

International Delegation Commemorates Genocide Anniversary in Istanbul

ISTANBUL — An unprecedented joint delegation of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Europe and European Grassroots Antiracist Movement (EGAM) comprising 20 people from 15 European countries, gathered here to commemorate the Armenian Genocide of 1915. They were invited by DurDe! (Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism), a Turkish organization that has been commemorating the Armenian Genocide for the past four years.

On April 24, symbolically at 19:15, up to 2,000 Turks, Armenians and others peacefully gathered at Taksim Square in an emotional moment of mourning, commemoration and solidarity. Earlier in the day, they also gathered outside the former Sultanahmed Prison (now a museum), where Armenian intellectuals, professionals and others arrested on April 24, 1915, were first jailed, before being taken away and murdered.



More than 2,000 people gathered at Istanbul's Taksim Square for the international joint commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, an unprecedented event organized by AGBU Europe, Turkish group DurDe! and EGAM.

A strong police presence kept watch as a small gathering of protesters shouted nationalist slogans nearby.

These events were organized by DurDe! and IHD, a Turkish Human Rights see ISTANBUL, page 16

US Congress Marks April 24 with Program

WASHINGTON — Armenians and non-Armenians alike commemorated the 98th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

On Capitol Hill, under the leadership of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, co-chaired by Congressmen Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ) and Michael Grimm (R-NY), scores of Members on a bi-partisan basis observed the 98th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide with an evening program on April 24th.

With views of the Capitol in the background, the Armenian Genocide Observance took place on the top floor of the Senate Hart Office Building, and was held with



Audience at the Capitol Hill Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

the support of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia and the Office of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic and in conjunction with

Armenian American organizations, including the Armenian National Committee of America and the Armenian Assembly. Sarig Armenian, an attorney and a former congressional staffer, served at the Master of Ceremonies.

In addition to the co-chairs of the Armenian Caucus, the following legislators participated in the evening's program:

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The Quest for A Culture of Remembrance

Armenians in Germany Commemorate Armenian Genocide

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — Among the many nations where people gather on April 24th every year to commemorate the victims of the 1915 genocide, Germany holds a special place for three reasons: first, because it was here that the Holocaust occurred, a case of mass murder that was modeled on the Armenian genocide; secondly, because the post-war German political world faced up to what the Nazis had perpetrated. It was not only the fact that many of the criminals were brought to justice at the Nuremberg trials, and that Germany acknowledged it as genocide, but also that in the years and decades that followed, the reality of what had been committed was subjected to historical scrutiny, so that broader layers of the population and members of the successor generations became aware of this past.

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AGBU YPs to Walk for Victims of Boston Marathon Tragedy

WATERTOWN — On Wednesday, May 15, members of the Armenian General Benevolent Union Young Professionals of Boston (AGBU YP) will lead a 5K untimed walk/ run through Watertown to benefit The One Fund.

Registration begins at 6:30 p.m. at the AGBU Center, 247 Mt. Auburn St., and the walk begins at 7 p.m.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Buildings for Syrian Refugees in Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Sites have been chosen in the cities of Ashtarak, Echmiadzin and Masis for the construction of buildings and detached houses for the Syrian-Armenians settled in the Republic of Armenia.

The chief of staff at the Diaspora Ministry, Firdus Zakaryan, stated that upon the successful conclusion of the program, other sites will also be allocated in future.

Zakaryan stressed: "There are three elements in the programs. The government of the Republic of Armenia will also contribute to the program. The Syrian-Armenian community will pay for a certain part of the cost, and the rest will be paid by the sponsor. The first sponsor has already been found. Upon the wishes of the Syrian-Armenians, detached houses will be built as well."

The Yerevan State University of Architecture and Construction will provide its services free of charge. The sites were allocated upon the order of President Serge Sargsian.

Istanbul Police Arrest Armenian Church Shooting Suspects

ISTANBUL (Combined Sources) — Two young men were arrested in Istanbul this week over a shooting near Saint Hovhannes Armenian Church on May 5.

According to *Radikal*, the two arrested were identified as M.E. born in 1997 and G.M., of Armenian descent, born in 1996. They confessed that they bought a gas gun and M.E. shot it in the air to test it. The young men said their shots were not targeting the church or those in it.

No injuries were reported.

Aronian Wins Chess Tournament

PARIS (ArmeniaNow) — Armenian chess Grandmaster Levon Aronian said he was happy to win the Alexander Alekhine Memorial, a tournament held recently in Paris and St. Petersburg (France/Russia) to commemorate the great chess champion.

"It's a great honor for me to become winner in such a strong tournament, especially that Alekhine is my favorite chess player," said Aronian, as quoted by Russian RIA Novosti.

In the 10-man tournament that ended on May 1, the 30-year-old Armenian, currently ranked as the second player in the world by the game's international governing body, FIDE, shared first place with Israel's Boris Gelfand with 5.5 points out of 9. Aronian, however, had a better tie-break score and was awarded the first prize.

Reigning world champion Viswanathan Anand from India finished third.

INSIDE

Focus on Survivors

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

UAE Delegates Pay Tribute to Armenian Genocide Victims

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The delegation led by Chairman of the Control Chamber of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Dr. Harib al Amim visited Tzitzernakaberd and placed wreaths at the monument dedicated to the memory of Armenian Genocide victims.

Al Amim also paid a visit to the Genocide Museum, where he examined photos, documents and literature. He left the following note in the memorial book, “I condemn what happened. No religion or nation can accept such phenomena.”

Chairman of the Control Chamber of Armenia Ishkhan Zakaryan accompanied the delegation.

The UAE has yet to join more than 24 countries that recognize and condemn the Genocide.

‘Kessab’ Film Premieres In Yerevan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – “Kessab,” a documentary by Nane Bagratuni, premiered at the Narekatsi Art Union on May 7.

Bagratuni said that the film is focused on the Armenian-populated Kessab settlement near the Syrian border.

Bagratuni added, “The movie is of a certain importance from the cultural and ethnographical viewpoints, as the Eastern Armenia does not have much information about Kessab. The movie is dedicated to the story of the Armenians living in the settlement.”

The documentary is 30 minutes and is presented in Armenian with English subtitles.

Armenia Launches National Music Website

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Examples of Armenian national music will be available on the new Armenian-language website namusic.net. A launch ceremony for the website was held on May 7 at the Martiros Saryan House-Museum.

According to founder and chief administrator of the website Sergey Umroyan, the Armenian national music website will contain exclusive recordings, articles, interviews and videos.

Umroyan also noted that there will be no genre restrictions on the website. He added that the goal of the website was to make a variety of Armenian musical styles and sounds available to people around the world.

Plans for English and Russian versions of the website are already in development.

SOAR Organizes Aid for Children Displaced by Orphanage Fire

YEREVAN – On the morning of May 5, an extensive fire broke out on the second floor of Mari Izmirlyan Orphanage, which houses approximately 100 children with special needs.

The cause and extent of the fire is not yet known. The 42 children who occupied the second floor have been temporarily relocated, but permanent residences are not yet available.

The Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR), which is the only organization whose singular mission is to provide assistance to orphaned Armenians throughout the world, is asking for assistance in aiding the Mari Izmirlyan Orphanage and the children who are left without a home.

If you would like to assist Mari Izmirlyan Orphanage, online donations can be made through PayPal at <http://soar-us.org/> (designate SOAR-National) or checks can be mailed to SOAR, c/o George Yacoubian, 1060 First Avenue, Suite 400, King of Prussia, PA 19406.

SOAR is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization established in 2005. For a complete list of all of SOAR’s services, affiliated orphanages, facilities and chapters worldwide and ways to donate or sponsor a child, visit SOAR’s website.

Despite Denial, Turks and Kurds Remember Armenian Genocide, Says Reparations Scholar

YEREVAN – The Turkish government is denying a genocide its own population remembers, according to Dr. Ugur Ümit Üngör, who spoke via simulcast from the Netherlands on May 2, during the annual commemorative talk on the Armenian Genocide at the American University of Armenia (AUA).

Üngör’s colloquium, titled “Lost in Commemoration: The Armenian Genocide in Memory and Identity,” explored the dichotomy between Turkey’s official state history and popular social memory.

“Yes it is true that Turkey is denying the genocide, but it is the Turkish state that is denying the genocide,” said Üngör, speaking from Amsterdam, where he works as the director of graduate studies at the Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies. “I think that Turkish society knows about the Genocide, that they acknowledge the Genocide, and finally that a lot of people have memories about the Genocide. It should be a task of researchers to unearth and expose these memories.”

In his remarks, Üngör deconstructed the phenomenon of Turkish denial, from its Young Turk origins to its evolution into an official state policy, seeking to reconstruct a new national memory, minus the crime and its victims.

Üngör peeled away at Turkey’s complex social fabric, revealing multiple conflicting national narratives about the Armenian Genocide. He examined the unofficial policies implemented by the Young Turk regime during World War I and the subsequent development of an official state policy by successive

Turkish governments. He then compared the narrative taught in schools, promoted in academia, and projected through foreign policy to a very different reality on the ground in eastern Turkey, where many Turks and Kurds hold vivid memories about the crime.

denied, and hence, longest continuing genocidal episodes in modern human history. From this perspective it should not be considered the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923, it should be considered the Armenian Genocide of 1915-2013 and counting.”



A screenshot of Dr. Ugur Ümit Üngör addressing the AUA students

In his conclusion, Üngör underscored the Turkish government’s failure to completely eradicate the memory of the Genocide from the lands and people it administers.

AUA President Dr. Bruce Boghosian, when introducing Üngör, discussed the continuing evolution of discourse about the Armenian Genocide, explaining that it is moving away from being regarded as an isolated historical event, and toward being understood as an ongoing historical process.

“A genocide can not properly be considered over until it is no longer denied,” said Boghosian. “The Armenian Genocide has the dubious distinction of being one of the longest

Üngör is the author of *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property*, which is a detailed accounting of all the property seized from Armenians during the Genocide to create the modern state of Turkey. He is also the author of the award-winning book, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950*, which examines the process of social engineering, mass violence and genocide the Young Turks and their Republican successors utilized as they tried to create a homogeneous Turkey. He is currently working on a book on paramilitaries in comparative perspective.

Students Compete in Tekeyan Poetry Contest

YEREVAN – On April 20, Tekeyan Centre Fund implemented the final round of the interscholastic competition titled, Poetry Reading Festival, devoted to the 135th anniversary of the great Western Armenian poet, pedagogue, social, political leader Vahan Tekeyan. The competition was launched on January 21, on the birthday of the poet. The aim of the project was to immortalize and introduce his life and rich literary heritage to the young generation.

Out of 60 participants of the second round, only 22 went on to the final. The participants were from Tekeyan Schools in Yerevan, Gumri, Stepanavan, Karbi, Berdzor as well as Syrian-Armenian students from the Yerevan Kilikian College. The Armenian Literature teachers from those schools competed in the final round, too.

The jury consisted of literary critics and actors, amongst whom were the People’s Artist of the USSR and Armenia Varduhi Varderesyan (honorary chairwoman), the head of the Department of Literature of Yerevan State University Prof. Samvel Muradyan (Chairman), People’s Artist of Armenia Guzh Manukian, the Head of the Department of General Education of the Ministry of Education and Science Narine



From left, Vahe Jilavyan, Sirvard Hambaryan and Tiranuhi Margarian-Karapetian pose with students.

Hovhannisyan (member), the initiator of the project Poetry Reading Festival Marieta Makaryan.

The project was a great success. Both the students and the teachers performed well; they deeply expressed the thoughts and the feelings of the poet. For their excellent performance all the participants were awarded certificates and honourable mention prizes by RA Ministry of Education and Science, RA Ministry of Diaspora and Tekeyan Centre Fund.

Apart from honorable mention prizes Tekeyan Centre Fund awarded the winners:

First prize went to Elen Asoyan from Yerevan Tekeyan School #92/; second prize to Zohrap Ayvazian from Kilikian College and third prize to Elya

Harutyunyan from Karbi Tekeyan School.

Tiranuhi Margarian-Karapetian from Kilikian College was the best among the teachers of literature; she received a certificate and 100,000 drams.



From left, Marieta Makaryan, Vartan Ouzounian, Varduhi Varderesyan and Armen Tsulikyan

Correction

In the April 20 issue, one person in a group photo with a story about Vatche Semerdjian was identified as “Mrs. Kartalian.” Her name is Ani Kartalian. We regret the omission.



INTERNATIONAL

The Quest for a Culture of Remembrance

GERMANY, from page 1

Germans refer to this process and what it has produced in civil society as “a culture of remembrance” (Erinnerungskultur). The third reason is that Germany’s Turkish population is the largest outside of Turkey, which has a political, social and cultural impact in both countries.

This year memorials took place at the historic Paulskirche in Frankfurt as well as in Berlin and a number of smaller cities. In Berlin and Frankfurt, the role of Germany then and now was a central theme. At St. Marienkirche in the capital, Archbishop Karekin Bekdjian celebrated the requiem mass and representatives of the German Catholic and Evangelical churches spoke. Musical offerings included liturgical church music from the Middle Ages and pieces by Komitas. Vocal pieces were performed by Artak Kirakosyan, soloist from the Alexander Spendiaryan Opera and Ballet in Yerevan.

In his greeting, Armenian Ambassador Armen Martirosyan addressed issues of a fundamental character. Every year when commemorating the genocide, he said, we ask “Why”: “Why did it happen? Why did the world keep silent...? Why did the great powers close their eyes ...to ethnic cleansing? Why did they not bring the criminals to justice? Have we Armenians drawn the lessons from this tragedy?” He went on to note the lamentable fact that “Ethnic cleansing was to become part of political culture, an acceptable way to solve interethnic problems...” in reference to the Holocaust and the more recent mass murders in Rwanda, Cambodia and the Balkans. “The international community has drawn no lessons from the genocide against the Armenians,” he stated.

For those nations which have recognized the Genocide, Martirosyan expressed the gratitude of the Armenian people.

