columbia University.

A love story that takes place during the Armenian Genocide between an Armenian engineer and an American nurse, *The Sandcastle Girls* follows a Genocide survivor's granddaughter as she tries to uncover her family's history and the sorrows of the Armenian massacres that she learns about along the way.

Bohjalian, who is the author of 16 books, has received high praise and accolades from literary critics and readers since his first novel was published 25 years ago. His novel, *Midwives*, was chosen for Oprah's Book Club and Winfrey also selected *The Sandcastle Girls* as her Book of the Week. Literary praise for Bohjalian's writing and for the accurate historical portrayal of the Armenian Genocide in *The Sandcastle Girls* have been recognized by major news outlets including *USA Today*, *Washington Post* and the *Boston Globe*.

"I have been overwhelmed by the support for this novel by the Armenian community around the world. I am deeply and profoundly grateful," said Bohjalian, whose Armenian grandparents on his father's side were survivors of the Armenian Genocide. "Whenever I've spoken to audiences that are predominantly Armenian, I have left moved beyond words," said Bohjalian.

The reaction from non-Armenians towards *The Sandcastle Girls* has been equally positive.

"Consistently non-Armenians have asked me the same sort of question: Why did no one teach me this? Why does no one know this story? They are appalled and, sometimes, aghast," said Bohjalian. "This is a part of our story that too few people know – and we all hope this novel will help open people's eyes to a cataclysmic injustice."

Mark Momjian, chair of the Armenian Center, expressed the significance of Chris Bohjalian's appearance on campus. "The enormous power of Chris Bohjalian's literary art has been recognized worldwide and his masterful novel, *The Sandcastle Girls* is of particular interest to the area's Armenian-American community, who in just two years will be commemorating the centennial of the Armenian Genocide," said Momjian. "I know the Center's friends and supporters

see BOHJALIAN, page 7

## AEF to Fund Computer Information Systems Department at Artsakh State

GLENDALE – The Armenian Educational Foundation (AEF) announced that it approved a \$100,000 budget to fund a four-year computer information systems degree program at Artsakh State University in Stepanakert. It will be named the "AEF Computer Science Department." The program is scheduled to be launched later this year. The \$100,000 will help finance computer hardware, software, instructor salaries and student scholarships.

The project, a collaboration among diaspora and Artsakh (Karabagh) organizations, named "iArtsakh," is an undertaking of the Armenian Educational Foundation, Scholars for Scientific, Educational and Cultural Development, Artsakh Prime Ministry and Artsakh State University.

The iArtsakh project extends ongoing AEF projects such as, school renovations, recently renovated Artsakh State University dormitory, computers for villages, IT training of village teachers and university scholarships.

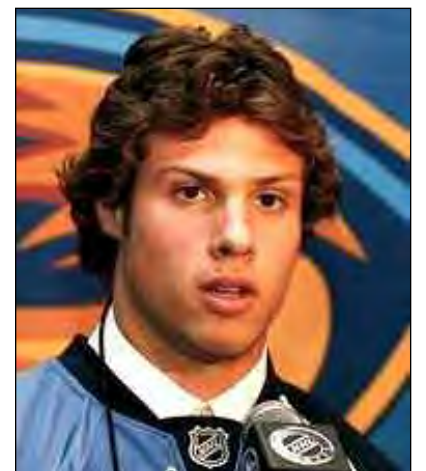
"We at AEF recognize the importance of economic development for Artsakh and believe that this project will have a big impact in developing the infrastructure needed to bring information technology companies to Artsakh," said AEF President Hermineh Pakhianians.

AEF was established in 1950 in Los Angeles and for 63 years has provided financial assistance to Armenian students and educational institutions. For more information, visit AEF's website at [www.aefweb.org](http://www.aefweb.org).

## Zach Bogosian Proud to Be First Armenian in NHL

WINNEPEG, Canada (News.am) – Winnipeg Jets defenseman Zach Bogosian says he is proud to be the first Armenian in NHL.

In an interview with the *New York Hockey Journal*, Bogosian talked about his Armenian heritage.



Zach Bogosian

"Yeah, growing up with an Armenian heritage ... you know, my grandparents are still pretty hardcore about it. My great-grandfather came across when the Genocide started," he said.

"It's just a hard-working family from a small town. I mean, if I can do it, anyone can do it. As far as being the first Armenian, obviously I'm very proud of it. But it's not just on me; it's on my parents and everyone who helped me throughout my whole career," he said.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

## 'Walk Thru the Old Testament' Held in Philadelphia Region

PHILADELPHIA – On Saturday, March 9, more than 100 people gathered at Holy Trinity Church of Cheltenham to do something they never imagined they would ever do – they mimed, spoke, gestured, laughed, and prayed their way through the entire Old Testament in a mere six hours.

"Walk Thru the Old Testament" was sponsored by the Diocesan Department of Youth and Education in partnership with the two Philadelphia parishes of Holy Trinity and St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Church of Wynnewood. Jeanette Der Hagopian, vice chair of the Holy

Trinity Parish Council and passionate advocate of adult Christian education, was chiefly responsible for advocating sponsorship and hosting of the event, which the Holy Trinity pastor, Parish Council and community then embraced whole-heartedly (with many individuals helping defray the costs of the Lenten breakfast and lunch).

for more than 30 years and an instructor for the "Walk Thru the Bible" organization for 35 (Walk Thru the Bible is an international organization employing thousands of instructors throughout the world, including Armenia). From the moment Petersen took the stage, the audience was mesmerized. Between brief explanations of content, he led participants through gestures and mnemonic techniques to help them learn and remember the Old Testament story, from Creation through the prophetic voices that preceded the coming of Christ. He called on a host of talents, assum-

ple's daily lives. As a result, many people later cited a desire to grow more trusting, more loyal, more faithful and more loving in all their relationships, including that with Christ.

Among other inspiring moments was the final exercise when the entire audience of more than 100 faced each other in two groups and in responsorial style read verses from Genesis and then Revelation; people were stunned to see the parallels and how all was promised fulfillment in time "when death and sorrow would be no more and we would once again see the Lord's face" (Rev 21:4;



Roger Petersen leads program participants on a journey through the Old Testament story.

ing different voices, even employing ventriloquism (his storytelling has been featured on a CD of Hans Christian Andersen's Christian-themed tales).

It was a wondrous exercise in imagination: at one point he had everyone picture themselves as standing on a map of the ancient Near East and locate the great cities, rivers, and seas of Bible times (youngest participant Peter Ohnigian, an eighth-grade Sunday School student at Holy Trinity, was designated the city of Ur).

By day's end, he had participants almost eager for another chance to go through the story themselves from the beginning. "We never thought it would be possible to learn so much in such a short time in such an interesting way," observed Larry and Kim Der Hagopian.

Petersen would frequently pause in prayerful reflection and apply biblical lessons to peo-

22:4).

"This Walk Thru the Bible was a great step in the right direction for the Armenian Church – bringing Scripture to life for us all to experience," shared Diana Lulejian, a young adult, eager to see a New Testament seminar.

The seminar drew the support and participation of an ecumenical group: parishioners from five Armenian congregations, visitors from the area who heard of the program from the Walk Thru website, Parish Council chairs and members, Sunday School staffers, and pastors from the region: Fr. Hakob Gevorgyan, Very Rev. Oshagan Gulgulian of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob, Rev. Nerses Manoogian of St. Gregory Armenian Church and Rev. Nishan Bakalian of the Armenian Martyrs Congregational Church (Fr. Mikael Bassale of St. Mark's Armenian Catholic Church was unable to attend).

## Ben Tavitian Earns Wrestling Honors at Central Catholic

By Tom Vartabedian

BRADFORD, Mass. – For someone who took up wrestling to get in shape for football, 220-pound Ben Tavitian certainly has come a long way this winter in his backup sport.

The senior from Central Catholic High School in nearby Lawrence won the North Sectionals against 16 participating schools and also walked away with an award for earning the most falls in the least amount of time.

Seeded third in the Division 2 Sectionals, Tavitian was not considered a pre-meet favorite, not by any stretch, when he had one of those days any high school wrestler would cherish. On a day when most matches went as predicted, he pulled off the biggest upset.

Tavitian breezed into the finals, needing fewer than three minutes to record a pair of pins and earn a spot in the title match. There he posted his third pin of the day in 2:34 over a top-seeded athlete from Dracut.

"I expected to place but not much more than that," said Tavitian. "I was thinking there might be a chance I could win if I worked hard enough and stuck to my guns. In the end, it was just how hard I wanted to work."

For four years, Tavitian has toed the mark at Central Catholic High School – one of the top private Catholic schools north of Boston.



Ben Tavitian, right, is joined by his coach, Ben King

He has shined in the classroom and on the football field.

Wrestling was an after-thought at first until he began his conquests and showed his innate talents.

"Four years ago at Central's open house, the wrestling program wasn't even a thought in Tavitian's mind," admit his parents, Joe and Brenda. "His football coach had recommended it. We're so glad he did."

It only got better after the sectionals. Tavitian kept winning and wound up with an incredible 54-2 record following the state meet where his first two matches lasted just 45 and 50 seconds respectively. The sectional title was a repeat.

Then came New England, where he picked up two more victories, a close 5-4 decision and a 13-6 romp.

Though he never got to defend his Division 2 state title crown from a year ago, very few could boast of 56 wins in his playing deck – for a single season. Of these victories, 45 went for pins – both school records.

In football, Tavitian has been All-Merrimack Valley for two years as a two-way lineman.

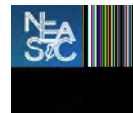
Through it all, he amassed a vast collection of awards that would make any school, family and community proud. With three sisters, there's never a dull moment around the house.

