



Clarinetist Narek Arutyunian performs as Pops Conductor Keith Lockhart watches.

Armenian Teen Clarinetist Narek Arutyunian Dazzles at Armenian Night at Pops

BOSTON – Armenian clarinet prodigy Narek Arutyunian refused to become intimidated by one of the world's leading orchestras.

By Tom Vartabedian

The 19-year-old stood firm and tall at Boston's Symphony Hall and was embraced by a crowd attending the 61st annual rendition of Armenian Night at the Pops on June 8.

Of the 2,400 in attendance, some 450 were Armenians, looking forward to getting their first look at the rising star. He did not disappoint.

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Nalbandian: Armenia Wants to Put Mechanism In Place for Studying Border Incidents

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian said this week his country is ready to have the international community look at the border incident with Azerbaijan last week.

"Armenia has always stood for the creation of mechanisms of investigation of border incidents, and, unlike Azerbaijan, when we agree on something, we do not backtrack the following day," Nalbandian said at a joint press conference with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) chair-in-office, Ireland's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Eamon Gilmore.

"Elements of the establishment of mechanisms were included in the statements by the presidents of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan in March 2011 and January 2012 in Sochi. We respect those agreements and we are for the creation of the mechanisms," Nalbandian added.

Recently the Turkish foreign minister expressed his concerns about the loss of Azeri soldiers, and added also that despite the efforts exerted by the OSCE Minsk Group, the Armenian side is not yet reacting. Asked to comment, Nalbandian said: "The statement of the Turkish foreign min-

ister, according to which as if he mourns the loss of only the Azeri servicemen as a result of the latest incidents, sounds racist."

"We have never heard him being concerned about the killings of Armenian soldiers as a result of subversive acts from the Azeri side. While the international community

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Knesset to Mark Armenian Genocide Before Release of Flotilla Report

By Jonathan Lis

JERUSALEM, Israel (*Haaretz*) – On the eve of the publication of the state comptroller's report regarding the 2009 raid on an aid flotilla bound for the Gaza Strip, the Knesset (parliament) is expected to hold a public discussion about the genocide of the Armenian people, at the request of member of the Knesset Zahava Gal-On (Meretz).

Knesset Chairperson Reuven Rivlin decided to permit the debate for last week. The decision followed the Turkish decision to try senior Israeli officials in court for their involvement in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) raid on the Gaza-bound ship the Mavi Marmara – the debate would be held just one day before the publication of the state comptroller's report on the affair on Wednesday.

The Knesset marked the anniversary of the Genocide with its first discussion of the matter on Tuesday, and a second public discussion is being planned, to be held by one of the Knesset committees.

Throughout the years, the government and the Knesset have refrained from discussing the subject for fear of harming relations between Israel and Turkey.

Over the last three years, determination has developed to discuss the murder of roughly one and a half million Armenians by Turkey 97 years ago, mostly because of the deteriorating relations between Israel and Turkey.

This is not the first time the Knesset has mentioned the subject. Last December, the Knesset Education Committee held an open discussion of the matter, the first of its kind. A representative of the Foreign Ministry relayed the ministry's position. "This subject, given the current atmosphere, could deteriorate our ties with Turkey. Our relationship with Turkey is very fragile and sensitive right now, and we cannot cross the line – we must approach the subject intelligently. Such a decision could have very serious strategic consequences," said the representative.

Rivlin also commented during the discussion in December. "The subject doesn't come up in the Knesset because of events that take place between Israel and Turkey, nor because we are trying to take advantage of the political situation to get even. I first entered the Knesset in '88, and a year later we made a suggestion for a day

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Oskanian Placed Under 'Politically Motivated' Investigation

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Vartan Oskanian, a former foreign minister highly critical of Armenia's government, has been summoned to the National Security Service (NSS) for questioning in a criminal investigation, which he denounced as politically motivated last week.

In a written statement, Oskanian see INVESTIGATION, page 2



Vartan Oskanian

Director Holland to Participate in 'Golden Apricot' Film Fest

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Director Agnieszka Holland will be among the honorary guests of the ninth Golden Apricot's International Film Festival. Her 2011 film, "In Darkness," will be presented in the category of "Yerevan Premieres," according to the Golden Apricot press service. Holland will also be given the "Paradjanov Taler" Award for her outstanding contribution to the world of cinema.

"In Darkness" is a Holocaust drama about a group of Jews who survive by hiding in sewers for 14 months. In January, the film was selected as one of the five nominees for Best Foreign Language Film at the 84th Academy Awards.

Born on November 28, 1948 in Warsaw, she went to Czechoslovakia to study film directing at the Film and TV School of Performing Arts in Prague. She began her film career working in Poland with Krzysztof Zanussi as assistant director and Andrzej Wajda as her mentor.

She wrote several scripts with Wajda before directing her own films, which were soon winning awards at festivals and gaining fame as part of the Polish New Wave. Holland is best known in the United States for her Oscar-nominated "Angry Harvest," "Europa, Europa" and the Warner Brothers films, "Olivier, Olivier" and the "The Secret Garden."

In 1994, she directed "Red Wind" in the United States, a thriller for television produced by Sydney Pollack, which was aired on Arte in the series "Fallen Angels."

Armenian Chapel Registers as Historic Building in Sweden

STOCKHOLM, Sweden (PanARMENIAN.Net) – An Armenian chapel will register as Stockholm's 192nd historic building, reported the Union of Armenian Associations in Sweden.

No one knows for sure who built the chapel, but one possible candidate is Ohan Demirjian, a diplomat who was engaged in Stockholm's social life from the time he arrived here in the 1860s to deliver horses as a gift to King Charles XV from Egypt's monarch.

Demirjian received Överjärva courtyard as a summer place and hosted lavish parties there. The chapel has been used as a conservatory, chapel, Armenian chapel and an artist's studio, according to Dagens Nyheter.

"Armenians have for years expressed interest in the building and it was periodically used for holding divine services. We hope it will remain as an important symbolic building in the Swedish cultural heritage," the union said in a statement.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Appeals Court Rejects Blind Man's Suit to Take Diplomacy School Exam

YEREVAN (Hetq) – Armenia's Court of Appeals this week rejected the petition of a blind man seeking to have the state overturn a lower court ruling stating that he was not eligible to take an admission exam to the School of Diplomacy run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Artak Beglaryan, who lost his sight at a young age, had filed the appeal suit and was also seeking one dram as symbolic moral compensation.

Beglaryan said that he would file another suit with the courts against the School of Diplomacy.

A graduate of Yerevan State University's Faculty of International Relations, Beglaryan studied for a year in England after being denied the opportunity to take the admission exam to the school administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Conference in Yerevan Dedicated to Protection of National Minority Rights

YEREVAN (Radiolur) – As of 2001, minorities comprised 2.5 percent of the total population of the Republic of Armenia. Their number does not exceed 100,000.

Representatives of ethnic minorities and the government came together this week to discuss the framework convention on the protection of the rights of the national minorities, which identifies the positive trends and the existing problems.

The national minorities and most of the population are tolerant towards each other, the Public TV and Public Radio broadcast programs for the ethnic minorities, there are almost no problems in the field of education, including higher education, the convention noted.

"Discrimination against ethnic minorities should not be accepted and the special status of representatives of national minorities should be taken into consideration, as they are considered cut off from their land and face the danger of losing their identity, language and culture," said Vardan Atsatsryan, Department of National Minority and Religious Affairs head of the government staff.

Sargsian Lauds Pan-Armenian Charity

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – President Serge Sargsian during a ceremony lavished praise on a diaspora-funded pan-Armenian charity that has spent more than \$235 million on development projects in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh since its establishment 20 years ago.

Sargsian stressed the importance of those projects as he presided over a regular meeting in Yerevan of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund's Board of Trustees comprising top Armenian state officials, Catholicos Karekin II and prominent representatives of Armenian communities around the world.

"They have been so many and so diverse that we are only left to conclude that without the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund it is no longer possible to imagine the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh (Karabagh)," he said. "This is a jubilee that instills joy and confidence in us."

The funds raised by Hayastan in the last two decades have been used mostly for building about 500 kilometers of roads, hundreds of apartments and houses and dozens of schools, kindergartens and healthcare centers. Karabagh has absorbed most of that money largely collected in annual telethons broadcast from Los Angeles.

Ara Vartanian, who was reappointed by the board as Hayastan's executive director, said the charity will spend about \$20 million this year. He singled out the planned construction of "community centers" in an unspecified number of Armenian and Karabagh villages. "We will build centers in villages that will house village administrations, medical rooms, auditoriums, libraries and computer rooms," Vartanian told reporters.

Oskanian Placed under 'Politically Motivated' Investigation

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said the NSS has opened a criminal case on money laundering allegedly involving himself and the Civiltas Foundation, a Yerevan think-tank which he founded and headed until recently.

"I find it strange and astonishing that my work and the work of Civiltas can in any way be linked to money laundering or illegally acquired funds," he said. "Even more astonishing is that such a question is being raised at a time when I have entered politics."

"It is obvious to me that the criminal case that has been opened is politically motivated," he added.

The NSS, which is the Armenian successor agency to the Soviet KGB and normally deals with very serious criminal cases, confirmed the summons and the launch of criminal proceedings against Oskanian and Civiltas. But it declined to comment further.

Oskanian insisted that Civiltas's activities have always been transparent and legal. "Since its first days in 2008, the Civiltas Foundation's programs have been supported by the governments of the Netherlands and Poland, the foreign ministries of Norway and Germany, the international development organizations of Switzerland and the UK, the US Embassy in Yerevan, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Yerevan Office as well as other well-known organizations, corporations and individuals," he said. "This has been public information. The government agencies of the Republic of Armenia clearly could not have been ignorant about these relationships."

Civiltas's four-year activities have focused on the analysis of political and economic developments in and around Armenia as well as public discussions featuring politicians, intellectuals and other public figures. The think-tank also launched an Internet TV station targeting mainly young Armenians last September.

Among members of its Honorary Board are Canada's former Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, Israel's former Education Minister Yossi Sarid, Canadian-Armenian filmmaker Atom Egoyan, American-Armenian rock singer Serj Tankian and Turkish human rights activist Murat Belge.

Oskanian, who served as foreign minister in former President Robert Kocharian's administration from 1998-2008, resigned as Civiltas head earlier this year, shortly after announcing his return to the political arena and joining the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK). He has repeatedly criticized President Serge Sargsian's government's economic and other policies since then,

provoking angry reactions from some senior members of the president's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK).

A Syrian-born former US citizen, Oskanian was particularly critical of the government in the run-up to the May 6 parliamentary elections. He was instrumental in having the BHK, until now a member of the country's governing coalition, denounce the Armenian authorities' handling of the vote jointly with two major opposition forces. He also strongly backed the BHK's subsequent decision not to join a new government currently being formed by Sargsian.

The BHK is led by Gagik Tsarukian, a millionaire businessman believed to be close to Kocharian. This is why some Armenian analysts have linked Oskanian's membership of the BHK with the ex-president's alleged plans to stage a political comeback. The BHK's decision to quit the government has

only stoked that speculation.

According to an NSS statement, the criminal proceeding was launched relating to the sale of 100 percent shares of Huntsman Building Production JSC owned by the US-based Polymer Materials and Huntsman International corporations for \$2 million without documentation which could result in avoidance of payments of taxes, as well as the misuse of the sum of the transaction left in Armenia by the American party exceptionally for charity purposes. In particular, \$1,135,000 was transferred to the bank accounts of Civiltas' founder Oskanian and member of the Board of Trustees Tigran Karapetian.

The Civiltas Foundation, breaking its own statutes and rules, has submitted no financial report in 2011, including on the charity money allotted by Polymer Materials and Huntsman International corporations.

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condemns the bloody incidents and urges the sides to refrain from the use of force, these sort of Turkish statements in fact encourage Azerbaijanis' new subversive acts," Nalbandian stated.

"While Azerbaijan is not only not reacting, but is continuously rejecting the Minsk Group Co-Chairs' proposals on the withdrawal of snipers from the line of contact, the consolidation of ceasefire, the creation of investigation mechanisms of the violations of ceasefire, the Turkish side is attempting to shift this responsibility of the Azerbaijani side on to others. The Turkish side is pretending it is unaware of whose fault it is that a progress was not made in Kazan on reaching an agreement of the basic principles. Twenty years ago Armenia did not oppose Turkey's inclusion as a member of the Minsk Group, because some countries expected that Turkey would be unbiased and would have its input in the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The past 20 years showed that Turkey is not only biased, but through its stance harms the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement process. A question arises: is Turkey's such behavior compatible with its being a member of the Minsk Group?" Nalbandian concluded.

President Serge Sargsian last week blamed Azerbaijan for the latest swell in deadly violence in the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict zone and warned that the Armenian military will contin-

ue to take "tough" action against Azerbaijani "provocations."

"I have always said that provocations along the line of contact are extremely dangerous. I have also always said that they will get a tough response. The incidents of recent days also testify to that," he said, referring to fierce fighting that left at least five Azerbaijani and four Armenian soldiers dead.

"We do not want an escalation of the situation but will not leave any action against our citizens, state borders and Nagorno-Karabagh without a response," Sargsian said, in written remarks to the Panorama.am news service. "The Armenian Armed Forces have received a strict order to display restraint and vigilance and at the same time prevent and punish any provocation by the enemy."