Referencing the cultural heritage of Armenians, he celebrated the rebirth of the nation, and said that its two pillars, the Republic of Armenia and the Diaspora, must both be equally strong. “Our unity is the course of our strength and our diversity is the source of our resilience.”

Sibylle Thelen, from the Baden-Württemberg Regional Center for Political Education, held the keynote on “The Power of the Many Voices: No Pluralism without the Freedom of Remembrance.” She characterized April 24 not only as a “day of mourning and remembrance,” but also “a day of clarification and belated reappraisal.” Thelen, who is the author of *The Armenian Question in Turkey*, has documented the process through which citizens have gradually come to learn about, understand and face the historical facts of the genocide. “With every passing year,” she said, “the memory of 1915 comes closer and closer – also in Germany. And a bit also in Turkey.” In her speech she touched on these developments in civil society, among the Turkish immigrants in Germany and in Europe.

In Turkey, this process unfolds in various forms: there are citizens who research and relate their family histories, discovering and remembering their Turkified Armenian grandmothers; researchers link up with colleagues abroad and import new approaches and questions; artists explore the dark past, like Orhan Pamuk in his bestseller, *Snow*, and Elif Shafak in *The Bastard from Istanbul*. Thelen cited a new book, *Serenade for Nadja* by Zülfü Livaneli, which has continued this literary experience. The protagonist of the book, a 38-year-old Turkish woman working in a university, learns from a visiting American professor the tragic story of 700 Jewish passengers on a ship named *Struma*, who drowned in the Black Sea in 1941-1942 because no one in the international community offered them help in their attempt to escape persecution. Shocked by this

story, she begins to research her own family history and discovers one grandmother was a Crimean Tatar, the other, an Armenian survivor who was forced to convert to Islam. Facing this past, the protagonist goes through a self-reflexive crisis which is painful, but liberating, as she gains inner freedom and self-conscious independence. The fact that this book has sold 250,000 copies speaks volumes. For Thelen, the heroine “symbolizes Turkish civil society” which, though small, has realized that taboos about history are inhibiting and enslaving. “It prevents the unfolding of Turkish democracy,” whereas “a Turkey that critically reappraises its past makes its own way to a free, pluralistic Europe.”

As for Germany, she recalled a resolution on the Armenian question which the Bundestag (Parliament) passed in 2005. Although the text avoided use of the term “genocide,” it was an attempt to bring the successor nation to the Ottoman Empire into the “European culture of remembrance” – the capacity Europeans have developed to face the tragedies of the 20th century, recognize responsibilities and open the way to reconciliation. The second part of the resolution explicitly identified it as a duty for Germany to provide Armenians and Turks support to work through the past to overcome it. Although Thelen could not announce great strides made in this direction, she could point to some progress in introducing the theme in history lessons.

In this context, she noted that with such a large immigrant population, Germany faces the challenge of exploring new ways to present its own history, including the history of immigration and the reasons behind it. Means must be devised to allow newcomers to participate in the collective memory of Germany and to learn even from its negative aspects. The speaker called for “historical work which is intercultural” and which provides “a multiplicity of perspectives to approach the past and present.” As an example, she cited a project built around a concentration camp memorial in the city of Ulm. Eighty per cent of the students came from immigrant families, and the question posed in the project was: what does your history have to do with me? The students investigated their own family backgrounds, compared them, discussed them and sought to locate them in a historical perspective. “It is a matter of sharing memory,” Thelen said.

Looking to the immediate future, she noted that next year 2014 we will be commemorating the beginning of World War I. The year thereafter, 2015, marks the centenary of the Armenian Genocide and with it the memory will inevitably prevail.

The second guest speaker was Cem Oezdemir, the national chairman of the Green Party and member of the Bundestag. His speech was titled, “In Memory of the Victims of the Genocide against the Armenians 1915.” Echoing Martirosyan’s sentiments, Oezdemir stressed how difficult it is to grasp the “why” behind the events: why the Young Turk leaders destroyed the multi-ethnic, multi-religious Ottoman state with their nationalist, racist ideology, and why the Armenians, known as the loyal people, were victimized. To put the apparently inconceivable crime in perspective, he reviewed the indispensable place Armenians had occupied in Ottoman society as professionals, manufacturers, intellectuals, artists. In Istanbul, for example, where they represented a tenth of the population, there were nearly as many newspapers in Armenian as in Turkish.

In his narration of the nationalist upheavals in the late 19th century which led to territorial losses in the Balkans and the expulsion also of Muslims, Oezdemir drew on examples from his own family history: uprooted Cherkessian ancestors on his father’s side who came under Russian occupation in the Caucasus and

a maternal Greek grandmother who had to change her name and religion. It was in their desperate attempt to hold the crumbling empire together that the Young Turks propagated the creed of Turkish-Muslim superiority, dooming minorities.

Oezdemir delivered sharp criticism of the attempt to rationalize the systematic deportations and massacres of the Armenians as somehow undesired by-products of the war, and argued strongly in favor of an honest overhaul of history from the Turkish side. He said that formal measures, for example, legal codes and bans, may serve the purpose of denying the past, but they cannot heal the wounds of the past. Quoting Hrant Dink, he called for a normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey, the opening of the border and accession of Turkey into the European Union – a move that he believes, as does Sibylle Thelen, would encourage the democratization process.

Like Thelen, Oezdemir also struck a note of optimism at this prospect, pointing to current developments in Turkey as evidence; for one, he cited progress (albeit limited) in allowing some Christian schools and churches to restore their activities and considered the recent Turkish government talks with PKK representatives as signs of a possible democratic solution to the Kurdish problem.

In the Paulskirche in Frankfurt, where the first freely-elected parliament convened in 1848, the historical events took center stage. Prof. Dr. M.A. Niggli, Professor of Criminal Law and Legal Philosophy at Freiburg University addressed the oft-raised question of whether or not the concept of genocide in reference to 1915 requires clarification, and answered with a resounding “no.” It was the jurist Raphael Lemkin, he recalled, who established the scientific conditions for a legal definition of genocide precisely on the basis of his study of the events in Turkey between 1915 and 1918. And it was this concept which prevailed at the enactment of the Genocide Convention at the United Nations.

Michael Hesemann, who is an author, documentary filmmaker and journalist, has been working in Rome since 2008 researching documents in the archives of the Vatican for a book on the Armenian Genocide and the Vatican, to appear in 2015. In his speech he reported on various interventions by Felix Cardinal von Hartmann and Pope Benedict XV in defense of the Armenian cause, which they launched immediately after April 24, 1915. Also participating in their efforts was the Catholic Nuntius in Munich Pacelli, Secretary of State Cardinal Gaspari and the cardinal’s sister who had worked as a nun and witnessed the genocide. They addressed their efforts to the German government in Berlin directly, especially to Imperial Chancellor Count von Hertling who was a Catholic himself. Hesemann quoted from the answers of the Chancellor, who rejected the pleas for intervention in an utterly irresponsible, cynical fashion. He also mentioned the work of Johannes Lepsius, which was taken very seriously by Catholic leaders, as well as his contact to Mathias Erzberger, a leading (CUT: politician and) member of the Catholic Center Party in the Imperial Diet. Hesemann’s speech culminated in his statement that although Germany was not an accomplice it was in the know and therefore bears a special responsibility to ensure that the truth wins out. Concluding his remarks, he cited passages from the prayer which Pope John Paul II offered during his 2001 visit to Tsitsernakaberd.

Although differing in form and approach, the leading speakers at Germnay’s commemorative ceremonies shared the concept and the commitment, that Germany can and should engage in efforts to make 2015 the year of recognition, reappraisal and the triumph of truth.

International News

‘Karabakh’s Wounds’ Premieres in Australia

SYDNEY (Armenpress) – Acclaimed Bulgarian journalist and filmmaker Tsvetana Paskaleva visited Australia to showcase her award-winning documentary “Karabakh’s Wounds” this week.

Paskaleva, an eyewitness journalist, covered the 1991 Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

“Karabakh’s Wounds” chronicles the struggles of the Armenian people during the brutal onslaught by the Azeri armed forces that indiscriminately murdered innocent Armenian civilians. This documentary has been showcased at numerous international film festivals and Paskaleva has been the recipient of several awards.

Paskaleva has travelled the world, promoting the plight of the people of Nagorno-Karabagh. She has had audiences in the parliaments of France, Spain, the Czech Republic and various governmental and non-governmental organizations throughout the US, Europe and the Middle East. She will be showcasing her documentary in London after her visit to Australia.

The New South Wales State Parliament hosted the Australian premiere of “Karabakh’s Wounds” on May 7. A second community screening will take place on May 12 at Galstaun College.

Genocide Memorial Unveiled in Hungary

SZEGED, Hungary (Public Radio of Armenia) – A memorial dedicated to the victims of the Armenian Genocide was unveiled in April. The cross stone was erected in the Park of Christian Solidarity near Szeged Cathedral.

Levon Sargisian, brother of President Serge Sargisian’s brother, spoke at the event. He said, “Although the recent period has witnessed some difficult moments, they have been swept away like ash in the wind.”

Sargisian’s remarks allude to the recent severing of diplomatic ties between Armenia and Hungary. He stressed the importance of paying tribute to the Genocide victims and ensuring prevention of similar atrocities around the world.

Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi said that the two nations had been bound by a centuries-long friendship, arising from a common Christian faith and the remarkable achievements of Armenians who had settled in Hungary.

Armenia suspended diplomatic relations with Hungary last August after an Azeri officer serving a life sentence for murdering an Armenian officer in Budapest was repatriated to his homeland and subsequently released.

Alevi Homes Desecrated In Turkey

ISTANBUL (*Today’s Zaman*) – Houses belonging to Alevi citizens were marked with the word “death” by unknown perpetrators, leading a group of residents to protest the incidents on Tuesday.

Residents in the Esenkent neighborhood of Maltepe called the police after they awoke on Tuesday morning to find that the word “death” had been written on the walls of about 10 houses belonging to Alevis. An investigation into the incident is under way.

A group of Maltepe residents and members of the Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association marched through the streets, demanding the perpetrators responsible for defacing the properties be found and arrested.

“Our country is being dragged into chaos at a time when bombs are exploding in our neighboring countries. Alevis, Sunnis, Kurds, Turks and Arabs are viewed as enemies of one another. It is no coincidence that this hideous incident occurred on the anniversary of the deaths of Deniz Gezmis, Yusuf Arslan and Hüseyin Inan,” said one protester.

Gezmis, Arslan and Inan were revolutionary student leaders hung after the March 12, 1971 coup.

Previously, dozens of houses belonging to Alevis were marked with red paint in several provinces. The incidents have sparked concern and unease among the country’s Alevi population.



Community News

Hartford Parish Celebrates Pastor's Milestone

HARTFORD, Conn. — On Sunday, April 14, parishioners of St. George Church gathered to celebrate a special milestone — the 10th anniversary of the ordination of their pastor, Rev. Gomidas Zohrabian, to the priesthood of the Armenian Church.

The community welcomed Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), who ordained Zohrabian at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in New York City in February 2003.

Zohrabian celebrated the Divine Liturgy with Barsamian presiding. At the conclusion of the service, the Rev. Oshagan Gulgulian read aloud the Primate's letter honoring Zohrabian with a pectoral cross. Barsamian bestowed the cross on Zohrabian, saying, "May the holy cross continue to guide you and strengthen you in your pastoral ministry."

A banquet, prepared by the families of the parish, followed in the church's Assadourian Hall. The event was organized by committee members Melanie Brown, Dn. Ashot Ghokasiyan and Julie Ashekian.

Rev. Krikoris Keshishian, pastor of St. Stephan's Armenian Church, delivered the invocation. Master of ceremonies Ghokasiyan welcomed guests and offered congratulatory remarks to Zohrabian. A toast was offered by Julie Tashjian, co-chair of the parish council.

The St. George Sunday School students sang Vork Zartaretzeen. Ashekian recalled how she and her husband, Clement Ashekian, served as the ordination godparents for Zohrabian, and related her warm friendship with Zohrabian and his family.

Gulgulian, who was a classmate of Zohrabian at the Gevorkyan Seminary of Holy



Fr. Oshagan Gulgulian, left, looks on as Archbishop Khajag Barsamian presents Fr. Gomidas Zohrabian with a pectoral cross.

Etchmiadzin and who served as the sponsoring priest at his ordination, shared his memories of their brotherly journey.

Various parishioners also offered words of congratulations, and presented Zohrabian with a gift. Zohrabian also received a pectoral cross from his parents, Tumas and Khatun Zohrabian, and siblings Raffi, Alfred and Lida Zohrabian.

He expressed his appreciation to the entire parish for the celebratory party. He said the past decade at St. George Church had been a rewarding experience for him as a pastor, and added that he looks forward to new accomplishments in the next chapter of his ministry.

Zohrabian generously established an endowment fund to benefit the parish's altar servers, junior choir and Sunday School programs. In lieu of gifts, parishioners made contributions to the fund.

"It is a joy to see a parish coming together, as a close-knit family, for worship and fellowship, and I am happy to share in this warm celebration today," said Barsamian. "Der Hayr and Yn. Ellen are loving and faithful servants of our Lord, and this community — and our Diocese — are blessed to have their service."



Elie Wiesel and Richard Hovannisian

Richard Hovannisian, Elie Wiesel in Conversation On Genocide

ORANGE, Calif. — On April 17, Prof. Richard Hovannisian, first holder of the AEF Chair in Modern History at UCLA and Distinguished Visiting Scholar at Chapman University and the University of California, Irvine, engaged in "conversation" with Dr. Elie Wiesel, Nobel Laureate and Holocaust survivor. The two guest speakers discussed the moral obligation of mankind to honor and preserve the memory of

the victims of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust by documenting and preserving witness and survivor testimonials, advocating for recognition and promoting education.

Before a capacity audience in the Wallace All Faiths Chapel, the scholars touched upon their individual experiences and that of their communities while dealing with concepts of truth and justice in the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust.

Hovannisian posed the question of whether there can ever be real justice for Holocaust victims, even with the countless monuments and reparations they have received, to which Wiesel simply said "no."

