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NEWS IN BRIEF

Armenian Election Given Mixed Assessment

Ruling Republican Party Wins Big

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – International observers gave a mixed assessment of Armenia’s parliamentary elections this week, praising the pre-election environment in the country but reporting irregularities in a “significant number” of polling stations on voting day.

In their preliminary findings that fell short of the Armenian government’s expectations, the nearly 300 observers mostly deployed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) avoided stating whether the vote was democratic.

“Armenia deserves recognition for its electoral reforms and its open and peaceful campaign environment but in this race, several stakeholders too often failed to comply with the law and election commissions too often failed to enforce it,” said Francois-Xavier de Donnae, a Belgian parliamentarian who heads a group of short-term OSCE monitors. “As a result, the international commitments to which Armenia has freely subscribed were not always respected.”



Senior European election observers start a joint news conference in Yerevan on May 7.

“The election campaign was open and respected fundamental freedoms, and the media offered broad and balanced coverage during the official campaign period,” said Radmila Sekerinska, an observer mission leader representing the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). “Unfortunately, this was overshadowed by concerns over the accuracy of voter lists and violations of the Electoral Code that created an unequal playing field.”

Representatives of smaller monitoring teams deployed by the European Parliament and the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) agreed with this conclusion. Emma Nicholson, who led the 27-strong PACE team, expressed concern over “reports of widespread interference with the running of polling stations, voters’ movement and casting of

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Azeri President Uses Platform at UN Security Council to Revile Armenia

Demonstrators Take Aliyev to Task

By Florence Avakian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

UNITED NATIONS – Lies, distortions and propaganda took center stage on Friday, May 4, as Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev addressed the topic of “anti-terrorism” before the United Nations Security Council and accused Armenia of “terrorism against civilians, military aggression and ethnic cleansing.”

Possibly aware this diatribe would occur, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-

moon, as well as the German Foreign Minister and the ambassadors from Security Council members US, France and Germany, were not present.

After making the 5,000-mile journey to New York for this appearance, he was escorted into the UN through the basement garage, so that he would not have to see the more than 50 demonstrators from the New York/New Jersey ARF chapter who protested across the street from the UN, carrying the flags of Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh) and signs which read, “Turkey and Azerbaijan Guilty of Genocide,” “Baku Guilty of Ethnic Cleansing” and “Stop Destruction of Nakhichevan.”

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Editor and Journalist Mahtesian to Receive Mirror’s 2012 Award of Excellence at Banquet

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WASHINGTON – Charles Mahtesian is Politico’s national politics editor and has his own blog on the Politico website. An expert on American politics frequently appearing on major radio and television shows as an analyst, Mahtesian also has a deep interest in and commitment to his Armenian heritage. He will be receiving the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator’s* 2012 Award of Excellence on May 24.

Mahtesian grew up in Haverhill, a suburb of Philadelphia, and confesses that he was not that interested in politics as a youth. He said, “I was a political science major, but was mostly a dumb jock playing baseball and soccer until halfway through college.” He completed an internship on Capitol Hill while studying at Catholic University in Washington, DC, and soon enough found his true calling.



Charles Mahtesian

He explained, “I think it is the clash of forces, the high stakes that interest me in politics. Discovering all of the forces that drive American politics fascinated me, and in particular trying to understand the cultural, social, economic and political forces that drive the processes and make politicians do the things they do.”

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Aftermath of French Presidential Election

By Varoujan Sirapian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS – Never has an election in France been so uncertain. According to surveys conducted six months ago, Nicolas Sarkozy started about 16 percentage points down. His place on the final ballot was not even assured, as he was running in third place, behind Francois Hollande (Socialist) and Marine Le Pen (Front National).

After the first round on April 22, only two candidates were left: Sarkozy and Hollande. The past 15 days were very tense and until the evening of May 4 (officially the last day of the campaign), the gap narrowed between the two candidates.

French law does not permit publication of surveys 48 hours before voting. In the age of online media and social networks, that measure seems absurd, as the Belgians and the Swiss, for example, can publish the

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Francois Hollande

Group Asks Clinton to Include Israel in NATO Summit after Turkey Veto

NEW YORK – The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) this week expressed deep concern at reports that Turkey blocked Israel’s participation in the upcoming NATO summit due to bilateral disagreements between the two countries.

In a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the league called Turkey’s actions “extremely unfortunate” and “highly politicized,” and urged the State Department to find a way to enable Israel’s participation in the summit, “...so that Turkey’s political dispute with Israel does not detract from the interests of the US, NATO, Israel or the other participants in the Chicago summit,” which is scheduled for May 20-21.

President Serge Sargisian is scheduled to participate in the summit.

Armenia Participates In Classical Eurovision

VIENNA (Arminfo) – Narek Kazazyan, a 15-year-old *kanon* player, represented Armenia in the Classical Eurovision 2012 international contest on May 5 in Vienna. The final of the contest was scheduled for May 11. Previously, Kazaryan had performed with noted *duduk* player Jivan Gasparyan and the Chamber Orchestra Virtuosi of Moscow. The second semifinal took place on May 6.

Armenia is taking part in the contest for the first time. The Classical Eurovision is held once in two years. Musicians age 15-20 years participate in the contest.

Armenian President Congratulates Medvedev

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – On May 8, President Serge Sargisian sent a congratulatory message to Dmitry Medvedev, on his becoming Russia’s new premier.

Sargisian expressed his gratitude to Medvedev for strengthening relations between Armenia and Russia, and Medvedev’s personal contribution toward a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

“The important trilateral meetings of Russian, Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents organized at your initiative, as well as your consistent endeavors in the direction of rapprochement of the parties’ positions over fundamental principals of conflict resolution, supported by other member states of OSCE Minsk Group, deserve profound acknowledgment,” the message read.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Aronian Keeps Second Place in FIDE Ranking

PARIS (armradio.am) – Armenian Grandmaster Levon Aronian (2,825) came in second place in the World Chess Federation (FIDE) Ranking, which was released this week. Magnus Carlsen of Norway tops the list with a rating of 2,835.

Four more Armenian grandmasters are included in the top 10 list of chess players: Sergei Movsesian (2,698), at 47th; Vladimir Akopian (2,697), at 49th, and Gabriel Sargissian (2,679) and Tigran Petrosian (2,657) rank 71st and 94th respectively.

Armenia ranks fourth in the list of countries after Russia, Ukraine and China.

Presidents of Armenia, Karabagh Participate in Opening of Complex

STEPANAKERT (Armenpress) – On May 8, Nagorno Karabagh Republic President Bako Sahakyan together with President Serge Sargisian of Armenia took part in an opening ceremony of “Europe,” a multi-functional complex in Stepanakert that includes the new branch of Ardshinvestbank, offices of various companies and a hotel.

Sahakyan noted the importance of opening a new modernized complex in the capital, underlining that it would substantially contribute to the economic development of the republic.

Prime Minister Ara Harutunyan, other officials and guests from Armenia and abroad took part at the event.

Yerevan to Host Fourth Annual Fashion and Design Award Ceremony

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – On May 25, the Governmental Session Hall lobby will host the Fashion Festival and 4th National Fashion and Design Award ceremony.

During the event 10 people will be awarded with memorial certificates for their contribution to development of fashion and design in Armenia over the past years.

Organizers hope the festival will serve as a direct link between consumers and fashion outlets, the national producers and independent modeling artists. It aims to present the available brand stores and their season collections to public, as well as the national production, collections, etc.

Businessmen, representatives of diplomatic missions, politicians and entertainers have been invited to attend the festival.

Armenian President Serge Sargisian and his wife, Rita, are expected to attend the opening ceremony.

Iranian Publishing House to Publish Contemporary Collection Of Armenian Poems

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenian Culture Minister Hasmik Poghosyan this past week received Iranian ambassador to Armenia, Seyyed Ali Saghaha, who is finishing his diplomatic mission in Armenia.

The ambassador expressed gratitude to Poghosyan for her work, and Poghosyan, in turn, said that the dynamic between Armenia and Iran are the best example of dialogue between two civilizations and two major religions. Saghaha noted the proclamation of Yerevan as the World Book Capital in 2012 by the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which is a large-scale celebration of Armenian printing.

Poghosyan thanked Saghaha for Iran's participation in that celebration.

The Armenian Ministry noted Armenia's contemporary poetry collection prepared for publication by Iranian Afraz publishing house, includes works by 12 contemporary Armenian writers.

AGBU Young Professionals Pool Worldwide Resources for American University of Armenia's ACM Digital Library Subscription

YEREVAN – Since 2001, the AGBU Young Professionals (YP) Network has lent its financial support to the American University of Armenia (AUA) by sponsoring its annual subscription to the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Digital Library. More than a decade later, the giving continues with support provided this year by YP Boston, YP Greater New York, YP Lebanon, YP Los Angeles, YP Orange County and

HAIK, a YP Partner organization in Frankfurt, Germany. In total, AGBU YP groups and partners have donated nearly \$25,000 to this endeavor over the years.

“It is important for the AGBU Young Professionals to support AUA graduate students in their efforts to pursue their studies,” said YP Orange County Chairwoman Dora Gulesserian, whose group donated for the first time this year. “The ACM Digital Library is an invaluable resource in providing knowledge about the computing industry and we are happy to be able to direct funds to this important cause.”

Advancing the educational and research efforts of AUA graduate students and faculty, the ACM Digital Library is the ultimate resource to the computing industry, providing a vast collection of citations and full texts from current and archival journals, articles and conference proceedings, both in print and online.

“I can attest to the importance of our students having access to inspirational information in their field of expertise,” said Aram Hajian, dean of the AUA College of Engineering. “The AGBU YP donation has helped enable our students to be aware of the most up-to-date scientific scholarship in computer science through the ACM subscription. I am happy to express my thanks and appreciation to the AGBU Young Professionals on behalf of the AUA College of Engineering. We highly value such examples of diasporan support for Armenia's institutional development and for AUA in particular.”

ACM is the world's largest educational and scientific computing society, uniting educators, researchers, students and professionals to inspire dialogue, share



AUA graduate students go online and look through material in the ACM Digital Library, which is sponsored annually by the AGBU Young Professionals to support their studies.

resources and address the field's challenges. Access to the latest publications via the ACM Digital Library is essential for AUA graduate students and faculty to further their scholarship and stay abreast of the changing trends in computing and information technologies.

“We are grateful to have the committed support of the global network of the AGBU Young Professionals,” said Dr. Bruce Boghosian, president of AUA “The AGBU YP sponsorship of the ACM has been steadfast over the years.”

Balloon Blasts Injure 144 at Armenia Rally

YEREVAN (AFP) – More than 140 people were injured on Friday, May 4, when gas-filled balloons exploded at a governing party campaign concert in the Armenian capital ahead of parliamentary polls on Sunday, officials said.

The emergencies ministry said 144 people suffered burns when scores of promotional balloons burst into flames at a concert staged by President Serge Sargisian's Republican Party in the Republic Square.

Armenian Internet sites showed a fireball rising into the air and chaotic images of people screaming in confusion and anger.

“The balloons exploded and caught fire after people holding the bunches released them from their hands into the air,” a witness said.

It was not immediately clear what caused the explosions although police said they were looking into various potential reasons including the “improper storage of flammable substances.”

“All the victims had either medium or light injuries. Now doctors are trying to revive them from shock,” Health Minister Harutian Kushkian said.

The promotional balloons were decorated with the governing party's election slogan “Let's believe in change.”

The incident marred a largely calm election campaign and Sargisian promised a full investigation.

“I urge everyone to keep calm. Let us pray for all the victims and wish them a quick recovery,” he said in a statement.



Hydrogen balloons explode during an Armenian Republican party's campaign concert in Yerevan on May 4.

Armenian Election Given Mixed Assessment

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votes throughout the day by certain political parties.”

“The authorities must address this unacceptable behavior before the presidential election next year,” Nicholson said at a joint news conference with de Donna and Sekerinska.

The observers' joint preliminary report on Sunday's election similarly refers to “undue interference” in the voting process, presumably by activists of pro-government parties, among vari-

ous violations. “While opening procedures were assessed positively in almost all polling stations observed, voting was assessed negatively in 10 percent, which is considerable,” according to the report. “Unauthorized people, mostly proxies, interfered in or directed the work of 12 percent of the [precinct election commissions] observed,” the report read.

Vote buying was the principal fraud allegation voiced by the Armenian opposition even before the closure of the polls on Sunday evening.

Sekerinska's said it was “very difficult” for the mainly Western observers to verify the vote buying claims. “Even people who have claimed that they were part of a vote buying scheme decided not to come forward with information and personal declarations,” she added.

Opposition leaders also cried foul after it emerged on Sunday morning that ink stamps meant to guard against multiple voting routinely disappeared after being put on voters' passports. The observer's report notes in this regard that the special ink used for the procedure “should have remained visi-

ble for 12 hours but faded much faster.”

Armenia's previous legislative polls held in May 2007 were judged by a similar OSCE-led mission to have been held “largely in accordance with international standards for democratic elections.” Western monitors gave a similar assessment of the Armenian presidential election of February 2008, which was marred by fraud allegations and a deadly government crackdown on the opposition.

The Armenian authorities have made no secret of their hopes to secure an even more positive international verdict on the latest vote. Sargisian and other top officials have repeatedly pledged to do their best to hold the most democratic election in the country's history.

The observers were clearly more critical of the authorities' election conduct this time around, however. In summary, de Donna said, “In some areas, these elections are better than the previous ones. In other areas, there is status quo and a potential for improvement. In other areas, there might be a setback and also a greater potential for improvement.”

Correction

A story in the April 20 edition of the newspaper titled “Armenian Books on Display in Harvard's Lamont Library,” by Daphne Abeel, incorrectly stated the publishers of the first book in Armenian. The first book was printed by Hakob Meghapat. We regret the error.



INTERNATIONAL

Human Rights Lawyer Geoffrey Robertson Speaks at AUA

By Laura Boghosian

YEREVAN – In a wide-ranging lecture at the American University of Armenia (AUA), international human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson, QC, accused Turkey's Minister for European Union Affairs of lying, endorsed Armenian calls for reparations and restitution, and declared the Armenian Genocide is not a subject for historians, but a matter for legal judgment.

Robertson, whose specialties include constitutional, international, human rights, civil liberties and media law, is founder and head of Doughty Street Chambers, a leading human rights law practice in London.

Robertson also served as a judge and president of the United Nations Special Court for war crimes in Sierra Leone. In 2008, the secretary general appointed him as Distinguished Jurist on the United Nations Internal Justice Council.

Invited to Armenia by AUA, Robertson spoke April 23 on "Why Armenian Genocide Deniers Are Wrong." A panel discussion, moderated by dean of AUA's law department Thomas Samuelian, followed his address; panelists were Robertson; Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Director Dr. Hayk Demoyan; and Dr. Yeghishe Kirakosyan, a founding member of the Yerevan-based International and Comparative Law Center.

'Thinking About Thinking'

The event, entitled "A Legal Lens on Genocide," was the third in the "Thinking About Thinking" lecture series co-sponsored by AUA and the Luys Foundation.

In his opening remarks, AUA President Bruce Boghosian explained that the purpose of "Thinking About Thinking" is to propose new ways of thinking about various topics, including the Armenian Genocide.

Discussion about the Armenian Genocide is moving away from appeals to morality and toward the realm of law, he said, with lawsuits in recent years focusing on insurance claims and the return of property such as churches and land.

Boghosian stated that as genocide deniers persist in their arguments against objective reality, Armenians must study their evolving tactics, which he compared to the methods used by those who deny climate change or evolution.

"Another way in which discourse about the Armenian Genocide is changing," said Boghosian, "is the movement away from regarding it as an isolated historical event, and toward understanding it as a historical process."

Boghosian observed that the Armenian Genocide "began many years before 1915, intensifying with the massacres, economic deprivations and depopulation strategies of the nineteenth century." And since genocide scholars characterize denial as the eighth and final stage of genocide, "it is ongoing" since Turkey continues to deny the genocide.

The Armenian Genocide, therefore, "has the dubious distinction of being one of the longest ongoing genocidal processes in human history," said Boghosian. "The Armenian Genocide is therefore not an event, but a process – a process fueled, as genocides are, by racial hatred and designed to rid the historical Armenian homeland of Armenians."

This genocidal policy continues to the present, he charged, with the Turkish blockade of Armenia's borders "in an attempt to further strangle it and induce emigration."

"We are no longer simply asking for genocide recognition," he concluded. "We're demanding that the genocide stop."

Turkish Minister's Lies

Robertson began his talk by sharing an indirect connection to the Armenian Genocide. An Australian by birth, Robertson's great-uncle William was one of the thousands of Australians killed at the battle of Gallipoli.

"He had no idea that that landing would be used as an excuse, as a trigger, for the roundup of Armenian teachers and lawyers, poets and intellectuals in Constantinople to begin a murderous operation so much more heinous than the crimes committed in ordinary warfare," he said.

"Genocide is different," Robertson stated, and it "cannot and should not be forgiven unless and until the nation that is responsible for it acknowledges that responsibility for the worst of all crimes and makes amends, as Germany has by now made amends for the Holocaust."

Unlike the judgment at Nuremberg, "We have had no judgment on the Armenian Genocide, and perhaps it is time that we did judge it, because the nation responsible for it can not bring itself to own up, cannot recognize that what it did to the Armenian community in 1915 was not just mass murder, not just a crime against humanity, but was motivated by a desire to extinguish a race."