Sargsian has warned previously that the Azerbaijani military will suffer a "final and devastating" blow if it attempts to forcibly regain control of Karabagh and other Armenian-controlled territories surrounding the disputed enclave.

Razmik Zohrabian, a deputy chairman of Sargsian's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK), echoed that warning on Thursday. "We do not favor war, we favor political solutions by means of negotiations," Zohrabian said. "But if, God forbid, there is war, we will ensure a final solution ... and they will suffer great losses in terms of both military and economic potential."

(RFE/RL contributed to this report.)

Armenian Pressure Group Sees Improved Road Policing

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Road safety in Armenia has improved even more this year thanks to the growing use of surveillance cameras by traffic police, a group defending drivers' rights said last week.

"By and large, there is now law and order," said Eduard Hovannisian, chairman of the Achilles non-governmental organization. "That law and order can be enhanced. But you can see that work is being done in that direction."

The first cameras designed to detect and punish traffic violations were installed on main streets and road intersections in Yerevan last January as part of a gradual introduction of a centralized road surveillance system. The Armenian government plans to have some 280 digital devices installed across the country by 2017. It says they will make road policing more objective

and efficient and complicate police corruption.

Until this year, the Armenian traffic police used only mobile radars and digital cameras placed in cars patrolling streets and highways. Officers are required to turn them on while on duty.

According to Hovannisian, traffic has become more orderly since January. In particular, Hovannisian said, police are now doing a much better job of properly documenting traffic violations with tickets handed to delinquent drivers on the spot or sent to them by mail.

"Whereas in the past there was virtually no [punitive] decision in which we couldn't find any violations, now it's all the way around," Hovannisian said.

The installation of cameras is part of a broader five-year plan to make Armenian roads safer, launched by the government in 2009. The plan's imple-

mentation began with a significant toughening of traffic fines and a crack-down on the widespread and longstanding non-use of safety belts.

Some of those fines have become even heftier with the entry into force on June 2 of amendments to Armenia's Code of Administrative Offense approved by the parliament earlier this year.

Hovannisian criticized the measure, saying that the existing financial penalties are already strict enough. "Nothing will change. There will just be more complaints and lawsuits," he said, adding that the police are mainly concerned with collecting additional revenue partly used for rewarding police officers.

Norik Sargsian, a senior police official, denied that. "Our job is not to raise our extra-budgetary funds but to ensure



INTERNATIONAL

Principal Receives Award for Bringing New Technologies To AGBU's Alex Manoogian School in Montreal

MONTREAL — Sebastien Stasse, the principal of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Alex Manoogian School in Montreal, has received a high honor for his dynamic leadership and years of dedication to harnessing new technologies to improve education. The prize, the honors certificate in computer applications in Teaching Award, was bestowed by the group AQUOPS, a nonprofit organization and authority on technology and education, at their annual symposium in Quebec on April 3.

The award acknowledges Stasse's more than 17 years of commitment to incorporating cutting-edge technologies into the AGBU Alex Manoogian School's curriculum, first as a primary school instructor and since last year, as the school's principal. Under Stasse's guidance, the school has fulfilled its charter to promote the use of mobile devices for educational purposes, setting it apart from the vast majority of Quebec's institutions. Drawing from more than a decade of experience as an educational trainer and consultant in



Youth at AGBU Alex Manoogian School gather around new laptops and iPads, which are in use 95 percent of the day to enhance studies.

laptops. Those tools are in use 95 percent of the school day, fully engaging students who are proficient in software tools for design, programming, word processing and multimedia, all of which enhance their studies.

Stasse was selected for the honors certificate by the AQUOPS Congress, a committee representing experts in the information technology field who encourage the use of computers and telecommunications among youth and young adults across Quebec. When presenting Stasse with the award, the members of AQUOPS Congress highlighted not only his efforts to bring the AGBU Alex Manoogian School to the forefront of technology, but to change the landscape of education from Quebec to British Columbia through his many lectures and trainings, which mobilize teachers and education companies. As Stasse commented after receiving the award, "I am honored to be recognized by my colleagues at AQUOPS, who have made many contributions to our profession, and who continuously inspire my work. I am grateful that I have been able to combine my two passions, information technology and teaching, and look forward to many more years of pursuing both to help raise the bar for education in our community."

In the years to come, Stasse's vision is sure to help the AGBU Alex Manoogian School maintain its tradition of academic excellence. Established in 1970 in Montreal to meet the needs of the city's growing Armenian Diaspora community following waves of immigration from the

Middle East throughout the 1960's, the school enrolled 12 students in its first year. Today, that number has grown to more than 300 students, all of whom are benefiting from its pioneering programs while learning about their cultural heritage.

To learn more about the Alex Manoogian School, visit web.alex-manoogian.qc.ca/wordpress/.

Turkey's Erdogan Slams Israel over 'Open-Air Prison' In Gaza

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan last week used his keynote address at a regional World Economic Forum meeting to slam Israel over conditions in the Gaza Strip.

"People are being jailed in the world's largest open-air prison," Erdogan said, referring to Israel's nearly six-year-old blockade of Gaza, one of the issues that has led to a crumbling of ties between onetime allies.

In 2009, Erdogan provoked a spat with Israeli President Shimon Peres and stormed out of an annual World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting in Davos, Switzerland, after accusing Israel of "murdering innocents by air strikes."

A staunch supporter of a sovereign Palestinian state, Erdogan on Tuesday also called on business people to channel investment to impoverished parts of the world, including the occupied Palestinian territories.

Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas, who took the stage after Erdogan, urged the world to address the deadlocked peace process between Israel and the Palestinians to bring stability to the volatile region.

"The ongoing Israeli occupation does not allow an economic cycle to occur in our lands. ... horizons for investment are elusive in Palestine," Abbas said, speaking in Arabic.

More than 1,000 business and government representatives are attending the two-day WEF meeting for the Middle Eastern, North African and Eurasian region.

The focus this year is on investment opportunities in Arab Spring countries, where unemployment is considered one of the main drivers of the popular uprisings that began in early 2011.

The forum continued Wednesday with sessions on social transition in the region, meeting growth and employment challenges and local governance.



Sebastien Stasse, principal of the AGBU Alex Manoogian School in Montreal, holds the honors certificate in Computer Applications in Teaching Award, conferred to him by the organization AQUOPS.

education technology certified by Apple, Inc., Stasse helped spearhead the school's innovative One iPad Per Student Initiative, which has ensured that every eighth-grade pupil has access to their own personal device in the classroom. At the same time, he played a vital role in promoting the school's acquisition of 20 iPads and 35

Knesset to Mark Armenian Genocide, Day before Release of Flotilla Report

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concerning the Armenian tragedy. We were prevented from speaking about it as a 'holocaust,' though we most definitely felt that as humans, as Jews, as citizens of Israel that aren't Jews, we must bring this subject up, and flood the public with the questions that arise, because we are obligated to prevent denial of the tragedy," said Rivlin.

"We are standing in front of all the peoples of the world, and saying that denial of a holocaust is something that Humanity cannot agree with. We didn't come to discuss something political, rather moral," continued Rivlin.

Meretz Chairperson Gal-On, who initiated the discussion set to take place, said, "this is an exciting moment, in my opinion, that the Education Committee is holding an open discussion, with a great deal of participation. For years, Israel always considered relations with

Turkey. That is the central issue in terms of recognition of the murder of the Armenian people, which has yet to take place in Israel's Knesset."

"Unfortunately, relations with Turkey are very tense, and I think that it is in our interest not to make them worse. Israel's government must advance relations regardless of the Armenian issue; it is a historic and moral obligation," said Gal-On.

Kadima MK Otniel Schneller, also among the upcoming discussion's sponsors, was the only one who expressed outright opposition to an official recognition by Israel of the Armenian genocide in December. "We cannot disconnect the discussion from the fact that we must rehabilitate our ties with Turkey — it's an existential necessity," he said. "We need to fit in the Middle East even if it is difficult," said Schneller, in December.

International News

Aronian Suffers First Defeat at Tal Memorial

MOSCOW (ArmeniaNow) — Grandmaster Levon Aronian on Sunday lost to a much lower-ranked British player, Luke McShane, in round three of the continuing Mikhail Tal Memorial tournament in Moscow.

The defeat dropped Aronian to the middle of the 10-man standings, with one-and-one-half points after three days of play.

In the first two rounds of the tournament, Aronian first beat Hikaru Nakamura from the United States and then tied with Russian Evgeny Tomashevsky.

In the next round of the Tal Memorial, which was on Tuesday, Aronian was due to play against Vladimir Kramnik of Russia, who was in third place with two points, half a point behind the joint leaders Teimour Radjabov (Azerbaijan) and Alexander Morozevich (Russia).

Aronian, who is currently number two on the World Chess Federation (FIDE) Top Player list, is taking on the current number one Magnus Carlsen (Norway) in round six of the Tal Memorial. The game in which Aronian would play with black pieces was on June 14.

The Armenian is said to be catching up with Carlsen rating-wise and his successful play may land him his first top FIDE rating when it is updated on July 1. The Tal Memorial finishes on June 19.

Armenia Has Applied for Observer Status at Shanghai Coop Group

SHANGHAI (Arminfo) — Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is considering granting Armenia and Sri Lanka the status of observer, said Kirill Barsky, the Russian president's Special Representative for the SCO.

Russian media quoted Barsky as saying that Sri Lanka, who is the SCO's dialogue partner, and Armenia have applied for the status of observer. The applications are being considered.

Barsky says that some other countries are also interested in the SCO membership.

The members of SCO are Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, while among the observers are Mongolia, India, Iran and Pakistan.

No 'Silver Bullet' for Situation in Syria: US

WASHINGTON (AFP) — US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said there is "no silver bullet" to fix what he called a tragic, complex situation in Syria, but renewed calls for the regime to relinquish power.

Speaking to members of the American-Turkish Council, Panetta said President Bashar al-Assad's forces had perpetrated "outrageous violence."

"From every angle the situation in Syria is enormously complex and tragic. There is no silver bullet," said Panetta, according to a prepared text of his speech.

His remarks suggested he and President Barack Obama's administration remained reluctant to back military intervention in Syria.

Panetta said Washington "will continue to work together with Turkey and the international community to bring pressure on Assad to step down, to bring about an orderly political transition in Damascus, and to bring an end to the Syrian people's suffering."

The Pentagon chief also urged Turkey and Israel to restore strained ties.

"I believe it is very important for Turkey and Israel to find a way to come together and repair their relationship," he said. "Turkey and Israel have a long history of defense cooperation that has advanced both Turkish and Israeli security and broader regional stability. There is much to gain through cooperation and much to lose in its absence," he said.

Tensions between Turkey and Israel spiked after an incident in which a number of Turks were killed when Israeli commandos stormed an aid ship seeking to break the blockade on Gaza.



Community News

ABA Annual Meeting Renews Commitment to Rule of Law Initiatives, Elects New Executive Leadership

GLENDALE — On the weekend of May 18-20, the Armenian Bar Association (ABA) hosted its 23rd Annual Meeting at the Glendale Hilton. The weekend was highlighted by the presentation of the coveted Hrant Dink Freedom of Speech Award to Edik Baghdasaryan, editor-in-chief of Hetq.am, a forum for investigative reporting of issues dealing with democracy and justice in Armenia.

The weekend also included the election and swearing in ceremony of the association's Board of Governors. Criminal defense attorney Garo B. Ghazarian of Glendale was selected by unanimous vote by the entire board as the association's new chairman. In addition to his federal and state litigation-based law practice, Ghazarian also serves as dean of the People's College of Law in Los Angeles and as a civil service commissioner for the City of Glendale. Among numerous television and radio appearances as an expert legal commentator, Ghazarian has been interviewed on "Larry King Live" and shared his expertise with Jane Vellez-Mitchell on her program concerning current legal issues.

"I am humbled and very honored for the opportunity to serve as chair of the Armenian Bar Association and I pledge to continue to fulfill the vision of Raffi K. Hovannisian, the founder of our organization, in assisting those in need, of helping to establish the rule of law in Armenia and protecting the legal rights of



Los Angeles City Attorney Carmen Trutanich bestows acclaim on newly-elected Armenian Bar Association Chairperson Garo Ghazarian.

Armenians everywhere," said Ghazarian at a sold-out gala banquet held on May 19, at the Armenian Society of Los Angeles Banquet Hall.

Ghazarian expressed further gratitude when he stated, "I wish to thank immediate Past Chair Edvin Minassian for his exemplary and tireless service of the last two years, with whom I was honored to serve as vice chair of the bar the last two terms and whose insight and wisdom I will continue to seek and employ." Ghazarian also noted the continued service on the Board of Governors of Minassian's predecessor, Sonya Nersessian, and vowed to build upon the legacy of these two exceptional past chairs and their service to the bar and the Armenian communities of the world and to Armenia these past four years. Ghazarian concluded his remarks by stating that, "each of the 17 board members is capable of leading the Armenian Bar, and though I may be the face of the bar during my tenure as chair, the leaders of the bar remain, as they always have been, each one of my fellow colleagues and friends on the Board of Governors."

Joining Ghazarian on the Executive Committee of the board are: Vice Chair (West see ARMENBAR, page 6



Delegates at the ACYOA General Assembly worked in small groups to brainstorm new ideas.