Hovannisian added that Armenians, on the other hand, have not even been given the satisfaction of formal recognition by Turkey. He wondered about Wiesel's view of the Holocaust being beyond the bounds of history and therefore incomparable and argued instead that the Holocaust, like the Armenian Genocide, could be contextualized and historicized without making either of them seem rational.

Wiesel spoke of the Armenians' "passion for memory" and for preserving every detail of a calamity that marked and traumatized all subsequent generations of Armenians both in homeland and Diaspora. Wiesel then described how the Armenian cause "eventually became my cause," and discussed the importance of

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From left, Richard Hovannisian, Jennifer Keene and Elie Wiesel

Resistance to Armenian Genocide Explored at CSUN Conference

NORTHRIDGE, Calif. — The Grand Salon of California State University, Northridge (CSUN), provided the setting for an academic conference exploring "Resistance to the Armenian Genocide" in the Ottoman Empire (1915-1923).

Dr. Vahram Shemmassian, professor of Armenian Studies and director of the Armenian Studies Program at CSUN, opened the conference by pointing out the importance of continuing scholarship about the Genocide as its 100th anniversary in approaches in 2015. Opening remarks were also provided by John Kossakian, co-chair of the Los Angeles United Armenian Council for the Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide and principal of the Ferrahian Armenian School in Encino.

An overview of the theme was provided by Dr. Rubina Perroomian, author and educator, in her talk, "Armenian Resistance to the Genocide: An Assessment of Circumstances and Outcomes." Perroomian traced the Ottoman Armenian population's gradually increasing national awareness and determination to stand up for basic human rights, beginning with the 1862 Zeitun uprising and continuing in the 1890s with the peaceful rally at Bab-Ali, the Khanasor Expedition, the seizure of the Ottoman Bank, and the plot to assassinate Sultan Abdul Hamid. She went on to assess the impact of limited opportunities for resistance during the Genocide itself.

"Peaceful Resistance: American Missionaries in Wartime Turkey, 1914-1917" was the topic of the next presentation, by Dr. Barbara Merguerian, an independent scholar and author. Merguerian pointed out that, as foreign nationals and as clergymen, educators and medical personnel, the Americans were not in a position to offer any kind of military resistance; but they remained at their posts throughout the interior of Turkey and did all they could to attract attention to the atrocities taking place, to provide food and clothing to victims, and to find ingenious ways to save many individual Armenians, until the break in diplomatic relations between Turkey and the United States in April 1917 forced most of them to leave the country.

Dr. Garabet K. Moumdjian, an independent historian, followed with a presentation of "Muslim Resistance to the Armenian Genocide in the Southern Theater of War: Jemal Pasha and the 4th Army Corps." His nuanced assessment of the Turkish leader Jemal Pasha, as well as other Ottoman governmental and military officials who, he said, were instrumental in saving the lives of some 150,000 to 200,000 Armenian deportees in the south, raised many questions from the audience. Moumdjian called for further scholarship to analyze the political, social, military, and other circumstances motivating Turkish leaders.

In the next presentation, "Post World War I Violence and Resistance in Cilicia," independent scholar and editor Aram Arkun addressed conflicts that arose in Cilicia as Armenians began to return to their homes, the Turkish Nationalist movement grew, and the occupying British and French forces were forced to make difficult policy decisions. The French administration in particular, increasingly torn between promises made to the Armenians and demands from the local Turks, took contradictory positions until France decided to pull its forces out of Cilicia in exchange for economic concessions from Turkey. As a result, Armenians were left powerless and forced to flee from their homes once again.

The final speaker, Shemmassian, in his presentation about "The Musa Dag Resistance in the Armenian Genocide Denial Campaign," cited different forms of denial and falsification by Turkish and Turkish-leaning scholars, particularly Edward J. Erickson, a retired

see CONFERENCE, page 6



COMMUNITY NEWS

Congress Commemorates Armenian Genocide

CONGRESS, from page 1

Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), along with Representatives Tony Cardenas (D-CA), David Cicilline (D-RI), Jim Costa (D-CA), vice chairman of the House Democratic Caucus Joe Crowley (D-NY), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Eliot Engel (D-NY), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Scott Garrett (R-NJ), Janice Hahn (D-CA), Rush Holt (D-NJ), House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA), Linda Sanchez (D-CA), John Sarbanes (D-MD), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Jackie Speier (D-CA), John Tierney (D-MA), Dina Titus (D-NV) and Niki Tsongas (D-MA).

"The Armenian Assembly appreciates the bipartisan, bicameral solidarity of our congress-



Rep. Michael Grimm (R-NY) and Bryan Ardouny

sional friends," stated Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. "We will continue to raise awareness, fight against genocide denial and urge all people of goodwill to stand with us to ensure that genocide is prevented in the future."

In addition to remarks by Members of Congress, the Republic of Armenia's Ambassador to the United States, Tatoul Markarian, and Nagorno Karabagh Representative to the United States Robert Avetisyan rounded out the program's speakers. Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, the Legate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, gave the opening prayer, and the benediction was given by Archbishop

Oshagan Choloyan, Prelate of the Armenian Apostolic Church of the Eastern United States.

Throughout the country from California to Maine and across the globe from Jerusalem to Argentina, communities paused to remember man's inhumanity to man. In addition, the Administration sent officials to the Armenian Genocide commemorations held in Yerevan and Istanbul while in the United States, the Florida Senate passed its first resolution commemorating the Armenian Genocide.

In the week leading up to the Capitol Hill Commemoration, members of the Central and East European Coalition (CEEC) held an Advocacy Day to discuss a number of key issues, including support for US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide. The CEEC is comprised of 18 nationwide organizations, including the Armenian Assembly and represents more than 20 million Americans.



Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ)



Representative Jackie Speier and George Washington University Armenian Students Association President Lena Krikorian

Assembly's Distinguished Humanitarian Award to Be Presented May 16

Special Guest Rep. Markey Confirmed, Sheriff Koutoujian to Serve as MC

WASHINGTON – The Armenian Assembly of America announced this week that Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA), along with Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian will join with community members as the Assembly presents its Distinguished Humanitarian Award to three longtime supporters.

Ann Hintlian, Virginia Ohanian and Nevart Talanian have served as a backbone of the Assembly through their generosity, dedication and commitment to the goals and mission of the organization throughout the decades.

Founded in 1972 as a Washington-based organization dedicated to promoting Armenian-American interests with the federal and state level government, the Assembly has served as the community's leading advocate with Congress and the Administration on the central issues of the past four decades: Armenia's and Artsakh's independence; strong US-Armenia relations; humanitarian assistance and economic development for Armenia's earthquake-ravaged regions, a just and fair resolu-

tion of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict and US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide.

"From its formative years and to this day, Mrs. Hintlian, Mrs. Ohanian, and Mrs. Talanian have helped pave the way for the Assembly's pioneering work for the betterment of all Armenians," stated the Assembly's Executive Director, Bryan Ardouny. "It is with great pleasure and pride that the Assembly bestows its Distinguished Humanitarian Award to them," Ardouny continued.

Preceding the evening Awards Reception, the Assembly will hold its Annual Trustees meeting on May 16 from noon to 3 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Cambridge. To join the Assembly on May 16th and for sponsorship opportunities, contact the Assembly's Washington office.



Virginia Ohanian, center, with friends at an Assembly event in Florida.

Conversation with Richard Hovannisian and Elie Wiesel

CONVERSATION, from page 4

remembrance and what might happen once the last witness eventually passes away.

Hovannisian emphasized that selectivity of memory poses a challenge for those not connected to an event, as the Holocaust has been universalized, while Armenians still struggle with denial. "The history is not just our history, but mankind's history," said Hovannisian, and stated that memory must not just be linked to a single victim group.

There currently exists two institutions in Los Angeles that preserve, digitize, index and utilize survivor testimonials from the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust – UCLA's Armenian Oral History project led by Hovannisian and the Shoah Foundation's extensive collection at the University of Southern California. Hovannisian began the UCLA program in the 1970s by having students interview survivors of the Armenian Genocide. The interviews were later transcribed and trans-

lated by a subsequent generation of students.

"Elie Wiesel and Richard Hovannisian in Conversation" was moderated by Chapman University History Department Chair Jennifer Keene and was part of the University's week-long events featuring Wiesel and organized by the Rodgers Center of Holocaust Education headed by Dr. Marilyn Harran.

In the days prior to the Chapman program, Hovannisian lectured in Armenia, Argentina, Uruguay and Arizona. On April 21, he was the keynote speaker at the annual commemoration of the Armenian Genocide at St. Mary Church in Costa Mesa, California, and returned to Chapman University May 1-2 for guest lectures in two Holocaust classes.

He will make a presentation on the destruction of Smyrna/Izmir in a communitywide program at St. Leon Church in New Jersey on May 17 and will be the featured speaker in Montreal on May 25 on the occasion of the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Armenian republic.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Resistance to Armenian Genocide Explored at CSUN Conference

CONFERENCE, from page 4

lieutenant colonel in the US Army, in an article in *The Journal of Strategic Studies*. Pointing out errors of fact, omissions, and faulty analysis that led Erickson to conclude falsely that the Armenians were engaged in a major military rebellion, Shemmashian concluded that, “nearly a century after the Armenian Genocide, we are

still confronted with fabrications, falsehoods, and concoctions that aim to discredit and thus deny the fact of the Genocide.” The need to combat these falsifications continues to be as important today as ever.

Two lively discussion periods were ably presided over by the moderator, Dr. Levon Marashlian, Professor of History and Political



From left, Tavit Samuelian, co-chair of the United Armenian Council of Los Angeles (UACLA) for the Genocide Centennial; Dr. Rubin Perroomian; Dr. Levon Marashlian; Dr. Hasmig Baran; Dr. Vahram Shemmashian; John Kossakian, UACLA co-chair and principal of Holy Martyrs Ferrahian School in Encino; Dr. Barbara Merguerian; Dr. Garabet Moumdjian and Aram Arkun

Gayane Novikova to Analyze Armenia's Elections And 'Barevolution' in NAASR Lecture

BELMONT, Mass. — Dr. Gayane Novikova will give a lecture titled “The Presidential Election and ‘BaREvolution:’ Recent Developments in Armenia Through the Prism of Regional Security Issues,” on Thursday, May 23, at 7:30 p.m. at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), 395 Concord Ave.

The presidential election in February 2013 was marked by the appearance of an oppositional movement named “Barevolution” by its founder Raffi Hovannisian. Further developments demonstrated the weakness of this political movement and its influence upon the unstructured Armenian opposition. It also indicated the fragility of the Republic of Armenia’s internal stability, which in turn influences its external security, especially when viewed in relationship to current devel-

opments in the broader South Caucasus.

In this lecture, Novikova will look at these very recent and ongoing developments in Armenia through the prism of regional security issues, providing a timely analysis of important and much-debated events.

Novikova is the founding director of the Center for Strategic Analysis in Yerevan. She is presently a visiting scholar at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University (2008-2013) and a visiting lecturer in the International Relations Department at Boston University (2013). She is the author of several books, including *The Conflict Potential of the South Caucasus: the Geopolitical Dimension* (2011) and more than 70 articles.

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

Science at Glendale Community College. The participants were presented by Dr. Hasmig Baran, president of the Alumni and Friends of the SCUN Armenian Studies Program.

The conference was co-sponsored by Alumni and Friends of the CSUN Armenian Studies Program, the CSUN Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures, and the Los Angeles United Armenian Council for the Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide.

The CSUN Armenian Studies Program (ASP) is currently celebrating its 30th anniversary with a banquet to be held on May 11. During those three decades the APS has acquainted

thousands of youth of Armenian origin and other nationalities with the Armenian language, literature, culture and other related topics. These subject matters may lead to a Literatures and Cultures major with an Armenian Option, or an Armenian Minor. With a solid base of about 3,500 Armenian students on campus (10 percent of the total student body) each year, there is an urgent need for additional resources to further strengthen the ASP by establishing an endowed professorship (\$500,000) and a number of scholarships. For further information about the Program or the banquet, contact Shemmashian at vahram.shemmashian@csun.edu.

OBITUARY

Helen Chorakjian

BAYSIDE, N.Y. — On Tuesday, April 23, services were held for Haiganoush “Helen” Chorakjian, matriarch of the Jendian-Tarpinian family. Two months shy of her 103rd birthday, Chorakjian died April 19 in her home in the arms of her daughter, Zabel.

Funeral services were held at the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs with the Rev. Abraham Malkhasyan officiating, assisted by Deacon Hagop Yaghiyan and Chorakjian’s nephew, Deacon Allan Y. Jendian, who also presented a biography of his *horcoor* (aunt or father’s sister).

Interment was at Cedar Grove Cemetery with a memorial *Hokejash* at Sevan Restaurant.

Born June 19, 1910, Chorakjian was the youngest of five children of Yeghia and Noyemzar Jendian of Sepastia in Historic Armenia. In spring 1915, the Ottoman Turkish government announced that everyone in Sepastia would have to immediately evacuate the city.

Accompanied by their mother, the five children, Zabel (17), Mugrdich (15), Mardiros (10), Ohannes (7) and Haiganoush (5), began an arduous walk that only four would complete. Mardiros and Mugrdich traded off carrying their baby sister Helen on their shoulders during the deportation march.

Early in the march, their sister Zabel and other children were thrown into the river and drowned. Further along the way, their mother and many Armenians died of starvation. They buried their mother the best they could. This tragic memory was forever etched in the minds of the Jendian siblings. Eventually, the remaining four reached Der El Zor in the Syrian Desert — some 250-300 miles from Sepastia. There they found their father’s brother, Uncle Garabed and his family.

While in Aleppo, they read their names on a listing that stated their father was searching for his family; having previously settled in America, he advised them to join their Tashjian *morcoors* in Istanbul. They reached their mother’s sisters, Aghavnie Poladian and Nonoche Mardirossian, by taking a train to Mersin and a boat to Istanbul.