According to his coach, "Ben is probably one of the most sincere kids I've ever coached."

Of the 10 colleges where he has applied, six have already accepted him to date, with more replies to come.



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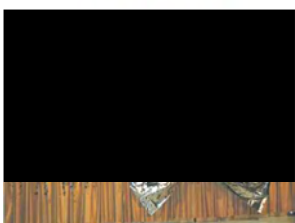
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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## OBITUARY

## Karl Karekin Turekian

### Legendary Yale Professor

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (*New Haven Register*) — Prof. Karl Karekin Turekian died on March 15, 2013, at Connecticut Hospice in Branford. He was 85.

He was Sterling Professor of Geology and Geophysics Emeritus and Senior Research Scientist at Yale University.

He Turekian was born on October 25, 1927, in New York, New York. He was the only child of Vaughan Thomas and Victoria Turekian, survivors of the Armenian Genocides of 1896 and 1915. He earned his BA degree in chemistry from Wheaton College in Illinois, with interruption for military service in the US Navy during World War II. He received his MA and PhD degrees from Columbia University. Turekian joined the faculty at Yale University in 1956 as the university's first geochemist, and he remained on the Yale faculty for his entire career of 57 years.

At Yale, he served as chairman of the Geology and Geophysics Department for two terms and held endowed chairs as the Henry Barnard Davis Professor, the Benjamin Silliman Professor, and as the Sterling Professor of Geology and Geophysics. Turekian also served as curator of Meteorites and Planetary Science in the Peabody Museum, and he was director of the Yale Center for the Study of Global Change and the Yale Institute for Biospheric Studies.

He was a member of the Council on Archeological Studies and chaired the Yale Studies in the Environment Program. He was a member of Yale's Elizabethan Club. He had a long association with Berkeley College at Yale, where he served as Executive Fellow.

He and his wife, Roxanne, were the first married couple who were allowed to live in one of Yale's residential colleges.

He enjoyed an extremely productive career as a geochemist. His scientific research centered on the application of natural radioactive and radiogenic isotopes to the study of Earth, its atmosphere and oceans, with special focus on understanding the processes and impacts of change over time. He explored subjects as diverse as circulation of Long Island Sound, acid rain, climate change, sediment accumulations, cosmic dust flux to Earth, and the composition of the Earth's crust, among others. Studies in his laboratory also focused on determining the growth rates of marine organisms and the origins of the Earth's atmosphere.

Turekian was part of the initial team of scientists who studied the moon rocks brought back during the Apollo space missions.

Turekian was the author of five books and hundreds of articles that were published in international journals and professional volumes. He edited treatises, encyclopedias and handbooks on geochemistry and ocean sciences. He also served as editor for some of the top journals in his field. Turekian performed exemplary service to the profession.

When he began his career at Yale, he served as president of the Yale chapter of Sigma Xi. He served on the US National Committee on Geochemistry, the Climate Research Board, the Ocean Science Board, the UN Council on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Pollution, and several committees and panels for the National Academy of Sciences, the National Research Council, and the National Science Foundation.

He was president of the Geochemical Society, and an active member of the American Geophysical Union and the Geological Society of America. Turekian has been richly recognized for his contributions to science. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He received an honorary doctoral degree from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He was awarded the V. M. Goldschmidt Medal of the Geochemical Society, the Maurice Ewing Medal of the American Geophysical Union, and the Wollaston Medal of The Geological Society of London. Early in his career, he was a Guggenheim Fellow at Cambridge University, and later he was a Sherman Fairchild



Karl Karekin Turekian

Distinguished Scholar at California Institute of Technology. Most recently, in February of this year, Turekian received the William Clyde DeVane Medal for distinguished teaching and scholarship from the Yale College Phi Beta Kappa chapter.

He was known for his legendary "coffee hour" at Kline Geology Laboratory at Yale, where ideas flowed freely and were debated with verve. He took great joy in engagement with his students and his colleagues from around the world. He was a deeply committed Christian, and his Christian faith guided all parts of his life.

He is survived by his wife, Roxanne; his children, Karla Ann Turekian and Vaughan Charles Turekian; his daughter-in-law, Heather Leigh Turekian; his grandchildren, Aleena Marie Turekian and Charles ("Chip") Henry Turekian; and many cousins, nieces and nephews. A private graveside service will be held at Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven. A celebration of Professor Turekian's life will take place in the future.

Donations in Professor Turekian's memory may be made to the Armenian Missionary Association of America, 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ, 07652; Children's Hospital Foundation, 111 Michigan Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20010; or The Connecticut Hospice, Inc. 100 Double Beach Rd., Branford CT, 06405.

## Donation

In memory of Daphne Abeel, former assistant editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, the Board of Directors of the Armenian Library and Museum of America donates \$100 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

# ADVERTISE IN THE MIRROR

The Detroit United Committee presents the

## 98th Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

Special Keynote Speaker

**Dr. Susan Karamanian**

International Law Expert

Saturday, April 20, 2013

AGBU Alex & Marie Manoogian School

7 pm

Emcee Judge Lisa Asadoorian

Please join us for this commemoration event as we honor our ancestors and seek justice for the loss of 1.5 million Armenians at the hand of the Ottoman Turks in 1915-1923. We welcome as our keynote speaker, Dr. Susan Karamanian, a leading expert on international law who serves as Associate Dean for International and Comparative Legal Studies at George Washington University's Law School. Dr. Karamanian will explore the possibilities for Armenians to pursue justice through the U.N. International Courts for Human Rights and the International and Criminal court, both located at the Hague.

Program will include a presentation by the Alex & Marie Manoogian AGBU High School students.

Everybody is cordially invited - Reception to follow

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## St. Sahag-St. Mesrob Medal Bestowed Upon Three AGBU Educators



The honorees alongside AGBU Vice President and Chairman of the School Board of Trustees Sinan Sinanian, AGBU MDS Principal Hagop Hagopian, and DHS Vice Principal Anahid Nalbandian-Pezeshkian

CANOGA PARK, Calif. — On Saturday, March 16, at a ceremony held at the Nazarian Center, Karekin II, Catholicos of all Armenians, awarded the St. Sahag-St. Mesrob medal to Kevork Agopian, Hermine Sahagian and Zarmouhy Minassian, three distinguished members of the Armenian community and retired teachers who have been part of the fabric of the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian school for more than a quarter century.

The religious ceremony, officiated by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese, was followed by a 90-minute program dedicated to the three honorees. AGBU Vice President and Chairman of the School Board of Trustees Sinan Sinanian was the keynote speaker. Sinanian highlighted the role of AGBU and its educational institutions in the struggles and triumphs of the Armenian people during the past century and

paid tribute to the dedication, commitment and contributions of the three honorees in promoting academic excellence during their years of outstanding service to the students and community at the Manoogian-Demirdjian school.

Members of the school staff, family representatives and the three honorees took to the podium to speak about their experiences and impressions on this historic occasion. Chairman Paul Kousharian presented the honorees with plaques on behalf of the AGBU Melkonian Alumni Organization. Senior class student Aneesa Youssefi took the stage to sing Dear Teacher, accompanied on the piano by music teacher Arus Andreassian. The event was attended by a large number of school alumni who came to show their respect and gratitude to their mentor teachers. The honorees were overjoyed at receiving bouquets of flowers from their former students.

The entire program was conducted by Hratch Sepetjian, the head of the Armenian department at the Manoogian-Demirdjian school. More than 300 attendees enjoyed the company of the honorees and their families during the reception that followed the program.

This program was organized jointly by the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School and AGBU Melkonian Alumni Organization.

## LA-Area Armenian Students Achieve Victory in Armenian Engineers & Scientists of America 12th Science Olympiad

OLYMPIAD, from page 4

with the ones who judged the projects for the participating students.”

The winning students are:

For junior physical sciences, first place, Daniel Yacoubian of Hovsepian and Nicolas

Haroutiounian of Merdianian; third place, Christine Hakopyan of AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian and Daniel Avakian of Merdianian.

Honorable Mentions, Edwin Danellian and Patrick Begian of Chamlian, Zovak Daduryan and Levon Avedikyan of Hovsepian

For senior physical sciences, second place, Arpi Beshlikyan of Rose and Alex Pilibos, third place, Bedig Deridarian and Lily Dermendjian of Rose and Alex Pilibos.

Honorable Mentions, Arthur Mazlovman, Hakop Mkhisian, David Ivazov and Nerses Bogosyan of Arshag Dickranian school

For junior life sciences, first place, Katia Khanalian of Hovsepian, Nanor Bedrosian of Merdianian, second place, Mary Aylozian of Chamlian, third place, Ani Tchorbajian and Christine Samuelian of Holy Martyrs Ferrahian. Honorable Mention, Mareen Kassabian of Chamlian

For senior life sciences, second place, Talar Kasabian of Rose and Alex Pilibos, third place, Lilit Shishikyan of Arshag Dickranian, Honorable mentions, Mary Baghdasarian, Nairi Baghdasarian and Kozetta Gyurdzhyan of Arshag Dickranian

The AESA encourages all Armenian students from 6th through 12th grades whether in public or private schools to strongly consider participating in the next 2014 AESA Science Olympiad. For more information, check AESA's website at [www.aesa.org](http://www.aesa.org).



The young winners of the AESA Olympiad

## Chris Bohjalian to Speak at Columbia University

BOHJALIAN, from page 4

are eager to hear this distinguished writer, whose originality and brilliance have touched so many hearts.”

Vice chair of the Armenian Center, Dr. Nicole Vartanian, said the Armenian Center is excited to be hosting Bohjalian upon the paperback release of *The Sandcastle Girls*.