ACYOA General Assembly And Sports Weekend Held in Chicago

CHICAGO — Young Armenian-Americans from across the Eastern Diocese gathered in Chicago for the 66th annual Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) General Assembly, where they held elections for the ACYOA Central Council and brainstormed ways to intensify the activity at the annual gathering of youth leaders.

The two-day meeting was held May 24-25 at the Hotel Sax. The General Assembly was followed by the annual Sports Weekend activities, May 25-28.

By Armen Terjimanian

Eighty delegates and observers from 23 parishes, including 13 clergy, participated in this year's General Assembly. Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), presided. Sam Mroczka from the host community in Chicago chaired the meeting; Karen Tonoyan of St. Leon Church of Fair Lawn, NJ, served as vice chair.

Barsamian addressed the delegates about the mission of the ACYOA and asked them to look inward to "gain a fresh perspective" on why they have chosen to serve the church through the youth organization.

"We've chosen to be part of the ACYOA of our own free will," said the Primate. "What led us to make this free choice? I think everyone will have a personal story of inspiration or motivation."

The Primate expressed the importance of "coming back to Christ" through forgiveness and prayer and following in his footsteps. He said the values of humility, outreach without discrimination, sacrifice and forgiveness are keys to following in Christ's footsteps and to realizing the mission of the ACYOA.

During the meeting, delegates discussed in small groups ways to enhance see ACYOA, page 7



Members of the new ACYOA Central Council with Archbishop Barsamian and Executive Secretary Nancy Basmajian (back row, left).

Crash Course in Armenia's Political System

NEW YORK — Eager to hear a firsthand account of the May 6 parliamentary elections in Armenia, more than 100 Armenian-Americans gathered at St. Leon Armenian Church in Fairlawn, NJ for part three of the Truth or Consequences series, "Challenges to Fair Elections and Democracy Building in Armenia."

Attendees received a two-hour mini course in election politics Armenia-style, courtesy of guest speaker Alex Sardar, chief of the Party of Counterpart International in Armenia.

This USAID-funded organization, with its in-country staff of more than 35 people and \$15 million budget over four years, has gone a long way in helping local groups pursue democracy-building missions and civil society strengthening activities in the homeland. Sardar has been on the frontlines of these efforts for nearly a decade. Born in Iran and raised in both Germany and the United States, his global perspective serves him well in relating to both Armenian-Americans and native-born Armenians.

In a departure from the panel format of the first two forums, Sardar engaged the audience for two hours straight. This turned out to be a highly interactive and productive exchange. Audience members enthusiastically participated in a candid conversation about Armenia's brand of politics. All told, the dialogue revealed that, when it comes to Armenia's political landscape, nuance and intrigue still rule the day. But the hope of tomorrow is in a politically-energized youth.

"This was a rare opportunity for the audience to dig deep into the subject of democracy-building in Armenia," remarked the evening's host, Dr. Kim Hekimian. She had her own war story to share from as far back as 1996, when serving as an election observer in Armenia under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

During her introductory remarks, Hekimian described various voting irregularities that took place during former president Levon Ter-Petrosian's bid for a second term. She mentioned some of the subtle ways that fraud could occur. She also recounted how she happened to find herself near a riot that broke out after the election results were announced. Some protesters crying foul play had stormed the parliament building. Suddenly the sound of military water canons and guns fired in the air were heard. She expressed how surreal it felt to be "running away from my own people."

She described the experience as a "defining moment" in her 20-year relationship with the Armenian homeland. She expressed how this "formative" episode nevertheless inspired her to remain committed to staying involved. As an adjunct professor in public health at the American University in Armenia as well as her involvement with nutrition programs that have successfully decreased Armenia's infant mortality rates, Hekimian visits Armenia frequently enough to keep a pulse on its progress.

Over the years, she became well acquainted with the work of Counterpart International and was instrumental in bringing her good friend Sardar to New Jersey to share his vast knowledge in democracy building and economic development with an eager, multi-generational audience.

She concluded her remarks by thanking the co-sponsors responsible for making the evening possible: The Armenian Bar Association; Armenian Engineers' and Scientists' Association (AESA) of New York/New Jersey; Armenian Human Rights Advocates; Armenian National Committee of New Jersey (ANC); Armenian Society of Columbia University; Knights of Vartan; National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR); New York Armenian Students Association and the Tufenkian Foundation.

Election Starts off with Hope

As Sardar vividly described it, May 6 was a very different election day than previous ones in see POLITICS, page 5



COMMUNITY NEWS

President Sargisian Awards Medal to Jack Medzorian

YEREVAN — President Serge Sargisian recently awarded the Movses Khorenatsi medal to Jack Medzorian of Winchester, Mass. This medal is bestowed upon individuals who have demonstrated a long-standing and sustained commitment to the development of Armenia in its cultural, educational and humanitarian spheres. At this ceremony, Medzorian was the only US citizen in the ceremony to receive the Khorenatsi medal.

Since their first visit to Armenia 40 years ago, Medzorian has returned to Armenia more than 50 times with his wife, Eva, following up on humanitar-

ian, educational, medical and cultural projects, implemented privately and through the Cambridge Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) and the Knights and Daughters of Vartan. Highlights of his accomplishments include the co-founding of the Armenia school aid program, now the flagship Armenia aid project of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, that has assisted in the renovation and building of more than 200 schools in Armenia; 10 youth exchanges/school partnerships; 19 three-week professional develop-



President Serge Sargisian, left, presents the Movses Khorenatsi Medal to Jack Medzorian.

ment training programs in the US for Armenia's professionals from a range of specialties; numerous programs in Armenia with alumni to implement new ideas learned from their US training programs; shipments of 40-foot containers of medical aid to needy hospitals in Armenia, especially in remote villages and numerous other humanitarian and educational aid projects.

Jack and Eva (Ahigian) Medzorian have been married for 57 years. They have four children and five grandchildren.

Crash Course in Armenia's Political System

POLITICS, from page 5

Armenia. For the first time, the citizenry was "palpably excited" about getting up to vote. "You could feel the energy on the street," he added.

He attributed this change in attitude to the weeks leading up to the election in which many non-profit groups, including his own, launched proactive get-out-the-vote campaigns throughout the districts. The political parties also supported voter-turnout efforts via the media and local networks.

Sardar further explained how the outside election observer system factored into the spirited mood of the day. Representatives from the UN, the OSCE, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) nations plus 20,000 domestic observers were dispersed throughout the 2,000 polling stations all across Armenia.

In view of the last presidential election of 2008, which resulted in bloodshed and a backlash in international circles, it behooved the Armenian government to cooperate. Everyone was well aware that Armenia had to answer to its obligations and meet the targets set by the international community. Otherwise, it would slip even further into isolation, which, given its national security issues, would be most unwise.

On another positive note, he pointed out that, in this fifth national election cycle since independence, more females ran for office than ever before. Twelve ran as single-mandate candidates (which make up the 41 seats in parliament versus the 90 party-listed seats). Two single-mandate women were elected and 12 more made it from the party lists.

Finally, there was a "healthy" tension between the major contenders — the Republican Party, Rule of Law Party and Prosperous Armenia Party. This gave the people a sense that they had a choice instead of the usual one-party elections of the Soviet period.

Despite the upbeat mood when the voting stations opened across Armenia, Sardar reported that a number of challenges emerged. Many were repetitions of past elections while some were new tactics that marked a step back. Most egregious among them was the blatant bribery used to lock up votes. Since most of the candidates running for office are monopolists and oligarchs, they also have the resources by which to secure votes for themselves or their parties. This occurs in the form of hard cash bribes or special favors, from

doling out jobs to fixing a broken elevator.

He described how the "national discourse" on the subject of bribery was "very sad" as it spoke to a level of cynicism that existed alongside the enthusiasm. He recalled overhearing voters discussing which of the candidates or parties had the best offer in winning their vote.

To make matters worse, the sense of being watched — a holdover from the Soviet era — led voters to believe that their individual vote was being monitored and there would be repercussions for failing to vote as promised. Bribery as an acceptable topic of national conversation reflects a shameless opportunism that permeates the electorate — especially among the financially vulnerable in districts outside of Yerevan.

He explained why so many candidates are from the business class. Simply put, as a member of parliament, one is automatically granted legal immunity. With so much at stake for these oligarchs, legal immunity gives corruption a free pass. This information came as very upsetting news to the St. Leon audience.

Sardar also described more nuanced ways in which the ruling party maintains "a leg up on the competition." Notable examples include greater media visibility, e.g. President Serge Sargisian's son-in-law is widely known to own a major TV station, and cooperation from municipal leaders to post only the ruling party's campaign materials in public venues. It also extends to publicly-run institutions. Public employees are allowed to engage in partisan activities while on the job. Their managers are led to understand that their own jobs are on the line if they do not get their rank and file behind the ruling party.

Various covert abuses continue at the ballot box. This year, noted Sardar, there were between 70,000 and 300,000 inaccuracies estimated in the voter rolls. Names of the deceased and names of those who had long left the country can be used to add ballots. And with passports as the only form of voter ID, counterfeiting is a business in itself. When in the interests of the neighborhood electoral commission leaders, these false documents can easily pass inspection.

Cleaning up voter registration and voter lists is a major challenge in Armenia; one that Counterpart International has supported. It has recruited volunteers to do the painstaking work of going door to door in towns and villages



Mia Dalbis

5-Year-Old Teams up with Share-A-Pair and Paros To Deliver Winter Boots to Armenia's Children

WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP, Mich. — A Barbie, a new shiny bike or perhaps even a puppy — these are gifts one would expect a 4-year-old to be thinking about for her fifth birthday. Not Mia Dalbis; for her birthday, all she wanted of her friends and family was to come to her party and for each to bring a new pair of winter boots for needy children in Armenia.

"I saw a little girl on TV that decided to deliver boots to an orphanage. I thought maybe I could do that because we both have lots of stuff already," said Mia Dalbis.

Her mother, Debbie Dalbis, contacted the Detroit Chapter of Share-a-Pair, a project of the Paros Foundation to see if Mia Dalbis' wish could be fulfilled and the boots that she was aiming to collect actually get onto the feet of needy children in Armenia. On May 19, family and friends gathered to celebrate Mia's 5th birthday. The net result is this special girl's wish came true. This winter, almost 200 children will have warm and dry feet thanks to her selflessness, her mom's commitment to her community and the generosity of her family and friends.

"Mia is an incredible little girl and with the support of her family, has done an incredible thing," said Peter Abajian, executive director of the Paros Foundation. "We will ship these new boots to Armenia and distribute them to vulnerable children this fall so they can wear the boots this winter."

Share-a-Pair has distributed more than 12,600 pairs of shoes to vulnerable children in Armenia. Distributions will continue through the month of July during a regional distribution campaign, during which an additional 12,200 pair will put on the feet of children in need. Share-a-pair was started in 2010 with a fixed goal of collecting and distributing 1,000 pairs for Armenia's children. It has since met the initial goal and has grown into a substantial humanitarian effort.

Formally launched in 2006, the Paros Foundation's goal is to develop high-quality, high-integrity non-governmental organizations in Armenia by providing guidance and needed resources. This includes providing inspiring office space, free of charge, to three of the six organizations the foundation works with in Armenia.

To honor the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, the Paros Foundation launched the Paros 100 for 100 Projects for Prosperity Program to implement 100 special projects, to help improve the lives of Armenian people. For more information visit www.paros-foundation.org/paros100.

throughout Armenia to check names of residents against passport-generated lists — tantamount to taking a census.

The issues of national security and national survival figure largely in any candid discussion about Armenia. One truth always emerges as self-evident: the alarming rate of depopulation and whether Armenia has the luxury of time to reverse it. Such a truth also demands weighing the consequences of allowing election abuses, human rights abuses, lack of rule of law and entrenched corruption to work themselves out over time, as some still suggest is possible.

Game Changers for Reform

In concluding his talk, Sardar maintained that the silver lining was in Armenia's activist youth. This phenomenon, along with the opportunities of an interconnected digital world, could step up the change so urgently needed. He also stressed that positive change is more feasible if the diaspora is there to partner with the locals, one issue and one project at a time. He noted that, by supporting small youth-led groups in Armenia, even small investments of a few hundred dollars could yield large dividends.

He cited the recent Mashdots Park crisis as a case in point. Apparently, a few enterprising individuals in Los Angeles had organized a public event, charging a nominal \$5 admission, in support of young activists protesting the closing of the park to make way for a merchant mall. During the event, Armenian-Americans were able to dialogue in real time with activist leaders via Skype. By evening's end, \$700 was raised to purchase provisions that would sustain the protesters dur-

ing their 24/7 occupation over four months. This included bullhorns, tents, hardhats and other outdoor survival gear. Finally Sargisian conceded to the activists and ordered the barricades removed and the park reopened.

Sardar went on to say that an infrastructure must be put in place to connect the local community organizations in Armenia with diasporans. In June, Counterpart International will issue its database of projects that it will support, thanks to American taxpayer dollars. Yet, he noted, there are many worthy projects beyond the scope of the USAID mission that could benefit from outside funding. The diaspora would be ideally suited to fill this vacuum.

"But it's not only about money," he cautioned. "The diaspora needs to get involved personally." He added that we must work with our counterparts in Armenia as their partners, not as their superiors.

Sardar concluded by saying, "Dialogues like this will not only go to helping people live better but also how to govern." Then he urged the audience to "make sure that our national ideals are the basis of everything. And keep sharing your ideas for projects."