In 1920, Chorakjian’s three brothers left for America along with Mugrdich’s wife, Angel, their mother’s brother’s bride-to-be, Siranoush



Helen Chorakjian

Tashjian and cousin Nerces Mardirossian. Due to trachoma in her eyes, Chorakjian was left behind and not allowed to board the ship to travel with her family.

Three years later, traveling alone, she arrived in Ellis Island on August 1, 1923, to finally reunite with her father and her brothers in Utica, New York.

She married Zareh Chorakjian, also of Sepastia, on July 7, 1926 in New York City where they made their home. Their daughter, Zabel, was born in 1928.

Zabel married Jerry Tarpinian, of Sepastatsie parentage, in 1949 and had two sons, John and Jerry Jr. Chorakjian’s grandsons were both baptized and married at Holy Martyrs.

After living in Brooklyn for nearly 50 years, Chorakjian moved to Malvern in 1990 to be closer to her family. She took care of her great-granddaughters and great-grandson.

Her husband Zareh died in 1966. She is survived by her daughter Zabel, grandsons John and wife Lyn, Jerry and wife Joan, great-grandchildren Jeana and husband Daniel, Lisa and Jerry Vincent, numerous nieces and nephews and their families in California.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Deacon Ordained in Cleveland

CLEVELAND, Ohio — St. Gregory of Narek Church of Cleveland, Ohio, welcomed Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), for a weekend of fellowship and worship that culminated in the ordination of long-time parishioner Murad Demirjian to the dia-

conate, on Sunday, April 7.

Arriving on Saturday, April 6, Barsamian joined the parish Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) members for lunch and conversation. Young people had an opportunity to hear from the Primate about his ministry and to learn more about various

Diocesan youth programs.

Later that day, Archbishop Barsamian met with members of the parish council and the community's Young Professionals group. They spoke about the importance of faith in daily life and shared recent accomplishments of the parish.

Concurrent with the Primate's visit, Deacon Rubik Mailian, chair of the Sacred Music Council, conducted a choir workshop on Saturday. The session focused on the music of the Divine Liturgy and the service of the ordination to the diaconate.

On Sunday, April 7, close to 200 people gathered to participate in the Divine Liturgy. The Rev. Hratch Sargsyan, parish pastor, celebrated the badarak, with Archbishop Barsamian presiding.

In his homily, the Primate spoke about last fall's pilgrimage to historic Armenia, emphasizing the perseverance of the Armenian spirit even

loves his church," said Sargsyan. "Deacon Murad is a dedicated servant of the Lord, whose involvement and enthusiasm is an example to the young people he inspires in our community."

The newly ordained deacon said he was humbled and moved during the service. "Today, as I accepted the responsibilities of a deacon, and heard the congregation affirm my worthiness for this role, I renewed my commitment to the three pillars of my life: faith, the Armenian Church, and my family," Demirjian said.

Dn. Rubik Mailian led the choir in singing the hymns of the Divine Liturgy and the ordination service.

Following services, a reception was held in the church hall. Mailian, Nara Avetisyan, Hratch Bagrazyan and students of the St. Gregory of Narek Armenian School performed musical selections, and master of ceremonies Frunz Yeranosyan and Armen Yerevanian recited



AGBU YPs Walk for Boston

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One Month after the tragic Boston Marathon bombings, YPs in the Boston area are coming together for an untimed 5K walk/run through Watertown to benefit The One Fund.

May 15, 2013

AGBU Center, 247 Mt. Auburn St. Watertown, MA

Registration 6:30 pm

5K Walk/ Run begins 7:00 pm

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100% of the proceeds will be donated to The One Fund to help Boston Marathon bombing victims and families

We thank our AGBU YP GNY friends who will be hosting a walk/run simultaneously to benefit The One Fund.



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian ordains Murad Demirjian to the diaconate at St. Gregory of Narek Church.

in the face of one of the darkest episodes in Armenian history.

"Only recently, we could not even imagine raising our voices in prayer in an ancient Armenian church in historic Armenia," Barsamian said. "But last September, our group was able to do just that in places like Aghtamar, Ani and Dikranagert. When we open our hearts, everything is possible with God."

During the Divine Liturgy, Barsamian elevated sub-deacon Demirjian to the diaconate. A long-time member of St. Gregory of Narek Church, Demirjian has served on the parish council and is the youth advisor for the ACYOA.

"He is proud of his Armenian heritage and he

poems.

Parishioners presented deacons Murad Demirjian, Serop Demirjian and Haig Arpajian with new stoles in appreciation of their dedicated service to St. Gregory of Narek Church. It was also announced that proceeds from Sunday's reception would be put toward the purchase of new robes for choir members and altar servers.

Barsamian congratulated Murad Demirjian, and expressed his gratitude to the entire parish for their warm welcome and their energetic commitment.

"Deacon Murad is a son of the Armenian Church. His humility, openness, and commitment are qualities that will help him carry forward our Christian heritage and touch others with its message of love and hope."

Armenian Memorial Church Annual Fair May 31 and June 1

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Memorial Church will hold its Annual Fair Friday, May 31 and Saturday, June 1 (rain or shine). On Friday, from 5 to 8 p.m., the church will be serving traditional Armenian dinners and desserts. The entire fair will be open on Saturday, June 1 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Visitors may enjoy eating at tables under the tent or may purchase take out orders.

The entire fair features an Armenian delicacies table, a silent auction and craft tables.

The women of the Church who are known for their fine cooking have been preparing the Armenian delicacies, including *mante*, *paklava*, *kadayif*, *cheoreg*, *koufte* and many other baked specialties.

Carol Koundakjian Trio of Marlborough is chairing this year's committee, which includes Adrine Beurklian of Watertown, Marilyn Coughlin of Needham, Phyllis Dohanian of Belmont, Bette Ohanian of Watertown, Gregg Ohanian of Woburn, Susan Parseghian of Arlington, Steve Sabounjian of Wilmington, Vicky Tomasian of Belmont and Roberta Vanderkeyl of Watertown. Angel Parseghian of Belmont, president of the Ladies' Aide, is chairing the delicacies table.

The Armenian Memorial Church is located at 32 Bigelow Ave. For more information, call the church.

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New York METRO

Knights in Bergen County Commemorate Armenian Genocide

HACKENSACK, N.J. — Bergen County officials and local Armenians commemorated those who perished during the Armenian Genocide at the Bergen County Courthouse on Wednesday, April 24, in an annual event sponsored by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan.

Attendees on behalf of Bergen County included Sheriff Michael Saudino, representatives from the offices of the Bergen County Executive Kathleen Donovan and the Bergen County Clerk, John S. Hogan, and members of the Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Guests gathered by the Armenian Genocide memorial on The Lawn on Main Street, as Grand Vice Commander of the Knights of Vartan, John Lawrence Shahdanian, Esq. welcomed everyone and invited Freeholder Maura R. DeNicola, representative of Bergen County Executive Kathleen Donovan, to present a proclamation for the Armenian Genocide. DeNicola declared April 24 as “a day of remembrance and reflection in somber recognition of the great calamity known as the Armenian Genocide.”

Following the reading of the proclamation, Shahdanian introduced the afternoon’s keynote speaker, Taleen Babayan, who expressed the resilience of Armenians, despite a history marred by catastrophe and tragedy.

“Almost a century after an unsuccessful attempt at extermination, we continue to thrive as a people,” said Babayan. “We are scattered, yes, but we are unified in our message. Unified in our will to persevere. We are here, appropriately, at this hall of justice, to see that justice is administered, no matter how long it may take and how arduous the path.”

Babayan touched on the family stories of survival that exist within the audience members



Taleen Babayan delivers her keynote speech.

fall victim twice — once to the sword and second to the lost pages of history.”

She noted that the challenges confronting the Armenian people and the homeland have



Armenian clergy and guests gather for the requiem service.



The Armenian Genocide memorial plaque at the Bergen County Courthouse in Hackensack, NJ

not ended, but despite all the conflicts, Armenians continue to persevere and to prevail.

“Our church hymns continue to echo in our sanctuaries. Our language continues to be spoken. And we continue to remember. And that, is our victory in the face of annihilation.”

The program concluded with a requiem service at the Armenian Genocide memorial, which states, “In Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1923 where 1,500,000 innocent Armenians were massacred by Ottoman Turks” dedicated on July 8, 1990.”

Area priests and deacons led the hokehankisd, including Fr. Hovnan Bozoyan, pastor of Sts. Vartanantz Church, Ridgefield, Rev. Diran Bohajian, pastor of St. Leon Armenian Church in Fair Lawn and Rev. Vazken Karayan, pastor of St. Mary’s Armenian Church in Union City, NJ.

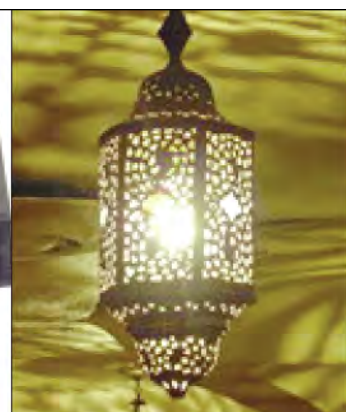
The afternoon service concluded with the laying of red carnations at the memorial plaque in remembrance of the 98th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

and across the Diaspora, which is what keeps Armenians united as a people. She spoke about the responsibilities of the next generation to continue recognition and commemoration efforts.

“As descendants of survivors, we have inherited a heavy load of responsibility and a moral obligation to keep our identity and the truth of our history alive. We have to ensure that those who perished in the Armenian Genocide do not



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New York METRO

For Martuni, a New Era in Health Care Delivery Is in Sight

NEW YORK — With the completion of the construction phase of the Martuni Regional Hospital scheduled for May 23, the brand new two-story structure, spanning a total area of 2,470 square meters, will stand for much more than just a new piece of modern construction.

First, the structure itself will represent a dramatic improvement in the delivery of safe, sanitary and multi-disciplinary health care to the 25,000 rural residents of the Martuni province and its 30 surrounding communities. These families

Fund USA, which donated \$300,000 toward the project. The two diasporan organizations worked alongside the government of Karabagh to bring the project from blueprint to reality in only three years.

Khoren Bandazian, the chairman of Armenia Fund USA, expressed his pride and satisfaction. “We are extremely gratified to finally open the Martuni Regional Hospital. This was a true collaborative effort behind a massive, all-encompassing project that leaves stone unturned to rebuild the trust of patients

The comprehensive nature of the project also includes physician-training programs. Irina Lazarian, the executive director of Armenia Fund USA, notes that, “Upgrading the knowledge and skill set of talented medical personnel is an integral part of our vision for a world-class hospital. The staff will be prepared to deliver outstanding service as soon the hospital doors open in October 2013.”

When the hospital is officially completed on May 23, it will have all the trappings of a multi-disciplinary regional hospital.

The basement includes storage and service rooms; the main floor holds a conference hall, an emergency room, an intensive-care unit and departments for polyclinic, diagnostics, infectious diseases, as well as administrative offices. The second floor features space for surgery, therapy and obstetrics and gynecology. In fact, the entire maternity ward was endowed by the late Giragos Vapurciyan, an individual donor from Detroit area.

In addition, the building has a boiler room, a power substation and a heating system. There is also an expansive courtyard for convalescing patients and their families. The access road to the hospital has been leveled and repaved with new asphalt, along with parking facilities for staff and visitors.

According to the hospital's executive director, Grigori Gasparian, the new facility has the capacity to serve close to 1,400 outpatients every year, and 1,000 inpatients every year with up to 23 inpatients at a time.

The Martuni Regional Hospital is the second modern medical facility in Karabagh, following the Stepanakert Polyclinic. It was also funded by Armenia Fund USA and completed in 2003.

Gasparian remarked that the polyclinic played an invaluable role in maintaining the health of mostly urban residents. “Now the Martuni Hospital will benefit rural communities as well, saving patients and families critical time and money traveling to Stepanakert for more complex treatment.”

The Martuni Hospital project is, it itself, part of a larger multi-year effort by Armenia Fund USA to revitalize Karabagh's overall healthcare system. In addition to funding an array of healthcare projects in the Armenian homeland, Armenia Fund USA also spearheaded the HyeBridge Telehealth program in partnership with Yerevan State Medical University and AAHP. The first HyeBridge telemedicine hub was installed in the Armine Pagomian Polyclinic and Hirair Hovnanian Diagnostic Center in Stepanakert. It uses Internet-based videoconferencing and a dedicated website to deliver improved healthcare training to physicians working in underserved communities throughout Armenia and Karabagh.



The Martuni Hospital nearing construction

have long been deprived of basic health care in the aftermath of war and economic stagnation. When the new hospital opens its doors to patients in October, it also has the potential to boost the economic growth of this strategically critical province, situated along Karabagh's eastern-most border.

Another noteworthy achievement is the successful cooperation of the project partners involved from start to finish. This includes Armenia Fund USA, the eastern affiliate of Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, joined by the US-based Armenian Medical

and their families in the local health system. We believe this initiative can serve as a catalyst for economic development, stemming the alarming tide of emigration from border communities.”

Herand Markarian, a spokesperson for the Armenian Medical Fund USA board of directors, stated that, “We are happy to join the efforts of the government of Karabagh and Armenia Fund USA in building the new hospital in the important region of Martuni, Karabagh.”

ACEF Continues to See Steady Growth

NEW YORK — The Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF) has continued to see steady growth throughout 2012, and remains involved in investment strategies for parishes across the Diocese. Due to its uninterrupted annual distribution, the fund helps parishes maintain vital programs that benefit ministry, youth and the elderly, as well as look forward to future projects.

In 2012, ACEF achieved a return of 11.3 percent, making it possible to distribute 4.5 percent to its beneficiaries, and to reinvest the additional income. “We fully expect to be showing positive numbers to all our constituents,” said ACEF Board Chair Bruce Ballard, who will present more detailed results at the Annual Diocesan Assembly in May.

The goal, Ballard said, is to achieve returns between 6 and 8 percent, and to continue distributing 4.5 percent annually (income above the 4.5-percent mark is reinvested). At the same time, the board said they hope to attract new investors, giving the fund more investment opportunity while reducing overall investment risk.