Geoffrey Robertson

Rather than acknowledging the Armenian Genocide, Robertson reported that just the week before Turkey's Minister for European Union Affairs Egemen Bagis told "a shocking lie," when he claimed that Turkish officials were acquitted of massacring Armenians by a British judge in Malta.

"This is a lie, a pack of lies that must be unpacked." There was "no difficulty at all in proving their guilt," Robertson said, but "as international law then stood in 1919, a government and its officials could not be prosecuted for ordering the deaths and deportations that killed at least a million Armenians... They were not acquitted, they just couldn't be tried." The Turkish prisoners were eventually exchanged for British hostages captured by Kemal Ataturk's nationalist forces.

It was not until the 1945 Nuremberg trials and the United Nations Genocide Convention of 1948 that a legal framework emerged for prosecuting government officials accused of slaughtering their own people, Robertson explained.

"The very idea that the Armenian massacres didn't amount to genocide would have amazed Raphael Lemkin, the architect of the Genocide Convention," said Robertson. In fact, it was because no one was punished for these massacres that Lemkin, who later coined the word "genocide," began advocating for such a law.

"He studied the Malta proceedings and he realized that the law needed a new crime to cover the mass murdering of their own people by military and political officials," said Robertson. "In his crusade for the crime of genocide from 1933 onward, it was always the Armenians that he used as the example for why we needed a law."

"There is no doubt among lawyers today that the Genocide Convention was written on the backs and through the blood of those million or so Armenians who died," he added.

The Armenian Genocide

In 2008, Robertson was asked by the London-based Armenian Centre to determine whether the Turkish deportations and massacres of Armenians beginning in 1915 constituted genocide under the standards of international law. The United Kingdom, like the United States, refuses to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide.

"I came to the conclusion that, beyond any shadow of doubt, the events of 1915 would be characterized as genocide today," he said. "The evidence was overwhelming."

Unless it acknowledges the Armenian Genocide, Robertson declared, "Turkey must not, and I hope will not, be allowed to join the European Union."

Robertson then described how genocide law

is evolving. "Genocide courts have been developing international criminal law in the last ten years... we have been refining, defining and developing the law of genocide in ways that bear directly on the issue of whether you can characterize the events of 1915 as genocide."

Specifically, rulings interpreting the Genocide Convention by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) are relevant to the Armenian deportations, particularly the convention's article 2-c that defines genocide as "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part."

"The other issue that we've dealt with in The Hague," said Robertson, "is the question of what amounts to genocidal intent."

Genocide Deniers and 'Proof'

Robertson skewered denialist historians Justin McCarthy, Bernard Lewis and Heath Lowry for their argument that there are no documents that "prove" the Armenian Genocide.

"They have this concept of genocide being proved, of genocidal intent, being proved by an order that is written down. 'Where is the order for destroying the Armenians?' they say. There is no order written down by Hitler for destroying the Jews. There was no order written down by the Hutus for destroying the Tutsis. This is ludicrous. This is a ridiculous idea which is at the heart of a lot of the arguments of the genocide deniers. The courts in The Hague over the last few years have constantly ruled that the intention necessary for genocide can be inferred from other factors," he stated.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) actually held that the existence of a plan or policy is not a legal ingredient of the crime, according to Robertson.

To illustrate how historians are ignorant of the legalities of genocide, Robertson read from the writings of Justin McCarthy, who admits that half a million Armenians died, but argues that Armenians died from sickness, exhaustion, and attacks of marauders on "rich convoys."

"ICTY jurisprudence makes it absolutely crystal clear that any government that orders deportations knowing that people will die from sickness, exhaustion following long marches, etc. will be guilty of genocide," said Robertson. "McCarthy just doesn't understand the laws of genocide."

"But notice the language... the rich convoys... what is he trying to say? That these people died because they were rich and they had all their rich objects on their backs? It's very distasteful, disgusting, I think."

Governments like that of Turkey, the United States, and the United Kingdom that call for the matter to be decided by historians are wrong, stated Robertson.

"They say this is a matter for historians. It's not. Historians... are utterly ignorant of what genocide is in law. It's not a matter for historians. Genocide is a matter for judges. But we hear time and again, this is a matter for historians."

The Armenian government is right to reject calls for the genocide to be studied by a panel of historians as described in the Protocols, said Robertson.

Robertson called governments that do not recognize the Armenian Genocide for political and commercial reasons "genocide equivocators."

Robertson then described how the "genocide-equivocating" British government claimed that the evidence was not "sufficiently unequivocal" to characterize the Armenian massacres as genocide.

Secret government documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act during his legal examination of the Armenian Genocide revealed the true reasons for the UK's position. Memoranda clearly stated that political and commercial relations with Turkey were the reasons for the government's admittedly unethical policy, given Turkey's "neuralgic" reaction to charges of genocide.

"So there it is, in black and white. We're lying, we're being unethical," admonished Robertson, "but we need Turkey [which] is crazed, insane, when it comes to allegations of genocide."

Reparations and Restitution

Robertson next discussed legal tools, such as the US Alien Tort Claims Act or the European Court of Human Rights, which Armenians might employ for reparations and restitution of property taken by the Turkish government during the genocide.

"The laws that confiscated and appropriated Armenian property, they're still available today for actions for restitution," he said.

"The issue of the Armenian Genocide can no longer be left to history. It certainly can't be left to historians," he concluded. "It is a matter for judgment, applying the developed law of genocide to the evidence. And in my judgment, there can only be one outcome."

Panel discussion

Hayk Demoyan opened the discussion by pointing out that Turkey began its denial as early as 1915-16, when it published books with photos of Armenian victims re-captioned as dead Muslims.

Turkey, he said, is preparing for 2015 with new skills and more sophisticated approaches to deny "the historical and legal facts of the Armenian Genocide," such as hiring and paying new academics, establishing new chairs, and restoring Armenian monuments as part of the general plan.

Yet despite the favorable international publicity reaped by Turkey with the restoration of Akhtamar, other Armenian cultural monuments are being systematically destroyed.

Demoyan said that metal detectors are being openly sold in Turkey with written instructions in Turkish that say if you want to find treasure, you should search for it in the foundations of Armenian churches or on the land of former Armenian cemeteries. In Ani last year, an Armenian queen's burial site was desecrated, khatchkars were broken to pieces and tombstones crushed, he said, yet "no one is punished."

Demoyan charged that current Turkish officials continue the Genocide by not punishing, for example, the policemen who posed with Hrant Dink's assassin and by blockading the border. When a country imposes a military blockade, he stated, the next step is a declaration of war.

Yeghishe Kirakosyan began his remarks by examining recent scholarship on the concepts of state responsibility and state succession as determined by the Permanent Court of International Justice and other international tribunals.

Modern Turkey could be held responsible, he said, for violations that took place at the beginning of the twentieth century and could be brought to justice. Kirakosyan explored the various avenues open to Armenians to pursue claims against Turkey, such as state claims commissions and international courts.

Moderator Tom Samuelian observed that many countries have benefited from the Armenian Genocide and its denial and asked, "Why not make them all pay?"

The discussion was concluded by Robertson, who declared, "There has to be restitution... We all want reconciliation... but you cannot have reconciliation without truth and acknowledgment of truth."

Visit to Armenian Genocide Memorial and Museum-Institute

Earlier in the day, Boghosian and AUA's leadership team escorted Robertson to the Armenian Genocide memorial where he laid flowers. In a televised joint press conference, Demoyan presented Robertson with the Fridtjof Nansen Medal for his legal examination of the Armenian Genocide. The medal is named in honor of Nansen, a Norwegian humanitarian and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, who aided Armenian refugees following the genocide. Also receiving a medal was Jussi Bjorn, who recently discovered memoirs describing the 1915 Moush massacres handwritten by his grandmother, Norwegian missionary Bodil Katharine Bjorn.

To view the entire lecture and panel discussion, visit: <http://webcam.aua.am/>

To read Mr. Robertson's report "Was There An Armenian Genocide?" visit: <http://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/files/Armenian%20genocide1.pdf>



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Armenia Fined for Refusal to Take Part in Eurovision 2012

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti) – The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) fined Armenia for its refusal to participate in the Eurovision international song contest, which will be held in late May in Azerbaijan, Armenia Today reported on Thursday.

The EBU resolution says that Yerevan should pay the full fee for participation in the contest. In addition, as a penalty, Armenia has to pay an additional fine equal to 50 percent of that amount. It is also noted that the Public Television of Armenia will have to show the finals of the international song contest live.

If the country fails to meet the EBU decision, it will be excluded from participating in the Eurovision contest in 2013. EBU stressed that the decision on the penalty was issued in accordance with the rules of the contest and reasons why Armenia refused to participate in the contest were not included.

Armenia officially refused to take part in Eurovision on March 7.

Earlier, a group of Armenian artists had sent an open letter to the Public Television of the country, which called for a boycott of the contest.

The reason for this was the death of a soldier on the Armenian border with Azerbaijan.

The final competition will be held on May 26.

Armenian Soprano Sings With Conductor Donald Runnicles

GLASGOW, Scotland – Soprano Anush Hovhannissyan was the soloist at a concert by the Scottish Symphony Orchestra (SSO), conducted by Donald Runnicles, and broadcast in a special edition of BBC Radio 3's "In Tune," live from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, presented by Sean Rafferty of the BBC.

Runnicles is the general music director of the Deutsche Oper Berlin, chief conductor of the BBC SSO, former music director and principal conductor of the San Francisco Opera and Grand Teton Music Festival, and principal guest conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

Hovhannissyan, a student at the Royal Academy of Music, Glasgow, performed two songs by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff. Her rich, warm voice, combined with perfect control, captivated the audience, both at the concert and those listening to the broadcast.

Early this year Hovhannissyan won the Clonter Prize 2012.

Azeris May Rethink Pro-Western Stance If No Karabagh Support

BAKU (Bloomberg) – Azerbaijan may rethink its pro-Western stance and realign with "a new bloc" if it does not get more support, particularly in its conflict with neighboring Armenia, a senior Azeri official said.

Azerbaijan wants Europe and the US to pressure Armenia into pulling out of Azeri districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabagh, according to Novruz Mammadov, head of the presidential office's foreign-relations department. The country has also been invited to join another political alliance, he added, without elaborating.

"We aren't paying attention to those proposals for now. But if it continues like this, we may consider it in five to 10 years," Mammadov said this week in an interview. "We're expecting help from the West on the Karabagh issue."

Azerbaijan is the third-largest oil producer in the former Soviet Union after Russia and Kazakhstan.

"We're the only secular Muslim nation in the world that's tied its destiny with the West," said Mammadov, who estimates that about 35 percent of all NATO supplies to Afghanistan transit his country. "But we haven't seen a positive attitude in

Azeri President Uses Platform at UN Security Council to Revile Armenia

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Azerbaijan, which had been elected in October 2011 to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council, mostly with votes from Muslim member-nations of the UN, but none from European nations, is chairing the Security Council for the month of May and Aliyev seemed intent to get his message across while he was being watched.

Knowing that Armenia, which is not a Security Council member, could not respond, Aliyev accused Armenia of "dozens of terrorist acts against the civilian population and infrastructure of Azerbaijan," which he said, "resulted in over 2,000 Azerbaijanis dead." Armenia, he said, "orchestrated those acts with the direct involvement of its security agencies and by using international terrorist groups." He continued by saying that during the Karabagh war, "Armenia widely practiced use of terrorist acts against the civilian population in conjunction with military aggression to achieve ethnic cleansing."

Again he brought up the Khojaly issue, where he accused Armenia of "annihilating" 613 women, children and elderly. He also accused Armenia of "masterminding terror acts in public transport and critical infrastructure."

Continuing his diatribe, he said Azerbaijan has largely neutralized this "terrorist threat from Armenia," but there are "additional terrorist acts, including hitting civilian infrastructure, especially water reservoir dams and the oil pipeline network." He also accused Armenia of harboring "elements of international terrorist organizations which are integrated into the security and defense sector of Armenia."

And then in one of the most appalling statements, he said Armenia "that claims to share European and universal values has venerated operatives of international terrorist organizations as heroes, and even erected monuments to them."

He finished his rant by accusing Armenia of "organized crime, drug trafficking, money laundering and illegal arms supply in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan."

(A similar harangue had occurred by his father President Heydar Aliyev at a press conference at the United Nations some years ago when as a UN corre-

spondent, this reporter had asked him about the massacres of Armenians by Azerbaijan in Baku, Kirovabad and Sumgait. The face of the elder Aliyev, who was in the last years of his presidency, became enraged and he went into a 15-minute tirade against Armenia, finally storming out of the UN press conference.)

Armenia's Foreign Ministry Responds

Following the current Azeri president's appearance before the Security Council on May 4, Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately made the following statement. "The Azeri presi-

links with terrorist groups on others, being the leader of a country which actively used thousands of mercenaries closely linked to notorious international terrorist networks in its unleashed war aimed at the annihilation of the Karabagh population. It is cynical when vain accusations are voiced against Armenia by the leader of a country, the authorities of which masterminded massacres, ethnic cleansing against the Armenians by medieval methods; a country where cruel butchers of sleeping people are glorified as national heroes; a country where a captive is humiliated in front of cameras and then killed as it is done by well-known terrorist organiza-



Azeri President Ilham Aliyev

dent's statement is based on lies, distortions and groundless speculation. It causes deep regret that such an august platform can be used for such base statements. Instead of reaffirming his country's commitment to a peaceful settlement of the Karabagh issues, he is abusing the authoritative tribune of the UN Security Council in order to repeat the overused thesis of anti-Armenia propaganda of Azerbaijan, just only forgetting to recall the Azeri leadership's famous racist thesis that 'Azerbaijan's main enemies are the Armenians of the world.'

The Armenian statement continued that "during the UN Security Council briefing on anti-terrorism, the president of Azerbaijan is making an unsuccessful attempt to lay its own responsibility of

tions; a country where centuries-old cultural monuments are barbarously destroyed by famous terrorists."

The Armenian Foreign Ministry's statement concluded by stating that "the continuous threats to regional peace and security, the bellicose and hatred disseminating provocative statements of the Azeri leadership which are in harsh contrast to the purpose and principles of the UN Charter, are not befitting a UN member state, and undermine the authority of the Security Council."

UN Representative Decries Statements

Armenia's Ambassador to the United Nations Garen Nazarian also released a statement which read that the Azerbaijani president should be reminded that "when using the term terrorism, his country was listed as one harboring terrorist groups, and is a logical route for extremists with ties to terrorist organizations. A number of recent reports by international and regional organizations clearly reflect that the territory of Azerbaijan is actively used by various terrorist and religious extremist structures, serving as a safe haven for criminal activities."

To underscore this statement, Reporters Without Borders recently listed a list of "predator rulers of countries." This list includes Vasif Talibov, leader of Nakhichevan, in addition to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

And in a routine press conference at the United Nations on May 3, by Azerbaijani Ambassador to the UN Agshin Mehdiyev on press censorship, he admitted that he didn't know that the day had been designated as Press Freedom Day. As reporters chuckled at his apparent ignorance, Mehdiyev said, "Azerbaijan doesn't need to mark this day due to its unrestricted media coverage. We have a free press."

On May 2, the Committee to Protect Journalists named Azerbaijan as a "runner up" to their list of the "Ten Most Heavily Censured Countries in the World."

Aftermath of French Presidential Election

FRANCE, from page 1

results after 6 p.m., closing time for the majority of polling stations. A survey conducted at the exit offices can provide a reasonably reliable estimation. And Sunday, May 6, at 6:01 p.m., two hours before the announcements were made by the French media, a Belgian news website, www.lesoir.be, ran the headline: "François Hollande will be the next President of the Republic" with 52 percent of the vote. Fewer than 600,000 votes, out of 34 million voters, made the difference.

As expected, at precisely 8 p.m., the picture of Hollande appeared on all TV screens, announcing his victory. At 8:20 p.m., Sarkozy made a touching and Republican speech before thousands of militants gathered at Mutualite auditorium, asking his supporters to not consider the victorious camp as the enemy but instead to think about the greatness of France, wishing luck to his opponent in this politically- and economically-problematic world.

The French-Armenians were, like

other citizens, divided between the two candidates. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), before the first round, had called on Armenian voters to support Hollande, only to renew this call on May 4. On the same day, the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL-Ramgavar) France, in a statement, called supporters to cast their ballots for Sarkozy. Figures such as Charles Aznavour and Alain Terzian joined other French artists, writers and intellectuals like Gerard Depardieu and Jean d'Ormesson in supporting Sarkozy.

Concerning the Armenian Cause the two candidates who participated, on April 24, separately, to the 97th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, in front of the Komitas statue in Paris, announced that, after the election, they would take the necessary steps to pass the law criminalizing denial of Armenian Genocide.

(Varoujan Sirapian is the director of the *Europe and Orient* publication.)

Community News

97th Anniversary Commemoration With HMADS Talents

By Talar Aydin

OAKLAND GARDENS, N.Y. — On Monday, April 23, the students of Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School (HMADS) gathered in Kalustyan Hall to showcase their talents to an enthusiastic audience filled with parents, grandparents, friends and guests.