“His passionate portrayal of love and loss set amidst the backdrop of the Armenian Genocide has rightly earned him widespread praise from all corners of the literary community,” said Vartanian. “It seems particularly fitting that our event will take place at Teachers College, given the rich and robust educational content which forms the foundation of Chris’ novels. *The Sandcastle Girls* is an especially poignant example of this, as the story has educated masses of Chris’ loyal readers who learned the horrific events of the Genocide through the quality of his research and the power of his prose.”

The discussion of *The Sandcastle Girls* will take place at 7 p.m. in the Cowin Conference Center (147 Horace Mann Hall) at Columbia University Teachers College, 525 W. 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue. A question-and-answer session and a book signing will take place after the presentation. Reception to follow.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

# State House Armenian Genocide Commemoration, April 19

COMMEMORATION, from page 1  
organizing the event is jointly chaired by state Representatives Jonathan Hecht (D-Watertown), Dave Rogers (D-Cambridge) and John Lawn (D-Watertown); and state Sen. Will

The participation of youth is an integral part of the commemoration. Members of the Homenetmen Scout Troop will attend, as will students from the Armenian Sisters' Academy and St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary

tion to the commemoration," said Lawn. "This is a visible way of showing the pride in history and culture of Armenian Americans as they strive for recognition of the Genocide."

"It is time for recognition of the Armenian Genocide. As a newly elected state representative I look forward to hosting the Commemoration and advancing this worthy cause for years to come," said Rogers.

Free buses to the State House, provided by

the Knights of Vartan, will leave St. James and St. Stephen's Churches in Watertown at 9:00 a.m. Bus transportation will be provided to anyone who is unable to march from the State House to the Heritage Park. In the case of inclement weather the march will not take place and a reception will be held at the Great Hall of the State House. Buses will depart Heritage Park at the conclusion of the program at 2 p.m. and return directly to Watertown.



The commemoration at the State House last year

Brownsberger (D-Belmont), who will host the day. "The march expresses the ongoing work of recognizing the Armenian Genocide and our desire to reach out to others and build awareness that as a world community we must work to prevent the horrors of genocide," said Musserian.

Survivors of the Genocide will be presented with proclamations at the State House ceremony and photographs of others will be present through the participation of attendees in the "Stand Up For Your Survivor" program organized by Arlington High School senior Anahis Kechejian. "There are so few survivors left," said Kechejian, "This is one way for descendants to honor our ancestors, and for youth such as myself to pledge our efforts to work for justice and preserve our Armenian heritage."

School, who will perform music at the State House. Martin Haroutunian and Tigran Avetisyan will perform at the Heritage Park.

"To see our youth involved in this event is particularly meaningful to me," said Hecht. "They are our bridge to the future and our hope that such atrocities will never take place again. The late Speaker George Keverian, who began the annual commemoration at the State House in 1985, would be pleased to see the program has now extended beyond the State House with this year's march."

"When the posters of survivors are held high in the House Chamber for all to see, it reminds us of a history that must be recognized and remembered, and calls us to the importance of working for human rights," said Brownsberger. "I look forward to all ages marching together."

"The march to the park is a wonderful addi-

## Billboards from Peace of Art Ask for Genocide Condemnation

BILLBOARDS, from page 1

Peace of Art, Inc. is a nonprofit educational organization that uses art to address human concerns and to promote peaceful solutions to conflict.

This year the billboards will be located in Foxboro, Watertown and Cambridge.

One digital billboard is on display now on Route 1 in Foxboro. A second billboard will be on display on April 1 in Watertown, on Mount Auburn Street, close to the Armenian cultural centers and churches. In addition, a third billboard will be on display on Cambridge Street, near Lechmere Station, East Cambridge.

Artist Daniel Varoujan Hejinian, president and founder of Peace of Art Inc., said, "With these billboards we are honoring the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide, calling upon the international community to recognize the Armenian Genocide and to condemn the perpetrators." He added, "Ninety eight years have passed but the bloody hand prints of the horrible events of 1915 stained the pages of the world history, when 1.5 million Armenians lost their lives."

The 2013 billboard depicts bloody hand-

prints on the words "Armenian Genocide" over a black background. Since 1996, Hejinian has been calling for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. In 2004 Peace of Art, Inc. began to sponsor the commemorative billboards honoring the victims and calling for the recognition of the Armenian



Genocide. This year's message further calls for the condemnation of genocide.

To date, the Armenian Genocide has been recognized by more than 20 countries and 42 US states.

However, in spite of his campaign promise to recognize the Armenian Genocide, in the last four years, President Obama has failed to use the term genocide in reference to the slaughter of Armenians.

**98th ANNIVERSARY  
COMMEMORATION  
ARMENIAN GENOCIDE**  
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TURKEY IS GUILTY OF GENOCIDE • DENYING THE UNDENIABLE IS A CRIME

**TIMES SQUARE**  
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**2:00-4:00 PM**

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With the participation of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, Prelacy of the Armenian Church of America, Armenian Missionary Association of America, Armenian Catholic Eparchy for US and Canada, Mid-Atlantic ACYOA, AYF-YOARF, Armenian Youth Organizations, and University Armenian Clubs

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[www.theforgotten.org](http://www.theforgotten.org), [www.armenian-genocide.org](http://www.armenian-genocide.org), [www.twentyvoices.com](http://www.twentyvoices.com)

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8:00 PM

Armenian Cultural & Educational Center  
47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown, MA 02472





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# SOAR Continues Mission to Aid Orphans

ORPHANS, from page 1

"During that trip we also saw a few of the orphanages and all of them were in bad shape at that time," said Yacoubian. After extensive research, Yacoubian and his wife found that there were not any organizations focusing directly on aiding these orphanages.

From there, the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) was born, and the Yacoubians organized a board of directors and began formal operations in 2006.

In less than a decade, SOAR has grown from a singular idea formulated while visiting an Armenian orphanage to a full-fledged non-profit organization encompassing 32 chapters worldwide – and growing. Its mission is to provide humanitarian relief to orphaned children living in Armenia.

SOAR provides assistance to 27 entities, including 16 orphanages and summer camps in Artsakh (Karabagh,) Georgia, Syria and Lebanon, in addition to Armenia. Its aid reaches both "natural" and "social" orphans in these facilities. Natural orphans have no parents and social orphans have parents unwilling or unable to care for them.

SOAR not only offers its assistance to orphaned children, but also orphaned adults,



Arsen Alaverdyan at the Gumri Social Childcare Center received much-needed purchases through his sponsorship funds from Lilit Martirosyan.

efficiently. "We have also been able to increase the amount we can help these children over the years," he said.

A couple of years ago, SOAR began its sponsorship program that allows them to allocate funds directly for the children themselves, in addition to the aid they provide to the facilities. With the sponsorship program, the sponsors are matched to individual children and the funds are exclusively used to meet the needs of that child, such as physical therapy, psychological counseling, surgery, braces, chess lessons and more. "When we post a child that needs sponsoring, the response is generally very quick and we find them a sponsor. There are some individuals who sponsor multiple children," explained Yacoubian.

As SOAR continues to expand its resources and outreach, their original mission to aid the Armenian orphans remains at the forefront of the organization. "We believe that these children are the most vulnerable population in Armenia," said Yacoubian.

SOAR has several upcoming events including a partnership with attorney and author Mark Geragos, who will donate a portion of the proceeds from his upcoming book tour to the organization. Geragos and co-author Pat Harris will be speaking about their new book, *Mistrial: An Inside Look at How the Criminal Justice System Works...and Sometimes Doesn't*. Book tour dates include April 14 in Philadelphia, April 27 in Chicago, May 4 in New York/ New Jersey, May 5 in Providence, May 6 in Boston and May 8 in Detroit. May 4 is also the date for an upcoming SOAR reception in Philadelphia.



Edgar Gaukchyan receives a special package of school supplies from his sponsor.

holistic care in a family-like setting. Warm Hearth-Jermik Ankyun is located outside of Yerevan in Third Village and is now formally affiliated with the SOAR Colorado chapter.

SOAR has been able to grow largely due to the dedication and foresight of its founding members. At least four of the original members of the board of directors have been with SOAR since its inception.

"It [SOAR] was always envisioned as more than just a Philadelphia organization. It's just grown from there," said Yacoubian, who also serves as a resource for members of the community considering adopting from Armenia.

There are currently 32 – soon-to-be 33 – chapters of SOAR throughout the world. "The goal has been to have 50 chapters by 2015, our 10th anniversary and the centennial of the Armenian Genocide," he added, stating that new chapters are slated for locations as diverse as Montreal, Switzerland and Iowa in the forthcoming months.

SOAR members and directors have gone to great lengths to ensure that the organization runs efficiently and transparently, which can

sometimes be an issue for organizations trying to connect funds and resources to where they are needed overseas. SOAR members and directors manage the distribution of resources by carefully tracking all resources and ensuring the resources reach the orphanages, facilities and ultimately the children who need them.



Special needs children at an orphanage SOAR has started to help

meaning those who are 18 and older, who need aid transitioning from the orphanage system and for those with special needs.

For example, Warm Hearth-Jermik Ankyun is a private group home housing approximately 13 orphans with disabilities and mental illnesses who have outgrown the state-funded orphanages. It provides each resident with an alternative to the psychiatric institutions and offers



A child at one of the SOAR affiliated orphanages

"For example, when we ship mattresses to the orphanages from Maine, the local chapter president is at the shipping site counting the mattresses, verifying the number and signing the invoice for the sea container. Likewise, when the shipping container arrives to the designated location, the local SOAR liaison is right there at the docks to count the mattresses, verify the number, sign the invoice and ensure that all the mattresses reach the orphanages."

SOAR also closely monitors the needs of the individual facilities and tracks growing areas of concern.