To help get ideas for projects percolating, Sardar agreed to meet the next morning with representatives from the co-sponsors of the series as well as individuals active in the community. Together, they identified areas in which co-sponsors' missions and community-based local projects presented opportunities for partnership. The participants agreed to continue collaborating to identify projects modest enough in size, cost and scope to see results sooner than later.



COMMUNITY NEWS

ABA Annual Meeting Renews Commitment to Rule of Law Initiatives, Elects New Executive Leadership

ARMENBAR, from page 4

Coast) Armen K. Hovannisian of Los Angeles, Vice Chair (East Coast) Harry Dickranian of Montreal, Canada, Treasurer Sara Bedirian of Beverly Hills and Secretary Hovanes Margarian of Sherman Oaks. Minassian will continue to serve the Executive Committee of the board as its chair ex-officio.

The general membership in attendance at the conference also filled five vacancies on the board by voting in favor of the following long-standing members: Judge Amy Hoogasian (US Immigration Judge, San Francisco), Assistant United States Attorney John Lulejian (Los Angeles), Margarian (Sherman Oaks), Sonya

Nersessian (Boston) and Saro Kerkonian (Glendale). The remaining current members of the board Christine Engustian (Providence), Michael Amerian (Los Angeles), Robert Cannuscio (Philadelphia), Gary Moomjian (New York), Katherine Ossian (Detroit) and Laura Karabulut (Toronto), joined Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Zaven Sinanian on the banquet podium where Sinanian administered their oaths of office. Vicken I. Simonian also serves on the Board of Governors in his capacity as chairman emeritus.

The weekend conference also featured presentations concerning civil, environmental and human rights issues in the Republic of



Walter Karabian (center) receives honorary membership from the Armenian Bar Association's (from left) Harry Dikranian, Michael Amerian, Edvin Minassian and Garo Ghazarian.



Edvin Minassian, two-term chairperson of the Armenian Bar Association (center), receives highest honors from Garo Ghazarian, ABA's newly-elected chairperson, and treasurer Sara Bedirian.



ABA banquet keynote speaker Eric Garcetti (third from left) and the ABA's "Hrant Dink Freedom of Speech Award" recipient Edik Baghdasaryan (fourth from left) flanked by (from left) Judge Zaven Sinanian, David Balabanian, Garo Ghazarian, Edvin Minassian, Sonya Nersessian, Armen K. Hovannisian, Gary Moomjian, Robert Cannuscio and Harry Dikranian

Armenia, moderated by Antranig Kasbarian of the Tufenkian Foundation and included Baghdasaryan of Hetq.am, Ursula Kazarian, founder and president of Armenian Environmental Network, and Sara Anjargolian, an attorney and documentarian from Los Angeles, who has spent many years in Armenia advocating for the advancement of civil and human rights.

Walter Karabian, one of the founding members of the Armenian Bar Association and the youngest speaker in the history of the California State Assembly, was honored by the association as an Honorary Life Member.

The afternoon sessions of the conference saw one of America's most prominent attorneys, David M. Balabanian of Bingham, McCutcheon, and Kate Nahabetian, an attorney with the Armenian National Committee in Washington, DC, discuss the history and potential implications of the United States Court of Appeal's Genocide-related decision in the case of *Movsesian v. Versicherung*.

Harut Sassounian, the editor-in-chief of the *California Courier*, whose columns are reprinted in more than 200 newspapers, jour-

nals and periodicals worldwide, presented his dynamic proposal on the formation of a democratically-elected representative body that would be a cross-section of every aspect of Diasporan Armenian society, organizations and religion. The elected body would then make decisions and represent the interests of the entire diaspora before international political and legal forums, such as the United Nations and the World Court.

The final panel of the day provided a personal, insightful look at the recent parliamentary elections that took place in the Republic of Armenia on May 6. The panel featured Baghdasaryan and Ghazarian and took a critical look at Armenia's electoral process and noted irregularities that continue to persist, recognized some improvements over previous elections and suggested remedies which would possibly bring about positive change in the areas of the electoral process, which fail to meet international and local norms for free and fair elections.

On May 19, with Bedirian serving as the mistress of ceremonies, nearly 300 members, guests and family were treated to keynote speeches from Eric Garcetti, current member and former president of the Los Angeles City Council, Carmen Trutanich, the city attorney for the City of Los Angeles, and the Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Hovnan Derderian and Archbishop of the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Moushegh Mardirossian. Association members were also recognized for their pro bono efforts during the year.

The weekend closed with a meeting of the Board of Governors, on Sunday, May 20, where the association's goals and agenda were set and plans were made for the Association's Mid-Year meeting in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, the weekend of October 19-21.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly Welcomes Summer Interns to DC

WASHINGTON — Thirteen Armenian-American college students, including two from Armenia, are taking part in the Terjenian-Thomas Assembly Internship Program in Washington, reported the Armenian Assembly of America.

The start of the 2012 intern class marks the 35th anniversary of the program. Since its inception in 1977, well over 900 young Armenians have benefited from this unique experience in the nation's capital. This year's students hail from coast to coast and are pursuing degrees in political science, history, linguistics and economics, among other majors. For the next eight weeks, they will intern in a variety of Washington, DC, placements, including the offices of Representatives Jackie Speier (D-CA) and Edward Markey (D-MA), the Armenian Embassy, the Armenian-American Wellness Center, Voice of America and the Central and the Eastern European Coalition. In addition to the actual internship, students will also take part in a series of cultural, social and educational activities.

This week the Assembly launched its Summer Intern Lecture Series with presentations by Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, legate of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern Diocese), the Assembly's executive director, Bryan Ardouny, as well as Dr. Rouben Adalian, director of the Armenian National Institute (ANI). Ardouny provided students with an overview of the Assembly's history and its advocacy work as well as current issues before Congress and the administration. Aykazian



Summer interns meet with Archbishop Vicken Aykazian (center).

discussed his ecumenical role with the Armenian Church and involvement with the National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches. Adalian discussed multiple aspects of the Armenian Genocide and ANI's ongoing research. Afterwards, students had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues in more depth.

"We welcome this year's incoming class, which marks an important milestone for the program," said Assembly

Internship Program Director Joseph Piatt, who spearheads this year's summer program and who is an alumnus himself. "These students possess an abundance of talent, ambition and enthusiasm and we encourage them to take advantage of this unique internship opportunity."

Matthew Andonian, a junior at the University of Michigan, said he is learning a great deal about the political process through his internship with Speier. "Attending events, briefings and panel discussions are just a few of the many responsibilities that I have. It is clear that this experience will be a tremendous benefit for my personal and professional growth."

The Terjenian-Thomas Assembly Internship Program was made possible by the Memorial Fund established through Aram Terjenian, Annie Thomas and Florence Terjenian of Belmont, Mass. Additional support comes from the Richard Tufenkian Memorial Fund, the John Hanessian Scholarship Fund, the Armen Astarjian Scholarship Fund, the Ohanian Memorial Fund, James and Connie Melikian and the Knights of Vartan.

ACYOA General Assembly and Sports Weekend Held in Chicago

ACYOA, from page 4

Christian participation during the annual Sports Weekend, with various ideas presented to the assembly after the discussion.

Delegates also elected two members to the ACYOA Central Council: Ani Grigorian of St. Mesrob Church of Racine, Wis., and Jonathan Pelaez of St. Mary Church of Livingston, NJ. Delegates re-elected a third member: Armen Terjimanian of St. Mary Church of Washington, DC.

The new Central Council was installed and blessed by the Primate following the Divine Liturgy held at the Hotel Sax on Sunday, May 27.

The ACYOA Central Council for the coming year will include chair Danny Mantis (St. Mesrob Church, Racine, Wis.), Vice Chair Karen Dardarian (St. John Church, Southfield, Mich.), public relations coordinator Terjimanian, programming coordinator Olivia Derderian (St. Gregory Church, White Plains, NY), special projects coordinator Adrienne Ashbahian (St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Church, Wynnewood, Penn.), treasurer Jonathan Pelaez, and secretary Ani Grigorian.

James Kalustian, a member of the Diocesan Council and president of the Armenian Heritage Foundation, gave a presentation on Boston's newly-dedicated Armenian Heritage Park. The park, which was opened on May 22, commemorates the victims of the Armenian Genocide while celebrating the contributions of Armenian-Americans and other immigrant groups to the city and state.

Kalustian spoke about the dedication ceremony and gave an overview of the park's history. Armenian Heritage Park is a project of the non-profit Armenian Heritage Foundation, involving 38 Armenian parishes and organizations in Massachusetts.

During the annual Primate's Luncheon on Friday, May 25, the Rev. Krikor Sabounjian, pastor of Holy Translators Church of Framingham, Mass., was presented with the "Fr. Haigazoun Melkonian Award," in honor of his leadership and dedication to the youth of the Armenian Church. Sabounjian served as

the first full-time youth director at St. James Church in Watertown, Mass., in the 1980s.

Additional awards were presented on the floor of the General Assembly. Mike Givelekian of St. Gregory Church of White Plains, N.Y., received the "Gregory Arpajian Award" for his leadership and service to the Armenian Church and community.

Ani Grigorian received the "Sam Nersessian Award," given to individuals who display the Christian values of love, patience, humility and understanding.

"The Chapter A Award," given to the chapter

that best fulfills the requirements of an ACYOA chapter, went to the St. Mesrob Church of Racine, Wis.

The "Fr. Haroutiun and Yn. Patricia Dagley Award," given to a layperson for continued devotion to the youth of the church, was awarded to Dr. Sam Mikaelian, the Diocese's development coordinator.

The General Assembly and Sports Weekend were hosted by the ACYOA Seniors Chapter from St. Gregory the Illuminator Church of Chicago, with assistance from the ACYOA chapters of St. James Church in Evanston, Ill., and

Sts. Joachim and Anne Church of Palos Heights, Ill. Sam Mrofcza and Shant Paklaian of St. Gregory the Illuminator Church led the Sports Weekend committee as co-chairs.

In addition to Sabounjian and Kalustian, Diocesan Council members the Very Rev. Aren Jebejian, Fr. Vasken Kouzouian, Fr. Arakel Aljalian, Lisa Esayan, Paul Mardoian and Oscar Tatossian attended the assembly proceedings.

Next year's General Assembly and Sports Weekend will be hosted by the ACYOA of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church of Providence, RI.



Delegates and clergy attending the 66th annual ACYOA General Assembly pose for a group photo.



New York METRO

A Look Back at AJA History

By Garpis Kazanjian

NEW YORK – Following the initial successful Armenian Jewelers Assembly (AJA) held in September 1997, in Yerevan, a group of Armenian jewelers from around the globe met in January 1998, in Milan, and later in Basel, Switzerland, in April 1998, to plan the official launch of the organization, the elections of board members and the president.

AJA was officially formed in Yerevan, in 1998, at the initiative of Armenian and diasporan jewelers and under the patronage of the government of Armenia. On record, during the first meeting, is the first message from the Armenian Embassy in Washington, DC, which says, “Since Soviet times, jewelry manufacturing, diamond cutting and gold production have been among the most successful sectors of

delegates, who upon their return home, were to organize regional chapters in their countries. These first representatives were: Nune Magoyan, for Armenia; Vartkes Knadjian for Europe; Sarkis Kinanian for the US West Coast; Hratch Kaprielian for the US East Coast; Pierre Akkelian for Canada and Nazareth Sabounjian for the Middle East.

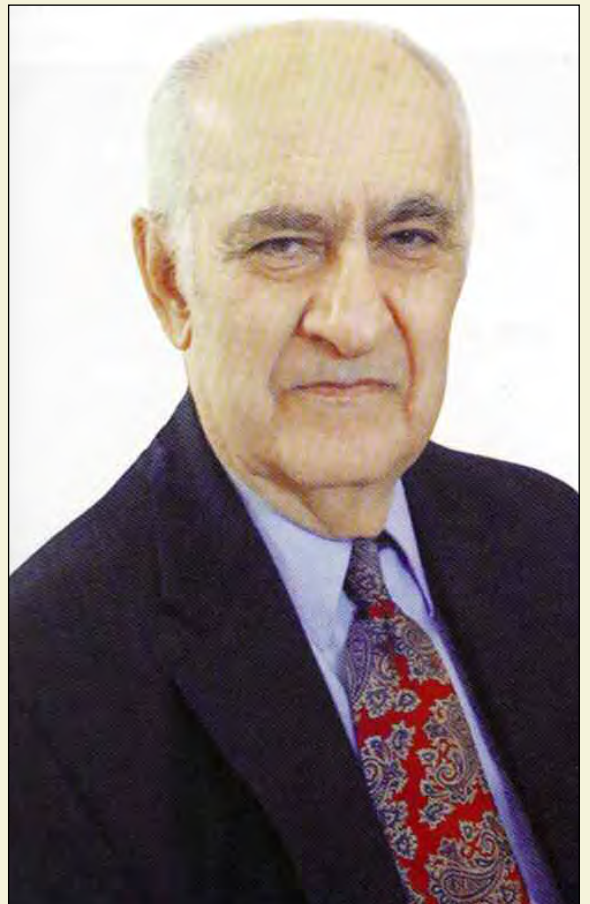
The first assembly was one of the most important and inspiring meetings of the Armenian jewelers and was under the patronage of the government, represented by President Robert Kocharian, Prime Minister Armen Darbinian, President of the Republic of Nagorno Karabagh Arkady Ghukasyan, Foreign Minister of Armenia Vartan Oskanian, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin I, Primate of Nagorno Karabagh Bishop Barkev Mardirossian and many other dignitaries and leaders.