The fifth-grade students marched into the hall as the HMADS Color Guards by saluting the audience with the Pledge of Allegiance, which was followed by the singing of the American and Armenian anthems, as well as the school's anthem. The class of 2012 then took the stage and delivered their introduction to the energized audience. The sixth graders mentioned that the Talent Show was dedicated to the Armenian heritage, commemorating the 97th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide by honoring the Armenian culture through music, poetry, song and dance. The class of 2012 introduced Principal Zarminé Boghosian to offer her welcoming remarks.

Boghosian thanked parents and grandparents for their continuous support of the HMADS family and acknowledged the presence of special guests in the audience, including Khoren Meikhanedjian, Parish Council Chairman Bruce Ashbahian, HMADS Board members Arek Nisanyan, Grace Kechian, Rose Hartunian and Lolita Babikian. She pointed out the Heritage Week exhibit that was on display in the hall, contributed by each class, and encouraged the audience to view the students' work at the conclusion of the program. Each display highlighted the 45th anniversary of the school and shined with originality and creativity; the Nursery students showed HMADS as the "Sunshine of Bayside," first graders wrote about "Why do I Like HMADS," the second grade created unique school-related word search puzzles, third-grade students researched 45 facts about the number 45, fourth grade planted a tree in Armenia in Honor of HMADS 45th anniversary, fifth graders interviewed seven representatives from the HMADS family and the sixth-grade students researched and wrote about the benefactors of the school, admiring their hard work and dedication. Boghosian concluded by reminding the students that it is their responsibility and goal to "to keep the torch of our heritage lit" and keep the Armenian culture strong.

Four kindergarten students began the program by paying a tribute to Armenia in a dance titled "Eem Anoonu Hayastan Eh." Another student delivered a cello performance, followed by all kindergarten students singing together as a group. Next up were the first, second and third graders, who played the piano and recited Armenian poetry, such as "Arakadzin" by Avedik Isahakian. A third-grade student treated the audience to a special Irish step dance. The three grades joined on stage to sing about the beautiful *Gakavig*, *Mugnigu* as well as *Im Pokrig Navag*.

The next group to perform was the students in fourth, fifth and sixth grades, who impressed the audience with intermediate violin and piano pieces and a contemporary dance by a sixth-grade student.

This group also featured two solo singers from the fifth grade. Following the final poem "Yerevan," by Sarmen, the upper grades performed a medley of *Ambi Dagits*, *Hampartsoom Yayla* and *Parootyan Dsar*, directed by HMADS Choir Master Anahid Boghosian.

The HMADS Choir ended the program by singing a special song, *Pyoonig*, with lyrics and see HMADS, page 7



Armenia Tree Project and Acopian Center for the Environment are organizing a public benefit event on June 6 at the Hotel Chantelle in New York City to kick off the "Regardening of Eden" partnership in northern Armenia.

'Regardening of Eden'

Armenia Tree Project and Acopian Center for Environment Announce Partnership in Northern Armenia

NEW YORK — Armenia Tree Project (ATP) and the Acopian Center for the Environment (ACE) are joining together to initiate a new project in Margahovit Village, in the Lori region of northern Armenia, and will hold a fundraising event on June 6, in New York City. Titled "Regardening of Eden," the project is an unprecedented partnership between two of Armenia's pre-eminent environmental organizations.

Focusing on the importance of trees, the protection of wildlife habitat and proper waste management, the partnership will engage local youth and community residents in the creation of a new park, environmental education, trash collection and recycling programs.

Since Margahovit Village does not have a park or a green zone where residents can gather and relax, ATP will establish a green territory for the community as part of this partnership. "We will organize tree plantings with local residents, schoolchildren and other young community members," said ATP Director Jeff Masarjian. "In the future, we expect the community to bring benches and establish a playground, thus developing this territory into a real recreational resource."

In addition to hands-on tree plantings, ATP and ACE will also assist with the establishment of an eco-club at the public school in Margahovit and education programs for the adult population focusing on planting and tree care, recycling and waste composting. An important element will be a series of trainings presented by ACE on "Appreciating Birds and Protecting their Local Habitats" for schoolchildren at ATP's Michael and Virginia Ohanian Center for Environmental Studies. Lessons will address bird identification, wintering and breeding birds of Lori, ways to preserve bird habitats and the impact of waste on nature and the environment.

"I am excited about the Regardening of Eden Project both because of the symbolism of this historic civilization and the fact that the biodiversity of Armenia is unique in our modern world. Many of the diaspora are not aware of the natural treasures that remain in Armenia and that their rate of destruction has increased since independence. Stopping and, thereafter, reversing this loss is essential to the successful future of Armenia. The Regardening of Eden Project is a step in that direction," said Acopian Center benefactor Jeff Acopian.

"These types of educational training sessions will help to form a sound understanding of the environment in children. It is especially significant as these training sessions are delivered to the younger generation who will one day become Armenia's future decision makers," said Acopian's nephew and ACE volunteer, Alex Karapetian. "The goal is to implement a strong understanding of nature and its value and the role human beings play in nature's cycles. As a result it will be possible to create a new generation of children who have environmentally friendly behavior, lifestyle and values."

The final aspect of the "Regardening of Eden" partnership is the implementation of recycling and waste removal programs. ATP and ACE staff and local residents will organize clean-up activities in Margahovit Village as part of the "Let's do it! Armenia" campaign scheduled for September 15. "Let's do it! Armenia" is a pan-Armenian volunteer effort tied to the World Cleanup 2012 initiative. The goal is to unite everyone around the idea of cleaning up trash throughout Armenia, including historical and cultural sites.

To implement the project in 2012 and to sustain it for years to come, ATP and ACE are organizing a public benefit event for the partnership on Wednesday, June 6, at the exclusive Hotel Chantelle in New York City.

Benefit tickets may be purchased by contacting Jason Sohigian at ATP Watertown or by visiting www.RegardeningOfEden.org.

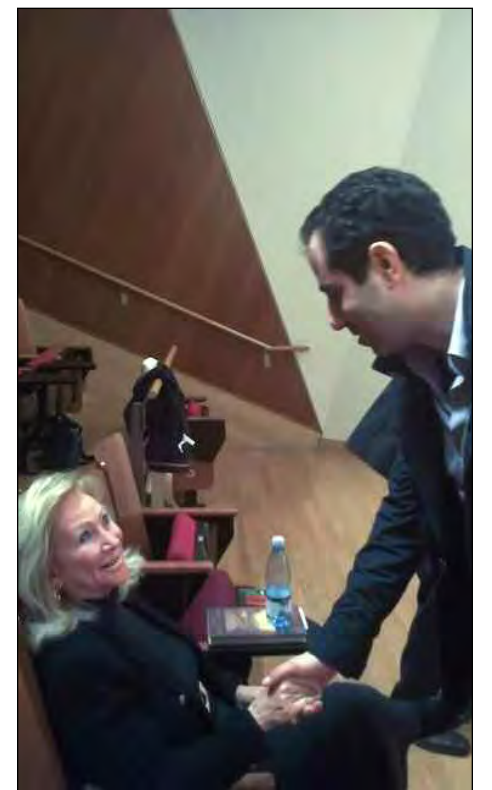
Margaret Ajemian Ahnert Charms at a Columbia University Reading of *The Knock at the Door*

By Jason Grant

NEW YORK — New York-born Margaret Ajemian Ahnert, author of the award-winning *The Knock at the Door*, took to the podium at Columbia University on Thursday, April 26. She captured her listeners' attention with readings from her book as well as anecdotes about her four-year international book tour.

The memoir, which chronicles her mother Ester's incredible survival of the Armenian Genocide and Ahnert's visits with her mother, is as much a celebration of the mother-daughter relationship as it is a history of the Armenian Genocide.

As Ahnert shared some of her experiences during her world book tour, she made it clear



Margaret Ajemian Ahnert and Alex Ohanyan

that the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide were not the current Turkish government but the Ottoman Empire.

Nevertheless, five years ago, at her first book reading, the 86th Street Barnes & Noble in New York City, five Turks tried to stop the reading. Security and police were called. It was former Gov. Hugh Carey, who was in the standing-room-only audience, who helped her to focus by asking questions about the book.

The Knock at the Door is published in several languages including Spanish, Italian, Polish, Armenian and Turkish. The publisher of the Turkish edition is in jail for publishing the book.

While working on a new book, Ahnert will continue her book tour. Among her future appearances, she will be at the New York Book Fair in early June, followed by an appearance in Glendale, Calif. and at the Canadian Bar Association in August. This fall, the book will be published in Russian. Ahnert will be at the Moscow Book Fair in September.

The book is available in hardback and e-book. The paperback edition will be published by Beaufort Books on June 15.

After her reading, Ahnert engaged in a lively question-and-answer session.



OBITUARY

Aris Sevag

QUEENS, N.Y. — On Saturday, April 28, *Ararat* editor Aris Sevag died at his home in Jackson Heights, Queens after a long battle with cancer. He was 65.

Sevag is survived by his wife, Asdghig; his children, Aida, Alice, Ani and Armen, and his brother, Paul.

Born June 6, 1946, Sevag grew up in the tight-knit Armenian community of Philadelphia. His parents, Dr. and Mrs. Manasseh Sevag, recognized their son's intellectual curiosity from an early age and encouraged him to succeed while retaining a connection to his Armenian heritage. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, he traveled around the country, working in various Armenian communities from coast to coast.

While Sevag was an accomplished educator, editor and translator, many people did not know that he was also an autodidact. During the 1980s, when he was teaching English at the Rose and Alex Pilibos Armenian school in Los Angeles, Sevag taught himself Armenian and embarked on a journey to become one of the world's foremost Armenian translators. His passion for the Armenian language knew no bounds and he was also an avid collector of books. His personal collection of books, journals and periodicals numbers in the thousands.

In the last two decades of his life, Sevag was



Aris Sevag

best known to the Armenian community as a well-respected editor. He served as the managing editor of the *Armenian Reporter* for 15 years until he stepped down in 2006 to join the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). At the AGBU, Sevag served as assistant editor

of the biannual *AGBU News* magazine as well as the editor of *Ararat* magazine.

Sevag has published more than a dozen literary, historical and other works, the most recent being *Armenian Golgotha* by Grigoris Balakian, which he published with Armenian-American poet and author Peter Balakian.

"Aris Sevag's death is a great loss to the Armenian community," Balakian said. "He was a great translator of Armenian literature into English. Aris lived inside of the language and he knew his writers in a deep and lived-in way. And, he brought to every text a serious intellectual understanding of the writer and of the time and place and historical context. He made

a rich contribution to Armenian culture, and he had a zest and passion for what he did, and his soulful love of literature will be missed by all his friends and colleagues."

George Bournoutian, senior professor of Middle Eastern and East European History at Iona College, worked with Sevag on numerous projects. Sevag edited seven of Bournoutian's 20 books, including the forthcoming sixth edition of *The Concise History of the Armenian People*. The Armenian translation of the book, which was just completed in Yerevan, Armenia, will be dedicated to Sevag's memory.

"Aris Sevag's knowledge of the Armenian and English languages surpassed many academics," Bournoutian said. "He never said a bad word against anyone, helped all and forgave those whom took advantage of him. He will be sorely missed," Bournoutian said.

During his lifetime, Sevag published hundreds of articles in journals and newspapers around the world. Among his unpublished translations are accounts of several Armenian Genocide survivors, a study on the orphans from the Armenian Genocide, histories of prominent Armenian families and works of literature. One of these literary works, Bedros Keljik's *Armenian-American Sketches*, was being serialized in the pages of *Ararat* since 2010 and before his death, Sevag was able to publish seven of the 21 short stories in the collection.

During his memorial service last week at St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church in Little Neck, Queens, his son, Armen, spoke about his father's spirit and love of life. He concluded with the words, "As long as there are books to read and people to read them, his smile and spirit will live on forever."

(A shorter obituary for Aris Sevag appeared in last week's edition of the *Mirror-Spectator*.)

Alice Gazarian

BOSTON — Alice Gazarian, of Boston, died on May 5.

Gazarian was born in South Boston, the third of four children, to Dickran and Eva Gazarian. She grew up in the neighborhoods of South Boston and Brighton. She graduated from Brighton High School and then attended secretarial school.

Her working career began with Liberty Mutual Insurance Company. Later she would work for the federal government in the US Navy. She also played a role with the USO, supporting soldiers and sailors. Her final role was working with the state arm of the Environmental Protection Agency. She loved her work and made many friends wherever she went.

Gazarian's life was focused on her family. Even though she did not have children of her own, her extended family was her focus. When she was just a child, she had helped take care of her rambunctious baby brother, Charles. In her mother's later years, she was instrumental in caring for her.

Upon the arrival of her niece and nephews, she showered them with love and attention. When her grandnephew and grandniece, Matthew and Stephanie, were born, she was a proud grandaunt. Her nieces and nephews were all her children in her eyes.

She was very proud of her Armenian heritage. During her childhood, Armenian was spoken exclusively in her home. She shared equal pride in her American roots. Her parents, having escaped from the Armenian Genocide, instilled in her the value of being in a country that is free. Her parents insisted that everyone in the family be fluent in English, educated and explored all the opportunities that America had to offer.

She still had fun when she retired. She loved to buy decorative items for her condo in Charles River Park, going shopping with her niece to artist studios for artwork.

She was a world traveler. She had a passion for traveling to the far corners of the world.



Alice Gazarian

Her travels took her to Europe, Asia, Australia and Africa. She also had an affinity for cruises, including the Queen Elizabeth II.

She leaves her brother, Charles Gazarian, as well as nephews, Richard Gazarian and Mark Montgomery, and niece, Nancy Griffin, and great-nephew and great-niece, Matthew and Stephanie Griffin.

She was predeceased by her siblings, Michael Gazarian and Frances Montgomery.

Funeral services were held at Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge, on Wednesday, May 9.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Holy Trinity Armenian Church.

Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Watertown.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Young HMADS Talents Commemorate 97th Genocide Anniversary

HMADS, from page 5

music written by Berge Turabian. Translated, *Pyoonig* is a phoenix, and the song describes the relationship between a phoenix and the Armenian people – burned and damaged, but never destroyed, thanks to the unwavering strength, courage, faith and culture. This was the premier performance of the song.

At the conclusion of the program, Boghosian thanked the faculty and staff for all their help in putting this event together. She also thanked all the piano teachers, violin teachers and accompanists for helping students learn so much. Applause filled the hall as parents, grandparents, teachers, board members and guests showed their appreciation for the children.

On Friday, June 8, the nursery and kindergarten graduation will be at 10 a.m., and the 30th commencement exercises for the sixth grade, on Friday, June 15, at 8 p.m.

(Talar Aydin is a HMADS fourth-grade teacher.)



The second graders recite a poem.



Young students perform in the talent show.

Setrak Agonian Honored as 'Member of The Year' at New York Athletic Club

NEW YORK – Setrak Agonian was named “Member of the Year” by the New York Athletic Club at its 92nd Annual Awards Dinner on April 18. More than 300 club members and friends attended the dinner, which is one of two major award events celebrated annually by the club.

To be recognized by the New York Athletic Club (NYAC) for athletic accomplishment is noteworthy. With more than 8,500 members, the NYAC is the largest club of its type in the world and is a major supporter of the United States Olympic effort. Since the founding of the modern games in 1896, NYAC members have won 231 Olympic medals. At the Beijing games in 2008, 40 NYAC athletes made the Olympic team and won 16 medals, including one gold. In London this year, the NYAC will field a similar-sized contingent.

In his native Bulgaria, Agonian was a boxer and a wrestler. He immigrated to the United States in 1967 and became a friend and associate of Bill Farrell, a long time NYAC member and coach of the US Wrestling Federation. Farrell recruited

Association in New York that organized matches with teams from Russia, Bulgaria and Armenia. In 1990, Agonian brought a team of Armenian wrestlers to New York, and they competed for the first time ever under the Armenian flag. Armenia was still part of the USSR at that time, and competing under the flag of Armenia was made politically possible only because of the Olympic associates Agonian had cultivated in Russia.

In 1990, Agonian became a founding member of the Armenian Olympic Committee, and in 1994, he marched in with the first Olympic team from the Republic of Armenia at the winter games in Lillehammer, Norway. In 2003, he brought the World Wrestling Championships to Madison Square Garden.

In 2007, Agonian was inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame. President of the International Olympic Committee Jacques Rogge praised him for this milestone event. In 2011, Agonian was awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor reflecting the contributions he has made to America in the business, athletic and social fab-



Sitting, from left, Silva Baronian, Karine Kocharyan, Didi Agonian, Hripsime Asadourina and Carmen Gulbenkain; standing, from left, Wendy Hillaird, Hrair Baronian, Viken Najarian, Jim Scherr, Rev Mesrob Lakissian, Haley Scherr, Setrak Agonian, Jon Simonian, Charlene Simonian, Antica Black, Yeretzgin Ojeen Lakissian and Edward Gulbenkian

Agonian to be a translator for the US team competing in 1971 in Bulgaria and a wrestling assistant in the 1972 Olympics in Munich. That was the beginning of Agonian’s association with the NYAC and the USA Olympic movement.

Since then, Agonian’s involvement with NYAC wrestling and his promotion of this ancient sport in the United States has met with much success. In 1984, he founded the Metropolitan Wrestling

Club of the nation. Many of these accomplishments, Agonian says, would not have been possible except for his longtime association with the NYAC.

In his remarks, Agonian said this is the major cornerstone in his life, and the perseverance that reflects his Armenian heritage is the second. He thanked his adopted country of the US for giving him chance and his beloved club for giving him the opportunity to achieve things that he never dreamed possible.