Due to the recent uprisings in Syria, there are more orphaned children in that country than in previous years. The SOAR Syria chapter, which aids the local orphanages, is headed by Father Armenag Bedrossian and Sr. V. Louisa Kassarian. One of the issues plaguing Syria is that "there are a lot of children living outside orphanages," said Yacoubian.

Like the organization itself, SOAR's resources and reach have expanded rapidly, but



Liliana Yacoubian, inspiration for SOAR and daughter of founders George S. Yacoubian Jr. and his wife, Erica

SOAR is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. For a complete list of all of SOAR's services, affiliated orphanages, facilities and chapters worldwide and ways to donate or sponsor visit [www.soar-us.org](http://www.soar-us.org).



# Arts & Living

## Fresno PBS Station To Screen 'Orphans Of the Genocide' Documentary

FRESNO – Armenoid Productions this week announced its documentary, "Orphans of the Genocide," will be screened by ValleyPBS, Station KPVT 18, on April 18 at 7 p.m. (PDT). The screening will be part of the ValleyPBS station fundraising drive, which will be hosted by actor Ken Davitian from the film, "The Artist."

Donors will receive copies of "Orphans of the Genocide" DVD and accompanying book with various levels of donations.

Created by four-time Regional Emmy Award winner filmmaker, Bared Maronian, the documentary weaves historical archives with interviews and memoirs of Armenian orphans establishing irrevocable proof of the Armenian Genocide.

Armenians nationwide are asked to contact their local PBS station and urge them to screen "Orphans of the Genocide" during the month of April.

The documentary is an emotional visual journey through never-before-seen archival footage and discovered memoirs of orphans who lived through the last century's first, fully documented and least recognized Armenian Genocide of 1915. The documentary follows Maurice Missak Kelechian whose research findings unveil the site of an Armenian orphanage located at the present day Antoura College near Beirut, Lebanon, where 1,000 Armenian Genocide Orphans had lived and were forcefully converted and "Turkified" during World War I. In addition to the Antoura site, the documentary unveils numerous other orphanages where Armenian orphans were housed and profiles one orphan girl who was adopted and later became one of Turkey's high-profiled national icons as the daughter of Atatürk, the founder of modern-day Turkey. The documentary traces the lives of many orphans who lived through the horrors of a war, losing parents and being separated from siblings and shipped to various countries.

The documentary also explores the herculean task of the American Near East Relief Foundation in saving, feeding and sheltering over 150,000 documented Armenian genocide orphans between 1919 and 1926 by setting up over 200 temporary and permanent orphanages in Historic Armenia, Turkey and throughout the Middle East. One of these orphanages was built in Gumri, the second largest city in Armenia, and housed 22,000 orphans.

Additionally, "Orphans of the Genocide" includes interviews with numerous public figures including British journalist Robert Fisk, whose article "Living Proof of the Armenian Genocide," published in 2010 by The Independent, included many of the archival proofs - Armenian-American Dr. Jack Kevoorkian, as well as revealing testimonials from children of the Armenian Genocide orphans scattered around the world. The Armenoid team offers never-before-seen archival footage weaving stories of Armenian orphans from around the globe.

Individuals interested in supporting the Armenoid projects can make tax deductible donations following the screening or by contacting director, Bared Maronian at bared.maronian@gmail.com.

Founded in 2006, Armenoid Productions has produced numerous award-winning documentaries, among them "Father Komitas," depicting the lives and deaths of two major Armenian clergymen's contributions to the Armenian nation and "The Wall of the Genocide," a poetic tribute to the 5,000 year-old Armenian History starting from the Noah's Ark resting upon Mount Ararat to the modern day assassination of outspoken Turkish-Armenian editor of Agos weekly newspaper, Hrant Dink. Both documentaries were honored with Telly Awards in 2007 and 2008, respectively.



Knarik Nerkararyan

## Merrimack Valley Plans Music-Themed Genocide Commemoration

NORTH ANDOVER, Mass. – Music throughout the ages will be the theme for the 98th memorial observance marking Armenian Martyrs' Day, April 28, in the Merrimack Valley.

Titled, "Weaving Armenia's Story Through Music," the program will include performances by New England musicians: soprano Knarik Nerkararyan, mezzo soprano Victoria Avetisyan and tenor Yeghishe Manucharyan, accompanied by pianist Levon Hovsepian.

**By Tom Vartabedian**

The commemoration will take place at 3 p.m. at North Andover High School, marked by a memorial service jointly celebrated by pastors from different churches throughout the Merrimack Valley, hosting a combined choir led by Paul Ketchoyian, accompanied by Arsen Russian.

Admission is free and open to the public. A reception will follow in the school cafeteria.

"We're very fortunate to have attracted three of the more prominent singers anywhere," said Sossy Jeknavorian, chairman of Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee of Merrimack Valley. "What better way to tell Armenia's fabled history than through music and song. Our story knows no lyrical boundaries."

Winners of a student essay contest will be presented with awards after reading their essays.

The event will also include a design and fundraising update on the \$35,000 Genocide memorial planned for Lowell. The project is made possible by donations from surrounding communities.

"Through voluntary contributions, more than \$70,000 has been donated to worthy charities in Armenia," replied Jeknavorian. "This remains a tribute to the members who have served this committee over the past two decades. It isn't often you see an event attended by four generations."

Nellie Nazarian, the sole remaining Genocide survivor in the Merrimack Valley and Southern New Hampshire, will also appear. The 102-year-old Methuen resident has attended previous commemorations and has outlived all her peers.

Among the performers, Nerkararyan is a choir director of St. Gregory Church in North Andover. More recently, she gained positive reviews for her role of Kupava in the Rimsky-Korsakov opera, "The Snow Maiden," with the Lowell Opera Company.

Avetisyan has performed throughout the world. She made her debut with the Boston Lyric Opera Company, appeared solo at Carnegie Hall and with the Boston Symphony as soloist for Verdi's *Requiem*.

Manucharyan recently reformed Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Charlotte Symphony, following an appearance with the Metropolitan Opera Society where he sang the new production of "Armida" with Renee Fleming. His Carnegie Hall debut was with the Opera Orchestra of New York in Donizetti's "Anna Bolena."

Hovsepian performs actively and teaches piano at the Powers Music School in Belmont and Keys for Kids in Lexington. He has appeared with the New England Philharmonic and taught master classes at La Corunia Music in Spain.

Communities in Greater Haverhill, Lawrence and Lowell will commemorate the Genocide throughout the week with proclamation signings, meetings and flag-raising ceremonies.

## French-Armenian Filmmaker Screens 'The Son of the Olive Merchant'

GLENDALE – On April 19, 7p.m., the Glendale Central Library Auditorium, will host the award-winning French-Armenian filmmaker, Mathieu Zeitindjioglou, to screen his documentary film, "The Son of the Olive Merchant." The film is in English, French and Turkish with English subtitles.

"The Son of the Olive Merchant" is based on Zeitindjioglou's honeymoon trip to Turkey with his wife in order to learn about his Armenian heritage. The couple questions and discusses the Armenian Genocide with the people whom they meet during the trip.

What they learn during the film is that even younger generations of Turks continue to deny the Armenian Genocide.

"The Son of the Olive Merchant" incorporates interviews, news footage, historical documents and animation. This documentary has been screened at more than 10 international film festivals around the world. It won prizes at the Los Angeles Films and Scripts Festival and the Los Angeles Movies Awards (LAMA II).

Zeitindjioglou was born in Versailles, France. He earned his degree in economic science and management at the University of Versailles. His work includes experimental art videos, as well as several short films that won him recognition at film festival awards. His films and shorts include, "The Man Who Was Not Hungry," "Tell Me About Love" and "The Philanthropist and the Farm." Zeitindjioglou is now working on his next documentary in India.

The running time for the film is 76 minutes. The Glendale Central Library Auditorium is located at 222 East Harvard St. Admission is free and seating is limited.

## Folk Arts Center Hosts Cultural Dance Tour of Armenia

STONEHAM, Mass. – The Folk Arts Center of New England and dancer Tineke van Geel have announced plans for a cultural and dance tour throughout Armenia August 30-September 10.

Van Geel noted, "September is a popular time to visit Armenia. The sky is usually clear enough in Yerevan to permit awe-inspiring views of Mt. Ararat."

The program consists of dance classes in the morning, taught by local teachers and sightseeing tours and free time to explore Yerevan in the afternoons and evenings.

Tour planners recommend a basic knowledge of dance steps, although non-dancers are welcome to join the tour and alternate activities can be arranged.

Tour members will be housed in rooms with two single beds and private bathroom at the Yerevan State University Foreign Guest House, close to city center with restaurants, shops and museums nearby.

Tour participants will also visit Lake Sevan, ancient churches and there will be excursions to some of the country's historic landmarks and monuments of the Ancient era and Middle Ages, such as the ruins of Zvartnots Church and the religious center of Armenia, Echmiadzin.

The tour will include visits to villages where folk dances can be witnessed firsthand. Participants will visit Sasnashen in the north-west part of the country, where descendants of Sasounts (Armenians from Sasoun, former west Armenia, present Turkish Anatolia) where villagers still dance the dances of their historical area.

For travel options and pricing, contact the Folk Arts Center of New England at <http://www.facone.org/programs/armenianto.html>. Registration closes April 30.





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Armenian over the Generations:

## The Story of the Sultan's Bookbinder and His Descendants

By **Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

NEW YORK — Parunag Gurjian died a poor man in Egypt in 1937, leaving a bill outstanding at a poor house hospital. His life had also begun humbly, in a fishing village on the sea. However, Parunag moved to Constantinople and apprenticed as a bookbinder. His life soon changed for the better. He ended up living in the upscale neighborhood of Pera, and prospered. In those days, Seroun Wang, his great-granddaughter explains, bookbinders were like jewelers. They used gold and precious jewels on bindings, and were highly skilled and sought after.