Garnik Nanagulian, the minister of industry and trade, played an irreplaceable role in the process of founding the AJA. Before being named minister, Nanagulian had been ambassador of Armenia to Canada. Sharing a close relationship with Akkelian, he was able to exchange opinions with Akkelian about the AJA’s foundation. During that meeting, a decision was made to bring the idea to life, and very soon we all witnessed the delightful product of the Armenian jewelers’ will to be unified – the birth of the AJA.

That day, Nanagulian’s opening statement was followed by a message from Kocharian and welcoming remarks from the prime minister of Armenia, the president of Nagorno Karabagh, member of the National Assembly, Gagik Abrahamyan, the honorary consul to Belgium, Haig Arslanian, director of Armenian Development Agency, Gagik Yeghiazarian, and many other officials and public figures.

This was followed by the approval of the AJA founding the documents upon presentation by Knadjian and Akkelian. Subsequently, the first assembly nominated and unanimously approved the first Executive Board and officers of AJA International: Djanik Oskanian, honorary president; Arslanian, co-chairman; Abrahamyan, secretary, and Vartan Sirmakes, treasurer.

The following members were elected as advisors: Emil Gregorian, Grigor Tsambouljian, Tsolag Momjian, Hampic Ipekian, Michael Minassian, Akkelian, Harout Missirian, Sarkis Kitsinian, Adom Knadjian, Vahe Isnar, Yervant Artinian, Kevork Kolanian, Edmond Avakian, Vatche



Garpis Kazanjian



The first executive board of the AJA International

our economy. Historically, Armenians have always excelled in jewelry. Today, Armenian jewelers are omnipresent in every corner of the world.” It was a true success to unite Armenians from all over the world, representing the most important industry of the country – jewelry, around a cause.

The first official assembly served a firm ground for that unity. During this event, six representatives were chosen as

Dikijian, Hratch Kaprielian and Yeghazarian.

The following day, on October 4, Itar Tass released the following: “The congress of the International Association of Armenian Jewelers opened in Yerevan on Sunday, October 3. The congress was attended by more than 200 jewelers, including businessmen, dealing in gold and diamonds from all over the world, Belgium, the US, France, Greece, Israel, Austria and other countries. The congress participants were welcomed by Armenian President Robert Kocharian who stressed the leading role of the Armenian Diaspora in investments in the economy of the Republic. The forum was supervised by the Armenian Ministry of Industry and Trade, aiming at pooling efforts for investment projects. Association co-chairman, Armenian parliament deputy Gagik Abrahamian stated: ‘This association shall create possibilities to meet for entrepreneurs ready to invest in the Armenian economy and establish business relations.’”

On April 26, 1988, another assembly took place in Basel, titled the BaselWorld International Show, where many Armenian jewelers discussed various issues relating to the further development and expansion of the AJA. On June 13-14, the International Board met in Antwerp, Belgium, to discuss a number of organizational matters. Those four historic events accomplished the AJA’s first united efforts.

In conclusion, I am touched by the opportunity to recall this short, yet rather rich history about the foundation of the AJA, and I apologize for any omission or shortcoming.

(Garpis Kazanjian is a member of the AJA.)

Avaks to Conclude Year’s Program with Picnic

NEW YORK – The Avaks seniors group of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral will conclude another successful year with an all-day trip to Montauk on June 21, followed by a picnic on the cathedral plaza in Manhattan on June 28.

The trip to Montauk will include wine tasting, a luncheon at the famous Gurney’s overlooking the ocean, and a visit to the Montauk Lighthouse. On June 28, there will be a picnic, music, dancing and prizes.

Every Thursday during the year, the Avaks enjoyed a full program, including Bible study at 11:30 a.m., followed by a homemade lunch and a cultural program, which included films and lectures.

Presentations were made by the Diocesan Vicar, the Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian; Diramayr Shakeh Kadehjian; Krikor Markarian and Dr. Vartan Matosian. St. Vartan Cathedral choir director Khoren Mekanejian, soloist Maro Partamian, fitness expert Arpine Dod and jour-

nalist Florence Avakian also gave talks.

Trips included a three-day retreat in September to the Ararat Center in Greenville, where the Avaks took part in daily worship and Bible study, apple picking, films and other activities.

In December, the Avaks hosted a Christmas party replete with a grab bag, singing of carols and lunch.

In the spring, the Avaks traveled to Lancaster, Penn., where they attended the Millennium Theatre’s “Sight and Sound” presentation of the biblical story of Jonah.

In May, a group of Avaks attended “Silence,” the award-winning play about the Armenian Genocide written and directed by Dr. Herand Markarian.

The Avaks program is under the direction of St. Vartan Cathedral Dean, the Rev. Mardiros Chevian. Chevian is assisted by Deacon Sebu Oscherician. For more information about the Avaks program, call the Diocesan Center.



As part of this year’s program, the Avaks visited the Ararat Center in upstate New York.



New York METRO

For AMIC, What A Year it Is and Will Be

By Judith Lee

NEW YORK – In a timeline that stretches back to 1974, members of the Armenian Medical International Committee (AMIC) will likely look upon 2012 as a seminal year when it regrouped, revitalized and recommitted to its mission to foster cooperation among all Armenian health care providers.

The changes started at the top, with a new president, Jerry Manoukian, MD, of San Francisco, who brings a fresh perspective to AMIC's mission.

"One of AMIC's priorities will be to improve the diasporan experience of Armenian health-care collaboration. It must be welcoming, comfortable and fun," Manoukian noted shortly after he was elected president in April.

Representatives of AMIC's member organizations convened in New York to discuss AMIC's future direction, and those in attendance said they support Manoukian and the revitalized organization.

"This is such a significant moment, it's extraordinary. We are thankful to Avedis Bogosyan, MD, AMIC's immediate past president, for his wise stewardship that enabled this meeting to succeed. At one meeting, AMIC elected a new president, formed new committees and identified six future leaders," said Lawrence V. Najarian, MD, president of Armenian American Healthcare Providers Organization (AAHPO).

Vicken Sepilian, MD, president of the Armenian American Medical Society (AAMS), said he feels gratified that AMIC will continue to move forward as the "organizer of organizations."

"AMIC has great contacts within its member organizations, and a strong history of collaboration. AMIC can ensure that the organizations can leverage from each other," said Sepilian.

Rosine Der-Tavitian, MSN, MPH, president of the Armenian American Nurses Association (AANA) and a faculty member at California State University Northridge, said she is most excited about AMIC's resolve to connect with younger health care professionals.



These Armenian health care leaders came from around the world to fine-tune the future of Armenian Medical International Committee (AMIC). From left: Jerry Manoukian, MD, Vicken Sepilian, MD, Lawrence Najarian, MD, Jean-Pierre Basmadjian, MD, Avedis Bogosyan, MD, and Serge Simonian, MD

(AMA-GB) also is focused on the next generation: "AMIC links us globally, and that in itself provides close communication and friendship of Armenian health professionals. This can help us nurture the next Armenian generation to grow and inherit our wealthy and healthy culture, our merits and our community values."

feasibility.

In May 1990, representatives from France, the US and Canada gathered in Montreal to lay the foundation of the Armenian Medical International Committee or "Comité International Médical Arménien."

AMIC has been associated with the Armenian Medical World Congress that was held first in Beirut in 1974, and then from 1980 on, held in Venice, Montreal, Los Angeles, Paris, Boston, Lyon, Toronto, San Francisco and New York.

"AMIC was formed to connect organizations that work to improve health care for Armenians. The original focus was to ensure that organizations could pool their knowledge and work more effectively together," noted Bogosyan.

Aida Boudjikianian, AMIC secretary, has maintained an extensive list of members and friends of AMIC who are familiar with the periodic reports that she sends. The communications program reaches out to 19 member organizations in Australia, Canada, Austria, Russia, Germany, England, France, Switzerland, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Argentina, Uruguay and the US.

Now, however, it is time for AMIC to extend its reach even further, Manoukian said.

'Friend' and Follow AMIC

"The first task is to explore social media and dream about how we can keep in better touch with each other. Wouldn't it be amazing to recall the names and faces of Congress attendees we've already 'met' on Facebook? This could be done in anticipation of upcoming Congress, perhaps as part of the registration process," Manoukian explained.

He is referring to another priority for AMIC, which is the Armenian Medical World Congress, to be held next July in Los Angeles. AAMS is hosting the event.

Sepilian noted that speakers are coming from around the world, including a contingent from South America. The social plans include a gala at the Kodak Theater with Wolfgang Puck catering the gala. The theme of the Congress is "United for a Health Future."

"It exemplifies what we do – Armenian health care professionals come together to exchange medical knowledge and philanthropic

experience, all to improve the health of patients, our community, and our organizations," Sepilian said.

Manoukian said he is determined to develop a strong emotional connection among all those who travel to the 2013 Congress.

"After the 2013 Congress, we might remember some of the scientific material we learned. But we will all remember how we felt, whether the experience was magic and spectacular. AMIC must reach individuals, groups, cities and countries in a personal way. We must generate a sense of community and collaboration that gives our members a 'can't wait' feeling as the Congress approaches," Manoukian said.

AMIC member organizations in California share his enthusiasm for social media and new technology to create a "buzz" about the event.

"We have an active medical society [AAMS] with visionary leaders. They are already on YouTube. We will reach more people this way. We need to have a webcam at the Congress to broadcast to those who cannot attend. Today, this is the way to reach people and have impact," noted Der-Tavitian.

Along with social media outreach, Manoukian pointed out other priorities: "AMIC has been an organization of organizations, and has not included individuals as dues-paying members. But we have individuals without formal organizations, whose participation is welcomed and prized. We will develop policy to formalize this type of participation."

That is music to the ears of Rafi Avitsian, MD, of Cleveland.

"I have tried to establish an organization here without success. Yet I am committed to AMIC's purpose, and make every effort to attend the Congresses and lecture," he noted.

Avitsian noted that AMIC is needed more than ever because Armenia's health care needs have changed.

"What are the current health care needs and what organizations can best meet them? Perhaps members from one organization can help with another organization's project. We need a good, ongoing update for all AMIC members," said Avitsian.

Manoukian promised to reach out globally to include more organizations, particularly from South America.



The new president of Armenian Medical International Committee (AMIC), Jerry Manoukian, MD, (far left) is congratulated by outgoing president Avedis Bogosyan, MD (far right). At center are Vicken Sepilian, MD, president of AAMA, and Lawrence Najarian, MD, president of AAHPO.

"I learned as an educator that when we reach out to youth, they will bring their gifts to us. This is needed to ensure that the Armenian health care collaboration continues. AMIC must bring the new generation to the podium," she said.

Seda Boghossian-Tighe, PhD, president of Armenian Medical Association-Great Britain

A Respected Past

The idea of an international body connecting Armenian health care professionals was originally proposed in 1973 in Beirut during the first Armenian Medical World Congress. Eleven years later, in Montreal, at the closing of the third Armenian Medical World Congress, a small committee was formed to study AMIC's



Arts & Living

ADAA Saroyan Prize Jury Announced

LOS ANGELES – The Armenian Dramatic Arts Alliance (ADAA) and the William Saroyan Foundation have selected the honorary jury for the third Biennial William Saroyan Prize for Playwriting Award competition: actress/producer Gates McFadden, playwright Catherine Filloux and playwright/screenwriter Eduardo Machado.

Director, choreographer and actress McFadden is artistic director of Ensemble Studio Theatre in Los Angeles. Her past roles include assistant professor at Brandeis University, lecturer at University of Pittsburgh



Actress/producer
Gates McFadden

and adjunct lecturer at New York University's (NYU) Tisch School of the Arts (five years), Harvard University and Brooklyn College. She has served as guest lecturer or artist at many schools across the US and Europe. In addition to her many New York acting credits, McFadden is also known for her role as

Dr. Beverly Crusher in the TV series "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and the four "Star Trek: The Next Generation" films. Other films include "Taking Care of Business," "The Hunt for Red October" and the "Muppets Take Manhattan." She enjoyed a recurring role on "Mad About You" and was a series regular on "Marker" for its initial season on UPN. She has done many guest appearances on television, acted in regional theater as well as done the narrations for various documentary films, symphonies and books. She is currently an adjunct member of the University of Southern California Department of Theatre where she was given the George Burns Teaching Fellowship.

Filloux is an award-winning playwright who has been writing about human rights and social justice for the past 20 years. Her new play "LUZ" will premiere September 27 to October 14, at La MaMa in New York City, where she is an artist in residence.

Filloux's commissioned libretto, "New Arrivals," for Houston Grand Opera, Song of Houston, will premiere in June, composed by John Glover. Filloux's more than 20 plays have been produced in New York and around the world, with numerous awards including the Voice Award for Artistic Works (Voices of Women), New Generations-Future Collaborations Award (Mellon Foundation/TCG), PeaceWriting Award (Omni Center for Peace), Roger L. Stevens Award (Kennedy Center), Eric Kocher Playwrights Award (O'Neill), MAP Fund and the Callaway Award (New Dramatists). Filloux is a co-founder of Theatre Without Borders and has served as a speaker for playwriting and human rights organizations around the world.