According to Ballard, for more than a year now ACEF has been realigning its portfolio allocations to rely more on the strength of equity markets and less on government bonds, which haven't performed as well. In the long term, Ballard said, the realignment will allow ACEF to outpace inflation and to achieve more steady returns for investors.

Since 2010, the fund has risen from \$50 mil-

lion to close to \$90 million. The growth is due in part to appreciation, and in part to an increased interest in investing with ACEF. Even in the current economic downturn, the community has continued to rely on ACEF to build endowments.

The fund's transparency and low operating expenses have been a draw for Diocesan parishes and individuals interested in setting up endowments to finance youth programs, meet parish operating needs and underwrite other community activities.

Last year, ACEF launched a newly designed website, www.acefinvest.org, as well as accompanying marketing materials to make the fund's work more accessible to investors. Visitors can learn how endowments work, read success stories about current endowments and download brochures and other materials.

Established in 1974, ACEF is an independent non-profit that supports parishes and individuals that wish to create legacies through endowments; it helps maximize financial returns by investing as a community.

The board includes individuals from diverse backgrounds, that include investment professionals from large Wall Street financial institutions, hedge fund managers, lawyers, accountants, C-level corporate managers and business owners, who donate their time to the oversight and development of the fund.

“We have all fronts represented, so we maintain a focused approach to the investment



ACEF board members with Archbishop Khajag Barsamian at the Diocesan Center earlier this year

aspects of the funds to achieve the highest returns for the beneficiaries, as well as making sure we follow all the rules and regulations associated with being a non-profit entity,” said Ballard.

Ballard joined the board six years ago, at the recommendation of a friend. After serving for a year as a general board member, he was elected treasurer in 2008, and became the chair last December, succeeding the board's long-serving leader, Mark Gabrellian.

A member of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob

Church in Wynnewood, Penn., Ballard has built a career in the hospitality and transportation industries. He is currently the chief financial officer of The Service Companies, a janitorial company that serves the hospitality industry. During his term at the helm of ACEF, he said he hopes to continue raising its profile and investing power.

“We have really moved the organization up in terms of its professionalism, its transparency, and its reach in the Armenian community,” Ballard said. “We are making a positive influence.”



Arts & Living

Artist Tashjian Donates Paintings To UNM-LA

SANTA FE, N.M. (*Los Alamos Monitor*) — Artist Richard Tashjian has been a nature lover since his early childhood. His initial memories are of drawing on the back of his sister's notebooks.

Tashjian, a native of Massachusetts, and a second generation Armenian-American, eventually settled in Santa Fe in 2001, after being drawn to New Mexico's scenery during his travels.

Now, at 87, Tashjian has been painting for more than 75 years and several of his paintings are of the red cliffs and skies of the Southwest.

Tashjian's experiences come from his experiences and background. He began his career in the Navy, during World War II, as an aerial photographer.

He later worked in the advertising industry after studying graphic design at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

It was not until the 1980s, when Tashjian was running a gallery and art studio in Watertown, that he became serious about painting.

Over the years, Tashjian was able to turn his passion into a career. His paintings have drawn international acclaim, especially in Armenia. His works hang in a number of museums in Armenia, as well as around the US, and locally are on display at the University of New Mexico-Los Alamos (UNM-LA).

Tashjian has had a long-standing relationship with UNM-LA's campus. He donated several paintings between 2005 and 2007. In 2007, Tashjian had a one-man show at UNM-LA titled, "Mesa, Canyons, Landscapes," which featured 30 pieces of his artwork.

Recently, Tashjian donated four more oil paintings to UNM-LA and his works are presently on display in the Student Center Lecture Hall in Building 2.

"UNM-LA has been so good to me that I wanted to give something back," Tashjian said. "I hope the students will be inspired by my paintings."

Tashjian still experiments with watercolor and acrylic, as well as oil.

An accomplished plein-air painter, Tashjian celebrates the tradition and style of painting outdoors in the open, on location along the Rio Grande and near the red rock cliffs of Abiquiu, among many other places.

Two Santa Fe galleries, Art Exchange Gallery and InArt Santa Fe Gallery, along with Johnson's Gallery in Madrid, currently represent Tashjian.



Richard Tashjian



Chris Bohjalian speaks to the audience at Columbia University about his book *The Sandcastle Girls*.

Bohjalian Electrifies Audience at Columbia University

NEW YORK — Acclaimed author Chris Bohjalian led a book discussion about his New York Times' bestselling novel, *The Sandcastle Girls*, on Thursday, April 19 at Columbia University's Cowin Conference Center in an event hosted by the Armenian Center at Columbia University.

By Taleen Babayan

On tour for the paperback release of *The Sandcastle Girls*, a love story that takes place during the Armenian Genocide, Bohjalian shared with the audience his deep historical

knowledge of the Genocide and the powerful rippling effect the book has had in educating people about the atrocities of 1915.

In her introduction of Bohjalian, Dr. Nicole Vartanian, vice chair of the Armenian Center at Columbia University, noted the author's "boundless intellectual curiosity" and his ability to pull in his audience from the very beginning.

"His skilled narrative is seamless and captivating all at once," said Vartanian. "Bohjalian's pen and prose merge to create an epic story of love, loss, betrayal, survival, hope, fear and fortitude."

For the audience to gain a better understanding of the significance of *The Sandcastle Girls* and how it came into being, Bohjalian began his presentation by sharing photos of his family dating back to 19th century Constantinople. Flashing a black and white photo of his parents' wedding day, Bohjalian revealed that his mother was not Armenian, but in fact Swedish.

"My mother was never the outsider because she adored her Armenian family," said Bohjalian who showed a photo of a bronze charm of Armenia that was on his mother's keychain.

Another photo dated back more than a century, when his grandfather was a youngster sitting on his father's lap at the turn of the 20th century in the Ottoman Empire.

"My grandparents, Leo and Haigouhi Bohjalian, were survivors of the Armenian Genocide," said Bohjalian. "Like most survivors, they took their stories to their graves."

Shedding some light on his family's history, Bohjalian said his great-grandfather provided cavalry horseman to the Turks. But with the start of the Armenian Genocide, they confiscated his horses, home and property in Constantinople and killed him. The surviving members of the family made their way to Egypt and his grandparents eventually met and wed in Paris.

Growing up in Westchester, NY, Bohjalian was close with his grandparents, and would accompany them the Holy Cross Armenian Church in Washington Heights, NY, on Sundays. The memory of his grandparents and the impact they had on his life remained with Bohjalian as he made his first attempt, 17 years ago, to write a novel about the Armenian Genocide. After completing a full manuscript, however, he was not happy with the result. Almost two decades later, he decided it was time to try again. But this time, he wanted to do it right, because "in my heart, I knew *The Sandcastle Girls* was the most important novel I was ever going to write."

The book focuses on the story of an American nurse who brings aid to Armenians in Aleppo, Syria and who meets Armen Petrosyan, an Armenian engineer who lost his wife and infant daughter to the Genocide. In the present, their granddaughter Laura is drawn back by a photo she sees at the Armenian Library Museum of America, in Watertown, Mass., of a woman who based on the caption is related to her. This picture links the present and the past and as Bohjalian noted, there is an "enormous amount of my childhood in this book."

see BOHJALIAN, page 11

Art Tome, A Legacy of Armenian Treasures: Testimony to a People Released

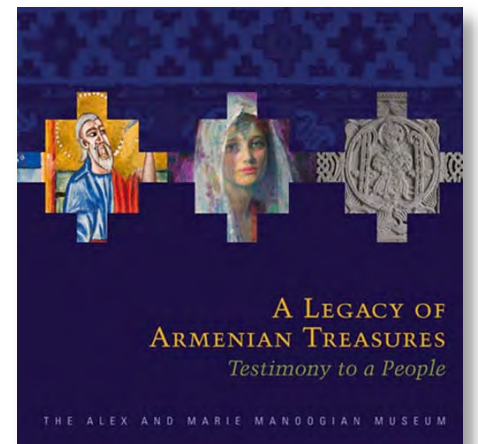
BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — The Alex and Marie Manoogian Museum published the text, *A Legacy of Armenian Treasures: Testimony to a People*, on May 1.

The museum, located in Southfield, Michigan, first opened its doors in 1992 with the a dual purpose — "to be both an artistic endeavor and an attempt to reconstruct the history of the Armenian people through the ages." It now holds the largest and most representative gathering of art and artifacts outside of Armenia.

A Legacy of Armenian Treasures features more than 160 of the museum's pieces, each reproduced in full color and accompanied by a detailed entry. Essays by nine scholars about Armenian art and artifacts shed light not only on the artistic significance of these objects but also on their cultural context as well.

"For centuries Armenia did not exist as an independent state, yet its clerics, poets, artists and musicians maintained and cultivated a cultural heritage of extraordinary beauty. A people can survive, even thrive, under alien imperial powers, if its sense of identity is continued," wrote Ronald Grigor Suny of the University of Michigan.

"Here we see how manuscript illuminators, church builders and writers carried on the idea of Armenian civilization through a millennium. This exquisite volume brings to us a vivid portrait of a people whom no empire was able to extinguish. The Manoogian Museum and this beautiful book reveal a glorious, gorgeous past of a determine people," added Grigor.



The book included nine chapter presented in the following sequence: "Illuminated Manuscripts and Printed Books," by Sylvie L. Merian; "Ceramics" by Amy S. Landau; "Inscribed Rugs" by Vahram Taitikian with S. Peter Cowe; "Ancient and Medieval Coins" by Levon Saryan; "Paintings and Sculpture" by Garabed Belian; "Ancient Objects" by Alina Ayzazian and Felix I. Ter-Martirosov; "Garments, Lace and Embroidery" by Merian; "Sacred and Religious Objects" by Landau, Theo Maarten van Lint and Merian and "Practical and Personal Metal Objects" Merian. A foreword is included by Thomas F. Matthews, professor emeritus, at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

The book was edited by Edmond Y. Azadian, Merian and Lucy Ardash. Azadian, an advisor from the Diaspora to the Ministry of Culture of Armenia, also serves as an advisor to the museum and as the director of publications for Baikar and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. His books include *Portraits and Profiles* and *History on the Move*. Merian is a librarian at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York and the author of several articles on Armenian art and artifacts. Ardash is the director of the Alex and Marie Manoogian Museum.

To order a copy of the book, visit <http://iupress.indiana.edu>. For review copies, interview questions or additional information, contact Mandy Clarke at mlclarke@indiana.edu or call Edmond Azadian at (313) 949-8599.



ARTS & LIVING

Egyptian Chant Avedissian Sets Contemporary Art Auction Record in Doha



DOHA, Qatar (Ahram) — “Icons of the Nile” by contemporary Egyptian artist Chant Avedissian set an auction record for living Arab artists at Sotheby’s Contemporary Art Sale Doha.

Sotheby’s Contemporary Art Doha auction achieved a total of \$15,199,750,00 last week, establishing the highest price for an auction of Contemporary Art in the Arab world.

According to Sotheby’s official press release, “The sale was 89.1 percent sold by lot. Records were set for nine artists, including a record for a living Arab artist [Chant Avedissian].”

Avedissian, born in Cairo in 1951 to Armenian refugees, used gouache, hand-painted stencils, with gold and silver acrylic paint on cardboard for the 120 separate pictures that

formed “Icons of the Nile.”

The lot sold for \$1,565,000 - (against the expected \$1 million) not only setting the record for the artist at any auction, but also placing him as the highest selling Arab living artist.

He was a student of Nora Azadian, an Egyptian-Armenian artist now living in Michigan.

Bohjalian Electrifies Audience at Columbia University

BOHJALIAN, from page 10

When he completed his manuscript, Bohjalian said he was warned that this book would be a commercial disaster because, “no one has heard about the Armenian Genocide and no one wants to read about the death of 1.5 million people.”

Bohjalian, however, maintained his belief in the novel and of getting this story out to the world. He thanked the support of many Armenian organizations such as AGBU and ANCA, which hosted “remarkable events in three time zones in the first three days the book was published.”

Word of mouth spread quickly and soon

Bohjalian was giving book talks to non-Armenians who were interested in hearing the truth about the Armenian Genocide, a chapter of history they had never known. Bohjalian showed pictures of book groups who sent him photos expressing how much the book meant to them as well as photos posted by those who were reading *The Sandcastle Girls* all over the world, from Norway to Afghanistan. Within weeks, he had sold the foreign rights to countries such as the United Kingdom, Brazil, Russia, France and Israel.

A highlight of Bohjalian’s presentation was a photo journey he took the audience members on as he noted the significant landmarks, in relation to the Armenian Genocide, that he visited after he wrote his book. These included the Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon, where there is an Armenian Genocide Museum and Deir Zor, where

“to this day you can run your fingers through the sand and come away with fragments of skull and bone of our ancestors.”

Bohjalian also made a trip to the Jebel orphanage in Lebanon, founded by a Danish missionary, which saved over 3,000 Armenian orphans, and the Musa Dagh memorial in Anjar, where he saw canisters that once filled the genocide martyrs.

His journey concluded with a trip to Yerevan, where he “went to the Armenian Genocide memorial in Yerevan and [to lay] flowers at the eternal flame in memory of our ancestors.”

“It was important for me to see the geography of the Armenian soul from the Armenian ground, to see Mount Ararat,” he said. “Ararat and Musa Dagh are two mountains that comprise the geography of the Armenian soul.”

Mark Momjian, Esq., chair of the Armenian Center at Columbia University, thanked Bohjalian for his gripping and emotional discussion. He presented Bohjalian with a gift of an inscribed copy of the novel *Mayfair* by the Armenian writer, Michael Arlen, and invited guests to a reception, where Bohjalian signed copies of his books.

Nora Arkelien traveled all the way from Erie, Pennsylvania, so she and her children could hear Bohjalian’s talk. “I wanted my children to make this trip with me so that they understand their heritage, and how special it is to be Armenian,” said Arkelien, whose children never met their Genocide survivor great-grandmother. “Chris’ characters in the book reminded me of how strong a people we are. As Chris reminds us, ‘We are the mountain.’”