Agonian accepted his honor accompanied by his wife, Didi, and witnessed by a group of fellow-Armenian NYAC members and well-wishers.

– Jon Simonian

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Job Opening

Visitor Services Associate

The Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) is seeking a Visitor Services Associate. This position calls for an individual who enjoys working with the public and has an appreciation for the fine arts. The Visitor Services Associate will be responsible for handling the front desk and the gift shop during the museum’s open hours: Wed, Sat, Sun: 12-6 pm, Thurs & Fri: 12-8pm; greeting museum visitors and tour groups in a friendly and positive manner, coordinating membership sign-ups and renewals, ensuring that the appearance of the gallery and gift shop is well maintained, preparing weekly visitor and gift shop reports, and performing other duties as assigned.

Qualifications: Good communication skills, basic computer skills, and a professional appearance and mannerism required. The ability to work during all or most of the museum’s open hours. Knowledge of Armenian culture and history a plus. Hourly rate commensurate with experience.

Please send letter of interest and resume to: Search Committee, ALMA, 65 Main street, Watertown, MA 02472, or via e-mail hr@almainc.org - No phone inquiries please.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Memorial Expands Annual Fair To Two-Day Event

WATERTOWN – The Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown is expanding its Annual Fair and will be serving its kebab dinners Friday, June 1, from 5 to 8 p.m. as well as Saturday, June 2, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., under the tent at the church (rain or shine). Visitors will have two days to enjoy traditional Armenian dinners; take out orders are available. The selection will also include Armenian vegetarian meals.

The entire fair, which includes an Armenian delicacies table, a sale of all new gift and household merchandise, a silent auction, and craft tables will open Saturday at 10 a.m.

The women of the church, who are known for their fine cooking, have been preparing the delicacies. They recently held an all-day *mante* session, producing hundreds of the petite Armenian dumpling-like treats. They will be featured on the baked goods table along with many other baked specialties.

The fair also features a Silent Auction with gift certificates, jewelry, etc. There will also be a sale of all new gift and household merchandise at bargain prices.

While this event is the church's largest fundraiser, the church designates 10 percent of the proceeds to a worthy charity. This year the donation will go to the Christian Youth Camp Arevik in New York.

Christine Mekjian of Watertown is chairing this year's fair with a committee which includes Adrine Beurklian of Watertown, Marilyn Coughlin of Needham, Gregg Ohanian of Woburn, Susan and Wayne Parseghian of Arlington, Steve Sabounjian of Wilmington, Vicky Tomasian of Belmont, Carol Trio of Marlborough 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. Admission is free, and the public is invited. The church is wheelchair accessible.

Archbishop of Eastern Prelacy Visits Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in NJ

EMERSON, N.J. – The week before Easter, the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (ANRC) again hosted Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan, prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America. He was accompanied by Bishop Anoushavan Tanielian, vicar of the Eastern Prelacy; Rev. Hovnan Bozoian, pastor of Saints Vartanantz Church in Ridgefield, NJ, and Rev. Mesrob Lakissian, pastor of Saint Illuminator's Cathedral in New York.

The archbishop and the clergy began the services with the participation of the residents singing the Lord's Prayer in Armenian. Then it became a very joyous occasion as Choloyan began the Blessing of the Bread, Water and the Salt. Those present knew that the message given by Choloyan was one of hope and salvation, which gave them comfort.

Upon completion of the liturgy, Choloyan went to each resident, allowing them to kiss the Cross. Madagh and grapes were served and brought an end to the service. Andy Torigian, president and chairman of the Board of Directors of the ANRC, expressed his deep appreciation to Choloyan and the clergy.



Standing from left, Sandy Cortelyou, director of activities; Rev. Hovnan Bozoian, pastor of Sts. Vartanantz Church, Ridgefield, NJ; Bishop Anoushavan Tanielian, vicar of the Eastern Prelacy; Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan, prelate of the Eastern Prelacy; Andy Torigian, president and chairman of the Board of Directors of the ANRC; Linda Amerkian and Matt Russo, administrator of the ANRC

Editor and Journalist Mahtesian to Receive *Mirror's* 2012 Award of Excellence

MAHTESIAN, from page 1

He knew he did not want to be a politician himself, but preferred to observe and analyze. He said, "The ideological component never really appealed to me. I've always been something of a contrarian thinker." Furthermore, "One of the things that I have learned is that on any given issue, both sides are probably right about some aspects of it. American politics is so much grayer than people think, and I have appreciated the grayness of it." Mahtesian prefers not to characterize himself as left or right, but as an independent, and finds that one reason he has been able to succeed in his field is his detached viewpoint.

After college, he began to work at the *Congressional Quarterly*, clipping stories from 125 daily American newspapers, then covering elections and redistricting, as well as contributing to the books, *Politics in America* and *Congressional Districts* in the 1990s. He then became a national correspondent for *Governing* magazine, traveling all over the US and writing about state legislatures, governors and urban politics for eight years.

It was in this period that he had a type of early, not mid-life, crisis that led him to rethink his career path. He said, "It seemed that the most interesting people that I was interviewing had their law degrees, even if they were not practicing. I was frustrated with the reactive nature of journalism but thought that with a law degree I could be more proactive in the future, no matter what job I held." He decided to earn a law degree in the evenings at American University's Washington College of Law while continuing to work full-time. After graduating, he worked briefly for a small firm but realized that he missed journalism and went back with new analytical skills and perspectives.

He went from *Governing* magazine to work for five years editing three volumes of the

National Journal's venerable biennial, the *Almanac of American Politics*. Yet despite all his accomplishments, Mahtesian said, "I began to be frustrated with the limitations of print media. I felt that the speed, the pace and the sophistication of political operatives had bypassed the ability of traditional publications to cover them. As journalists, we were wedded to a lot of outmoded ideas. It was an industry ripe for disruption."

This led to his move to Politico, based in Arlington, Va., in 2008. Politico disseminates its journalistic products not only in a newspaper which it owns, but through other media such as television, radio and the Internet. Politico itself is owned by a larger corporation, Allbritton Communications. Mahtesian said that the advantages of Politico, compared to traditional newspapers, include "the speed at which we can operate and move, and the voice that we can use (not just blogs but story forms – you don't have to seem to write in the austere voice of God that we were taught to write in as young journalists)." Furthermore, it was a publication or outlet that was not for a broader audience but specifically for people who are extremely interested in politics, though good stories would reach broader audiences too. Mahtesian added that for at least for him, "to be able to write for an audience like that, and to be able to write with some edge, to be able to write for a very ambitious publication was a great opportunity." Mahtesian's commentary is also in demand by National Public Radio, MSNBC, Fox News, C-Span, CNN and the BBC.

It is exciting to be on the cutting edge of changes in the industry, experimenting on how to make the Internet work and so far, Politico seems to be succeeding economically. Having just started his Politico blog, titled "Charlie Mahtesian on the American Political Landscape," Mahtesian says "I'm still trying to find my voice as a blogger while continuing to

oversee national political coverage." Like most journalists, he would love to write a book someday, but for now outside of his daily work, his priority is his family and two young children.

He wants his children to understand who they are and the values he wishes to impart to them. He said, "In many ways, I explain to them the Armenian experience and the lessons handed down to me, the things my grandfather and father told me. I tell them and hope these things sink in." Mahtesian finds that "the uniqueness of the Armenian experience is important – the ability of the Armenian to endure over time was part of the Armenian DNA. There is something about the Armenian character that makes us different."

Mahtesian's grandfather came to the US from Sepasdia (today Sivas, Turkey) after the Armenian Genocide and Mahtesian was fortunate to have known him. His parents sent Mahtesian to the Armenian Sisters' Academy in Radnor, Penn., until high school. His father felt very strongly about it, and his mother, though not Armenian by background, was very supportive of it as well. Consequently, Mahtesian learned to read and write Armenian, though he did not speak it at home. His mother was Catholic and the family went to St. Mark's Armenian Catholic Church in Wynnewood as a sort of compromise.

When Mahtesian moved to Washington, his education and then work did not leave much time for socializing in Armenian circles, but he has given talks recently to Armenian organizations on American politics, including the Armenian National Committee in California. Mahtesian said that in general, "I have been very impressed by the energy and growing sophistication of the Armenian political community. Part of this is generational. My parents' and grandparents' generations had a different focus, to establish themselves here and raise their families. The younger generation is able

to commit to their cause in a very different way."

He feels that if there were no organized Armenian lobby organizations, the situation could be even more frustrating for Armenians. His advice: "You need to be vigilant. The challenge is to familiarize each member of Congress with the larger issues, which are at stake. It is a matter of convincing members without many Armenians in their districts and showing how Armenian values relate to the American experience."

Though Armenians are relatively few in number, they do have some cards in their hands. Mahtesian explains: "When you look at the closely-divided nature of Congress at the moment, and the divisions in the political arena, one of the things you understand from all these closely-contested elections is that every vote matters. Sophisticated politicians understand this and respect communities that organize and are effective in presenting their arguments." In this context, Republican or Democratic Party affiliations are not that important.

When asked about the upcoming presidential campaign, Mahtesian commented, "I think the best that Armenians can hope for is a candidate who is familiar with the issues and understands the community as more than just another organizational interest. I think there is a certain moral imperative to the issues that matter to the Armenian community that makes them different. Levels of funding are very different from acknowledging a genocide." He also felt this was an advantage in comparison to the undoubtedly well financed and effective Turkish lobbying in the United States.

Tickets to see Mahtesian at the *Mirror-Spectator's* 80th anniversary benefit banquet on May 24 at the Royal Sonesta Hotel, and more information about the gala, may be obtained by calling (617) 359-0413.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Members of Congress Commemorate Genocide with Statements in Senate and House

WASHINGTON – Last week, more than two-dozen members of Congress commemorated the Armenian Genocide with floor statements in the United States Senate and House of Representatives and through participation in the annual Armenian Genocide Capitol Hill Observance.

Under the leadership of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, which is co-chaired by Representatives Ed Royce (R-CA) and Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ), the Armenian Genocide Observance was held April 25, in the historic Senate Kennedy Caucus Room in conjunction with the Armenian National Committee of America and the Armenian Assembly of America, along with the support of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia and the Office of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic.

Master of ceremonies, Ardashes Kassakhian, clerk of the City of Glendale, officiated the program, with the following legislators participating: Senators Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Jack Reed (D-RI) and former Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) along with Representatives Joe Baca (D-CA), Howard Berman (D-CA), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), David Cicilline (D-RI), Robert Dold (R-IL), Elliot Engel (D-NY), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Scott Garrett (R-NJ), Janice Hahn (D-CA), Rush Holt (D-NJ), Ed Markey (D-MA), Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Laura Richardson (D-CA), Steven Rothman (D-NJ), Ed Royce (R-CA), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Jackie Speier (D-CA) and Bob Turner (R-NY).

Kassakhian invoked a powerful passage from his great-grandfather's autobiography, which was recently published by Haigazian University Press, titled, *Towards Golgotha: The Memoirs of Hagop Arsenian, a Genocide survivor*.

"For after surviving the deportation, witnessing terrible events as a soldier on the front, and military imprisonment, and after the tempestuous events of the past five years, I am now alive, in the peaceful city of Bethlehem, surrounded by my beloved ones...I have great hope that by reading these life memoirs, my children will learn some lessons for the future: namely, instilling in them the desire for boldness and diligence, strengthening their self-confidence as well as sharpening their sense of caution and farsightedness. It is also hoped that they will learn to scorn injustice and face hardship, never



Members of the clergy, as well as former Ambassador to Armenia John Evans and his wife, Donna, participated in the commemoration.

to get discouraged and become leaders in control of their lives and models of behavior to others."

Following Kassakhian, each speaker underscored the importance of learning from the lessons of the Armenian Genocide and the need for prevention, a theme further stressed by former Maine Rep. Tom Andrews, now president of United to End Genocide.

In addition to remarks by members of Congress, the Republic of Armenia's ambassador to the United States, Tatoul Markarian announced that Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Representatives Anna Eshoo and Brad Sherman have been awarded Armenia's highest civilian honor, the Mkhitar Gosh Award, for their commitment to strengthening the enduring bonds between America and Armenia as evidenced by the strong US-Armenia relationship, as well as their tireless efforts regarding affirmation of the Armenian Genocide. Nagorno Karabagh Representative to the US Robert Avetisyan rounded out the program's speakers.

The community-wide audience was joined by clergy from the Diocese and prelacy with the invocation offered by Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan, prelate of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Eastern) and the benediction offered by The Very Rev. Oshagan Gulgolian, representing Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate

of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern).

In addition, members of the Central and East European Coalition (CEEC), along with Assembly Southern California Regional Council

Member Margaret Mgrublian, accompanied by Boston College Armenian Student Association (ASA) Co-resident Ali Rezai and his ASA colleague Armen Abagyan, toured the newly-opened Library of Congress exhibit titled: "To Know Wisdom and Instruction: The Armenian Literary Tradition." This timely exhibition is a testament to the rich and vibrant culture of the Armenian people and marks the 500th anniversary of the first printed Armenian book, the *Urbatagir* (the Book of Fridays), by Hakob Meghapat in 1512 in Venice, Italy.

Earlier in the day, the Assembly visited numerous Congressional offices as part of the Central and East European Coalition's Advocacy Day to discuss a number of key issues, including support for H.Res. 304 and S.Res. 399, the respective House and Senate resolutions on the Armenian Genocide. The CEEC comprises 18 nationwide organizations and represents more than 20 million Americans.

Abagyan and Rezai, who participated in the Advocacy Day, summed it up as follows: "It was truly a remarkable experience and we appreciated the opportunity to advance the Armenian issues on Capitol Hill."

Rabbi Ronald Shapiro at Milwaukee Martyrs Day

Jewish Leader Speaks on Genocide and Holocaust

MILWAUKEE, Wis. – As part of its remembrance of the Armenian Genocide, St. John the Baptist Armenian Church has long hosted a *madagh* dinner, followed by a speaker on the Sunday closest to Martyrs' Day. This year, on April 22, the suburban Milwaukee parish invited a local rabbi, Ronald Shapiro, to give a presentation after the dinner. Aside from his work at Milwaukee's Congregation Shalom, Shapiro

By David Luhrssen

teaches contemporary Jewish studies at Cardinal Stritch University and is active in the city's interfaith movement.

In his remarks, Shapiro spoke of the great similarity between the cultures and traditions of the Armenian and Jewish peoples. He surprised even the most knowledgeable in attendance by referencing a fourth-century Persian persecution of both groups, living as neighbors, involving the sort of deportations common to both the Genocide and the Holocaust in the 20th century. He also spoke of the coincidence between the late 19th-century pogroms of Eastern Europe and the massacres in the Ottoman Empire that drove significant populations of Jews and Armenians to refuge in other lands, including the US. During many dark centuries both groups looked forward to the reestablishment of homelands where their cultures could be nurtured. "We have been victims of others who believed they had the absolute view of what every human being must be," he said. "Armenians and Jews have often been at the receiving end of that hatred."

Shapiro also spoke of Mount Ararat as a common symbol of rebirth for both nations. "Noah was not Jewish," he said, "and Adam was not Jewish. Adam in Hebrew simply means human being – not just man or woman but human being. No one can say we are better than anyone else by virtue of lineage. We have so much in common as humans created in God's image."

The rabbi praised the St. John congregation for its many young members and extolled the value of passing traditions on from one generation to the next. An example was the talk given by St. John's Nicole Kashian, 18, as a preface to Shapiro's presentation. She reiterated the facts of the Armenian Genocide and focused on its denial, pointing out that the Genocide was better known in World War I than in the 21st century. As evidence, she cited the New York Times, which published no less than 145 articles during the Genocide and called the murder "systematic" and "authorized." Yet, unctuous US and European Union officials continue to waffle and the Turkish government continues to encourage Genocide denial. "We cannot forget," she concluded. "We will always remember."

St. John was also host of a joint Martyrs' Day commemoration on the evening of April 24, with a requiem and vespers led by Rev. Nareg Keutelian, with clergy from Holy Resurrection Armenian Church in South Milwaukee and St. Mesrob and St. Hagop churches in Racine, Wis.



From left, Norman Marcus, Ronald Shapiro, Fr. Nareg Keutelian and Charles Dadaian

Kim Kardashian Tapes Armenian Genocide PSA for Glendale

GLENDALE (*Los Angeles Times*) – Kim Kardashian, who recently made headlines after she said she wanted to run for mayor of Glendale, has also taped a public service announcement for the city's official commemoration of the Armenian Genocide.

In the video, unveiled last week at the Glendale City Council meeting and uploaded to YouTube on Wednesday, May 2, Kardashian asked the public to join in commemorating "the loss of those innocent lives of millions of people

worldwide."

Sitting on a couch with her hair pulled back into a ponytail, Kardashian also refers to the Armenian Genocide of 1915, in which roughly 1.5 million Armenians were killed at the hands of Ottoman Turks, as "the modern genocide."

Kardashian does not specifically refer to Glendale, but city officials told the *Glendale News-Press* it was sent in for the official Genocide commemoration at the Alex Theatre last week. It was never aired, however, due to technical difficulties.

She had been invited to attend personally, but was out of state.

Councilman Ara Najarian – who publicly invited Kardashian to be his honorary chief of staff to learn more about Glendale politics – said that if she had attended, "It would have been a little more exciting."