Machado was born in Cuba and came to the United States when he was 9. He grew up in Los Angeles. He is the author of more than 40 plays, which include: "The Floating Island Plays," "Once Removed," "Stevie Wants to Play the Blues," "A Burning Beach," "Havana Is Waiting" and "The Cook." They have been produced at many major regional theaters, as well as in Europe and Off-Broadway, including The

see ADAA, page 11



Playwright Catherine
Filloux



Richard Shepard finds the right shot. (photo courtesy of Richard Shepard)

The Two Hollywood Worlds of Richard Shepard

LOS ANGELES – Richard Shepard is an independent film and television director and screenwriter who has been recently vaulting from one success to another. The television pilots that he has directed for the shows "Ugly Betty," "Criminal Minds," "Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior" and "Ringer" have successfully led to serialized television shows, and Shepard won an Emmy Award for Outstanding Directing and a Director's Guild of America award for "Ugly Betty" in 2007. Shepard's 2005 film, "The

Matador," starring Pierce Brosnan, Greg Kinnear and Hope Davis, received enthusiastic reviews. His most recent film, a dark comedy called "The Hunting Party," with Richard Gere, Terrence Howard and Jesse Eisenberg, was shot on location and deals with modern political issues. His documentary, "I Knew It Was You: Rediscovering John Cazale" (2010) is a favorite of movie buffs.

Shepard, a native of New York City, continually encounters Armenians in all walks of life in Los Angeles. He said, "As soon as I hear a name which sounds Armenian, I say my mom is Armenian and we start talking about it." His father's family was originally from the Austria-Hungarian Empire, and exposed him to aspects of Jewish culture. Shepard noted that there are filmmakers who have tapped into their childhoods and backgrounds in a specific way to make their films. Atom Egoyan is a good example. Shepard, however, is not one of them. His childhood and cultural formation manifest themselves in his work through his worldview.

He explained, "I consider myself very lucky in the weird rich complex of backgrounds that I grew up with. It contributed to my development as an artist and a human being, my way of looking at things, and my attitudes." Shepard was exposed to different cultures and languages, leading him to become artistically open, and flexible in life. He said, "I remember as a child going over to Grandma's house, and people were speaking languages that were not English. I can eat any food, and travel almost anywhere. I have shot movies all over the world in places most people have not gone to." Despite this general influence, Shepard has not so far made works delving directly into his past, observing, "More specifically, that hasn't been the case, but who knows where it may lead?"

Both of Shepard's parents were artists in different ways. Shepard's passion for movies was shared with his father, who would take him to revival theaters as a child. Shepard said, "I think that as soon as I realized that I was not going to play third base for the New York Mets I shifted my priority to making Super 8 movies, when I was about 12 or 13 years old. I educated myself, getting magazines and books to learn how to do little tricks and visual effects. I was influenced by real movies I was seeing. It is such an incredible way to express yourself. Then eventually I realized it was what I wanted to do, and truly the only thing that I was at that point capable of doing."

After making films in high school, Shepard went to New York University (NYU) for film school. "NYU at the time went out of its way not to teach you anything about business. It allowed me to be in a very creative environment without the specter of commerciality over your work. I had some great teachers and was able to experiment without any pressure, which the business aspect usually adds," he explained.

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Professor Mathews Probes Armenian Art On International Stage

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK – Prof. Thomas F. Mathews, emeritus professor at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts, recently gave a talk on the role of Armenian architecture in the international arena, at Columbia University. The event was sponsored by the Armenian Center at Columbia University and co-sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and Columbia's Art History Department.

Mathews, along with Dr. Helen Evans of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, had been the curator of the 1994 exhibition, "Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts," featuring Armenian illuminated manuscripts at the Morgan Library and Museum, with curatorial assistant Dr. Sylvie Merian. Using many images, he pointed out that there are two recent major studies – 2001 (by Christina Maranci) and 2007 (by Judith McKenzie) – which have an important bearing on Armenian architecture. And in the study of Medieval art, there is a continuing controversy on the "rise of the cult of icons," he noted.

In Armenian literature, there are voluminous sources of Armenia's conversion to Christianity. However, the most neglected treatise is the *Treatise on Images* by Vertanes of Kertogh, which has been translated by Dr. Sirarpie Der Nersessian. An article on this treatise was published a few years ago by Mathews in the *Revue des Etudes Armenienne*, Vol 31, 2008-2009.

"Vertanes is the Pliny of Armenia," stated Mathews. His seventh-century *Intellectual Dialogue on the Christian Use of Icons*, written in Dvin, is the earliest defense of icons, and Vertanes mentions the wood materials and even the pigments used with Persian names. These include icons of Christ, Peter and Paul, the Mother of God and Saints Gregory and Hripsime.

Mathews said that the next important intellectual in this field was John of Damascus who was secretary to the patriarch of Jerusalem in the early eighth century. "The Byzantine rulers forbade the use of icons because the people were worshipping the icons almost as idols and not as symbols of Christianity or the Christian saints," he explained. "This was the cause of a huge conflict between the Greeks and Armenians, both doctrinally and ecclesiastically," he said. "The icon phenomenon is larger than Byzantium."

There is no evidence of icons in Armenia before the Arabs sacked Dvin in 640 AD, because Armenian icons were painted on wood panels, which are perishable, he said. In Egypt, the wood panels in St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai survived because of the dry climate and because the monks protected them.

There were stone icons in Armenia, which due to their weight did not travel and their iconography was inspired by the wood icons transported to Armenia. The stone relief in the Odzun church, which is made of different stone than the rest of the church, dates before the eighth century, the scholar said. "This relief was widely used in the Byzantine world." There is a carved relief on a four-sided stone stele at Harichavank where Mother Mary is wearing a necklace, and which has been compared with the necklace on the Maria Regina icon in Rome, 561-579. There is also archeological evidence of stone reliefs at Louvre, France, which were copies of Christian icons, and inspired by the wood icons in Armenia. "Obviously all this iconography circulated because they were painted on wooden panels."

The Dvin Crucifixion, which is three feet high with a double-armed cross, reveals the body of Christ gone, but His face enshrined in a halo of

see MATHEWS, page 11



ARTS & LIVING

ADAA Saroyan Prize Jury Announced

ADAA, from page 10

Actors Theater of Louisville, The Mark Taper Forum, Seattle Repertory Theatre, the Goodman Theatre, Hartford Stage, the Long Wharf Theater, the Williamstown Theater Festival, the Cherry Lane Theater, INTAR, America Place Theater and the Hampstead Theatre in London.

Machado wrote and directed the film "Exiles" in New York, which played at the American Film Institute (AFI) Film Festival and numerous other festivals. Machado is currently the artistic director of INTAR Theatre in New York and is head of playwriting in the Goldberg Department of Dramatic Writing at NYU's Tisch School of the

Arts. This past year, he was a story editor on the HBO show "Hung."

The honorary jury will evaluate the three finalist plays, which will be announced next month and selected from a pool of script submissions from around the world. The grand prizewinner of \$10,000 will be announced in late 2012.

ADAA's William Saroyan Prize for Playwriting for plays on Armenian themes is made possible by a grant from the William Saroyan Foundation, which has underwritten the Saroyan Prize since its inception in 2007. The chairman of the William Saroyan Foundation is Haig Mardikian. ADAA and the William Saroyan Foundation have partnered for the last three cycles of the competition to give greater exposure to talented playwrights passionate about telling the Armenian story to the world, and it has succeeded. Additional funding for the prize also includes Larry Gagosian of Gagosian Galleries.

For more information on the Saroyan Prize or ADAA, visit www.armeniandrama.org.



Playwright/screenwriter Eduardo Machado

Mathews Probes Armenian Art on International Stage

MATHEWS, from page 10

glory. There are also horsemen on the side. This cross with the human face "is the most complete venerating image," Mathews said, adding that the crucifixion "is the first and most formidable problem of theology. And this 'Christ in Glory' iconography is found from Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Anatolia, Armenia and Constantinople to Rome."

Armenia is part of this larger world, which centers on

this concept of Christ on the cross. Mathews believes that the iconography for the Dvin relief was based on a second-century wooden triptych from Egypt. This would explain how the iconography of the horses got to Dvin: on a wooden icon, the crucifix icon is on a cross with a pair of horsemen.

For Armenia, "there aren't ancient treatises. There is art and sculpture. However, iconography in Armenia still has to be investigated," he said in conclusion.

Following a brisk question-and-answer period, Mark Momjian, the chairman of the Columbia Armenian Center Board of Directors, who with Prof. Zainab Al Bahrani, head of Columbia's Art History Department, welcomed the attendees and presented Mathews with a copy of the *New Testament*, 1880, published in Armenian in Constantinople, in appreciation of his lecture.



Prof. Thomas F. Mathews

Lecture at NAASR on 'Sentimental Kinships Of Genocide' in Turkish Works of Literature and Memoir

BELMONT, Mass. — Dr. Burcu Gürsel will present a critical exploration of three works considered by many as groundbreaking in Armenian-Turkish rapprochement for their treatment of the discovery of Armenian ancestry in Turkey in a lecture, titled "Sentimental Kinships of Genocide: Tragic (Mis)recognition in *My Grandmother*, *The Bastard of Istanbul* and *The Grandchildren*," on Thursday, June 28, at 8 p.m., at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) Center, 395 Concord Avenue.

Spanning the genres of memoir, fiction and oral history, these works by Fethiye Çetin, Elif Shafak and Aysegül Altınay are analyzed by Gürsel as cornerstones of what can be called sentimental literature proper in recent Turkish-language treatments of the Armenian Genocide.

Much like historic examples of sentimental literature that maintain and reproduce imperial and nationalist agendas against the grain of their own social protest and ethical malaise, these works assume a direct relationship between showcasing pain, on the one hand, and catharsis, moral edification and social cohesion, on the other.

In these three works, the drama of recognizing ancestral identity and history functions not as the tragic leveling of ideology but instead as the foundation of its reincarnation. Dependent on the very mythologies and fantasies of personal biological lineage that they appear to "pluralize" or "destabilize," these works reproduce the thinking they proclaim to be challenging.

Gürsel received a bachelor's from the University of Chicago and a PhD in comparative literature and literary theory from the University of Pennsylvania. She has taught at Sabancı University and most recently was a postdoctoral fellow at the Forum Transregionale Studien (Berlin). She currently lives in Istanbul and is finalizing her book manuscript based on her dissertation, *Invasive Translations: Violence and Mediation of the False-Colonial, France and Ottoman Egypt (1780-1840)*.

More information about the lecture or NAASR and its programs for the furtherance of Armenian studies, research and publication may be had by e-mailing hq@naasr.org.

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ARTS & LIVING

Armenian Teen Clarinetist Narek Arutyunian Dazzles at Armenian Night at Pops

POPS, from page 1

"Best 18 minutes I could have ever performed," he told observers at a post-reception. "Playing next to conductor Keith Lockhart was the ultimate experience. I shall treasure this moment forever."

From the time he walked onto the stage following the traditional *Hayr Mer* to the time he was embraced by the conductor, Arutyunian displayed his talents with obvious passion and conviction.

He opened with a rather spirited number called *Czardas* written by Monti, then presented a somber rendition of *Krounk* (The Crane) by Komitas for solo clarinet.

The finale was a jazzy *Concerto for Clarinet* written by the great Artie Shaw, which had the

Armenian musician of considerable talent." With a "Paree Yegak," Lockhart extended his arms to the Armenian crowd, several of whom were children accompanying parents. He then presented a brief but worthy synopsis of the newly-opened Armenian Heritage Park at the Rose Kennedy Greenway, reading from notes he was provided.

"It is a tribute to both the immigrants and martyrs who overcame tremendous obstacles," he noted. "Armenians are a people to be admired."

The crowd applauded loudly, acknowledging the unexpected gesture.

Echoing his sentiments was Ara Arakelian, president of the Friends of Armenian Culture Society (FACS), which sponsors the annual event.

"We're here tonight not only to celebrate a new Boston landmark but to pay tribute to our national musical heritage," he said. "The credit goes to our many supporters and volunteers who have made Armenian Night at the Pops so invigorating over the past six decades."

A week before his 20th birthday, Arutyunian has built up quite a musical portfolio and it is only getting better. He represented the third youngest Armenian performer at the Pops, following noted diva Hasmik Papian, who enthralled the crowd with her operatic voice a year ago.

When asked if this was the highlight of his young life, Arutyunian pondered a moment, then replied "no."

Nothing quite compares to the first prize he won at age 16 in the International Young Musicians Competition in Prague or the Musical Youth of the Planet Competition in Moscow the year before.

He would also have a difficult time negating the prize he was awarded by violist and conductor Yuri Bashmet to perform concerts and record the Weber *Concertino for Clarinet* with the State Symphony Orchestra of New Russia.

Born in Gumri, Armenia, Arutyunian's family moved to Moscow when he was 3. He graduated



Clarinetist Narek Arutyunian with the Boston Pops

ed from Moscow State Conservatory where he worked with Evgeny Petrov. He currently lives in New York and works with Charles Neidich at the Juilliard School of Music.

In addition to the Pops concert, Arutyunian is appearing in recitals at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, Washington Center for the Performing Arts and Music for Youth and Buffalo Chamber Music Society.

In case Bostonians missed it, he will be at the Gardner Museum on September 21.

Following his interlude on stage, Arutyunian came off stage for intermission and took a seat in the audience for the remainder of the evening, which also included a tribute to Cole Porter and works by Gershwin and Richard Rodgers. The encore featured Sousa's *Stars & Stripes Forever*, a Pops standard.