Columbia University Teacher’s College student Anna Abalyan said she was impressed with Bohjalian’s discussion and was “glad to see the book is helping raise awareness about the Armenian Genocide.”

Historian Dr. Vartan Matossian appreciated Bohjalian’s ability to convey the story of how the book was written.

“I was particularly interested to hear his reflections about being the son of an ‘assimilated’ Armenian American and how he had been, predictably, attracted to trying his hand at the literary representation of the Genocide, if such a thing is really feasible, over the past twenty years.”

Members of the Armenian Center at Columbia University said they were proud to host such an impassioned and remarkable writer like Bohjalian.

“The timing of Chris Bohjalian’s inspirational talk at Columbia University, marking the 98th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, is critical,” said Momjian. “With the centennial two years away, our hearts and minds are moved by this great writer and his dedication not only to preserving the memory of this terrible crime, but the miraculous survival of the Armenian people.”

“Chris’ presentation not only offered a fascinating perspective on the novel’s, and his own, evolution through the stories it tells, but also demonstrated why he is such a celebrated and beloved novelist,” said Vartanian. “Interweaving personal

anecdotes with the challenges of authoring a novel that requires such historical precision, he humbly exposed his writing and editing processes to the audience in a way that will linger with us as we return to the pages of this extraordinary novel again and again.”

Re-population Process In Nagorno-Karabagh Topic of Talk at ALMA On May 19

WATERTOWN, Mass.— Dr. Arshak Balayan, assistant professor of philosophy at Yerevan State University, will speak at the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) about his research into the re-population of Shahumyan (better known as Karvachar) and Kashatagh Regions of Nagorno-Karabagh (Artsakh), on Sunday, May 19.

These two areas were outside the Nagorno-Karabagh Autonomous Oblast of the former Soviet Union and thus many people believe that these areas are under greater threat of being re-annexed to the Republic of Azerbaijan. In spite of its uncertain political status, 12,000-13,000 people have already moved to these areas, both under-populated and with poorly developed infrastructure.

With the help of two colleagues, Balayan has conducted in-depth interviews with many families from more than 10 villages and towns to determine their motivations for moving to these areas, what problems they face and the potential for developing these areas.

Currently a visiting scholar at Harvard University, his third consecutive annual five-month sojourn there, Balayan’s research is supported by the Open Society Institute, funded by George Soros. He has been involved in a number of educational, social initiative and research projects and teaches courses at Yerevan State University on topics such as “Communication Ethics,” “Christian Ethics,” “Philosophy of Science” and others.

Balayan is also the author of published translations, including a major one by Bertrand Russell, and has authored the textbook on introductory philosophy for Yerevan State. His main academic interests are the philosophy of science and communication ethics.

Balayan’s talk on the “Re-population Efforts in Nagorno-Karabagh” will take place on the 3rd floor of ALMA on May 19 at 2 p.m. Entrance is free to the public and refreshments will be served.

Friends of Armenian Culture Society, Inc.

62nd Annual Armenian Night at the Pops

Saturday, June 1 at 8:00 PM, Symphony Hall, Boston

featuring

Emmanuel Tjeknavorian, violin
Boston Pops Orchestra
Keith Lockhart, conductor

For tickets and information, please visit www.FACSBoston.org

Photo Credit: Stu Rosner



Remembering the Dead and Living Victims of the Armenian Genocide

By Raffi Bedrosyan

During the endless Turkish arguments and Armenian/international counter arguments about the number of massacred Armenians in 1915, Hrant Dink would repeatedly remind both sides about a more critical topic: "We keep talking about the gone dead, let's start talking about the remaining living..." The remaining living meant the unknown number of Armenians remaining in Anatolia, remaining not as Armenians, but as Turks, Kurds, Alewis, Moslems and other identities. Ninety eight years after the attempted destruction of a nation, it is time to talk more about the hidden Armenians, mostly orphans of 1915 assimilated into identities other than their own Armenianness.

Hrant had the courage to reveal the real identity of one of the best-known Turkish heroes as an Armenian orphan. Sabiha Gokcen, the first female military pilot and Atatürk's adopted daughter, was in reality Hatun Sebirciyan, an Armenian girl orphaned in Bursa in 1915. This revelation was the beginning of the end for Hrant, triggering a massive hate and threat campaign against him by the government, the military and the media, resulting in his assassination three years later. But Sebirciyan/Gokcen was only one of tens of thousands of Armenian girls and boys torn away from their parents during the 1915 events. What happened to these orphans? How many were there? This article will cite some examples from different parts of Anatolia.

It is a well-documented fact that during the deportation of the Armenian population from all corners of Anatolia to the Syrian desert, as the convoys approached their towns or villages, local Turks and Kurds snatched Armenian children from their parents to take them home as servants or wives. Many children were sold as slaves by them or the gendarmes escorting the convoys. There were also a few children entrusted by their parents to Kurdish and Turkish neighbors before starting on the deportation route. There were some children initially rescued by European/American missionaries or Pontian Greek religious leaders, but inevitably they were also later seized and sent away or murdered. We can cite one of many documented tragic incidents in Trabzon, where 600 Armenian orphan children were taken to the Greek monastery with the government's permission after their parents were massacred by drowning in the Black Sea. But after three months, by the order of the Trabzon governor Djemal Azmi, the police forcefully removed the orphans from the monastery and handed them over to a Turkish boat captain, Rahman Bayraktaroglu, who placed each child in a flour sack, securely tied the top and dropped each into the Black Sea. It is documented that Governor Jemal later joked, "The harvest of smelt (hamsi) will be plentiful this season with all the drowned as fish feed."

Trabzon Governor Djemal Azmi selected about 450 of the best-looking girls from the

Armenian community of Trabzon and converted the local Red Crescent Hospital to a warehouse for the Turkish elite and visiting dignitaries, even sending some of the girls as treats to his superiors in Istanbul. The supply of the orphans got replenished as needed. He kept a supply of 15 Armenian girls for himself but also gave one to his 14-year-old son, Ekmel, as a present. Most of the girls were forcefully Islamicized; a few eventually escaped or committed suicide. These experiences came to light from witnesses during the trials of the Ittihat ve Terakki leaders after the war, but also were told in 1921 by Djemal Azmi's son himself to his close friend, known to him as Mehmet Ali. The friend, however, happened to be an Armenian named Hratch Papazian, disguised and even circumcised as a Moslem, who had succeeded infiltrating the Ittihad ve Terakki circles hiding in Berlin, in preparation for assassinating the Turkish leaders as part of Operation Nemesis (Djemal Azmi and Bahattin Shakir, head of the Special Organization [Teskilat-i Mahsusa] who was the chief organizer of the deportation massacres, were both assassinated in Berlin on April 17, 1922, right in front of the bewildered widow of Talat Pasha, a year after Talat himself was brought to justice).

The Ittihat ve Terakki government had special plans for the surviving orphans. In an organized operation, while there was a world war going on, most of the surviving orphans were rounded up and sent to orphanages set up in multiple locations, with the objective of converting them to Islam and to be assimilated as Turks. One of these special Turkification orphanages was in Ayn Tura, near Zouk, an hour's drive from Beirut, where 1,000 Armenian orphans were kept, between the ages of 3 to 15. By the orders of Djemal Pasha, governor of Syria and Lebanon, and under the supervision of Turkish intellectuals and teachers, including the newly-appointed principal, Turkish novelist Halide Edip Adivar, these orphans were converted to Islam and Turkified. The boys were circumcised, and were given Turkish names, but preserving the initials of their Armenian names and surnames, so that Haroutiun

Najarian became Hamid Nazim, Boghos Merdanian became Bekim Muhammed, Sarkis Sarafian became Saffet Suleyman. The orphanage was converted from a Christian school after expelling the Lazarist Catholic priests. While famine prevailed everywhere in Lebanon and Syria during the war, abundant food was provided to the orphanage, with the objective of raising well-fed and healthy newly Turkified children. Based on the memoirs of one of the orphans, Harutiun Alboyajian, the children were expected to speak Turkish only; if the supervisors heard any Armenian spoken, the boys would be beaten severely. They were dressed as Turkish children and were taught Islam. It was Djemal Pasha's firm belief that the Armenians had superior intellect and capabilities, which would help the Turkish nation immensely. Despite efforts to keep the orphanage sanitary, about 300 Armenian orphans died from leprosy and other diseases until 1918. Some of the orphans were placed with



Armenian orphans

families in towns where there were no Armenians left, and some were distributed to other orphanages. At the end of the war, when Near East Relief took over the orphanage, there were 670 orphans, 470 boys and 200 girls, who still remembered their Armenian names.

Another example of Turkification experiment was in Eastern Anatolia, successfully implemented by Eastern Front commander Kazim Karabekir. He estimated that there were about 50,000 desperate orphans after the war in his regional area of operations. It is documented that about 30,000 of them were circumcised and Turkified. He rounded up about 6,000 Armenian children in Erzurum, 2,000 girls and 4,000 boys, and placed them in an army camp. Some were given training similar to a military school; others were taught trades essential for army supplies such as sewing and boot-making. These orphans had become completely Turkified and named "The Healthy Children Army." The talented ones among these boys were later sent to higher military academies in Bursa and Istanbul. Without going into the psychology of the assimilations and conversions, it is alleged that these converted military officers became the most fanatical ultranationalists in the Turkish army, with some of them participating in the May 1960 military coup which toppled the civilian government of Adnan Menderes.

Apart from the orphanages, tens of thousands of young girls and boys became slaves after 1915, bought and sold in bazaars and markets. Although slavery was officially abolished in the Ottoman Empire in 1909, slavery markets reopened after 1915 in order to trade Armenian women and children. Kidnapping Armenian children from the deportation convoys not only supplied the Turks and Kurds with servants, free labor or sex objects in their own homes, but also a marketable commodity that could be sold for profit in these markets. The markets were set up in Aleppo, Diyarbakir, Cizre, Urfa and Mardin. It is reported that the Mardin market had the lowest prices. After being branded and tattooed as a slave, Armenian children aged 5-7 found buy-

ers for 20 cents, similar to the price of a lamb. Girls or boys aged 14-15 went for 50 cents, whereas an adult Christian woman was worth about one Turkish lira. But if the slave came from a well-known wealthy family, the price went up significantly, as owning the slave could also bring the future potential of claiming the wealth of the slave's family. There are several documented cases from the later Turkish Republic era when Kurdish and Turkish families attempted to legalize the ownership of many real estate properties, previously owned by their "wives" or "daughters."

There are also documented cases when kind-hearted Assyrian priests or European/American missionaries purchased several Armenian children from these markets, with the objective of rescuing them. Assyrian Archbishop Tappuni of Mardin purchased and saved nearly 2,000 Armenian children in 1916. While some Moslems treated the Armenian slaves humanely, most owners savagely beat them, as they believed "Christians only deserve beatings." The women and girls ended up being second wives for the Moslem owners, who received harsh treatment not only from their husbands but also from the other wives of their husbands. But eventually, they all got absorbed into the Moslem households, bearing children, learning the Quran, praying piously as Moslem women.

According to a post-war report of the League of Nations Rescue Commission for



Women's bodies were tattooed by various "owners."



A woman's tattooed hands indicate her history as a sex worker.



Armenian orphan boys exercising

Armenian Women and Children, at least 30,000 Armenian girls were sold in the markets to be placed in harems, or to be used as slave labor. Documented histories of some continued on next page

Remembering the Dead and Living Victims of the Armenian Genocide

from previous page

2,000 Armenian girls, boys and young women rescued from Turkish and Kurdish households after the war are archived in the League of Nations offices in Geneva. Rescuing the Armenian orphans became one of the first tasks of the League of Nations after the armistice in 1918. Following the pleas of the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate, the Allied Forces and the League of Nations representatives organized the transfer of most Armenian orphans from Anatolia and Syria to Istanbul, and started searches of Armenian orphans in Moslem homes. As there was no room to place all the orphans in existing orphanages in Istanbul, several schools were used to house the Armenian children, including the French Notre Dame de Sion, St. Joseph, the Italian school, the Russian monastery, and Turkish Kuleli Military Academy.

As some of the orphans already had Turkish names, there started heated discussions between the Armenian Patriarchate and the government authorities as to the real identity of the children. In fact, some of the orphans were already transferred to Turkish homes in Istanbul as maids and servants; among them, 50 orphans sent to the farm of Ittihad ve Terakki leader Enver Pasha. The children were conditioned and intimidated not to speak Armenian, nor to reveal their Armenian identities during the war years.

Documents show that between 1920 and 1922, there were about 3,800 Armenian chil-



Armenian orphans

dren brought to Istanbul, 3,000 sent to Cyprus, 15,600 taken to Greece, and 12,000 transferred to Syria from Marash, Urfa, Antep, Malatya and Harput. Significantly, the Istanbul Patriarchate records indicated that there were still at least 63,000 Armenian orphans documented as “Not Rescued” in Turkish and Kurdish households.

In recent years, genocide scholars have stated that the perpetrators not only aim at the “destruction” of the oppressed group but also the “construction” of the oppressor group. The 1915 events and the consequences clearly show that the Armenian orphans became a source of pro-creation for the Turkish nation by enriching their genetic pool. There are now tens of thousands of Turkish and Kurdish families, with a hidden Armenian grandmother. It is remarkable that, even 98 years after attempts of forced Turkification, assimilation and conversion, there are signs of hidden Armenian identity in various places in Anatolia starting to emerge. There is a somewhat graphic term defining these people in Turkey, “remnants of the sword” (*kilic artigi*).

Hrant Dink’s lawyer, Fethiye Cetin, in her book *My Grandmother*, and the follow-up, *The Grandchildren*, co-written with Aysegul Altinay, and many other books, documentaries and movies have come out in recent years, describing the existence and emergence of the hidden Armenians in Turkey, carried from one generation to the next, all originating from the 1915 Armenian orphans.