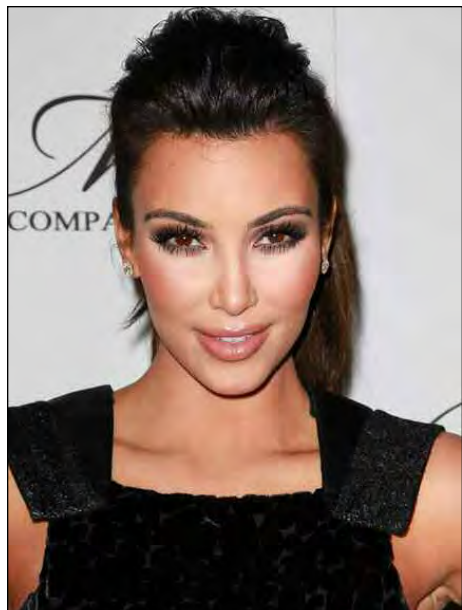
The event was sold out, with about 1,400 in attendance.

"That is the one and only Kim Kardashian," Najarian said in referring to the video. "I don't think anyone can bring too much publicity to the Armenian Genocide."

Since her quip about running for elected office in Glendale aired on her sister's reality TV show, "Khloe & Lamar," Kardashian has been coy about her plans.

On Sunday, she told Politico that the public would "just kind of have to stay tuned."

In the TV clip, Kardashian tells her sister that she wants to run for mayor of Glendale – or as she calls it, "Armenian town" – in five years. The mayor is actually picked from among elected City Council members.



Kim Kardashian



**New York
METRO**

An Evening of Nostalgia and Celebration

By Florence Avakian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK – An overflow audience filled Merkin Concert Hall on Saturday, April 28, in anticipation of a celebratory evening of nostalgia – and they were rewarded amply with the music by renowned stars from Armenia, France and the United States.

Titled, “Rebirth,” the event was dedicated to the 20th anniversaries of Armenia’s membership to the United Nations as well as the establishment of its



TCA New York/New Jersey Chairman Hagop Vartivarian

Armed Forces. Among the guests were Archbishop Khajag Barsamian and Archbishop Oshagan Cholyan, heads of the Armenian Diocese and Armenian Prelacy, respectively; Armenia’s Ambassador to the

United Nations Garen Nazarian; Director of the United Nations Security Council Affairs Division Dr. Movses Abelian; Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) Press Committee Chairman Hagop Vartivarian and ADL District Committee Co-chairs Edmond Azadian and Papken Megerian; Tekeyan Cultural Association Executive Secretary Kevork Marashlian, Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Central Committee Chairman Antranik Kasparian, ARS District Committee Chair Silva Takvorian and Knights of Vartan Grand Commander Dr. Dennis Papazian.

Welcoming the attendees and delivering

impassioned addresses extolling the significance of the celebration were Nazarian, Vartivarian and representatives of the ARF and the ADL. Twenty children ranging in age from 7 to 15, garbed in Armenian costume, opened the concert by singing the American and Armenian national anthems under the direction of their conductor, Vagharshag Ohanyan, a soloist and voice teacher in the New York-Armenian community.

The evening’s memorable performance was under the baton of composer and conductor of the Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island and Amrenian Chorale of Greater Worcester Konstantin Petrossian, who also was the program’s musical director. Petrossian has performed throughout the Soviet Union, Europe and Canada, and has received many honors, including the Gomidas Award in 2005.

The evening featured the bright lights of an acclaimed musical roster, including longtime Armenian and international legends, Raisa Megerdchian and Ruben Matevosyan; opera stars, Yeghishe Manucharian and Victoria Avetisyan, and popular singers Vicken Tarpinian, Johnny Roubian and Arevik Gharibyan.

Among the unforgettable performances were Matevosyan’s soulful rendition of Arno Babajanian’s *Tchknagh Yeraz* and Alexey Hekimian’s *Baree Aragil*; Megerdchian’s interpretation of Babajanian’s *Azk Parabandz*, Melik Mavisakalian’s *Jan Hayastan* and *Doo Eenchbes Mee Asdgh* by Robert Amirkhanian, sung as a charming



Yeghishe Manucharian and conductor Konstantin Petrossian

duet by Megerdchian and Matevosyan.

Gomidas’ *Hayastan* was given a rousing performance by Metropolitan Opera tenor Yeghishe Manucharian, as was Armen Smbatyan’s *Hayastan* by Boston Opera mezzo-soprano Victoria Avetisyan. French singer Vicken Tarpinian almost brought the house down with his heartfelt *Dele Yaman*, arranged by Petrossian, and his emotion-filled rendering of the popular *Zartir Lao Hayee Achker* by Amirkhanian was delivered with great feeling by Roubian. The evening came to a rousing finale with Edgar Hovhannessian’s *Yerevan/Erebuni* with the participation of all the soloists and the orchestra, which garnered a standing ovation.

The evening before, a reception for the Armenian legends, Megerdchian and

Matevosyan, had been hosted by Edward and Carmen Gulbenkian in their home. The evening also was an opportunity to focus on the unity of the Armenian community with guests present from many different Armenian organizations.

Nazarian expressed his appreciation to the two Armenian legends and to the Gulbenkians for their contribution to the celebratory concert. Similar gratitude was expressed by Vartivarian who thanked the Gulbenkians, Nazar and Artemis Nazarian and Mr. and Mrs. Alex Dadourian for their great help and emphasized that “this gathering of Tekeyans and Hamazkayins should be an example for unity.” (Nazarian, incidentally, had hoisted the Armenian flag 20 years ago for the first time, at the UN.) He paid tribute to Megerdchian and Matevosian, whom he called the “Edith Piaf and Frank Sinatra of the Armenians.”

Matevosian, who has been the troubadour of Armenia for more than 50 years, and has sung all over the world, including Carnegie and Town Hall, Lincoln Center and the United Nations, recalled his many styles of singing, including classical and popular, during an exclusive interview. Megerdchian, also eminent in a 50-year career that has spanned the globe, including being a star of radio and TV, paid special tribute to the importance and prominence of culture during the Soviet period, which she said is now suffering due to lack of funds. She recalled that more than 400 compositions had been written for her by noted composers. “The most happiness for me is when I sing a new song,” she said with her warm smile.

The evening ended with the two singing legends giving an impromptu performance (with Megerdchian also playing the piano) of several well-known Armenian songs with the guests joyfully joining in.



From left, Ruben Matevosyan, Raisa Megerdchian, Vicken Tarpinian, Victoria Avetisya, Yeghishe Manucharian, Arevik Gharibian and Johnny Roubian



TCA President Dr. Harutiune Arzoumanian



Victoria Avetisyan



Aline Baghdasarian



Johnny Roubian and Arevik Gharibian



New York
METRO



Raisa Megerdchian takes a bow.



Johnny Roubian



From left, Papken Megerian, Edmond Azadian, Nazar Nazarian and his wife, Artemis Nazarian



From left, Hagop Vartivarian, Papken Megerian, Edmond Azadian and Ambassador Garen Nazarian



Edward Gulbenkian, left, presents an award to Raisa Megerdchian.



Yeghishe Manucharyan



Vicken Tarpinian



Arts & Living

'Armenia Observed' Showcases Peter Carapetian's Work At AIWA Event

VENICE, Calif. – Tuesday, May 1, the Los Angeles affiliate of the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA's) Board of directors attended a luncheon at Tripod Gallery to view the photography exhibition, "Armenia Observed," which features the work of Peter Carapetian, an award-winning photographer, who was born to Armenian parents in Teheran and raised in London.

Joan Agajanian Quinn not only scheduled the event but also conducted an interview with the artist. Carapetian's background in worldwide publications and what he tries to capture through his images was explained during the presentation. He told many anec-



Joan Quinn conducts an interview with photographer Peter Carapetian.

dotes about the people he met in Armenia, spoke about individual pictures and fielded questions from the audience. Sue and Steve Demer, principals in the Tripod Gallery, hosted the lunch, which was catered by the Rose Cafe. The Demers' gave a preview of the upcoming Carapetian exhibit, which deals with Venice, Italy as its subject. AIWA members and friends have been invited back to participate in the upcoming exhibition, which opens May 12.

Lily Balian announced the AIWA symposium to be held at the Athenaeum Club in



AIWA group, seated, from left, Diana Hekimian and Joan Agajanian Quinn; standing, Arsine Phillips, Peter Carapetian and Ani Aivazian

Pasadena on May 19 beginning at 9:30 a.m. An array of journalists – Eliz Gazarian-Semerjian, Lianna Zakharian and Maria Armoudian – will sit on a panel, titled "The Evolving Media," moderated by Keri Tombazian. The luncheon speaker will be Silva Sevlilian.

Said newly-elected AIWA President Silva Katchiguan, "It will be an afternoon to remember."

For information, email Ani Aivazian at ani-aivazian@hotmail.com.



Armenian Cuisine co-authors Barbara Drieskens and Aline Kamakian present their specialty pastry with philo and walnuts.

New Armenian Cookbook Combines Food and History For a Yummy Combo

NEW YORK – In April, co-authors Aline Kamakian and Barbara Drieskens from Lebanon wrapped up a month-long, Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)-coordinated tour across the US and Canada to promote their book, *Armenian Cuisine*. Equal parts cookbook, photo essay and oral history, the recently-released hardcover is quickly finding its place on kitchen counters and coffee tables in homes around the world.

The book's concept was developed by Kamakian, who, as a Lebanese-Armenian chef and owner of the renowned Beirut restaurant, Mayrig, had two goals for the project: the first, to record her mother's cherished recipes, and the second, to resolve her clients' questions about why the Armenian foods listed on Mayrig's menu were known by Turkish names. Her quest for answers took her to the ancestral Armenian land of Cilicia (present day southeastern Turkey). Knowing her talents lay more in cooking than writing, she forged a collaboration with Drieskens, a trained anthropologist who had recently left the academic world. The two embarked on an emotional three-week journey across almost 2,000 miles to trace the roots of



Author Barbara Drieskens and Aline Kamakian sign copies of *Armenian Cuisine*.

both Armenian food and people, in a place where neither seemed to have survived. The result is a striking volume filled with 139 classic recipes and hundreds of photographs of landscapes and natural foods that have made it a 2012 New York Photo Festival contender.

As Kamakian and Drieskens chronicled their trip, they struggled to reconcile the land's beauty with the horrific atrocities that had been committed there. They were alarmed to see centuries-old Armenian churches in ruins and the Armenian language completely unspoken. However, they soon found that the region's Armenian history was being preserved through traditional cooking. While they spent time

see *CUISINE*, page 14

Outstanding Cultural Event Held At Weill Hall

By Lucy Ishkanian

NEW YORK – The annual "Musical Armenia" concert took place at Weill Recital Hall (at Carnegie Hall) on Friday, March 30. It was sponsored by the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Prelacy Ladies Guild.

The artists presented this year were cellist Marta Bagratuni and pianist Hayk Arsenyan, who performed interesting selections from both the classical and Armenian repertoire. There was a special, compelling introspective moment, with the moving interpretation by Marta Bagratuni of the Armenian Sharagan, *Oor Es Mayr Im* ("Mother, where art thou"), arranged for cello and piano by composer Vache Sharafyan, titled *On the Wings of the Hymn*. The rarely-heard *Visionary Landscapes, Twelve Armenian Folk Songs Suite* by composer Alan Hovhanness, expertly performed by Hayk Arsenyan, revealed a period of development in Hovhanness' music as he



Marta Bagratuni and Hayk Arsenyan hold the 2012 Musical Armenia poster together.

was exploring the realms of modern 20th-century Armenian music.

The artistic caliber of both Bagratuni and Arsenyan was on a high level of professionalism, including technical proficiency, stage presence and aplomb, but most importantly, solid knowledge and command of the compositions they were performing.

The success of a concert is always expressed on the faces of the audience departing from the concert hall. If the audience has received pleasure, you will see it reflected in the eyes, on the smiling faces and with the comments, as each one is anxious to express their feelings to one another and to the artists. This is the criteria of a successful concert.

The elated, beaming capacity audience proclaimed its appreciation for a most exciting cultural experience with a well-deserved standing ovation, as the artists appeared together on stage to acknowledge the applause at the conclusion of the concert.



ARTS & LIVING

Gharibian's Study of Armenian Journalism a Valuable Resource

Armenian Journalism 1794-1977

by Jerair H. Gharibian. 145 pp. 2012.
Watertown, Mass.

By Daphne Abeel

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Jerair Gharibian, who died in 1991, made an important contribution to Armenian culture in the Boston area, when, in 1980, he founded the Boston Armenian Independent Radio Hour, which to this day broadcasts news and commentary of interest to the Armenian community.

His widow, Yevgine Gharibian, who hosts the broadcasts, has now paid further tribute to her husband's legacy with the publication of *Armenian Journalism 1794-1977*, written to fulfill his master's degree requirement at Boston University.



Jerair Gharibian

Gharibian had a rich and varied life as a writer and a journalist. Born to Armenian parents in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1937, he began his education there, but traveled later to London to study at a branch of London University, where he studied industrial management. While in London, he became a co-founder of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Navasardian Committee.

In 1964, following his graduation, he moved to Tehran, where he lived for 10 years, immersing himself in the social and political life of the Armenian community there. He was particularly

interested in the education of young people and established a youth biweekly magazine, *Alik Badanegan*, which was published under the auspices of *Alik* daily, where he served as assistant editor.

In 1975, Gharibian was invited to the United States to assume the position of executive secretary of the Armenian Youth Federation of the ARF. It was at this time while he was attending Boston University's School of Journalism that he wrote his master's thesis on Armenian journalism.

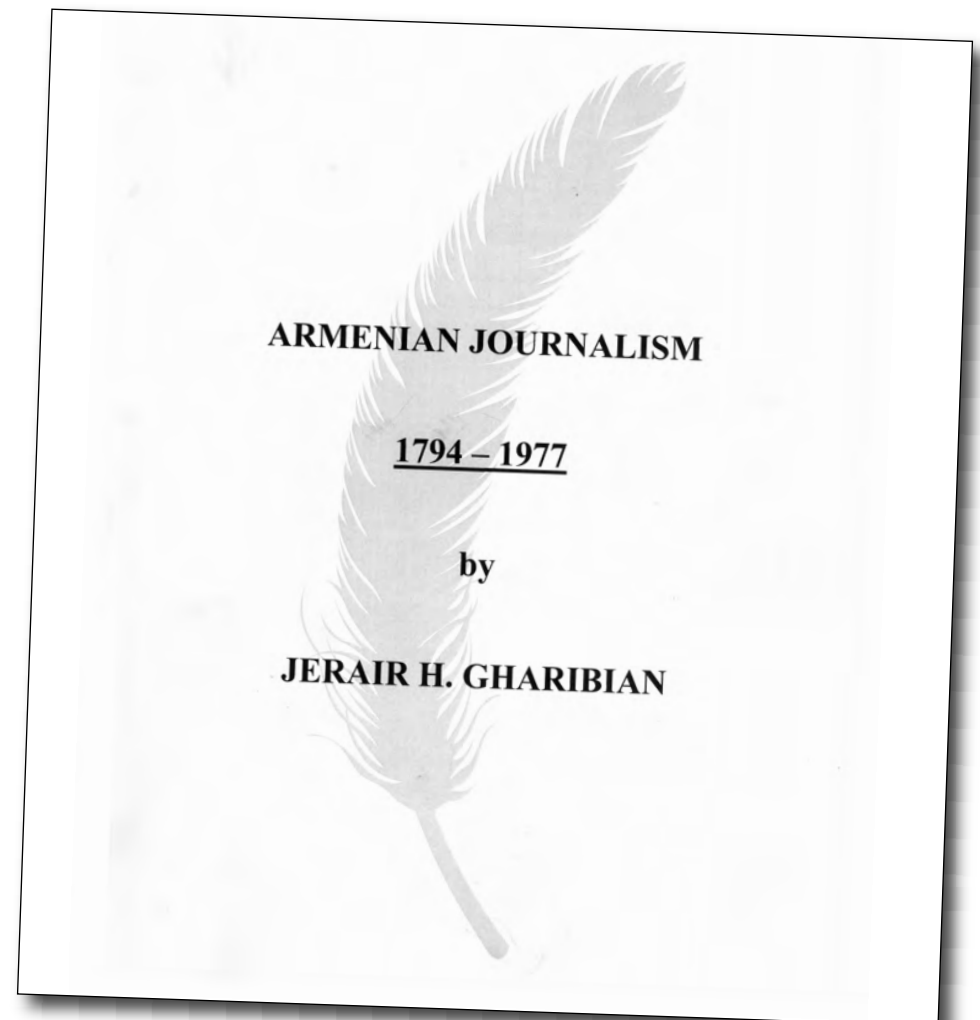
This relatively short text is of archival importance to the Armenian community, if for no other reason than for the tables which list the publication of virtually every Armenian newspaper and periodical, dating back to 1794, when the very first newspaper, *Azatarar*, was published by a priest, Rev. Haratune Shmavonian in Madras, India. The tables list not only the title of the publication, but the date and place of origin, the publisher, the editor and the nature of its content. This is an invaluable resource for anyone who is engaged in research on many subjects touching on Armenian history, culture and politics.