As with any Armenian Pops production, socialization was a vital part of the evening. People gathered inside the lobby and in the aisles, exchanging pleasantries. It was a night on the town, fashionable and festive.

A post-concert reception took place at the Colonnade Hotel, attended by more than 200 guests, where Arakelian welcomed the gather-

ing and applauded the star attraction. Arutyunian spent the interim signing programs and chatting with well-wishers about his young yet-brilliant career.

On a personal note, Aram Khachaturian is probably the greatest Armenian exponent of the instrument by virtue of his exquisite *Clarinet Trio*. Likewise, Tigran Mansurian (in his *Double Concerto for Clarinet and Cello*), Alexander Arutunian, Alan Hovhanness, Eduard Baghtasaryan, Gagik Hovunts and Geghuni Chirchian have all added significant works to the international clarinet repertoire, not to mention Hachig Kazarian, perhaps the greatest when it comes to popular Armenian band music.



Ara Arakelian, president of FACS

crowd swaying in their seats. When it came to the Armenian piece, Lockhart silenced his ensemble, stepped to one side and gave his guest artist complete autonomy. The two often made eye contact and exchanged smiles.

Lockhart lauded Arutyunian as "an

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ARTS & LIVING

The Two Hollywood Worlds of Richard Shepard

SHEPARD, from page 10

He learned about techniques of lighting and all the other aspects of making movies, though he does regret not learning more at the time about how to deal with actors or the business itself.

He also made a lot of good friends and connections, which ultimately were helpful in his career. He loves to point out on various occasions, and on his website <richardshepard.com>, that he is still waiting for an honorary diploma from NYU. (He failed one science class, which prevented him formally from graduating with a degree.)

Shepard feels that his career can be divided into two halves. Initially, he followed what the conventional wisdom about screenwriting – to follow a very specific structure. Shepard said, “This is what they teach in film school and every single book of film writing. This is the structure of most successful movies. The problem is that you end up trapped in a structure. For years I would outline a movie, pages of this and that will happen. It is smart in one way to do this but for me in retrospect it was not smart.”

Then, while in his mid-30s, he found his creative voice. He said, “Some find it much younger. My finding my actual ‘voice’ took a while. I really learned to do the craft of writing. This eventually allowed me to stop thinking about the craft and focus on the art. When I write now I don’t feel like I’m trying to fit into a box, but that I am my own thing. I think writers get stuck trying to write what they think others want to see or read.”

It happened in 2004 when Shepard began to write “The Matador.” He said, “I was in one of the many darker periods of my professional career and not getting much work. I decided to write a script, but not for anybody except myself. I let the characters take me where they wanted to go.” It turned into a comic thriller about a hit man and a businessman, both experiencing difficulties in their lives, who accidentally meet and strike up an unlikely friendship.

Shepard planned to make this movie very inexpensively, but then luck stepped in. He sent

zone keep a sense of humor – that is the only way that they can deal with things. There is a level of that in the movie but we were also extremely careful to be accurate and I certainly wanted to make sure that we were not treating anything that happened in a light way.”



Directing Richard Gere (at left) and Terrence Howard (center) in “The Hunting Party” (photo courtesy of Richard Shepard)

Shepard added, “Without a doubt, there is some correlation in my life to this film. I don’t necessarily have any interest in doing a movie on the Armenian Genocide, but you can touch on topics without directly dealing with them.” Among other things, he explored in the film the tragedy that ethnic cleansing and genocide was permitted to occur again, while the US and the world knew it was happening. The US chose to do nothing initially.

Shepard feels he has developed his own directorial vision as well as a personal approach to writing. He said, “One of the pleasures of being a director is that it is ultimately your decision. Even with the world’s best cinematographer offering an opinion, in the end it is your decision. There is no rhyme or reason, no way of explaining. Filmmakers in general are steeped in so many things – the spirits of their parents and friends, the things that they see...I’d like to think that I am still evolving.

The movies that Shepard has recently made are all character-driven, with entertaining dialogue and plot twists. This attracts prominent actors looking for the kinds of roles they cannot always find. Despite his success, Shepard remains clear-eyed about the dangers of his profession. He pointed out that “each time a movie is put together it is a mystery. It is a miracle even if you are Steven Spielberg. There are a

million things conspiring against you. In a weird way, I am the CEO of a \$20-million organization for one year. No one’s figured out the pure secret to it. You hope you have the best, most interesting script, that you find the right people to trust you and give you money, that

do not exist. But, with movies, he said, “if you make a film that is not great, you suffer in a way that is so different. And people will always look at my last movie.” Finally, it is three months of work with a deadline for TV versus two years for a film.

With five recent successful pilots which have become television shows, Shepard has a good track record, and this allowed him in September 2011 to launch a small production company called Olé with the producer brothers Sean and Bryan Furst, with whom he worked on “The Matador.” Olé has an exclusive two-year deal with CBS Television Studios. Olé, Shepard said, basically “finds scripts for me to produce. It is just being proactive. The company is the difference between being a hired gun as a director and producing your own TV show. It is a lot of extra work, which is why I have partners.” The Furst brothers read scripts, come up with ideas, meet writers, sometimes before Shepard does, and then they discuss things. CBS finances the company and Olé pitches ideas to it. The project concepts that CBS buys will be produced by the Furst brothers, with Shepard as executive producer.

Clearly, Shepard through practical experience, has caught up with the business side of the industry and has drawn his own lessons: “It is a curse and a blessing. During this economic downturn a lot of people in business do not have a stable life. They are laid off and unprepared to reinvent themselves. In the movie business you have to reinvent yourself every week, and you are always looking for a new job. You cannot depend on only one thing. You have to have a lot of balls in the air, and you always want to be as self-starting as possible.”

Shepard has come to enjoy the changes in schedule and approach that switching back and forth between directing TV and writing and directing his own films entail. He said, “I happen to like both worlds so much. When I’m writing, I’m in complete control of my destiny and day. I can do anything when I want, but when you’re directing you deal with 150 people, all asking you questions. After six months of writing a script I like to get back to working with tons of people, and vice versa.”

Shepard just finished a pilot called “Golden Boy” for CBS about the meteoric rise of one policeman’s career all the way to police commissioner. He also has directed some episodes of the popular new HBO series, “Girls.” Shepard’s next big film project is called “Dom Hemingway,” a comedy about a safecracker set in London, in which Jude Law has agreed to star. If all goes well, Shepard will begin filming his new script this fall. He already is scouting locations in London.



With Joe Mantegna on the set of “Criminal Minds” (photo courtesy of Richard Shepard)

it as a sample for a writing job to Brosnan’s production company. Shepard said, “I would have never thought of him...his producing partner though felt it was really funny, so they gave it to him to read. We weren’t even trying to get him. It was lucky timing. A few years earlier when he was doing James Bond he might not have wanted to risk his image.” Brosnan agreed to both co-produce, and act in it, and this added another layer to the film precisely because he was appearing now as an anti-Bond. Shepard added, “‘The Matador’ might have come off as a dark comedy about a hit man, but it was also a movie on friendship and what a marriage was like and what you need to do to get ahead in business and having a moral compass in life.”

“The Hunting Party,” Shepard’s next film, appeared in 2007, just two years after “The Matador.” Another dark comedy, it was loosely based on a real life attempt by two journalists to catch the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic (who later of course was arrested and at present remains on trial, accused of genocide). Shepard spent months researching Bosnia before writing and then shooting the film on site, some 15 years after the fighting and ethnic cleansing took place. Emotions were still raw. He said, “We had extras crying when the set was dressed and looked like their town with blood on the ground. Journalists in a war

CALENDAR

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

JUNE 16 — St. Nersess Armenian Seminary annual Summer Picnic. 150 Stratton Road, New Rochelle. Festive day of music with John Berberian Ensemble, kebab meals, children’s activities, including a magician, an attic treasures sale, Baykar the Armenian vendor and more. Plus, purchase super raffle ticket for \$50 to win three cash prizes. Free parking and admission. Visit www.stnersess.edu or call (914) 636-2003 for more information.

SEPTEMBER 29 — Save the date. Armenia Fund 20th Anniversary Gala, 7 p.m. at Gotham Hall in New York City.



On June 16, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary will hold its annual summer picnic, featuring the John Berberian Ensemble, pictured at left, kebab meals, children’s activities and more, 150 Stratton Road, New Rochelle, NY. Admission is free. For information, visit www.stnersess.edu or call (914) 636-2003.

COMMENTARY

Turkey's Zero Problem Foreign Policy And its Multiples

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Turkey's hawkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu entered the foreign policy arena disguised as a dove, advocating a new foreign policy for his country that would reduce to zero all the problems with its neighbors. Since Mr. Davutoglu prefers to define his country's foreign policy in mathematical terms, the results or the sums of that policy can be measured in the same mathematical terms. Mr. Davutoglu's zero was multiplied with many zeros to give a zero result as appraised by Armenia's Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian. The protocols with Armenia yielded a zero. Negotiations with Cyprus regressed, rather than progressed, when Turkey refused to abide by the European Union's demand to open up its ports and airports for Cypriot transport. Next, after kissing and hugging President Bashar al Assad of Syria, Turkey emerged as the vanguard in undermining that country's sovereignty. Turkey engineered a stand off with Israel, and finally, after signing a \$20-billion energy agreement with Iran, and thumbing the warnings from the West, relations between the two nations are frosty.

All these problems – far from being reduced to zero – have inexplicably boosted the Turkish leaders' arrogance. At the NATO conference in Chicago last month, Ankara insisted on keeping out Israel and the NATO leadership gave in. The Turkish Israeli policy is multifaceted and that apparent hostility also has a silver lining; had Turkey been really hurting Israeli interests, the latter's operatives in Washington would tame Ankara right away. Instead, Israel giving in to Turkey's quest allowed Ankara to gain brownie points in the Arab world and thus in the end to boost Israel's basic interests in eliminating unfriendly regimes in the region, one by one. After Iraq and Libya, now it is Syria's turn. The collapse of Assad's regime, to which Turkey is fully subscribed, has more value for Israel than an apparent defeat at a Chicago conference. Washington fully understands – and, in fact, orchestrates – these multi-level policies.

Since 2005, Turkey has begun the accession negotiations with the European Union. Turkey wants to have its cake and eat it. The EU has set some basic conditions for Turkey to be eligible for membership; the EU requests the removal of article 301 from Turkish penal code, the resolution of the Cypriot problem, the opening of borders with Armenia and the recognition of (all) genocides. Ankara refuses to abide by those conditions and wishes to be entitled for membership.

Recently, Turkish leaders have raised the ante and puffed their chests further, pretending that the EU needs their country rather than the other way around.

On the sidelines of the EU-Turkey talks, Mr. Davutoglu has participated in a joint press conference with the EU foreign policy chief, Baroness Catherine Ashton, and the EU enlargement com-

missioner, Stefan Fule.

Davutoglu has made outrageous announcements, including freezing relations with the EU as long as Cyprus serves as president, from July 1, 2012 through January 2013. In addition, Turkey will block countries and companies exploring oil and gas within Cyprus's continental shelf.

He has particularly indicated: "EU-Turkey relations and the political contacts we are currently establishing will continue as they are. Yet no ministry or organization of the Turkish Republic will take part in any activity that will be presided by southern Cyprus."

For his part, Egemen Bagis, the Turkish minister in charge of EU affairs, has added: "Turkey will determinedly progress in its course towards the EU."

The 25 nations constituting the EU have agreed to Cyprus' presidency. Yet Turkey, still not a member, has been defying their decision.

This unbridled bullying must give a pre-taste to all members of the EU who wish to admit Turkey in the union.

Armenia's foreign policy architects believe that if Turkey's joins the EU, by extension Armenia will be bordering Europe. Now they can predict what to expect from that Europeanized neighbor.

Any observer at this press conference would expect that Baroness Ashton would stand up and tell Mr. Davutoglu that beggars cannot be choosers. But instead, what do we see? The Baroness, who when in Yerevan, walks and talks like a commanding general, radiating the arrogance of power through her body language, has become a pussycat in front of the Turks. Instead she thanks Turkey for sheltering nearly 27,000 Syrian refugees who have fled violence in their country, where forces loyal to President Assad [the Syrian army] are waging a crackdown on an uprising.

She would rather thank Turkey for playing its surrogate role perfectly by hosting a Syrian government in exile, by training and arming mercenaries to wreak havoc in a country which was one of the most stable nations in the Middle East.

The Baroness concludes her remarks by adding: "We are horrified by the violence and determined to work together in support of solutions."

Today arms and money are pouring into Syria, mostly through the Turkish border and raising the level of violence to such an atrocious level where it will be convenient to blame the government forces, which are trying to bring order and save the lives of citizens caught in the crossfire of the army and foreign intruders.

Turkey has been enhancing its power by efficiently executing assignments from the West and as compensation, it is allowed even to bully the European Union.

All indications are there to conclude that Turkey is ready to accomplish another dirty job in the region, when pressure on Iran heats up, after the collapse of the regime in Syria.

That will add another zero to Mr. Davutoglu's "peaceful" foreign policy.

Azerbaijan Adds Tension on Border to Shift Karabagh Debate to United Nations

By Aris Ghazinyan

Over recent days, tensions on the line of contact of Armenian and Azeri armed forces have escalated drastically, and although the chronicle of all past years consists of reports on shootings on the border, never before has it reached this scale.