Parunag was even called to the palace by Sultan Abdul Hamid II sometime in the late 1880s or 1890s, and given the seal of the sultan to post over the door of his atelier. This seems like a great honor, but there was a dark side to it. Abdul Hamid was known as the “bloody sultan” for his massacres of Armenians. Wang said that Parunag told his children, Nuritza and Levon, that “you are called to the palace once to get the bag of gold, but when you are invited the second time, you never come home. We have to leave. You get the bag of gold but...”

Consequently, one day he suddenly took the children out for a walk, but instead took a ship to Varna, Bulgaria, where there was an aunt and uncle. Parunag's wife had died previously in an accident. The children were placed in a French Catholic school, while Parunag went to Boston to see if it could be a suitable place for their new home.

Eventually, a Turkish man came to his place and said the sultan wanted to know why he left, and presented him with a second bag of gold to

pay for him to come back home. Parunag felt that only in Cairo could he be safe from the sultan, so he went back to Bulgaria and took his children to Egypt, where he married again. Wang does not know why Parunag specifically was important enough to be invited back, or whether he had done anything to warrant being considered a threat to the Ottoman government.

Parunag's son died of tuberculosis, which he had caught while attempting to come to the US via Italy. Unfortunately, Italy and the Ottoman Empire were at war then, and since he bore an Ottoman passport, he was jailed and got sick. He was sent back to Egypt where he died.

Levon's older sister Nuritza (“Nurig”) went to St. George's Austrian School in Constantinople before the moves to Varna and then Cairo, and became an educated young woman. Meanwhile, a man named Hovannes Hacdorjian [Hovhannes Khachadurian, also spelled Hackdorjian] of Kharpert had come to the US as a teenager. By the time he reached the age of 30, his older brother told him he needed to get married, and suggested he go to Cairo where cultured Armenians lived. With a letter of introduction, Hovannes met and soon married Nuritza. Back in Philadelphia, they had a daughter, Seroun Anna, in 1906, and a son, Armen, in 1909. Hovannes worked in various businesses, including men's clothing stores and shoe stores. His father had a big shoe factory in Kharpert, which gave him some initial experience in this field.



Parunag Gurjian in Cairo

Nuritza and Hovannes with their children took a trip to Varna to live with the former's aunt, but after a year they left. This may have been during the period of the Armenian Genocide or its aftermath. Seroun later related to her daughter that once they sat on the floor in church and a woman approached her, saying that you think I'm poor because I sit on the floor, but look at these coins sewn on my clothes — this means I'm rich. After a stop in Constantinople they went back to the US because Hovannes needed a hernia operation. Consequently, they were unable to see Parunag in Egypt.

Seroun Anna's daughter pointed out that at the time, the marriage of an Armenian from Kharpert with one from Istanbul was considered a mixed marriage, and many did not welcome it. In fact, before she died, Seroun Anna confessed that the Kharpert side of the family never fully accepted her, in part because she spoke standard Western Armenian in the house. Her attempts to tell jokes in the Kharpert dialect to them failed to bridge the gap. Nonetheless, she instructed her daughter not to speak to Armenians who used the non-standard “gor” ending in Western Armenian.

There is a historically interesting anecdote (for Armenians at least) related by Hovannes' granddaughter, Seroun: “In 1933 at the back of my grandfather's store in Philadelphia there was a meeting of Armenians. My grandfather was busy in the front with business, or maybe the Armenians there didn't trust him. Then they came out. A man who left, named Richardson, was wealthy. He manufactured the pink, green and white mints still seen today in many restaurants, called Richardson Candies. He said, ‘don't worry, tomorrow everything will be fine.’ The next day they found out that they killed the bishop in New York.” After that, Hovannes and his family would have nothing to do with members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

Seroun Anna's brother, Armen, served in the Marines and became an accomplished pianist. He played on cruise ships, the Republican Club on Capitol Hill and many other clubs. He dated a famous Armenian opera singer for some time, but never married.

Seroun Anna went to work for the Federal government in Washington, DC, and both her parents eventually died. The division of the

Department of Labor in which she worked was transferred to New York City, and there she made new friends, including many Chinese girls. While waiting for somebody, she met Dr. Chao Chen Wang, who was born in Chang Zhou, in the Jiangsu province of China, and graduated from Jiao Tung University in Shanghai, where he studied electrical engineering. He was sent to Harvard University by the Chinese government and specialized in ultra-high frequency communications. He earned his doctorate in 1940.

The two began to see each other and decided to marry. The Armenian Church refused to marry them, as did the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, so they held their service on January 25, 1947 at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in New York, which was more liberal. Dr. Wang had attended services at a church in China, but only was baptized prior to the marriage. He had worked for RCA and Westinghouse.

Dr. Wang almost never talked about this wartime work, but his daughter Seroun was told by his friends after he died that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had secretly met with him in the White House. She also found out earlier that one of his inventions, a type of klystron, may have contributed to ending the war by misleading the enemy at night to think he was shooting at Allied forces instead of his own troops. He later worked for Sperry Gyroscope, and then became the founding president of the Industrial Technology Research Institute in Hsinchu, Taiwan.

As reflected in her name, daughter Seroun Mei Mei Wang, the source of the information in this article, grew up in the US with two ancient cultures in her family. She found this to be perfectly natural, and pointed out: “Everybody thought that my mother and father were in a mixed marriage, but they weren't. I never thought of them as a mixed marriage — unlike the Kharperksi and Bolsetsi marriage of my grandparents.”

Seroun Mei Mei learned Armenian from her mother and went to Armenian school on Saturdays in Bethpage, Long Island. She also



Top left, Seroun Wang, right Ani Manichaikul, with Ani's children Zoe and Raffi

took a summer course at Columbia University years later. Even her father understood Armenian and spoke a little. He also would attend Armenian cultural events with his wife, as well as Armenian Church services. Seroun Mei Mei had tasted her first lahmajun at a

see GENERATIONS, page 13



### MUSICAL ARMENIA

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## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Exhibition of Iconic Portraits Continues at ALMA

WATERTOWN, Mass.— The third-floor Contemporary Art Gallery of the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) is host to works by self-taught artist John Berberian. He has spent the last 20 years working in pencil and charcoal on a series of portraits of his

graduate of West Point. However, the current show also includes iconic figures from the 20th century such as Helen Keller, Leonard Bernstein, Teddy Roosevelt as well as William Saroyan and Yousuf Karsh.

Born in Providence, Berberian continues to live



From left, ALMA Trustee Hapet Berberian, John Berberian with his father and brother

toric figures, some 30 of which are currently on view at ALMA. Several are also particularly striking, including President Lincoln, Buffalo Bill Cody in full cowboy regalia and President James Buchanan Jr.

Berberian says that his preferred period is around the Civil War, following the interests of his German-American maternal grandfather, a

in the city where his grandparents settled almost 90 years ago, arriving after the Genocide from Palu, Historic Armenia. Berberian's musician parents remodeled an old 1926 Vaudeville theater in Providence and since 1960 the family has hosted performing arts productions and films.

The exhibit opened on March 3 and will be on display through the end of April.

## Fresno State to Host Haroutyunian, Bohjalian in Upcoming Lectures

FRESNO – In the first of two upcoming lectures at Fresno State, Dr. Sona Haroutyunian, the 10th Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor of Armenian Studies, will present a talk on “The Theme of the Armenian Genocide in Cinema” at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 10. This is final presentation of her three-part series of illustrated public lectures on the theme of the Armenian Genocide.

Haroutyunian's third lecture will deal with the Italian directors, the Taviani brothers, and their film “Skylark Farm,” a co-production by Italy, Spain, Belgium, France and the European production company Eurimages.

Her first lecture, February 25, focused on the literary genre as an instrument, which brings greater attention to the historical phenomenon of the Armenian Genocide.

Her second lecture, on March 14 explored the power of translation related to the Genocide as an instrument of cultural, historical, and linguistic interaction.

Haroutyunian is a graduate of Yerevan State University, where she received her Masters of Arts in pedagogy, philology and literary translation in 1996, and later her PhD in philology. She received her second PhD in linguistics at the University of Venice, where she has been a professor of Armenian language and literature since 2001.

The lecture will take place in the University Business Center, A. Peters Auditorium, on the Fresno State campus.

The second lecture event scheduled will take place on Sunday, April 14, 2 p.m. when the university hosts *New York Times* best-selling author, Chris Bohjalian, at the Leon and Pete Peters Education Center. During the talk, Bohjalian will discuss *The Sandcastle Girls*, on the occasion of its paperback release.

The talk, part of the Spring Lecture Series

of the Armenian Studies Program, is co-sponsored by the Armenian National Committee of America-Central California. The lecture is funded in part by the Leon S. Peters Foundation and the Bertha and John Garabedian Foundation.

*The Sandcastle Girls* is a novel set in the period of the Armenian Genocide. Bohjalian is the author of 16 books, including *The Night Strangers*, *Secrets of Eden*, *Skeletons at the Feast*, *The Double Bind*, *Before Your Know Kindness* and *Midwives*.

Both lectures are free and open to the public. Free parking is available in all campus parking lots.

For more information on either lecture, contact the Armenian Studies Program.

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## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# The Story of The Sultan's Bookbinder and His Descendants

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fundraiser in a parking lot which was to be the future site of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral.