As Dr. Khachig Tololyan of Wesleyan University notes in his introduction, "Both in the homeland and in the diaspora, Armenians have made their history in contexts that gave the press an uncommon centrality in political and cultural life; furthermore, the lack of universities and of institutional documentation in stable archives made the Armenian press the best record of social history available to us. Jerair Gharibian's book is a reference guide and a history of the Armenian press from 1794-1977, but it is also a study of the tight-knit relationship between the Armenian press and its heterogeneous contexts, from Madras to Yerevan, and Tbilisi to Fresno."

Tololyan also notes that even this first publication served as a kind of political rallying point, a characteristic that is reflected in contemporary publications, which are now, in large part, owned by various political parties.

Ara Ghazarian, curator of the Armenian Cultural Foundation, has contributed a foreword in which he, too, comments on the importance of the publication as "the first historical, analytical work on the history of Armenian journalism written in English."

In his own introduction, Gharibian points to the unique role that Armenian journalism has played in the history of the Armenian people. "Only rarely does one come across a nation which



has been compelled to publish newspapers and periodicals with the survival of the people as its primary concern."

Of course, there could be no publication of any sort without the invention of the alphabet and Gharibian reviews the creation of the Armenian script by the Armenian monk, Mesrob Mashtots in 404 AD. The first text to be translated into Armenian, not surprisingly, was the *Bible*, but it was followed by original works in the fields of history, philosophy and religion and hence "The Golden Age of Armenian Literature" was born. In spite of the fact that Armenia was subject to many invasions, creative writers continued to produce works, which included songs, most notably by the troubadour, Sayat Nova.

In the 16th century, as Armenians began to emigrate to other lands in order to escape oppression by invaders, new writers in the diaspora began writing in the language of the common people (*krapar*) rather than the literary language of the clergy (*ashkharapar*).

Subsequent to the founding of that first paper in Madras, the growth of Armenian publications increased gradually through the 19th century. Thanks to European demands that the Ottomans ease up on restrictions placed on the Armenian community, education received a push and parochial schools and colleges were established by Armenian missionaries in Constantinople, Kharpert, Marsovan, Aintab, Marash, Konia and Tarsus. In the mid 19th century, three important Armenian newspapers were published, *Masis* in Constantinople, *Huisisapayl* in Moscow and *Ardziv*, founded in Constantinople, but later moved to Van. *Ardziv*, established by Bishop Megerdich Khrimian, played an especially important role in exhorting Armenians to press for their freedom.

Especially in the years 1905-1914 leading up to the Genocide, Gharibian notes that censorship of Armenian journalism by the Ottomans was particularly harsh. Such words as "freedom," "rights," "revolution," and "justice," were routinely stricken from any publications. Particularly taboo were the words "Hayastan" (Armenian) and "Hairenik" (Fatherland).

With the extermination in 1915 of over 600 scholars, writers, journalists and other intellectuals, journalism nearly ceased to exist in Ottoman Turkey and it was at this time the Diaspora became the haven for Armenian journalism. Throughout the Middle East and in the United States, wherever a significant population of Armenians immigrated to escape persecution, new vehicles for journalism were formed, including some in the Soviet Union, although these latter were very much under the book of the Communist regime.

It needs to be pointed out that Gharibian was

writing long before the breakup of the Soviet Union and the formation of the independent Republic of Armenia and his criticisms of and references to the Soviet influence on the Armenian press no longer have the same validity as they did at the time of his writing in the late 1970s.

Gharibian gives a thumbnail sketch of the importance of the Armenian press in Middle Eastern countries such as Syria, Iraq, Iran and Egypt and pays particular tribute to Lebanon which was the birthplace of many outstanding Armenian journalists. The influence of Beirutis may still be traced, for example, in the editorship of *Azg*, published in Yerevan and headed by Hagop Avedikian, who was born in Beirut.

Papers were also started in France, Turkey and the United States where the first publication was *Arekag*, founded in 1888 and published by Haig Eginian in Jersey City, NJ.

Writing in 1977, Gharibian counted 52 Armenian periodical publications in the US, including *Hairenik*, the organ of the ARF, and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, the publication of the Armenian Democratic Liberal (ADL) Party. Both today, are located in Watertown, Mass. Gradually, with succeeding generations of Armenians less able to read in the Armenian language, there was an ever-increasing need to create an Armenian press in English.

Gharibian notes that few editors of Armenian periodicals were trained journalists, although that trend is changing both in Armenia and abroad.

In his concluding chapter, Gharibian writes, "The future of the Armenian-language press in the Diaspora is governed, however by language and social factors. As assimilation by foreign cultures takes its toll on those who can read the Armenian language, the need for newspapers and periodicals printed in the Armenian idiom will continue to decline. On the other hand, these same forces of assimilation may give rise to a need for more publications in the languages of those nations in which the Armenians have settled. But this in itself is ruled by the ability of Armenian culture to survive under the attack of foreign influence."

Clearly, the rest of the story of Armenian journalism is yet to be written. But there are signs of interest in the history of both Armenian journalism and publication in general; witness the recent exhibit at Harvard University's Lamont Library of the history of the Armenian book, organized by Prof. James Russell, which included books, magazines and newspapers.

Copies of *Armenian Journalism 1794-1977* may be obtained by contacting yevgine@aol.com or by visiting the library at the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) in Belmont.

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ARTS & LIVING

Tashjian Featured Artist at Santa Fe Gallery

SANTA FE, N.M. – Richard Tashjian is the May/June featured artist at the Art Exchange Gallery & Arrowhead Studios.

Originally, from Watertown, Mass., he has lived in New Mexico for many years. He has made several trips to Armenia taking photographs, paintings, drawing, meeting with artists and museum directors, etc.

One particularly interesting painting is “The Village of Pithni,” which features an old church on a hillside. It is an acrylic on panel, 37”x24”. The show opened May 11, and runs through June 22.

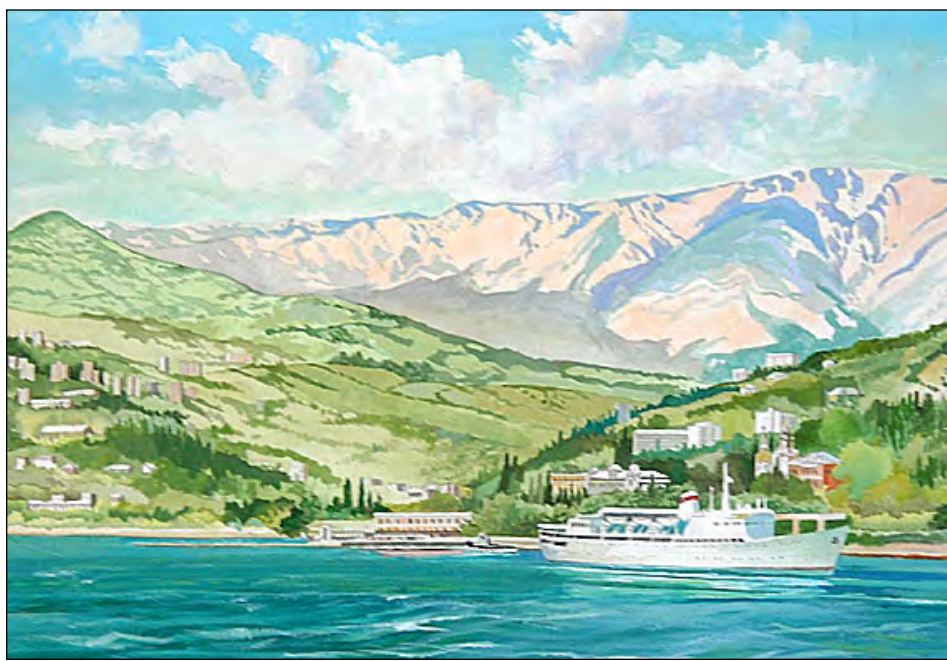
He has been with the gallery for about six years. “We had done well with his work and I felt it was time to honor him with a solo show again and feature some of his new work. He is very talented and able to capture how it feels to be in a certain spot. He has visited Armenia several times and captures the warm varied landscape with consistently beautiful results. He explains that Armenia and Northern New Mexico have similar terrain and colors. Many of the New Mexico scenes look like they could actually be Armenian landscapes,” said Jeff Tabor, director of the gallery.



“The Village Pithni” by Richard Tashjian



“Another New Mexico Landscape,” by Richard Tashjian



“Another New Mexico Landscape,” by Richard Tashjian

New Armenian Cookbook Sells Out on Tour across US and Canada

CUISINE, from page 12

with local families, many the survivors of the Armenian Genocide who are profiled in the book, the authors realized that the kitchen was where the past was recounted. It was “a place where people told the most depressing stories, the ones that would be very difficult to discuss under any other circumstance, but somehow were easier to tell through cooking, because the food was a way of escaping the tragedy,” as Drieskens described at a recent presentation in the AGBU Central Office, organized by the AGBU Young Professionals of Greater New York (YPGNY). Through traditional dishes, such as *mante*, *Urfa kebab* and *dolma*, some of the many highlighted in the book, they discovered that the people of Cilicia have kept Armenian culture alive for generations.

Before the Armenian Cuisine tour culminated at the 2012 *Los Angeles Times* Book Festival on the weekend of April 20, it brought Kamakian and Drieskens to various cities, including Montreal, Boston, New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia. At each stop, groups had the opportunity to listen to the women’s stories from their trip, watch them prepare food and sample various dishes.

In Montreal, Kamakian and Drieskens guided participants through the recipes, while in Hackensack, NJ, at Bloomingdale, more than 60 attendees purchased all the available copies of the book after watching them demonstrate both an appetizer and dessert. That was the case at every venue, with some guests purchasing several copies.

Karina Ambartsumian, YP Philadelphia chair, said, “The audience was absolutely captivated by Aline and Barbara’s journey, experience and find-



Guests enjoy a food demonstration at the Bloomingdale’s department store in Hackensack, NJ.

ings. We saw that the food truly brought people together, sparking conversations among Armenians, non-Armenians, and foodie enthusiasts.” Everyone, she described, enjoyed fresh plates of Armenian nut and olive salad, bride fingers and the philo dough pastry with walnuts.

For their next endeavor, Kamakian and

Drieskens plan to translate the book for the Turkish public. Kamakian sees its great potential to initiate a dialogue about the past, because “it is a way to learn about what has happened without having to read a history textbook, which makes it very accessible to everyone,” as she noted at the recent New York

event. Until then, the current edition will continue to draw families around the dinner table to enjoy all it has to offer.

For free recipes and more information on Armenian Cuisine, visit: <http://www.armenian-cuisine.com/index.htm>. To purchase copies in the US, email books@agbu.org.



ARTS & LIVING

Sibel Edmonds Finally Wins

By David Swanson

WASHINGTON (veteranstoday.com) – Sibel Edmonds' new book, *Classified Woman*, is like an FBI file on the FBI, only without the incompetence.

The experiences she recounts resemble K.'s trip to the castle, as told by Franz Kafka, only without the pleasantness and humanity.

I have read a million reviews of nonfiction books about our government that referred to them as "page-turners" and "gripping dramas," but I had never read a book that actually fit that description until now.

The FBI, the Justice Department, the White House, the Congress, the courts, the media and the nonprofit industrial complex put Edmonds through hell. This book is her triumph over it all and part of her contribution toward fixing the problems she uncovered and lived through.

Edmonds took a job as a translator at the FBI shortly after 9-11. She considered it her duty. Her goal was to prevent any more terrorist attacks. That is where her thinking was at the time, although it has now changed dramatically. It is rarely the people who sign up for a paycheck and healthcare who end up resisting or blowing a whistle.

Edmonds found at the FBI translation unit almost entirely two types of people. The first group was corrupt sociopaths, foreign spies, cheats and schemers indifferent to or working against US national security. The second group was fearful bureaucrats unwilling to make waves. The ordinary competent person with good intentions who risks their job to "say something if you see something" is the rarest commodity. Hence the elite category that Edmonds found herself almost alone in: whistleblowers.

Reams of documents and audio files from before 9-11 had never been translated. Many more had never been competently or honest-

ly translated. One afternoon in October 2001, Edmonds was asked to translate verbatim an audio file from July 2001 that had only been translated in summary form. She discovered that it contained a discussion of skyscraper construction, and in a section from September 12th a celebration of a successful mission. There was also discussion of possible future attacks. Edmonds was eager to inform the agents involved, but her supervisor Mike Feghali immediately put a halt to the project.

Two other translators, Behrooz Sarshar and Amin (no last name given), told Edmonds this was typical. They told her about an Iranian informant, a former head of SAVAK, the Iranian "intelligence" agency, who had been hired by the FBI in the early 1990s. He had warned these two interpreters in person in April 2001 of Osama bin Laden planning attacks on US cities with airplanes, and had warned that some of the plotters were already in the United States. Sarshar and Amin had submitted a report marked "VERY URGENT" to Special Agent in Charge Thomas Frields, to no apparent effect. In the end of June, they had again met with the same informant and interpreted for FBI agents a meeting with him. He had emphatically warned that the attack would come within the next two months and urged them to tell the White House and the CIA. But the FBI agents, when pressed on this, told their interpreters that Frields was obliged to report everything, so the White House and other agencies no doubt already knew.

One has to wonder what US public opinion would make of an Iranian having tried to prevent 9-11.

Next, a French translator named Mariana informed Edmonds that in late June 2001, French intelligence had contacted the FBI with a warning of the upcoming attacks by airplanes. The French even provided names of suspects. The translator had been sent to France and believed her report had made it

to both FBI headquarters and the White House.

Edmonds translated other materials that involved the selling of US nuclear information to foreigners and spotted a connection to a previous case involving the purchase of such information. The FBI, under pressure from the State Department, Edmonds writes, prevented her from notifying the FBI field offices involved. Edmonds has testified in a court deposition, naming as part of a broad criminal conspiracy Representatives Dennis Hastert, Dan Burton, Roy Blunt, Bob Livingston, Stephen Solarz and Tom Lantos and the following high-ranking US government officials: Douglas Feith, Paul Wolfowitz and Marc Grossman.

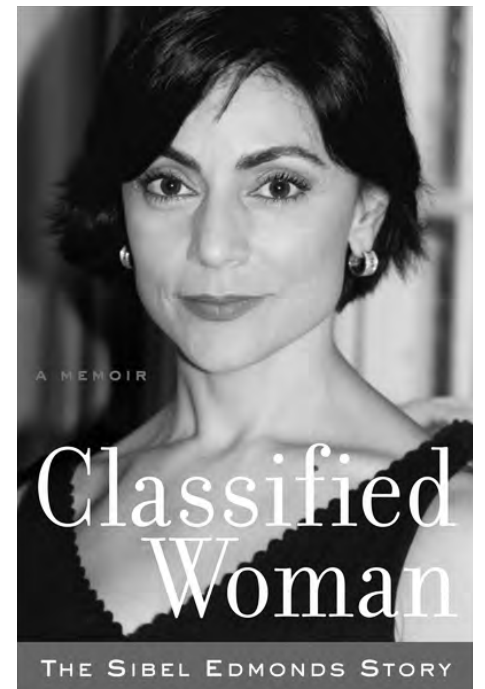
When Edmonds was hired, she was the only fully-qualified Turkish translator and this remained the case. In November 2001, a woman named Melek Can Dickerson (referred to as "Jan") was hired. She did not score well on the English proficiency test and thus was not qualified to sign off on translations as Edmonds was. Her husband, Doug Dickerson, worked for the Defense Intelligence Agency under the procurement logistics division at the Pentagon dealing with Turkey and Central Asia and for the Office of Special Plans overseeing Central Asian policy. This couple attempted to recruit Edmonds and her husband into the American Turkish Council and the Assembly of Turkish American Associations, offering large financial benefits. But these were organizations that the FBI was monitoring. Edmonds reported the Dickersons' proposal to Feghali, who dismissed it.

Then Edmonds discovered that Jan Dickerson had been forging her (Edmonds') signature on translations, with Feghali's approval. Then, Edmonds' colleagues told her about Jan Dickerson taking files out of other translators' desks and carrying them out of the building. Dickerson attempted to control the translation of all material from particular individuals. Dennis Saccher, who was above Feghali, discovered that Jan Dickerson was marking every communication from one important person as being not important for translation. Saccher attempted to address the matter but was shut down by Feghali, by another supervisor named Stephanie Bryan, and by the head of "counterintelligence" for the FBI who said that the Pentagon, White House, State Department and Congress would not allow an investigation.

Had Edmonds understood the truth of that statement, it might have saved her years of frustration and stress, but it would have denied us the bulk of the revelations in her book. Dickerson threatened Edmonds' life and those of her family. Edmonds lost her job, her reputation, her friends and contact with most of her family members. She watched Congress cave in to the president. She watched the government protect the Dickersons by allowing them to flee the country. She listened to Rep. Henry Waxman and others in 2005 and 2006 promise a full investigation if the Democrats won a majority, a promise that was immediately broken when the Democrats took control of Congress in 2007. Edmonds was smeared in the media, and her story widely ignored when media outlets got parts of it right. The Justice Department claimed "States Secrets" and maneuvered for a cooperative judge (Reggie Walton) to have cases filed by Edmonds dismissed. The government classified as secret all materials related to Edmonds' case including what was already public. The Justice Department issued a gag order to the entire Congress.

And Congress bent over and shouted "Thank you, sir, may I have another?"