More and more often Western experts speak about the real threat of war. As experts at Stockholm International Peace Research Institute say "the deals and orders for acquisition of arms and armament by Armenia and Azerbaijan increase the chances for the resumption of active hostilities between the two countries over Nagorno Karabagh."

And, as reported by Eurasianet, at a conference in Washington, DC last week, "regional expert Tom de Waal addressed the question of why international officials can't make more direct statements 'naming and shaming' whichever side started the violence. The problem, de Waal said, is that there's no way for them to know. There are 20,000 soldiers dug into trenches on each side of the line, and six monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Another

stark statistic: since the beginning of 2011, 63 people have been killed in skirmishes between Armenia and Azerbaijan."

Commenting on the results of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's recent visit to Baku and Yerevan, Sabina Freiser, director of European programs at the International Crisis Group, said in her interview to *Turan* that the Karabagh conflict might get out of hand.

"There is a real threat that the conflict will get out of control, and Armenia and Azerbaijan will start firing back as retaliation for each loss. As soon as it happens, it'll become very difficult for the sides to step away from the brink of a precipice or win the war in a short time," she stated.

The present escalation of tensions started in April when the Azeri armed forces opened a 30-minute non-stop fire at the border village of Dovekh in Tavush province, damaging the kindergarten, school and a shop. And between June 4 and 6, Azeri forces made several subversive raids or opened fire at border villages and, as a consequence, both sides have suffered losses.

Why is the sudden escalation of tension on the border? The thing is that since January 1 of this year Azerbaijan has assumed its non-permanent membership in the UN Security

Council; the Azeri authorities have promised to use this status to transfer the Karabagh issue from the OSCE Minsk Group (MG) format to that of the United Nations.

Azeri politicians believe that if the UN, an organization that recognizes Azerbaijan's territorial integrity within its Soviet-drawn borders, takes up the Karabagh issue, the negotiation process might undergo a drastic shift.

The predictions are that peacekeeping forces of UN might be placed along the entire perimeter of the "internationally-recognized" Armenian-Azeri border, in which case Nagorno Karabagh would de facto be part of Azerbaijan.

Hence, Azerbaijan is highly interested in pumping up the situation on the border, so that it can accuse MG of inability to control the situation and guarantee peace.

Obviously it'd be hard to choose better timing to demonstrate this point than Clinton's regional visit. That's why the recent uneasiness on the border "coincided" with the visit.

Azerbaijan keeps building its military potential with each passing year, and some 20 military industrial entities function in the country.

Recently it became know that Israel had supplied drones, anti-aircraft and anti-missile

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Clinton Should Share the Blame For Killings of Armenian Soldiers

A tragic pattern of bloody engagements continues to recur along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border at great human cost. Whenever high level visits or international meetings are scheduled on the Artsakh (Karabagh) conflict, Azerbaijan unfailingly initiates attacks on Armenian border guards causing many casualties.

Azerbaijan's leaders hope that such hostile action would impress upon the mediating countries the urgency of resolving the conflict by pressuring Armenia's leadership to make territorial concessions on Artsakh.

Last week, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the Caucasus republics. On the day of her arrival in Yerevan, Azeri forces attacked two Armenian border posts, killing three soldiers and wounding many others. In the ensuing days, more Azeri attacks took place, drawing Armenian return fire, resulting in scores of casualties, mostly on the Azeri side.

Armenians expected Secretary Clinton to strongly condemn Azerbaijan after its initial attack. Clearly, the Azeri military action was timed to coincide with her visit to Armenia. Yet, regrettably, the secretary merely urged

both countries to refrain from "the use of force," stressing that the Artsakh conflict "can be resolved exclusively by peaceful means." Clinton's totally unacceptable statement equated the aggressors with the victims. Moreover, by not condemning the Azeri attacks, she actually emboldened Azerbaijan to commit further acts of aggression against Armenia.

Since it is common knowledge that Azerbaijan orchestrates such attacks to coincide with visits of high-ranking officials to the region, Secretary Clinton should have warned Azerbaijan, before embarking on her trip, not to initiate any hostile action while she was in the area. The State Department should have advised the Azeri government that any breach of the ceasefire during the Clinton visit would be personally embarrassing for the secretary of state, leaving her no choice but to cancel her trip to Baku. Even if such a warning was not issued in advance, Clinton should have refused to go to Baku after the Azeri attacks. Unfortunately, the Secretary placed a higher value on Azeri oil than on Armenian blood. By her actions, she also undermined the international prestige and moral standing of the United States.

As this could be Clinton's farewell visit to the region — she is retiring from public service later this year — it is regrettable that she will leave behind a legacy of violence and conflict rather than peace and reconciliation. The US secretary may have come to Yerevan and Baku to encourage a negotiated settlement to the Artsakh conflict, yet she left the region more destabilized than before.

Another factor that has encouraged Azerbaijan to continue its attacks is the inadequate Armenian response to the countless ceasefire violations since 1994. Armenians will be unable to stop Azeri aggression simply by firing back. The Aliyev regime should be made to understand that it would pay a heavy price for breaching the cease-

fire. Rather than simply returning fire, the Armenian response should be to neutralize the Azeri military positions responsible for initiating the attacks.

Although some may fear that a more robust Armenian response would lead to all-out conflict, such concerns are misplaced because Azerbaijan is not ready to wage war, according to most military experts. By starting a premature war, the Azeris risk losing even more territories, not to mention the enormous economic losses!

To deter further Azeri aggression and reduce Armenian casualties, here are seven actions that Armenia may consider taking should Azerbaijan continue to violate the ceasefire:

- Respond by targeting Azerbaijan's petroleum industry, disrupting its oil and gas pipelines. The best defense is a good offense.
- Take preemptive action to neutralize Azeri snipers who regularly target Armenian border guards and civilians in nearby villages.
- After each attack, suspend peace talks with Azerbaijan for an indefinite period. One cannot talk peace and fight at the same.
- Demand that all countries refrain from the sale of weapons to Azerbaijan.
- Urge the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a defense-alliance that includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, to warn Azerbaijan that any further attacks on Armenia would trigger a collective military response from all CSTO members.
- Declare that Turkey's support for Azerbaijan in the Artsakh conflict constitutes a hostile act, and hence, withdraw Armenia's signature from the Armenia-Turkey Protocols.
- Recognize the Republic of Artsakh as an independent state and invite other countries to do likewise.

Azerbaijan Pumps up Tension on Border To Shift Karabagh Issue from MG to UN

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defense systems to Azerbaijan, valued at \$1.6 billion

As for official Baku's policy of military built-up of recent years, SIPRI experts state that "Armenia has a more limited circle of arms suppliers and is heavily dependent on Russia"; they also emphasize that Azerbaijan in this respect has an incomparably larger choice.

Nonetheless, Armenia isn't just sitting back and doing nothing, it's developing bilateral military cooperation with Russia as well as block cooperation within the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

"Over the past three years we have increased the level of our army equipment as much as we had done during all previous seventeen years since Armenia's independence. We have imported to the Republic of Armenia essentially and qualitatively new armament, equipping our army with contemporary weaponry," said Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian.

On the one hand, clearly Azerbaijan cannot be interested in war, as it would pose a threat to the oil and gas pipelines passing in close vicinity to the line of contact. They would be under the threat of destruction in which case Azerbaijan would lose its vitally important grounds for economic development and investments.

On the other hand, however, Azerbaijan's political elite cannot keep forever promising its people to "return the occupied lands whatever it takes," especially given that the opposition forming in that country is stronger than ever in the past several years and that the criticism against the current authorities takes more radical shape.

(This analysis originally appeared in ArmeniaNow.)

Turkey: A Midwife for a Kurdish State?

By Ofra Bengio

Ankara has willy-nilly helped the Kurdish genie escape from the bottle and it will be very difficult for Turkey to push it back inside.

If there is one country that has helped build a Kurdish entity in Iraqi Kurdistan it is Turkey. This assertion seems paradoxical in view of Ankara's traditional opposition to such an eventuality in Iraq and the well-known pressures it applied on its allies, especially the United States, not to lend any support to the Kurds of Iraq because of the possible spillover effects on its own restive Kurds. Turkey's new stance appears even more paradoxical against the backdrop of the latest upheavals in the region and their contagious effects both on its own Kurds and those of Syria.

How is one to explain these paradoxes? First let us have a quick look at the facts on the ground. Since the 1991 Gulf War and much more so after the 2003 Gulf War Turkey has turned itself, slowly but surely, and against its better judgment, into the lifeline for Iraqi Kurdistan, which is led by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the euphemism for a Kurdish state in the making.

The slow change in Ankara's policy towards the KRG was not due to any altruistic considerations but for very pragmatic, down to earth ones. Immediately after the 1991 Gulf War and the crushing of the Kurdish uprising which ensued, Turkey was confronted with the problem of a million Kurdish refugees on its border. Unwilling to burden itself with another million Kurds, Turkey devised with the Allies the "Provide Comfort" project for the fleeing Kurds to enable them to go back to their homes.

This plan, together with "the no-fly zone" where the Iraqi army could not act against the Kurds, as well as the ruptured relations between Ankara and Baghdad due to the war, set in motion the schizophrenic relations that would develop between Turkey and the KRG.

On the one hand Turkey was extremely apprehensive of the possible contagious effects of the KRG on its own Kurds, hence Ankara's attempts to thwart any political and diplomatic gains by the KRG. On the other hand Ankara did its best to reap the fruits of its relations with the emerging entity, one of the most important of which were economic gains. This approach turned the Kurdistan Region into a huge investment area

for Turkish companies whose number reached around 900 by 2012 and amounted to half of the companies acting in the KRG.

To this list one should add other large business, cultural and social ventures which turned the KRG into an undeclared Turkish sphere of influence. The net result was that no less than seven percent of Turkish exports went to the KRG.

Ankara's thirst for oil and gas and the pressure brought to bear on it to stop importing from Iran go a long way to explain the surprising pipeline deal it cut with the KRG on May 20, 2012, without the approval of the central government in Baghdad. If it materializes, the deal, which envisaged the building of two oil pipelines and one gas pipeline from the Kurdistan Region to Turkey, might give further boost to Kurdish aspirations for independence.

Interestingly, the Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Taner Yildiz, declared on that occasion that "Turkey should also be considered as the Regional Kurdish Government's gateway to the West."

A second important aim for developing these relations was the hope that the KRG would help in solving Turkey's own acute Kurdish domestic problem, namely the ongoing attacks which the armed Turkish Kurdish PKK continued to launch against Turkish state targets.

However, Ankara's hope that the KRG would fight against, or at least contain the PKK, whose bases are found in Iraqi Kurdistan, was not fulfilled. The third and perhaps most important consideration was Ankara's need to attune itself to the region's changing geostrategic map, which pushed it to act according to the dictum "my enemy's enemy is my friend."

The geostrategic considerations gathered momentum in the past two years due to several developments, all of which impacted negatively on Turkey's environment and its foreign policy configurations.

Before analyzing these changes it must be stressed that the stance of the AKP government toward the Kurdish domestic issue as well as towards the KRG underwent slow transformation, which distinguished the AKP from earlier Kemalist governments.

The geostrategic changes were quite drastic, including the "Arab Spring," which accelerated the collapse of the Turkish-Iranian-Syrian axis. Furthermore, the revolution in Syria not only turned Ankara and Damascus into sworn enemies once again but also raised the specter of the influx

of Syrian refugees. Worse still, it opened the Pandora's box of Syrian Kurds and their possible collaboration with their brethren in Turkey, not to speak of the PKK card which Damascus started to employ once again against Ankara.

The withdrawal of the American forces from Iraq in November 2011 and the vacuum left thereby was another very worrying development for Turkey, as it enhanced its competition with Iran for filling this vacuum.

Lastly, one should note the deteriorating relations between Ankara and Baghdad against the background of the Sunni-Shi'ite rivalry in the region, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's growing tilt toward Iran and his support for Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, as well as the growing personal antipathy between Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan and Maliki.

All this weakened Ankara's "commitment" to the almost sacred notion of Iraqi unity and emboldened it in its bilateral ties with the KRG, the most challenging of which for Baghdad was the oil pipeline deal mentioned above.

Turkey's changing policy towards the KRG and its president Masu'd Barzani found its expression on the symbolic level as well.

Barzani's April visit to Turkey was a case in point. While in the past Ankara treated Barzani as a mere "head of tribe," in this most recent visit it accorded him a welcome befitting a head of state, thus turning him into one of its important allies in the region. Moreover, in this visit Barzani reiterated publicly the Kurds' right to self-determination but, interestingly enough, Turkish officials and the media chose to turn "a deaf ear" to this declaration.

Turkey is facing now a Kurdish problem on all three fronts, which has multiplied its dilemmas but which has moved it, so it seems, to adopt a flexible and non-conventional policy: Embracing the KRG so as to contain its own Kurds and Syria's as well. Should Turkey decide to give Barzani the green light, he would not hesitate to go the extra mile and declare independence. One thing is certain: Turkey has willy-nilly helped the Kurdish genie escape from the bottle and it will be very difficult for Ankara to push it back inside.

(Prof. Ofra Bengio is head of the Kurdish Studies Program at the Moshe Dayan Center, Tel Aviv University, and author of *The Kurds of Iraq: Building a State within a State*. This analysis originally appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* on June 12.)



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