When her father was transferred to Massachusetts the family had more frequent interactions with Armenians, some of whom interestingly spoke Armenian with a Boston accent. Nonetheless, Armenian remained primarily a language between Seroun and her mother. While her father spoke three or four Chinese dialects, he primarily spoke English with his daughter, and in fact spoke very little in general. She did hear the Shanghai dialect when he spoke with his former schoolmates, and Mandarin at events connected to his fraternity. Seroun Mei Mei learned Mandarin Chinese by taking classes, and followed up before graduating college with a summer session at Middlebury College.

There were some difficulties too. Seroun declared: "The Chinese kids all said I was an American; and the Armenians called me an odor. I wasn't accepted with either group. At the Armenian dance group they gave me the nickname of chini." This was a Tekeyan Cultural Association Dance group which met at the present *Mirror-Spectator* headquarters. The Wang family, incidentally, was a regular subscriber to the *Mirror*.

Seroun Mei Mei studied French at Boston University, and then lived in Taiwan a year, where she studied Chinese as well as computer science, probably in 1972-73. Her mother stayed with her, and then her father came to Taiwan to start up his company, but Seroun Mei Mei went back to the US after three years and got a job at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) based on the computer skills she had learned in Taiwan.

She got married like her mother to somebody from China whom she met through her job. Her husband was raised in Burma and came to the US for college at Sacramento State, and then transferred to MIT. He ended up with four degrees. They had two daughters, Ani and Mariam Manichaikul, but divorced after seven years.

Seroun Wang worked at the National Institute of Health and at a pharmaceutical company as a clinical research associate. She taught English as a second language in high school for many years. She is retired now and lives in Chevy Chase, Md.

Dr. Wang taught his grandchildren the names of all the parts of the face in Armenian when they were little, on a clown. The two girls went to Armenian school at St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church in Washington, DC but it was not that effective for a variety of reasons. The girls made some Armenian friends from Sunday school and ballet school though there were relatively few Armenians their age. Their mother and grandmother worked hard to get them interested in Armenian culture, and seem to have succeeded.

Ani went to Stanford University, where she majored in mathematics and was active in the Armenian student organization. This allowed her to become friends with Armenians not only from California but from around the globe. She said, "One thing I could always feel is that the Armenian community is really small, but I found them to be really inclusive. Some cultural groups can be well defined. I found some of the groups I identify with culturally say that you're not 100 percent full-blooded and not be accepting — not like the Armenian group."

When she went to Johns Hopkins University for her doctorate, she organized an Armenian club her last year, though it fell apart after she left. She now works at the Center for Public Health Genomics and the Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of Virginia as an assistant professor. Many of her fellow classmates and colleagues in the sciences were Chinese, and so in 2006 she ended up marrying Wei Min Chen, a man from China (Wuxue, in Hubei) like her grandmother

# CALENDAR

## CALIFORNIA

**APRIL 17 — Chapman University hosts "Genocide & the Obligation to Remember: Elie Wiesel and Richard Hovannisian,"** 7 p.m., at the Wallace All Faiths Chapel. The event will focus on genocide and the obligation to remember, including preservation of memory, advantages and disadvantages of comparative approaches and relevance to today's students and youth. The dialogue will draw on the life experiences of the two writers. Admission is free and open to the public, but tickets and ID are required for entry. Limited tickets are still available at [www.chapman.edu/wiesel-events](http://www.chapman.edu/wiesel-events). Chapman University is located 1 University Drive, Orange.

## MASSACHUSETTS

**APRIL 7 — Memorial Concert in Remembrance of the late Dr. Elizabeth Gregory.** 2 p.m. Performances by pianists Mariam Nazarian and Ani Hovsepian, tenor Yeghishe Manucharyan, Mezzo Soprano Victoria Avetisyan, and violinist Haig Hovsepian. Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington. Free and open to public.

**APRIL 12 — "A Stone/ Bronze Age Settlement in Yerevan,"** 7:30 p.m. presentation by Vladimir Tshagharyan, director of Shengavit Archaeological Preserve; Dr. Mitchell Rothman, archaeologist, Widener University, Penn; and Dr. Susan Pattie, director of Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) Sponsored by Cambridge Yerevan Sister City Association as part of the Cambridge Science Festival in cooperation with ALMA and the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR); hosted at ALMA, 65 Main St., Watertown. Admission is free.

**APRIL 13 — Milford Public Library hosts annual poetry month celebration with featured poet Diana Der-Hovannessian,** 3 p.m. before she departs for the International Poetry Festival in Yerevan. Der-Hovannessian will read from *Dancing at the Monastery* and *Armenian Poetry of Our Time*. The event is free and open to the public. The library is located at 80 Spruce St., Milford.

**APRIL 13 — Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society of Greater Boston presents musician Elena Yerevan** 7:30 p.m., at the Papken Suni Agoump (Armenian American Social Club) located at 76 Bigelow Ave., Watertown. Tickets are \$20 at the door.

**APRIL 19 — Armenian Genocide Commemoration at the State House,** 10:30 a.m., House of Representatives Chamber, Massachusetts State House. At noon, participants are invited to march from the State House to the Armenian Heritage Park for additional remarks, music and a brown-bag lunch. Keynote speaker will be former US ambassador to Armenia, John Evans. Donald Tellalian, architect of the Armenian Heritage Park, will receive a joint Senate/House resolution thanking him for his efforts. Free buses will leave at 9 a.m. from St. James and St. Stephen's Armenian Churches in Watertown, courtesy of the Knights of Vartan. For more information, contact coordinator Lalig Musserian at (617) 319-2651.

**APRIL 20 — Genocide commemoration and flag-raising, 10 a.m., Lowell City Hall,** sponsored by the Armenian National Committee of Merrimack Valley; main speaker, Michelle Hagopian, executive director, Armenian National Committee of America Eastern Region. Please convene at 9:30 for a march downtown



**On April 13, at 7:30 p.m. the Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society of Greater Boston will present musician Elena Yerevan, at the Papken Suni Agoump (Armenian American Social Club) located at 76 Bigelow Ave., Watertown. Tickets are \$20 at the door.**

**APRIL 24 — St. James and St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Churches together** with the Armenian Cultural and Education Center (ACEC) will host a **Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide** on April 24, 6 p.m. The event will begin at St. James for a requiem service, followed by the laying of the wreath at the Khatchikar in front of the church. A procession will form and march to St. Stephen's where another wreath will be laid before continuing on to the ACEC where the commemorative program will begin. The keynote speaker will be Garen Nazarian, Armenia's ambassador to the United Nations. There will also be a musical interlude. ACEC is located 47 Nichols Ave., Watertown.

**APRIL 28 — The Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee of Merrimack Valley** 98th observance, 3 p.m., North Andover High School; musical performance by soloists Knarik Nerkararyan, Victoria Avetisyan and Yeghishe Manucharyan, accompanied by pianist Levon Hovsepian; complimentary admission; reception to follow.

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

**APRIL 6 — Spring Dance Featuring Armenian and American Music;** 7-11 p.m. at the Ararat Armenian Congregational Church, 2 Salem St., Salem. All ages welcome. Tickets \$15, available at the door. For info, email [janigian@comcast.net](mailto:janigian@comcast.net).

## Free Calendar Submissions

Beginning in March, the *Mirror-Spectator* accepts calendar submissions free of charge. Calendar entries of a maximum of five lines can be submitted to [mirrorads@aol.com](mailto:mirrorads@aol.com); entries exceeding five lines will be subject to charge. We encourage readers and community members to submit their events so that we may provide readers with a comprehensive calendar of events.

and mother. Again like the immediately preceding generations of women in her family, Dr. Ani Manichaikul gave Armenian names to two of her three children (Raffi, Zoe, and Daron). Her husband also took an interest in researching Armenian names. Zoe is also informally called Taline at home.

Ani's husband teaches the children to speak Chinese, while Ani encourages the children to learn Armenian, as does their grandmother. The children love the Taline Armenian DVDs and CDs, which have songs and dances, and they play with Armenian alphabet blocks. Ani says that the children really enjoy church too, though it is hard for them to understand what is spoken.

Mariam studied history at Oberlin, and after graduating law school at Rutgers University, became a judge in New York and a professor of law at Cornell/CUNY teaching night classes. Both Mariam and Ani were accomplished

pianists who performed at Peabody. Ani pointed out that Armenians despite being few in numbers have contributed a lot to Western music, and she and her sister had the opportunity to perform some Armenian pieces.

Looking back at her experiences and her family, Seroun Mei Mei Wang finds many similarities between Armenian and Chinese culture and society which helped make one understandable to the other. For example, when she got to know her older aunt in China, she found her quite similar to her mother in her thinking. She declares: "Actually, I don't see any differences between Armenian and Chinese culture. Interactions are the same. They both have the same social upbringing of children and traditional lifestyle. Families are important, with everything done together. They both take care of old people and don't send them to nursing homes. Armenians do quarrel a lot, but so do the Chinese."

Ani Manichaikul agreed about the commitment to education, which allowed both sides of her family to encourage her to study and work hard. She found that both cultures were food-centric too. She said, "I think both Armenians and Chinese have diasporan cultures with strong ties to their homelands. Many other immigrants will after a few generations feel fully Americanized but both Chinese and Armenians no matter how many generations pass still strongly identify with their cultural history." Yet, she continued, "being part Chinese and part Armenian, I do feel a difference between the two cultural backgrounds. You can meet Chinese people everywhere and feel a small bond. But with Armenians I feel an instant connection because I don't meet Armenians all that often. It is very exciting and I want to share this part of myself. They tend to be really warm. I think it is something we are proud of—being part of this smaller group with a rich history."





## COMMENTARY

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror- Spectator

Established 1932

An ADL Publication

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

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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## COMMENTARY

## Political Tug-of-War in Armenia

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The outcome of the February 18 presidential election is still in dispute. The founder and leader of the Heritage Party, Raffi Hovannisian, continues to challenge the election results. To dramatize his campaign, he resorted to his traditional tactic, namely a hunger strike.