As less confrontational approaches failed, Edmonds became increasingly an activist and an independent media participant and cre-



ator. Her story and others she was familiar with were rejected and avoided by the 9-11 Commission. She worked with angry 9-11 widows and with other whistleblowers to expose the failures of that commission. Disgusted with whistleblower support groups that only offered to help her when she was in the news and never when she needed help most desperately, Edmonds started her own group, made up of whistleblowers, called the National Security Whistleblowers Coalition. She started her own website called Boiling Frogs Post.

When an unclassified version of a report on Edmonds' case by the Justice Department's Inspector General was finally released, it vindicated her.

Edmonds has received awards and recognition. Her story has been supported (with rhetoric, not action) by Congress members and backed up by journalists. It appears in a forthcoming film.

Coleen Rowley, another FBI whistleblower, one who was honored as a *Time* magazine person of the year along with two others, said: "What I find so remarkable is Sibel's persistence in trying every avenue and possible outlet in trying to get the truth out. When going up the chain of command in the executive branch and Inspector General internal mechanisms for investigating fraud, waste and abuse went nowhere, she sought judicial remedy by filing lawsuits only to be improperly gagged by 'state secrecy privilege.' Along the way she also sought congressional assistance, testified to the 9-11 Commission, and engaged with various media and other non-governmental organizations. It's somewhat ironic that Sibel herself demonstrated such enormous energy and passion throughout this decade quite the opposite of the 'boiling frog' idiom she uses for her website as a warning to others. If her book can inspire readers to summon even 1/100th of the determination and resolve she has modeled, there's hope for us!"

Yet, thus far, no branch of our government has lifted a finger to fix the problem of secrecy and the corruption it breeds, which Edmonds argues has grown far worse under President Barack Obama. That is why this book should be spread far and wide and read aloud to "mis"representatives in Congress if necessary. This book is a masterpiece that reveals both the details and the broader pattern of corruption and unaccountability in Washington, DC. Edmonds has not exposed bad apples, but a rotten barrel of toxic waste that will sooner or later infect us all – not just the whistleblowers like Edmonds and the thousands of people in our government who see something and dare not say something for fear that we will not have their back.

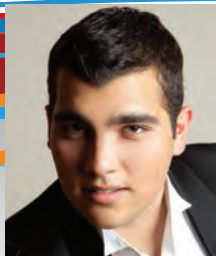
Let us have their back.

(Sibel Edmonds had previously revealed the work of the Turkish government, behind the scenes, in holding the Armenian Genocide resolution in Congress at bay – editor.)

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ARTS & LIVING

Armenian Musicians John Baboian and Maggie Scott Featured at JAZZ at the Arsenal Series

WATERTOWN — Well-known jazz guitarist/performer/Berklee professor John Baboian is bringing his Be-Bop Guitars to close out this season's JAZZ at the Arsenal series May 21 at 7:30PM. Local legend, vocalist/pianist Maggie Scott, nee Margaret Vazaian, will join the band for this concert of standards and originals.

The Be-Bop Guitars features five guitarists from the Berklee guitar faculty, plus vibes, bass, drums and trumpet, with specialized arrangements for five guitars.

Baboian, the director of the series, which is concluding its fourth season at the Arsenal Center for the Arts, lives in Belmont and remains close to his Armenian roots.

"I've always been proud of my Armenian heritage, going to Armenian school after school when I was growing up in Watertown," explains Baboian. "I've been glad I was able to speak and understand the Armenian language even though I was born here in the US. It was very helpful for me when I traveled to Armenia in 1987 and in 2008. Even though my primary musical focus is jazz, I still have a hand in Armenian music, playing for many years with Artie Barsamian's jazz



Maggie Scott

band and Armenian band."

Baboian has performed worldwide with his band and with other musicians, including a performance with the Be-Bop Guitars at the Cape Town Jazz Festival in South Africa. His most recent recording is "Freshly Painted Blues." He has shared the stage with Frankie Avalon, Sergio Franchi, Al Martino, Ben Vereen and many other celebrated musicians, and has recorded with Black Sea Salsa Band, Boston Big Band and others. To hear his music, visit: myspace.com/johnbaboian.

In 1990, Baboian, in conjunction with the Amaras Arts Alliance, produced the first Armenian Jazz Festival in the northeast, when 25 jazz artists of Armenian ancestry came together to make music for a day-long event at the Armenian Sisters' Academy in Lexington.

"I was there playing with my group and accompanying several others," Baboian said. "And Maggie was there performing with her group and singing with a vocal quartet. It was a great opportunity for us to bring together Armenians that had a common musical language and put them on a stage to present their art form."

Scott, the child of Armenian immigrant parents, began playing piano in junior high school, before attending Juilliard School of Music. She was featured as a soloist with the Boston Pops under Arthur Fiedler in 1950, in what she calls "a transformative experience."

A veteran jazz vocalist/pianist and beloved Berklee voice professor, Scott has been a mentor to countless singers. A mainstay at the Colonnade Hotel in the 1970s, Scott built her reputation performing as a soloist and with her trio at jazz clubs and hotels in the area. She has given concerts in Costa Rica as well as Europe, performed on television and radio and has accompanied Cab Calloway, Eartha Kitt and other greats. She is known as a trailblazer for female musicians and was the first woman elected to the executive board of the Boston Musicians' Association where she served for 25 years.

JAZZ at the Arsenal features a variety of jazz



The Be-Bop Guitars

styles performed by the best jazz ensembles in the Boston area with many headed up by Berklee's faculty. The Monday night perfor-

mances are held in the intimate Black Box Theater at the Arsenal Center for the Arts located at 321 Arsenal St. Performances are at 7:30

p.m. The venue is handicapped accessible. For tickets or more information, visit <http://www.arsenalarts.org>.

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

MAY 24 — Celebrating 80 years and beyond, Benefit Gala of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator. Thursday, reception, 6:30 p.m.; dinner 7:30 p.m., Boston Royal Sonesta, Cambridge. Keynote speaker, Vigen Sargsyan, chief of staff of the President of the Republic of Armenia. 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award will be bestowed upon Dr. Gregory H. Adamian, chancellor and president emeritus of Bentley University; 2012 Award of Excellence will be bestowed upon Janet Shamalian, national correspondent for "NBC News" from Texas, and Charles Mahtesian, Politico national policy editor, Washington, DC. For information, call (617) 359-0413. **JUNE 1-2 — Armenian Memorial Church Annual Fair** (rain or shine); open Friday from 5-8 p.m., serving Armenian kebab meals; entire Fair open Saturday 10 a.m.-7 p.m. (kebab meals served all day, starting at 11 a.m.); Armenian delicacies; silent auction and gift sale. 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown. Admission free. For more info, (617) 484-3176.

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NEW JERSEY

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

NEW YORK

MAY 19 — HMADS Gala Dinner Dance. Details to follow. On June 15, HMADS 30th Commencement Exercise at 8 p.m., Kalustyan Hall. **SEPTEMBER 29 — Save the date.** Armenia Fund 20th Anniversary Gala, 7 p.m. at Gotham Hall in New York City.



Chris Mekjian, left, and Roberta Vanderkey are two volunteers working hard to provide appetizing Armenian meals for the Armenian Memorial Church Annual Fair, Friday and Saturday, June 1 and 2, at 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown, Mass. Admission is free. For more information, call (617) 484-3176.



COMMENTARY

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COMMENTARY

Reflections on Elections

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Our readers would rightfully expect us to focus in the first place on parliamentary elections held in Armenia on May 6. However, it is also worth reflecting on other elections held the same day in Europe because they may also have a bearing on Armenian issues, directly or indirectly. Thus, presidential elections took place in Serbia and France, and dramatic parliamentary elections took place in Greece.

In Serbia, the incumbent liberal president, Boris Tadic, seems to be 1 percentage point ahead of his ex-nationalist rival, Tomislav Nikolic, who is less than sanguine with Serbia's prospects of joining the European Union; he would rather cooperate with Russia. On the other hand, Mr. Tadic has been the main architect of Serbia's rapprochement with the EU. His negotiations resulted in Serbia's candidacy to the EU last March.

Greek parliamentary elections may have far more significance on Turkey's potential membership to the European Union. Since last November, Greece was run by an uneasy coalition of the center-right New Democracy Party and the center-left Pasok, or Socialist Party. They negotiated a bailout with the European Central Bank, against a very unpopular austerity plan, which they strong-armed through parliament. Violent social unrest erupted and finally both parties were marginalized in last Sunday's parliamentary elections. New Democracy won 20 percent of the votes, down from 33.5 percent in 2009, and Pasok ranked third with 13.8 percent, down from 43.9 percent. The left-wing coalition, Syriza, took the second place with 16.6 percent. Now it is up to minor parties to form a coalition government to renegotiate the austerity plan rejected by the Greek electorate with the European Central Bank. Should that coalition fail to renegotiate the plan, Greece faces the prospect of being ousted from the European Union, eliminating one more hurdle from Turkey's race to join the EU.

Another presidential race closely watched by Armenians in the homeland and the diaspora took place in France when Socialist contender Francois Hollande was facing conservative (UMP) incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy.

With 80-percent voter turnout, Mr. Hollande garnered 52 percent of the votes over Sarkozy's 47 percent. The kingmaker was the leader of the extreme right-wing party, Front National, Marine Le Pen, who had won 16 percent of the votes during the first round. Sarkozy was hoping against hope that Le Pen would send the conservatives to his rescue, but like Ralph Nader did in 2000, "Le Pen dropped the guillotine on Sarkozy," as described by Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times*.

Francois Hollande has promised some domestic social reforms (hiring 60,000 teachers, bringing back the retirement age down to 60 from 62, etc.) and to renegotiate fiscal discipline with the EU leadership.

What was interesting for Armenians was that both candidates personally attended the 97th anniversary commemoration of the Genocide (unlike Mr. Obama, who issued his soft-pedaling pronouncement on the Armenian Genocide on April 24, right after personally attending the Holocaust Day commemoration).

Only tears were missing in Mr. Sarkozy's eyes when he delivered his passionate speech at the Genocide memorial. Had Sarkozy signed the French Senate's resolution making the denial of the Armenian Genocide punishable by law, pre-empting the Supreme Court's verdict, he would not have to shed tears, because perhaps 100,000 Armenians would have voted for him.

Mr. Hollande, who is more sedate in nature, promised at the rally that he would make sure that the law is drafted with "utmost legal security" in order to ensure its approval by the country's highest court. "We can no longer commit an impression that would again leave us with the impossibility of having the text validated," he said.

For our readers, the most anticipated parliamentary elections took place in Armenia. During the campaign, there was much jockeying between the parties and speculations were rife. Pollsters were very active with their predictions and many proved to be more biased than the parties involved.

The government promised fair elections, which the international observers took very seriously, since much depended on their reports. There were 647 international observers and 31,000 local observers. The elections took place in a calmer atmosphere than before. Bribing, which certainly took place in some regions, was not very easy to detect. But opposition groups made more noise than necessary to justify their anticipated losses. The ruling Republican Party had the government apparatus in its hands to steer the election in its favor, like all administrations before it.

A few pundits warned of big surprises, which did not materialize. The head of the Heritage Party, Raffi Hovannisian, predicted that on May 7, "we will wake up in a different Armenia."

Perhaps Mr. Hovannisian was also surprised that he woke up in the same Armenia.

Political parties in Armenia may profess adherence to ideolo-

gies, but they basically represent a strong man or an oligarch. They all promise the same to the people and few deliver on their promises. This time around, the emigration issue was a major theme, which received some lip service from all the parties, without a tangible program to solve it.

Out of the nine parties running, six were successful in grabbing seats in the parliament. Thus, President Serge Sargsian's Republican Party won 44.05 percent of the votes, which translates into 74 members of the parliament, for a total of 131. It means that it can garner a majority in the parliament over any resolution that it wishes, without the need of coalition partners.

Gagik Zaroukian's Prosperous Armenian Party won 30.20 percent, which gives it 30 seats, plus eight elected on a majority slate. Levon Ter-Petrosian's opposition party, the Armenian National Congress (HAK), won 7.10 percent of the votes, which allows them seven seats. Hovannisian's Heritage Party won 5.79 percent (six seats) while Arthur Baghdassarian's Country of Laws Party won 5.49 percent, which allows it five to six seats.

The big surprise was the downscaling of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) with 9.73 percent, which translates into five to six seats, down from 11 seats in the previous parliament. It is no surprise at all that election news in the ARF media begins with complaints about election irregularities, without touching the core issues of the elections.

The aftermath of the election will be more interesting to watch than the election itself, as horse-trading between the parties will begin until the power blocs are consolidated.

Throughout the campaign, Zaroukian's Prosperous Armenia Party flirted with different opposition groups, despite its formal pact with its coalition partner, the Republican Party. It even formed an inter-party center for public oversight of elections to monitor irregularities. The Heritage Party refused to participate but odd bedfellows such as the ARF and the HAK participated. All the parties in the group have assured the electorate that their agreement does not extend beyond the elections, but some suspicions linger in the case of Prosperous Armenia. It looks like Zaroukian will turn out to be the kingmaker, with the guidance of former President Robert Kocharian behind the curtains. There is no love lost between Ter-Petrosian and Kocharian, nor between Ter-Petrosian and the ARF leadership, but a marriage of convenience seems to be in the offing.

Before the election, Ter-Petrosian expressed his readiness to enter into a power-sharing agreement with the ARF and Prosperous Armenia. The ARF has no problem cooperating with Prosperous Armenia (meaning Kocharian who had offered the gravy train in the past). Whatever is new is Ter-Petrosian's readiness to cooperate with the necessary evils. "The Armenian National Congress does not exclude its participation in a real coalition, while categorically rejecting any cooperation with the Republican and Orinatz Yerkir (Land of Laws) parties, which it considers to be our country's main evils," he said.

After rhetoric to "deconstruct" the "kleptocracy," Ter-Petrosian's HAK coalition came up with five to six seats in the parliament, which is not sufficient to exercise effective opposition to the ruling party. Therefore, the Tuesday, May 8, HAK rally will prove to be a watershed for the opposition group; elected members of the Congress will either drop their parliamentary mandates, not to disappoint their followers, or the first president has to pull out from his sleeves an agreement with Kocharian's party, which will prove to be his lifeline.

The Republican Party has a sure bet on the Orinatz Yerkir Party to form a coalition, because the latter has nowhere to go but hang on the coattails of the president to survive.

With its diluted power in the parliament, the ARF will gleefully jump on the bandwagon of a coalition if it is realized through the cooperation of Kocharian and Ter-Petrosian.

Perhaps such a development will not prove to be a bad option, as a mechanism of checks and balances may emerge in the parliament, steering it into a balanced course.

How clean were the elections? The international observers gave mixed reviews: "Armenia deserves recognition for its electoral reforms and its open and peaceful campaign environment, but in this race several stakeholders too often failed to comply with the law, and the election commission too often failed to enforce it," said Francois-Xavier de Donnea, head of the Organization for Security and Operations in Europe (OSCE) monitors.

But on the other hand, Radmilla Sekerinska, an observer mission leader representing OSCE's office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, said: "The election campaign was open and respected fundamental freedoms, and the media offered broad and balanced coverage during the official campaign period."

There is certainly progress in the democratic process. After taking all irregularities into consideration, the observers have not contested the election results. This offers the opportunity for the elected legislators to make good on their election pledges, and should the opposition move to a more formal venue from the streets, a civilized discourse may ensue, leading the country to increased stability and prosperity, which have to be the expectations of the electorate in the first place.



COMMENTARY

After Denial

Following racist remarks by Emre Belözoglu during a recent game, the famous false truth that racism is alien to this country has resurfaced. Turkey is a country where false truths often become righteous convictions. How can one explain such widespread denial, given the fact that our daily life

and our daily language and writing abound with racist, exclusionary and discriminatory remarks? Besides, is it not the case that racist remarks are being made on the soccer field where society's internal dialogue can be perfectly heard? Gülençül Altınsay of *Taraf* daily has compiled examples of such utterances. Here is an excerpt:

“On Dec. 17, 2008 a group of Trabzonspor fans chanted, ‘Genocide to Armenian Oguz in Trabzon,’ targeting Oguz Sarvan, then-head of the Referees Board. The Trabzon stands where Emre is being accused of racism have since had their own incident with similar remarks made three weeks ago.” Altınsay continues giving as examples “The chanting by the Bursaspor fans of ‘Armenian dogs support Besiktas’ and the threats reading ‘Wait for us, negro Eagle [meaning Besiktas]; wait for us Arab Eagle; we are coming’ that they posted on the Internet before a Besiktas vs. Bursa game in Istanbul. And of course, the turmoil in the stands two years ago at a Bursa-Diyarbakir match. The Turkish flags that all Bursaspor fans held and the huge placard reading ‘How happy is he who calls himself a Turk’ [as opposed to the Diyarbakir team].”

Do not our reactions at home and on the streets exclude or deny the identity of those who fall outside the definition of a nation designed by Ittihadist and Kemalist elites? This would include almost every citizen of Turkey! And do not we even go sometimes as far as keeping out all others in the world who are not Turks? Is not this the manifestation of a deep identity crisis caused by Kemalist trauma? What could be the reason for the recurrence of this denial mechanism despite the obviously racist language and environment? Could it be the unbearable magnitude, gravity and significance of the truth?