It is of course very difficult to estimate the number of hidden Armenians in Turkey today. One can assume that perhaps up to 100,000 Armenian orphans survived but got Turkified, converted and assimilated. Scholars estimate another 200,000 adult Armenians avoided deportation in various Anatolian villages by

converting to Islam. It is therefore conceivable that 300,000 Armenian souls survived the 1915 events. The population of Turkey increased seven fold since then. Using the same multiple, one can extrapolate that there may exist 2 million people with Armenian roots in Turkey today.

I would like to share one of my own personal experiences with a hidden Armenian, albeit indirectly. When I was in Armenia in 1995 as a voluntary engineer inspecting Hayastan All Armenian Fund-financed construction projects, I also visited Spitak where the church destroyed in the 1989 earthquake was being rebuilt. I was informed that the financing came from Turkey from a still confidential donor, as specified in the will of a grandmother of a very wealthy Turkish family, who had only revealed her Armenian roots at her deathbed. In recent

years and especially after the reconstruction of the Surp Giragos Armenian Church in Diyarbakir, there has been a resurgence of the hidden Armenians in revealing their identities. It is hoped that the Turkish government sees this as a positive consequence of the recent steps of liberalization and not as a threat, and eventually finds the courage to face its past.

Selected Sources:

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Ayse Hur, “1915ten 2007ye ErmeniYetimleri” (Armenian Orphans from 1915 to 2007),” Radikal, 20.01.2013

Eren Keskin, “Soykirim Ortaklari “(Partners in Genocide), Ozgur Gundem, 22.01.2013

Ruben Melkonyan, “Attitude of the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul Towards the issue of the Forcibly Islamicized Armenians,” Noravank Foundation, 09.03.2010

Ruben Melkonyan, “The Islamization of Armenian children at the period of the Armenian genocide,” Miacum,11.08.2007

Keith David Watenpaugh, “The League of Nations” Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism, 1920-1927” , American Historical Review, December 2010

(Raffi Bedrosyan is a civil engineer, as well as a concert pianist, most recently involved with the renovation of the Surp Giragos Armenian Church in Diyarbakir. He lives in Toronto.)

C A L E N D A R

MASSACHUSETTS

- MAY 12 – Book Presentation, The Immortals: A Pictorial Anthology of Historiographic Works** by Alice Navasargian, 2:30 p.m. Free event co-sponsored by ALMA, NAASR and the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA). ALMA Contemporary Arts Gallery, 65 Main St., Watertown.
- MAY 12 – Book Presentation, The Immortals: A Pictorial Anthology of Historiographic Works** by Alice Navasargian, 2:30 p.m. Free event co-sponsored by ALMA, NAASR and the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA). ALMA 3rd Floor Gallery, 65 Main St., Watertown.
- MAY 19 – “Re-population Efforts in Nagorno-Karabagh,” 2 p.m. talk by Dr. Arshak Balayan**, assistant professor of philosophy at Yerevan State University, about his research into the repopulation of New Shahumyan (Karvachar) and Kashatagh Regions of Nagorno-Karabakh; free event hosted by ALMA, 65 Main St., Watertown, MA.
- JUNE 1 – Armenian Night at the Pops, 8 p.m.,** featuring young violinist Emmanuel Tjeknavorian from Vienna and the Boston Pops Orchestra at Symphony Hall, Boston. Presented by Friends of Armenian Culture Society. For tickets and information, visit <http://www.facsboston.org>.
- JUNE 13 – St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of Merrimack Valley Men’s Club Fourth Annual Cigar Night & Dinner**, in memory of Fr. Vartan Kassabian; surf & turf dinner, open bar, cigars, live & silent auctions, raffles; tickets \$150, contact Greg Minasian @gminasian@verizon.net, or 978-470-3075;158 Main Street, No. Andover, 01845.
- MAY 18 – Hoy Lari in Concert to benefit the Armenian Children’s Milk Fund**, returning to New England by popular demand, 2:30 p.m. at the First Baptist Church in Woburn. Janet and Paola will entertain kids of all ages with songs in Armenian and English; tickets \$15, family 4-pack \$50, available at the door. For more info, contact Dro at drokanayan@gmail.com.
- MAY 31 and JUNE 1 – Armenian Memorial Church Annual Fair**, Friday 5-8 p.m. serving Armenian kebab meals, entire Fair open Saturday 10 a.m.-7 p.m., Armenian meals from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Armenian delicacies bake sale, exciting silent auction, craft fair; 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown; wheelchair accessible, free admission; for info, call (617) 923-0498.
- JUNE 17 – The Gregory Hintlian Memorial Golf Tournament**, this year remembering Dan Dorian, sponsored by Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, Marlborough Country Club, Marlborough.

NEW JERSEY

- MAY 18 – Annual Meeting and Luncheon, Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA)**, Sheraton Lincoln Harbor Hotel; Weehawken, meeting, 9:30 a.m., luncheon, 12:30 p.m., speaker will be Dr. Mary Papazian, president of Southern Connecticut State University; special guest, Maro Matossian, director of the Yerevan Women’s Support Center; distinguished service award, Ruth Bedevian. For reservations, call (201) 927-9072, or email aiwainc@aol.com.

NEW YORK

- JUNE 7 – The Hamazkayin Armenian Cultural Association of**



On May 18, Hoy Lari will perform in a concert to benefit the Armenian Children’s Milk Fund at 2:30 p.m. at the First Baptist Church in Woburn. Janet and Paola will entertain kids of all ages with songs in Armenian and English. Tickets are \$15, or family 4-pack for \$50, available at the door. For more information, contact Dro at drokanayan@gmail.com.

NY presents a concert dedicated to the 300th jubilee of Sayat Nova, 8 p.m. featuring Elie Berberian (Canada) and his band performing songs by Sayat Nova and other favorite minstrels, suggested donation \$25 post-concert reception included at the Armenian Center, 69-23 47th Ave., Woodside. Contact gradaranik@gmail.com or call (212) 689-5880 for tickets.

PENNSYLVANIA

- MAY 18 – Mer Doon Armenian Dance, 8 p.m., Santerian Hall**, Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, 101 Ashmead Road, Cheltenham. Sponsored by the Knights of Vartan Ardashad Lodge. All proceeds will support the Mer Doon home in Echmiadzin, which provides women over 18 years of age a loving home and a solid education. Advance tickets are \$15. For tickets or info, call Vick Bazarbashian, 610-389-4633.

Free Calendar Submissions

The *Mirror-Spectator* accepts calendar submissions free of charge. Calendar entries of a maximum of five lines can be submitted to 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.



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Repeat Performance at Yerevan Municipal Elections

By Edmond Y. Azadian

On May 5, the Yerevan municipal elections took place. In Armenia, another term is used – the election of Yerevan Elders. Although the results were anticipated, active electoral campaigns were still conducted by the participating parties, because unlike most countries, almost half of Armenia's population lives in the capital city.

Following the parliamentary and presidential elections, the Yerevan municipal elections yielded almost the same results, meaning the ruling Republican party came out on top. The opposition had already prepared its arsenal of accusations, anticipating the results – vote rigging, intimidation, bribery and so on.

There were certainly some irregularities and some of the accusations had valid foundations, but the ruling party had honed its election mechanism so well that the local and international monitors had little to detect or to report. A total of 100 diasporan volunteers had joined the 150 local volunteers to monitor the elections under the guidance of Transparency International.

There are 464 precincts in Yerevan.

After the announcement of the Central Election Commission, the following picture emerged: the Republican Party received 55.89 percent of the votes (235,512); Prosperous Armenia received 23.07 percent (97,189); Barev Yerevan received 8.48 percent (35,732); the opposition HAK received 4.39 percent; ARF-Dashnak received 3.8 percent; Country of Laws (Orinants Yerkir) received 3.73 percent and Mission (Arakeloutyun) received .64 percent. Except for the first three parties, the rest were not able to garner the mandated 6 percent, therefore, their combined votes of 12.56 percent will be prorated among the winners.

Many analysts had predicted these results even during the presidential and parliamentary elections, which had already also predetermined the outcome of municipal results.

Although the opposition parties had taken part in the parliamentary elections they abstained from proposing their candidates for the presidential election, except Raffi Hovannisian's Heritage Party. They also did not join around a single opposition candidate. When Hovannisian made a surprise showing with 38 percent of votes, all the rest of the opposition parties contended that he had won with their votes. Therefore, the only change the municipal elections brought was the success of Hovannisian's Barev, Yerevan Party, without the presumed votes of the other opposition parties, which had their own candidates.

The opposition parties again failed to rally around a common candidate which automatically doomed their chances of success. Whereas in neighboring Georgia, where few pundits had predicted Mikheil Saakashvili's fall, the Georgian Dream Coalition brought together the major opposition parties, who, despite their ideological differences and diverse political platforms, brought to power Bidzina Ivanishvili.

As this juncture, the Republican Party controls the majority votes and will certainly re-elect Taron Margarian, the incumbent mayor. The party does not need any partners to form a coalition because in the Municipal Council, as well as in parliament, it can pass any resolution or any legislation unhindered. But political wis-

dom dictates otherwise; in a small country like Armenia, it is an awesome responsibility to concentrate power in the hands of a single party and given the power structure of the system, virtually all power is concentrated in the hands of the president. Therefore, the president, as well as his Republican Party will bear the responsibility of any government action or legislation. Also, the positive and negative developments in the country will reflect on that single party – the unemployment, lack of rule of law and especially the emigration will be the burdens of the party in charge.

There is another reason that will force the ruling party's hand to seek coalition partners. During the presidential election, Gagik Zarakian's Prosperous Armenia Party was playing the role of the opposition, inviting Levon Ter-Petrosian's HAK to court Prosperous Armenia in the hopes of coming up with a strong contender against President Serge Sargsian. That teasing game continued until the very last minute, when Zarakian announced that he was not a candidate, leaving the field free of opposition for the incumbent Sargsian.

Prosperous Armenia kept the administration as well as the opposition guessing which way the party would swing. There may be small grievances between the rank and file of the Republican and Prosperous Armenia parties, but at the peak of the pyramids, the interests of both parties converge, since both are composed of oligarchs, serving the interests of the oligarchy.

A healthy and strong opposition party would hold the feet of the administration to the fire. Without a genuine opposition, there will be no checks or balances in place. The executive and the legislative branches are controlled by the Republican Party and now the municipality of Yerevan joins the foray. The Supreme Court, or the Constitutional Court, which was supposed to keep the balance between the executive and the legislative, thus far has only contorted itself into a rubber stamp.

The three elections to date have rendered the opposition parties powerless, except for Heritage, which despite the media lampooning its leader, Raffi Hovannisian, somehow appeals to the younger generation. Ter-Petrosian's HAK coalition, which recently became a formal political party, was a coalition of ragtag interests and the influential participants jumped ship when the leader's maximalist policy hit a dead end.

The ARF could not build credibility as an opposition party because it had shared the gravy train with the Republican Party during the heyday of the ruling coalition. Therefore, suspicions of opportunism continue to linger about the party among the electorate. The Mission Party is too marginal to play any significant role. Despite pretensions of being an opposition party, Zarakian's Prosperous Armenia has proven to be the useful and disposable opposition always helping the administration under the table. Thus, Armenia lacks an opposition political party.

At this time, mounting problems will challenge and tax the power of the administration; unemployment is being eased at the expense of depopulation; the blockade is continuing and bellicose pronouncements are being issued louder and louder from across the Azeri border. Since the 1988 earthquake, there are still 20,000 people who need housing and in the best-case scenario, they will be housed in five years' time. The work is cut out for the administration. It needs all the help that it can get if this victory will not prove to be a Pyrrhic victory.

A Misguided Missive

It is common knowledge in journalism that letters to the editor do not reflect the opinion or the position of the respective paper that receives it. In the case of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, published letters contradicting the editorial policies supported by the paper and its founding party further confirm that the publication is an open forum for all ideas, inviting civil discussion.

In the April 27 issue of *Mirror-Spectator*, a letter was published under the title of "April 24: The Elephant not in the Room" and signed by Mark McKertich. The author of the letter is not the only person under the misguided opinion about the issue raised and perhaps the letter may prove to be a blessing in disguise to put the record straight for all concerned. Mr. McKertich raised an issue with painful roots, and its careless dismissal can cause more damage than good. He blames Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, the Primate, for not attending Times Square Armenian Genocide commemoration, "arguably our most sacred commemoration." Certainly the primate is cognizant how sacred the occasion is, better than anyone else. However, the Diocese was represented there by the Rev. Vasken Karayan.

And the letter goes to accuse the wrong party for the sorry situation created by other culprits: "Most Armenians now see through the hypocrisy of the church's position on unity and the ineptitude of Archbishop Barsamian and the Diocesan Council." We would argue not "most Armenians," but it would be more correct to say "only myopic Armenians" who believe amnesia to be a blessing rather than a disease.

The words "ineptitude" and "hypocrisy" in the letter are out of place. There is a church division, which was not created by our primate or the present Diocesan Council. It was created in 1933. It continues to this day and it spread throughout the Diaspora under the cover of the Cold War. The dissident church and its leaders would have loved everyone to forget the politicization of the church division triggered by that crime and to characterize the issue as an "outdated conflict."

The "elephant" is the division of the church. Anyone can forget and call it "outdated con-

flict" at their own risk. But that does not heal the wounds nor unite the church.

During the Cold War years, the fight against the head of the church in Echmiadzin had an ideological veneer that Antelias was defying the highest seat of Armenian Church, because it was under communist rule. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, that excuse lost its value and meaning. But the church is still divided because it has become a war of turfs, control of real estate and political power base.

Archbishop Barsamian's action is not the result of a personal whim. It is a matter of principle adopted by the entire church under the jurisdiction of Holy Echmiadzin. His presence would have legitimized the existence of two heads. We wished that policy could be applied uniformly all over to delegitimize division and dividers. Those who tolerate this anomaly are not contributing to the church unity; they are only perpetuating disunity.

Years of unity negotiations have gone nowhere. It is time to sort out right from wrong. It is time to stand by the legitimate church to correct and uproot this "outdated conflict."

— Hagop Vartivarian
Chairman, ADL Press Committee

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Tsarni Retracts Apology to Armenians; Breaks Promise to Rectify Earlier Claim

Armenians woke up on April 30 to the breaking news: “Ruslan Tsarni Apologizes to Armenian Community,” as reported by Alin Gregorian, editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* of Watertown, Mass.