For a long time, he was not clear on why he had chosen that particular kind of protest, to what end or when he would end the hunger strike. But finally, during Holy Week, he made it clear that his hunger strike would end on Easter Sunday, when he would attend church services with his family. Therefore, as we go to press, Mr. Hovannisian has resumed his food intake to intensify his campaign.

His contention is that President Serge Sargsian's reelection was flawed, therefore, he has to transfer power to Hovannisian, or rather to "the people." He has equated himself with the people, which may be interpreted in two ways: either he is very humble to claim victory on behalf of the people or he is conceited enough to think he is the only candidate who can speak on behalf of the people.

Politics abhors a vacuum. When former president Levon Ter-Petrosian's HAK coalition lost its position as a viable opposition force, all of the discontented groups rallied around Hovannisian.

As a populist politician, he is conducting a very flexible campaign, having carefully studied the underlying reasons which led to Ter-Petrosian's failure. The former president had cobbled together a coalition of 18 discontented groups with different ideologies and interests. He had rallied those groups around some maximalist demands.

The ultimate goal of HAK (Armenian National Congress) was to "dismantle" the "kleptocracy." He never budged from his extremist position. Additionally, his subordinates used abrasive language, while he was continuing it in his professorial rhetoric. He has tolerated or even encouraged his supporters in the media to poison the political atmosphere to the point of no return. He did not allow any room for rapprochement or compromise with the authorities, who continued to ignore him, while undermining his coalition in an underhanded way.

Eventually HAK disintegrated and its die-hard disciplinarians were rewarded with six seats in the 131-member parliament to become a negligible opposition faction.

On the other hand, Hovannisian has been conducting his campaign on a more civilized level, some ultimatums notwithstanding. He also began with maximalist demands, asking the reelected president to show up at Liberty Square – where he has set up shop – and turn over the presidency to him.

He soon realized the satirical parameters to his demand and he toned down his rhetoric; actually, he took the time to show up at the presidential palace to have a very courteous exchange of ideas with Sargsian.

It looks like the president's entourage has determined to kill the opposition leader with kindness. Any aggressive demand is met by the administration's very tolerant approach.

As a shrewd politician, Hovannisian realizes the president's patronizing approach to his demands are playing into the hands of the administration, especially in the eyes of the international political community, for whom his public discourse seems to be intended.

Epistolary demands are being exchanged between the two parties. The original demands of the Heritage leader – outright surrender of power – are being watered down. The demand to open the ballot boxes for a recount was presented after the deadline without legal due diligence for which Hovannisian has apologized.

His demand for early parliamentary elections in a new format was turned down. Also his demand to punish five regional governors was ignored.

He realized that his maximalist position has been eroding. Therefore, he has already come to a turning point – either power surrender or power sharing – and since the first alternative does not seem realistic, he is opting for the second one.

The administration is well disposed to power sharing, but not on the terms that the opposition has been demanding. It looks as if the political power play is entering into a period of horse-trading, which could wear down the parties and take the wind out of Hovannisian's sails.

Throughout this game, Hovannisian is proving to be an effective and prudent tactician, with his sights set on the next presidential election, five years down the road.

In the meantime, upcoming Yerevan municipal elections will provide a real opportunity for Mr. Hovannisian to make his mark on the political scene, especially when five other parties will be clamoring for victory in those elections.

Should the Heritage Party achieve some impressive results, Hovannisian will stay a major player for the long haul.

Hovannisian empowered the young and educated masses. Even if he cannot achieve his goal in the immediate future, he will be credited with introducing a new political culture, which in time may yield quantitative results.

He is also mindful of what degree of power sharing he may achieve. Should he settle for some face-saving positions for himself and his party members in Armenia's power structure, he will deny Armenia's political system the benefit of credible opposition.

At this time, the tug-of-war is continuing, hopefully with some positive outcome for Armenia.

## Forget the Elephant, Just Look around the Room

By Gonca Sönmez-Poole

Do you know the expression "the elephant in the room?" Of course you do. We have all used it. In fact, the last time I used it myself was in an article in this newspaper about a year ago.

Whether we call it dialogue, rapprochement, "track-two work" or any other method of conflict resolution relating to Armenian-Turkish relations, we have all used and abused this poor elephant, albeit for perfectly valid reasons. That is because up until the last few years, the consensus – too easily dictated to us all – was this: it is nearly impossible for these two sides (I hate that word "sides") to come to terms in this intractable (I hate that word, too) conflict unless the Turkish government were to officially acknowledge the Armenian Genocide (and I hate the word "genocide" more than any other word.)

Well, I humbly suggest the following scenario for all of those holding or participating in any meeting between any number of Turkish and Armenian people: acknowledge each other.

I have been meeting with a Turkish and Armenian group for the past eight months and the more I talk to them and the more they talk to each other, the more I realize that we do not have to speak about the "elephant" in order to reach beyond the barriers of communication.

We simply have to acknowledge each other. We have to acknowledge each and everyone in the room, be curious about each other and want to know something about what makes us

all who we are.

And so, at the expense of alienating a few players out there whose job it is to make or break high-level meetings at the top, I want to advocate for what I believe has the most power to move us along: connecting one person at a time. I would like to put forward a whole new mantra and that is to forget the elephant and look around the room. And no, I do not mean forget the Armenian Genocide or the events of 1915 – but I believe that no fictional symbol elephantine can come close to representing what genocide is. So let's forget the tired elephant phrase.

Instead, what I am suggesting is simply another tool, not among historians, not among diplomats and certainly not among politicians. I suggest the simple tool of asking for each other's stories and listening to them.

I am appealing for all of us in the vast arena of Armenian-Turkish relations to extend a listening ear and to hear as many stories as we can about each other. I believe it is through those stories that we will learn what makes each of us the unique product of our backgrounds, our upbringings, our educations and our social environments.

To make my case, I would like to share with you a few snippets of the interviews I have conducted with some of the participants in the group I started last September.

Following our first meeting, I asked members of Turkish-Armenian Women's Alliance (TAWA) about their future expectations regarding our group.

Please note that no recording device was used during the off-record meetings with this group. The separate interviews were conduct-

ed with a partial group of participants on a voluntary basis. The quotes used are from those interviewed who have agreed to sign a release form, permitting the author to make their words public.

Participant Tsoleen Sarian said, "You know, just the fact that we're here is so worthwhile to me, just the fact that I've gotten this far is excellent. I am so content and happy and anything is like a bonus, you know because I have now met people and be able to sit around a table and I've never done that before, I've never even considered I wanted to do that before...I can't change other people's minds, I can't explain centuries of history. I can't do that, but if I can learn myself a little bit more and if I can grow in my understanding, then excellent."

Participant Zeren Earls said, "It seems like an interesting group of women, progressive thinkers from different walks of life and creates interesting conversation; and to this point, I haven't really made an effort to get to know Armenian people, just because I'm not near them usually, and this gives an opportunity to find out who they are and what they're doing in an environment that I feel would be useful to spend time with."

Another woman, Ayse Kaya Firat said, "I can't just say ignore the past, you know, jump into the future and experience new things; that is not what I'm saying, but I believe we can be [a] great example for many other controversies, you know, between other nations...so if that was the goal, a lot of good, a lot of goodness can come out of that, right? I'm going beyond Armenians and Turks for

*continued on next page*





## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Federal Judge Wrongfully Dismisses Lawsuit on Armenian Properties in Turkey

Federal Judge Dolly M. Gee, wrongfully claiming lack of jurisdiction, dismissed a lawsuit on March 26, filed by Armenian-Americans demanding compensation from Turkey for confiscating their properties during the Armenian Genocide.

Attorneys Berj Boyajian, Mark Geragos, Ara Jabaghourian and Brian Kabateck had filed a class action lawsuit on July 29, 2010, on behalf of Garbis Davoyan of Los Angeles, Hrayr Turabian of New York City and all Armenians whose ancestors had real estate holdings in Turkey.

The grandparents of Davoyan and Turabian owned land near Aintab and Adana. The complaint also charged Turkey's Central Bank and Ziraat Bankasi of unjust enrichment by benefiting from the proceeds of the confiscated Armenian properties.

Since the Republic of Turkey and its two major banks contended that US courts lacked jurisdiction over foreign entities due to sovereign immunity, the Armenian plaintiffs argued that the lawsuit should proceed due to two exceptions to the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act (FSIA):

"Commercial Activity" and "Expropriation."

The federal judge ruled that both of these exceptions did not apply in this case. She found the banks' commercial role in the US to be minimal and unrelated to the claimed grievances. She ruled that the expropriation exception is also not valid because the property was not "taken in violation of international law."

Gee stated that the appropriation of personal property contravenes international law if: 1) it does not serve a public purpose; 2) it discriminates against or singles out aliens and 3) the foreign government does not pay compensation. Judge Gee held that Armenians were citizens of the Ottoman Empire based on the Law of Nationality of January 19, 1869, "which treated all persons found within the Ottoman Empire as Ottoman subjects."

According to the judge, this law "remained in effect until May 23, 1927, when Law No. 1041 stripped Turkish citizenship from the Armenians who had fled or were deported from the Empire during the events at issue in this lawsuit." She concluded: "Legally, Armenians whose property was taken and who were deported from the Ottoman Empire were citizens at the time."

In making these rulings, Gee made a series of grave factual errors and misapplied the law. Her contention that Armenians were Ottoman citizens at the time of the Genocide and deportations, and therefore not subject to US court jurisdiction, is flatly wrong.