Tuesday was another April 24. That was the 97th anniversary of the day when in 1915 the Young Turk government took the decision to collectively deport Armenians to Syrian deserts, which ended in the annihilation of Armenian and Assyrian existence in these lands. Regardless of what you call it, what happened to Armenians and Assyrians has taken our soul and brain hostage since then. Their annihilation became the very source that keeps promoting our widespread denial. This source is probably the primary reason for the widespread schizophrenia that is repeated on a daily basis at home, at work or on the street. We deny by all means what each and everyone either knows or guesses. There is a chilling statement that has been coined recently: “In this land, Kurds try to prove that they exist; Armenians try to prove that they are dead.”

Denial is a schizophrenic struggle to maintain contradictions. It is a state of mind and soul that is hard to sustain and must be worked at endlessly. Otherwise, what could be the reason for such extensive efforts to prove that it has never happened, if it really did not? What could be the reason for the countrywide outrage in the face of documented doubts in the face of denial? What could be the reason for large sums of money for lobbying activities and publications to plead for understanding from others? For inventing a “Turkic world” to rally support?

Despite this, I am of the opinion that the denial is ailing. Each April 24, it is getting less sustainable. Several grassroots initiatives are burgeoning across Anatolia to make sure that memory is duly honored. Critical inquiries by young people in particular, from a variety of backgrounds and beliefs, tell us that it is high time to deal with our clichés, taboos, myths, legends and hypocrisies. Youngsters are aware that unless this is done, their future cannot be bright and secure. Each April 24, they further outgrow the state of “childhood” of April 23, a mindset that refuses to grow up, a self-imposed immaturity. And they are multiplying. Just like a pomegranate...

(Cengiz Aktar is a columnist for *Today's Zaman*.)

A Head-scarved Woman at the April 24 Commemoration

By Etyen Mahcupyan

The Armenian issue has been a periodically recurring problem for all governments of the Turkish Republic so far.

It has become a habit for us to react and voice national concerns via our Foreign Ministry when parliaments of foreign countries pass bills on recognition of the Genocide, or as April 24 looms. Meanwhile, we have tended to market it as a victory when we manage to make some Western countries backpedal thanks to Turkey's commercial and military importance. The critical point was that the Armenian issue tended to be defined as a “foreign policy” matter in the eyes both of governments and of society. It was as if these incidents had occurred, not in Anatolia but during a conflict with another country along the country's geographical borders. In support of this perception, the official accounts of the country's history advocated that during the forced relocation, the country was at war with foreign forces that sought to divide Anatolia, and therefore, internal territories should be considered as a sort of boundary. From this perspective, Armenians could no longer be seen as an ancient nation (millet) of the Ottoman Empire, and they could be defined an aggressive tribe warring against the state. This was how the forced relocation could be expanded to include all Armenians.

This perspective further called on the community in Turkey to lend support to their state, and the community complied with this invitation despite its internal diversity. On the other hand, there were natural connections with the Armenian issue and the Republican regime because the founders of the new regime were no one but the pro-Community of Union and

Progress (CUP) circles. Moreover, Kemalists held no different ideas about non-Muslims than the CUP. Indeed, several years after the establishment of the republic, non-Muslims started to witness increased pressures on them through laws and deliberate practices. Eventually, society was feeling indebted to the state that had saved them from the domination of foreign powers, and, as a result, they unquestioningly adopted the official position with regard to the Armenian issue.

When the Genocide debate flared again after 1980, the state, in line with the mindset of the September 12 regime, started to tell its citizens more openly how they should think about this matter. And those who stepped outside the state's official discourse were seen as traitors and they were crushed by criminal laws. The general public was feeling that they were in a big conflict that was growing bigger and bigger and they thought that the “right” thing they could do was to side with the state.

This picture started to change in the mid 1990s. Secular groups were showing signs of division, with democrats distancing themselves from the state with respect to nationalism and secularism. The first broad contact occurred in this period between the democrats of the secular groups and the intellectuals of the Islamic groups that were in the grips of change, and with the coup of February 28, 1997, the division inside the secular groups ran deeper. In this stretch of time, the New Democracy Movement started to shake the state's official discourse in many respects, the intellectuals of the Armenian community launched the *Agos* newspaper and a “progressive” opposition emerged out of the Islamist Welfare Party (RP).

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) served as a silent revolution that directed this fragmented change to a sin-

gle melting point. In addition to being significant in terms of making sense of the Islamic groups, this movement is acting as the mediator of society and the state's need for “reform.” This change is progressing so fast that Parliament Speaker Cemil Cicek, who had said, referring to the Armenian conference in 2005, “They are stabbing us in the back,” now felt the need to touch on the Armenian issue in the context of the initiative to draft a new constitution and stressed that the country has to confront its past to the end. The AKP is not the driving force behind this striking change. The real change is going on inside the Islamic community, and the energy coming out of this change is going beyond the government's reticence.

This year, a head-scarved woman read the press release concerning the commemoration of April 24 in the name of all participants. Many intellectuals and columnists from Islamic groups expressed their respect for the sorrow resulting from the forced relocation of Armenians, and they condemned the pro-CUP mentality. The Association of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed Peoples (MAZLUM-DER), the most important human rights association among the Islamic groups, issued a press release that was extremely respectful for the lost lives, that underlined the historical reality and that refused to use pro-state jargon. In this respect, Turkey is about to pass the threshold. The policy of denial is now being perceived as a ridiculousness that sticks only to neo-nationalist (ulusalci) TV channels. The government is very unlikely to remain indifferent to the mental liberation of the Islamic groups. But the West should refrain from raising this issue as a “foreign policy” matter once again.

(This column originally appeared in *Today's Zaman*, Istanbul, on May 4.)

Arab Spring Has Washed Region's Appalling Racism out of the News

By Robert Fisk

How many tracts, books, documentaries, speeches and doctoral theses have been written and produced about Islamophobia? How many denunciations have been made against the Sarkozys and the Le Pens and the Wilders for their anti-immigration (for which, read largely anti-Muslim) policies or – let us go down far darker paths – against the plague of Breivik-style racism?

The problem with all this is that Muslim societies – or shall we whittle this down to Middle Eastern societies? – are allowed to appear squeaky-clean in the face of such trash, and innocent of any racism themselves.

A health warning, therefore, to all Arab readers of this column: you may not like this week's rant from yours truly. Because I fear very much that the video of Alem Dechasa's recent torment in Beirut is all too typical of the treatment meted out to foreign domestic workers across the Arab world (there are 200,000 in Lebanon alone).

Many hundreds of thousands have now seen the footage of 33-year-old Ms. Dechasa being abused and humiliated and pushed into a taxi by Ali Mahfouz, the Lebanese agent who brought her to Lebanon as a domestic worker. Dechasa was transported to hospital where she was placed in the psychiatric wing and where, on March 14, she hanged herself. She was a mother of two and could not stand the thought of being deported back to her native Ethiopia. That may not have been the only reason for her mental agony.

Lebanese women protested in the centre of Beirut, the UN protested, everyone protested. Ali Mahfouz has been formally accused of contributing to her death. But

that's it.

The Syrian revolt, the Bahraini revolution, the Arab Awakening, have simply washed Alem Dechasa's tragedy out of the news. How many readers know – for example – that not long before Ms. Dechasa's death, a Bengali domestic worker was raped by a policeman guarding her at a courthouse in the south Lebanese town of Nabatieh, after she had been caught fleeing an allegedly abusive employer?

As the Lebanese journalist Anne-Marie El-Hage has eloquently written, Ms. Dechasa belonged to “those who submit in silence to the injustice of a Lebanese system that ignores their human rights, a system which literally closes its eyes to conditions of hiring and work often close to slavery”. All too true.

How well I recall the Sri Lankan girl who turned up in Commodore Street at the height of the Israeli siege and shelling of West Beirut in 1982, pleading for help and protection. Like tens of thousands of other domestic workers from the sub-continent, her passport had been taken from her the moment she began her work as a domestic “slave” in the city; and her employers had then fled abroad to safety – taking the girl's passport with them so she could not leave herself. She was rescued by a hotel proprietor when he discovered that local taxi drivers were offering her a “bed” in their vehicles in return for sex.

Everyone who lives in Lebanon or Jordan or Egypt or Syria, for that matter, or – especially – the Gulf, is well aware of this outrage, albeit cloaked in a pious silence.

In Cairo, I once remarked to the Egyptian hosts at a dinner on the awful scars on the face of the young woman serving food to us. I was ostracised for the rest of the meal and – thankfully – never

invited again.

Arab societies are dependent on servants. Twenty-five percent of Lebanese families have a live-in migrant worker, according to Prof. Ray Jureidini of the Lebanese American University in Beirut. They are essential not only for the social lives of their employers (housework and caring for children) but for the broader Lebanese economy.

Yet in the Arab Gulf, the treatment of migrant labor – male as well as female – has long been a scandal. Men from the subcontinent often live eight to a room in slums – even in the billionaires' paradise of Kuwait – and are consistently harassed, treated as third-class citizens and arrested on the meanest of charges.

Saudi Arabia long ago fell into the habit of chopping off the heads of migrant workers who were accused of assault or murder or drugrunning, after trials that bore no relation to international justice. In 1993, for example, a Christian Filipino woman accused of killing her employer and his family was dragged into a public square in Dammam and forced to kneel on the ground where her executioner pulled her scarf from her head before decapitating her with a sword.

Then there was 19-year-old Sithi Farouq, a Sri Lankan housemaid accused of killing her employer's 4 daughter in 1994. She claimed her employer's aunt had accidentally killed the girl. On April 13, 1995, she was led from her prison cell in the United Arab Emirates to stand in a courtyard in a white abaya gown, crying uncontrollably, before a firing squad which shot her. It was her 20th birthday. God's mercy, enshrined in the first words of the *Koran*, could not be extended to her, it seems, in her hour of need.

(Robert Fisk is a columnist for the *Independent*. This column originally was published on May 7.)



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Lawsuit-Happy Turkish Group Loses Appeal on Armenian Genocide

The Turkish Coalition of America (TCA) has been on a rampage in recent years, filing lawsuits against scholars, public officials and civic groups who support the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Last week, a federal appeals court put an end to TCA's legal tirade against the University of Minnesota by unanimously upholding a federal court's decision dismissing TCA's baseless allegations.

The Turkish advocacy group had filed a lawsuit against Prof. Bruno Chaouat, director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Minnesota, for labeling TCA's website and others as "unreliable." The university's webpage had posted the following stern admonition to students: "We do not recommend these sites. Warnings should be given to students writing papers that they should not use these sites because of denial, support by an unknown organization, or contents that are a strange mix of fact and opinion."

Initially, TCA had complained that the inclusion of TCA's website on the university's list of "Unreliable Websites" violated the Turkish group's freedom of speech. The university rejected TCA's allegation, although, the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies revised its website on November 18, 2010, removing the "Unreliable Websites"

and recommending new resources for Genocide research. The university asserted that the revision was not prompted by TCA's complaint and denied any wrongdoing. On November 24, 2010, Chaouat posted a statement on the center's website explaining that the list of "Unreliable Websites" was removed because he did not want to "promote, even negatively, sources of illegitimate information."

TCA then filed a lawsuit against the university, its president and Professor Chaouat, claiming that including its website on the same list as websites denying the Jewish Holocaust, stigmatized the Turkish organization. The court dismissed the lawsuit.

A three-judge panel of the Eighth Circuit Federal Appeals Court upheld the lower court's decision on May 3, ruling that the university did not violate TCA's First Amendment rights, since it neither blocked nor restricted access to the Turkish website.

The judges also rejected the Turkish group's second claim that it was defamed when the university stated that TCA's website is "unreliable," engages in "denial," presents "a strange mix of fact and opinion" and is an "illegitimate source of information." In a sinister attempt to win the lawsuit, TCA claimed that its website did not deny certain underlying historical facts, affirming that "certainly hundreds of thousands of Armenians died." However, since the Turkish website had alleged that it is "highly unlikely that a genocide charge could be sustained against the Ottoman government or its successor," the judges ruled in favor of the university asserting that TCA had in fact engaged in "denial."

TCA's malicious lawsuit disturbed many US scholars who were worried that this case would set a dangerous precedent and have a chilling effect on academic freedom. The gravity of these concerns had prompted the Middle East Studies Association to demand TCA to withdraw its lawsuit.

Although TCA failed in its bullying tactics against the University of Minnesota, there is no guarantee that this Turkish group will stop suing other academic or civic organizations for refusing to cave in to Turkey's denialist cam-

paign. It should be noted that TCA spent \$630,000 on legal fees out of its 2010 budget of \$3.6 million. Significantly, no mention was made in its annual report of the sources of TCA's funding, except a passing remark that it is "supported entirely by private donations." The Boston Business Journal reported that Turkish-American Yalcin Ayasli, founder of Hittite Microwave Corp., contributed \$30 million to TCA in 2007.

TCA engaged in the following wide-ranging activities and political objectives with its \$3.6 million budget in 2010:

- Delivered 75 position papers to members of Congress and US opinion leaders;
- Monitored the American media;
- Took a Native American business delegation to Turkey;
- Lobbied the Congress against the Armenian Genocide resolution;
- Advertised in Roll Call and Washington Quarterly;
- Organized Summer internships in Washington for Turkish students;
- Provided scholarships to African-American, Armenian-American, Hispanic American, Native American and Turkish-American students to study in Turkish universities;
- Awarded grants for academic conferences;
- Offered research fellowships to professors Michael Gunter, Justin McCarthy, Hakan Yavuz and others;
- Contributed \$100,000 grants to each of the Assembly of Turkish American Associations and Federation of Turkish American Associations, and a smaller amount to the Azerbaijan Society of America;
- Spent \$630,000 on lawsuits against various entities that support the Armenian Genocide issue;
- Funded congressional trips to Turkey and
- Filed a report with the US government accusing the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) of being a "hate group."

Given TCA's tax-exempt charitable status, the Internal Revenue Service should investigate the legality of this Turkish group's involvement in such extensive political and lobbying activities.

Karabagh Foreign Ministry Decries Armenian Killings on 21st Anniversary

In late April-early May 1991, special police detachments (OMON) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan, with the support of the USSR Interior Ministry's troops, launched a large-scale punitive operation titled "Ring," the essence of which was to exile the Armenian population of the Nagorno-Karabagh Autonomous Oblast, the Shahumian region, and some regions of Northern Artsakh (the Khanlar, Dashkesan, Kedabek, and Shamkhor regions of the former Azerbaijani SSR).

As a result of this operation, dozens of Armenian settlements were completely devastated, destroyed or populated by Azerbaijanis. Tens of thousands of people were deported, hundreds were killed. It was the operation of Ring characterized by unprecedented cruelty and mass human rights violations that dramatically increased the level of tension in the region and transferred the Karabagh conflict to a military plane.

The report of the CSCE Mission of

February 28, 1992 noted that "particularly serious escalation took place in April-May 1991 when the Soviet Army, with the support of the Azerbaijani Interior Ministry's units, deported Armenians from many villages of the region. The deportation was carried out with extreme cruelty".

The events, which took place during the operation of Ring, were reflected in the documents of some international organizations, became a subject of hearings at the Human Rights Committee of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation and got the corresponding assessment in the resolutions of the European Parliament and the US Senate.

The Human Rights Center of Memorial Moscow Association stated gross violations of the basic human rights: "They grossly violated the right of every person to life, liberty, and security; they used tortures, carried out arbitrary arrests and detentions and committed numerous property offenses. The practice of people's deportation

acquired a mass character. Particularly cynical these violations were made by the fact that the mass violence against the civilians was committed by the law enforcement agencies. The responsibility for this rests with the top leadership of the Azerbaijani Republic, Azerbaijan's Interior Ministry and Committee for State Security (KGB), as well as with the leadership of the USSR Interior Ministry, Ministry of Defense and the Command of the USSR MIA Interior Troops. These crimes cast a shadow also on the top leadership of the USSR".

On May 1, 1991, the US Senate unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the crimes committed by the authorities of the USSR and Azerbaijan against the Armenian population. The resolution, in particular, condemned "the attacks on innocent men, women and children in Nagorno-Karabagh, in the adjacent Armenian settlements and in Armenia; the large-scale use of military force and firing of the unarmed population on the eastern

and southern borders of Armenia", as well as contained calls "to put an end to the blockades and other forms of force and the terror against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh".

On May 25, a draft statement on the situation in some regions of Armenia and Azerbaijan was submitted to the session of the Fourth Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) for consideration and was approved by the overwhelming majority of votes.

The statement, in particular, noted that "in accordance with the internationally accepted norms and conventions on human rights, the deportation of civilians must be immediately stopped, the hostages must be freed, and the suspects on cases of armed clashes must be transferred to the prosecution of the USSR Prosecutor's Office".

However, the crimes committed during the operation of Ring haven't got the proper political and legal assessment by the international community and their organizers and executors are still unpunished. This became a precedent for new military crimes and inhumane actions by Azerbaijan against the peaceful Armenian population.

The deported residents are still unable to return to their homes and they haven't received any reimbursement so far.

Unfortunately, we also have to state that the Armenian villages deported during the operation of Ring are not mentioned in any of the documents proposed by the international mediators for the Azerbaijani-Karabagh conflict settlement.

(This commentary was released by the NKR MFA Information Department and originally published in Hetq online.)

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

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

daytime telephone number.

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CHIEF OF STAFF FOR
THE PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

2012 AWARD OF EXCELLENCE RECIPIENTS



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