Prior to this apology, Tsarni had been telling the international media that “an Armenian convert to Islam had brainwashed” his nephews – Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev – the Boston bombers. By linking an Armenian to such a heinous crime, Uncle Tsarni had infuriated Armenians who suspected dubious motives behind his outlandish claim.

Armenians were naturally relieved upon learning that Tsarni had told the *Mirror-Spectator*: “Armenia has a very strong culture, therefore, I want to stress that his [Misha’s] ethnicity has nothing to do with it. I wish I had never said it. I felt for you [Armenians] and wish I had never done it.” He went on to apologize for linking the Armenian community “to this evil event.”

While this apology was a good start, it was inadequate compared to the magnitude of the damage Tsarni had caused to the good name of Armenians worldwide. Merely apologizing to an Armenian newspaper could not undo that harm, unless he repeated it on CNN or other TV networks.

I contacted Tsarni asking him if he would issue a similar apology on national television. He responded affirmatively since he regretted dragging the Armenian name into “this sad episode.” Tsarni stressed that he did not “speak about all Armenians, just one man of Armenian descent. I never had the intention of harming Armenians or anyone else. I feel sorry that the name of the Armenian people was used. I feel somehow guilty. I would like to apologize. No one likes to be brushed with an act like this.” Tsarni asked me to report that he felt terrible about mentioning Armenians in his TV interviews.

Given his willingness to make a new public statement, I offered to assist him in drafting the text of an apology for a possible future network appearance. He first welcomed the idea, but later informed me that he would neither accept my suggestion nor issue his own statement, claiming that his earlier remarks were accurate, since Misha was of Armenian descent, overlooking the fact that Misha Allakhverdov, born in Azerbaijan, was of mixed Armenian and Ukrainian parentage. Tsarni further advised that he never meant to refer to “the entire [Armenian] ethnicity. It was a simple technical characteristic of the person whose name I did not know at the time. Had I known his name was Misha, he would be Misha, not an Armenian or anyone else.” He justified the use of the phrase ‘a new convert to Islam of Armenian descent,’ by claiming that his intent was “to help the media, reporters, and law enforcement agen-

cies to locate that person.” He, therefore, decided not to issue an apology on television, as he had promised.

Furthermore, he disputed the *Mirror-Spectator*’s report of his apology, by claiming that he was “misquoted.” He asserted: “I never said, ‘I wish I never said it.’ I said that I had no intention to have the name of Armenians used in association with the bombing. I spoke about the certain individual who I was told about and that information was confirmed as true information.” Despite Tsarni’s belated denial, the *Mirror-Spectator* stands by its story and I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of its report!

I reminded Tsarni of his unfulfilled commitment to appear on national TV and set the record straight on his allegation about ‘the Armenian’ Misha. He has yet to respond, as he has been busy making funeral arrangements for his nephew, Tamerlan.

There are many unanswered questions about Tsarni. Although the Internet is replete with all sorts of allegations about his background, we prefer to concentrate on questions of more immediate interest to the Armenian community:

– Why did Tsarni apologize to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* and then turn around and claim that he was misquoted? Could it be that he had felt sorry for his earlier statements to the media, and then backtracked after being advised by ‘unknown interests’ that he should not apologize to the Armenians?

– Why did he make a personal commitment to me to appear on major TV networks to apologize for maligning Armenians, and then refuse to do so?

With these unanswered questions, one can only wonder about Uncle Tsarni’s mysterious motives and enigmatic connections.

Evil: Then and Now

Boston has been through a lot lately and so has the city of Watertown. The effects of the evil that grew in the minds of the Tsarnaev brothers are bound to stay with those who were locked in their homes during the manhunt of April 19. But that was hardly the end of it. On April 24, with most residents hardly over the shock of the bombings, the Armenian communities in and around Watertown had to recalibrate their hearts and minds to honor the memories of their ancestors who perished during the genocide of 1915.

Although I recently wrote about the need to dislodge “the elephant” (the Armenian Genocide) and welcome “the dialogue” for Armenian-Turkish relations, I personally cannot forget the evil that engulfed Armenians during that time, or the subsequent trauma inherited by the survivors and their descendants. So I would like to share some comments I have collected from my interviews with several of the Turkish-Armenian Women’s Alliance (TAWA) women concerning Armenian-Turkish history.

Tsoleen Sarian said, “I think we’re angry because we don’t know better, we don’t know how to get over this; we don’t, we can’t find our voice to educate and explain, we can only react...although we want this recognition, what comes next [is] that dark, gray area which is so unknown that everyone just stays out of that.”

Ay e Kaya Firat said, “It is impossible to reverse the course of things...They might say that they want material things – like they want land – but even if they were given those things, they wouldn’t be relieved. The pain won’t go away. They would like it to be acknowledged, and obviously there would be consequences under international law, but even [if] that were to happen, they wouldn’t be happy; there’s nothing to be happy about this event. It’s pain that we have to suffer together.”

Laura Bilazarian-Purutyanyan said, “If an individual has an injustice in their life, whether as a victim or a perpetrator, in order to move on from it and not have that experience own their life and their future and dictate all [their] decisions going forward, [the events of 1915 have] to unpack and shed light on that experience; otherwise, [it will be] like putting a rug over it, but it’s still this mountain in the middle of the room with a rug over it, rather than moving the rug and looking at it, and letting it fall apart and over time be cleaned up. It’s just not going to get cleaned up without acknowledgment.”

Zeren Earls says, “If the Turkish government could possibly say we know it, it happened, it was wartime. Sorry, let’s move on, but they’re not saying that; they are denying, so it’s the denial which then forces them to reflect it in their own storybooks, or verbally telling their kids in whatever way they do to perpetuate the story.”

Joyce Van Dyke says, “I know I had a conversation long ago in college, where somebody I was talking to said that the Genocide didn’t happen and I remember being in this very fraught situation with this person. It’s happening to me right now as I’m recalling it. The minute he said that, I felt my palms tingling, and I looked down and my palms had broken out in beads of sweat, a thing that’s never happened to me before or since. My palms are tin-

gling right now just to remember this; whenever I sort of recall this event, that’s what happens to me....beads of sweat, and I don’t sweat much.”

Some of the TAWA participants have dealt with the memory of 1915 through works of art. For example, playwright Joyce Van Dyke, in “The Deported: A Dream Play,” created two female characters, both survivors of 1915; one is based on Joyce’s grandmother, Elmas Sarajian Boyajian. The reaction to Joyce’s play was mixed, including negativity expressed by some Armenians who didn’t appreciate the fact that the play raised issues of reconciliation as well as recognition. The play’s third act features a dreamlike sequence, with a potential scene of reconciliation at some undetermined time in the future. When I asked Joyce why it was important for her to write this third act, this was her answer:

“It was like breaking through into light somehow, or into life. In a way, the play is about how you live: how you live on, how you find a way to live when you know something has happened to you like this; and so it could not, for me, just end with these people releasing parts of their story and then dying. I mean, there had to be, there had to be something beyond that, it had to go somewhere. It had to have an impact somehow.”

As a Turkish-American reading Joyce’s script and then watching the play, I felt a connection to what Joyce was trying to achieve with her art; and that’s probably why I was inspired to start the TAWA group. I was pressed to reconsider my reasons just the other day when a highly-educated Armenian American academic questioned the validity of what I am trying to achieve with TAWA: Wasn’t the basic point that a Genocide had taken place in the Ottoman Empire, one where at least one million Ottoman citizens of Armenian heritage had been deported, massacred, or left to die, along with their cultural heritage and ties to their home-

land in Anatolia? The answer to that question is undoubtedly yes! But here’s a second question: Is that all there is to explore, understand and carry into the future by Armenians as well as Turks? I’m hoping the answer is no. I can’t speak for all Armenians and Turks around the world, but I believe the TAWA women can carry more than one truth at a time in their brains. Whether we can do that, without diminishing the memory of a huge number of Armenians who were killed or dispersed around the world because of the evil committed in 1915, is a challenge well worth the effort.

And finally, nothing I have said here should reduce the importance of paying respect to Armenians who, just like Joyce’s grandmother, should be remembered well beyond 1915. This was her

response when I asked what she would say to her now deceased grandmother if she had the chance:

“I wish I could tell her that I remember that I never saw her cry, and that I saw her laugh many times, and that I don’t understand how she could have been the person that she was. [I] thought that all the time about her when I was growing up, all the time I was in her presence; I used to be just astounded to be in her presence and to think, how can you make food and set the table and mend your clothes and just be a normal person after what you went through? How can you maintain yourself, how can you maintain your composure, how can you not be insane? How can you be a good person that does constructive things? I never said that to her, ever, ever – and that was my governing feeling about her my whole life.”

One of the worst evils in history fell upon the Armenians in 1915, but the ones who were able to survive marched on, and against all odds, have maintained their language, culture and traditions while making significant contributions to the world, as I witness in and around Boston every day. And just as the city of Boston was determined to stay strong after the evil we witnessed on Marathon Monday, that process of survival alone is a testament to the indestructible spirit of humanity, exemplified not only by Armenians of a hundred years ago, but by Armenians right here and right now.

“just as the city of Boston was determined to stay strong after the evil we witnessed on Marathon Monday, that process of survival alone is a testament to the indestructible spirit of humanity, exemplified not only by Armenians of a hundred years ago, but by Armenians right here and right now.”

By Gonca Sonmez-Poole



International Delegation Commemorates Armenian Genocide in Istanbul

ISTANBUL, from page 1

Association. The international delegation, organized and led by EGAM and AGBU Europe, included leading European activists against racism as well as young Armenian leaders.

In the days leading up to the April 24 commemoration in Istanbul, delegation members held numerous meetings, a press conference and a conference at Sehir University to explain their views and actions, as well as to learn about developments in Turkey relating to the recognition of the Genocide and the treatment of minorities.

EGAM President Benjamin Abtan said his visit was intended primarily as an expression of support for those in Turkey who are fighting against racism. "Genocide is the worst expression of racism," he said. "Genocide denial is a continuation of the crime of genocide."

On April 25, at the invitation of AGBU-Armenia, a small group of delegates travelled to

Hayk Demoyan. They also held a press conference and met with representatives of non-governmental organizations involved in Armenia-Turkish relations at the AGBU Armenia offices.

The Delegation's activities in Istanbul and Yerevan received ample coverage in the Turkish, Armenian and European press. An appeal, issued by the organizers and signed by well-known figures in Europe, was published in the European press shortly before April 24. Tatevik Baghdasaryan (left), host of Armnews talk show Manramasner, interviewed DurDe! Representative Yildiz Onen and AGBU Europe Board Member Nicolas Tavitian. The interview can be seen at: <http://www.armnewstv.am/hy/1346315300>.

AGBU Europe Board Member Nicolas Tavitian said, "After the assassination of Hrant Dink in 2007, many Turks realized that the Armenian Genocide continues to kill, and that its continued denial is toxic for Turkish democracy." He added, "Courageous people have started to push in the right direction, and their numbers are growing. But their struggle is not over and they need all the support they can get. That is why we were in Istanbul, and why we look forward to many more joining us next year."

For her part, the AGBU Yerevan Office Director Arpi Vartanian said, "It was important for representatives of AGBU Europe, DurDe and EGAM to visit Yerevan and present in person their initiatives and impressions in Turkey. The people in Armenia are interested in learning about Genocide recognition events outside Armenia, and especially in Turkey," she said. "The opportunity to discuss and share with the press and members of civil society here was important. These types of events and initiatives - both in Turkey and in Armenia - make a huge impact on civil society."



Tatevik Baghdasaryan (left), host of Armnews talk show Manramasner, interviews DurDe! Representative Yildiz Onen and AGBU Europe Board Member Nicolas Tavitian.

Yerevan to commemorate the Armenian Genocide together and share their experience in Istanbul with the Armenian public. The delegation members - EGAM's Abtan, AGBU Europe Board Member Nicolas Tavitian and DurDe! Representative Yildiz Onen - laid a wreath at the Genocide Memorial in Yerevan and met with Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Director



From left, AGBU Europe Board Member Nicolas Tavitian, DurDe! Representative Yildiz Onen, EGAM President Benjamin Abtan and AGBU Armenia Director Arpi Vartanian visit the Genocide Memorial in Yerevan.



Portraits of survivors of the Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan. The inscription reads, "These eyes have seen Genocide."

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PROVIDENCE — On Saturday, April 27, a commemoration of the 98th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide was held at Saints Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church. The program took place in the sanctuary and was sponsored by the Cultural Committee. Many patriotic songs describing the struggles of the Armenian people were presented. The Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island performed under the direction of conductor Konstantin Petrossian with Mari Panosian and Janna Guegamian playing the piano and organ, respectively. Rev. Shnork Souin, pastor of Saints Sahag and Mesrob, presided over the Requiem Service which included the blessing of Madagh. The offering had been prepared by the Women's Guild.

AGBU YPs to Walk for Victims of Marathon Tragedy

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AGBU YP Boston Chair Irina Nanagoulou explained the motivation behind the event, saying, "Specific thought was given to the date of the event (one-month anniversary) as well as the location. Since Watertown is home to so many Armenian families, churches, cultural centers and the New England AGBU Center, we felt that it would be especially meaningful to hold the event here - to contribute to the revitalization of the town. The length of the walk - 5k - also has meaning - one kilometer dedicated to the four people who lost their lives and the last kilometer dedicated to the survivors and everyone who made the Greater Boston area strong

and safe in the aftermath."

The AGBU YP Greater New York Chapter will also host a simultaneous walk/ run to benefit The One Fund.

"The goal of this event is not only to raise money for The One Fund but it is also to come together, as Armenians, Americans, citizens of the world and stand together against violence and remind each other of the resilience and courage of the human spirit," said Nanagoulou.

One hundred percent of proceeds will be donated to The One Fund to help Boston Marathon bombing victims and families. To purchase registration early, or to donate, visit <http://agbuypboston.webs.com/>.