In a telegram dated September 9, 1915, Minister of Interior Talaat issued the following order: "The rights of Armenians to live and work on Turkish soil are totally abolished." Thus, Talaat had revoked the Armenians' Ottoman citizenship as of September 9, 1915, making them non-citizens at the time of the expropriation of their properties. This fact alone invalidates the fundamental premise of the judge's ruling that the Federal Court has no jurisdiction over Turkey's expropriation of its citizens' property.

Furthermore, since Ottoman citizenship was imposed upon native Armenians after their territory was overrun by Ottoman armies, Armenians were forced to become the unwilling subjects of a foreign invader. The judge's erroneous ruling leads to the absurd and dangerous notion that the rights of people under occupation can be violated without any recourse to international law, once the conquering nation declares them to be its citizens.

Gee committed a second serious error when she made the convoluted argument that expropriation of foreign properties could have fallen under the jurisdiction of her court if carried out in conjunction with acts of genocide, because "genocide violates international law." However, she ruled that the Armenian lawsuit does not meet the foregoing criteria, because it involves a "political question" related to foreign policy that falls under the jurisdiction of the executive and legislative branches, not the judiciary. She completely ignored the fact that the lawsuit was not filed under a claim of genocide, but as a violation of international law that includes crimes against humanity, but not necessarily genocide. Apparently, Gee was not aware that the US government on several occasions had recognized the Armenian Genocide, making her argument about the separation of powers completely meaningless.

There is a good possibility that the Federal Court of Appeals will reverse Gee's baseless and erroneous ruling. The plaintiffs' lawyers could strengthen their case considerably by pointing out some of the factual errors in her ruling, as well as rectifying the shortcomings in their own filing.

Lawsuits against Turkey must be filed with the utmost care, preparation and professionalism, since they impact the interests of the entire Armenian nation, particularly on the eve of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide

## Forget the Elephant, Just Look around The Room

from previous page

God's sake, let's go to Africa together...let's change lives there."

These comments came at the outset of this journey that TAWA began in September 2012, and it hasn't been smooth sailing ever since. As the person in the middle of the process, I needed to not only keep track of the availability of a dozen busy women, but I had to listen and recognize their concerns and their sensitivities between meetings. And most important, I had to keep track and assess the mood and atmosphere of the group during and in between our gatherings.

We did lose one participant due to her heavy work schedule, but twelve of us are still getting together, determined to carry on.

I will leave you with some words from participant, Laura Bilazarian-Purutyan: "I'm an Armenian, I'm a granddaughter of survivors and I'm coming here. I am coming here as the granddaughter of survivors, and if I understand too deeply your perspective, do I give up something of my experience? I'm trying to hold on to their experience and honor it, but there is a problem on the table: you know it's an ongoing problem of lack of recognition, and the communities, the Armenian community is not grappling with it and the two nations are not grappling with it. Am I at risk of losing something in this conversation...honoring my grandparents?"

(A TV producer, filmmaker and writer, Gonca Sönmez-Poole spent two decades working for WCVB-TV's Chronicle program, followed by 13 years managing her own nonprofit organization. For the past seven years, she has dedicated her free time to Armenian-Turkish dialogue work around Boston. She can be reached through her personal website [www.goncasp.net](http://www.goncasp.net))

## Turkey and Armenia at Loggerheads

By David L. Phillips

Turkey and Armenia missed a historic opportunity to improve ties when Turkey refused to ratify the protocols on the Establishment of Diplomatic and Bilateral Relations signed on October 10, 2009. Rather than rapprochement, Armenians are now fully mobilized to organize worldwide activities commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 2015. Armenia would never sacrifice gaining greater global recognition of the Genocide for cross-border cooperation with Turks. However, trade can still play a helpful role reducing tensions and creating positive momentum in Turkish-Armenian relations.

More than a closed border, Turks and Armenians are divided by different perceptions of history. More than 1.5 million Armenians perished during the final years of the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923. Turkey disputes these facts, referring to the events as "shared suffering." Turkey has demanded a joint historical commission to address the "Armenian question."

The political impasse between Turkey and Armenia is compounded by Ankara's linking of relations with Armenia to resolution of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh where Armenians and Azerbaijanis fought a brutal war displacing 600,000 people in the early 1990s.

The governments of Turkey and Armenia may be at loggerheads, but Turks and Armenians are still engaging in economic diplomacy, working on cross-border activities beneath the radar. Commercial contact involves mostly "suitcase trade" involving consumer goods transported from Turkey through Georgia to Armenia.

But bigger business is possible. Armenia could sell surplus electricity to Turkey which needs energy to power its economic boom. Armenia could also tap into Turkey's state-of-the-art fiber optic cable to meet its growing demand for internet. Railway service between

Kars in Turkey and Gumri in Armenia could resume when Turkey opens its border gate. In anticipation, Armenia could begin conforming the country's Soviet-era railway gauge to Turkish and European standards.

In addition, Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ) could be established to catalyze joint enterprises between Turks and Armenians. A QIZ is an industrial park and a free-trade zone, which is linked to a free-trade agreement with the US. Goods qualify when partners contribute raw material, labor, or manufacturing. Kazan, an area in Armenia on the Turkish border, would be a suitable destination for joint ventures in textile and piece goods manufacturing.

The QIZ should proceed with steps to relax

The governments of Turkey and Armenia may be at loggerheads, but Turks and Armenians are still engaging in economic diplomacy, working on cross-border activities

restrictions on the surface transport of commercial goods. Armenian trucks are allowed to use Turkey as a transit country, but can't off-load on Turkish soil. The same holds true for Turkish trucks transiting through Armenia. Trucks should be allowed to transfer goods destined for markets in the neighboring countries, with Turkey and Armenia identified as destinations in the export registry.

Normalized travel and trade would also stimulate the tourist industry. Many Armenians are coming from Russia to cultural sites in Eastern Turkey. Allowing Armenian tourist buses to cross the Turkish-Armenian border would be a windfall for local business. Charter flights between the eastern Turkish city of Van and Yerevan would enhance commercial contact and a Turkish Airlines office in Yerevan would boost travel. The Ani Bridge across the Akhurian River, which symbolized the connection between Armenian civilization and the Anatolian plain, should be restored.

A useful database is being prepared by the Turkish-Armenian Business Development Council profiling opportunities and connect-

ing potential business partners. Linkages could also be established between local chambers of commerce and mayors with the goal of establishing sister-city relationships and fostering trade and investment.

Such civil society and private sector initiatives have intrinsic value. Moreover, they can also incentivize official diplomacy or serve as a safety net when diplomacy stalls. They are not, however, a substitute for official diplomacy.

There is currently no contact between Turkish and Armenian officials. While the Turkey-Armenia protocols called for a "dialogue on the historical dimension," Armenians balked when Turkey demanded a commission to determine whether the events of 1915 met the definition of genocide.

Instead of trying to reinvent history, Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan can make history through an executive order to open the border and normalize travel and trade as a step toward diplomatic relations. Bolder yet, he could submit the protocols on normalization and diplomatic relations to the Turkish parliament with his personal endorsement for ratification.

With an eye on his legacy, Erdogan could also call for parliament to repeal Article 301 of the penal code, which makes it a crime to "denigrate Turkishness" and is used to repress the freedom of expression. Repealing regressive legislation would make Turks more free, and also benefit Turkey's EU aspirations.

Turkey's moral authority is undermined by the government's denial of the Armenian Genocide. On Remembrance Day, April 24, Erdogan should apologize for what happened to Armenians during the waning days of the Ottoman Empire. Reconciling with Armenia would help consolidate Turkey's role as a regional power, as well as a force for good in the world.

(This article first appeared on the Huffington Post on March 26. Phillips is the director of the Program on Peace-building and Rights at Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights.)





# Pageantry of Easter at Holy Echmiadzin

EASTER, from page 1

The Pontifical Mass was attended by President Serge Sargsian, Parliament Speaker Hovik Abrahamyan, Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian, the President of the Constitutional Court Gagik Harutunyan, as well as Members of Parliament, members of the government, the Supreme Spiritual Council members, representatives of diplomatic missions accredited in Armenia, as well as educational and cultural leaders and other faithful.

The canopy bearers during the Pontifical procession were Kamo Hovhannisyan, director of the Spondiaryan State Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet; Shavarsh Kocharian, deputy minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of

Armenia; Harutun Khachaduryan, director of the Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival and Armen Mouradian, executive director of the Izmirlian Foundation.

Assisting the catholicos at the Holy Altar were Bishop Hovnan Hakobian, Grand Sacristan of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin; and Bishop Mushegh Babayan, operations director of the Mother See.

During the service, the catholicos addressed his message to Armenians throughout the world on the occasion of Holy Easter, offering his Pontifical blessings and proclaiming the good news, "Christ is Risen from the dead! Blessed is the Resurrection of Christ."



The catholicos greeted the faithful.



Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II walks out of Echmiadzin, under a canopy, surrounded by young acolytes.



Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II celebrates the Pontifical Divine Liturgy.

# 98th Anniversary Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

**Friday, April 19, 2013, 10:30 am**  
House of Representatives Chamber • Massachusetts State House



Keynote Speech  
Ambassador John Evans



**Joint Senate/House  
Resolution Recipient:**

**Donald Tellalian**  
Architect of the  
Armenian Heritage Park



At noon, participants are invited to march to the Armenian Heritage Park for additional remarks, music and a brown bag lunch.

*For more information contact:*

- Senator Will Brownsberger 617-722-1280
- Representative Jon Hecht 617-722-2140
- Representative Dave Rogers 617-722-2400
- Representative John Lawn 617-722-2304
- Lalig Musserian, Coordinator 617-319-2651

Buses will be leaving at 9:00 am from St. James and St. Stephen's Churches (Buses generously provided by the Knights of Vartan)