

Armenia Marks First Republic Day: President Calls for Unity

YEREVAN (Armenia Now) – On May 28, Armenia marked First Republic Day, celebrating the establishment of the first short-lived democratic Armenian state 95 years ago.

In a speech at Sardarapat, one of the scenes of heroic battles that led to independence at the beginning of the 20th century, President Serge Sargsian called for unity to uphold the new republic.

“Ninety five years ago at Gharakilisa, Bash-Aparan and particularly here, in Sardarapat, we were put to a fatal test. It was a nationwide test for old and young, clergy and military, Dashnaks and Communists, officials and peasantry. All of us. In the last patch of historic Armenia, the last handful of Armenians living in their Fatherland were fighting. Here we stopped and forced back the enemy; and the world had neither illusions nor doubts about the adversary’s racist and anti-Armenian intentions. Here the Armenians of Eastern Armenia averted the impending calamity. The Genocide that originated in the Ottoman Turkey and was consistently per-



A military march at Sardarapat outside Yerevan

petrated and proliferated was stopped here owing to our spirit of unity,” said Sargsian, according to his press office.

“For many nations the declaration of independence is a political act and even a grand ceremony whereas for us it was an ordeal. We did not even know that one or two days after the courageous May battles we would declare independence. We creat-

ed Armenia’s statehood right in the battlefield at the expense of enormous casualties and losses, thanks to blood and faith, standing behind each other, looking forward. United!

“May 28, 1918, heralded our physical deliverance and political rebirth; consequently, our people’s valor and vigor were superbly manifested during the Great Patriotic War and in the battle of Artsakh. Today, here at Sardarapat, the Armenian soldier’s firm tread and victorious spirit testify in the best possible way that we know the formula of survival and victory,” he continued.

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Genocide Resolution Introduced in Congress

WASHINGTON – Rep. David Valadao (R-CA) along with Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) and Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) and Michael Grimm (R-NY), officially introduced a resolution regarding the Armenian Genocide, reported the Armenian Assembly of America.

The new bill, H.Res. 227, calls on “the president to work toward equitable, constructive, stable, and durable Armenian-Turkish relations based upon the Republic of Turkey’s full acknowledgment of the

facts and ongoing consequences of the Armenian Genocide, and a fair, just, and comprehensive international resolution of this crime against humanity.”

A House-only resolution, H. Res. 227 was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, where longtime supporters of US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide, Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA) and Eliot Engel (D-NY), serve as chairman and ranking member, respectively.

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Very Rev. Aren Jebejian Elected Primate of Canada

MONTREAL – On Saturday, May 25, during the annual diocesan meeting, the pastor of St. Gregory the Illuminator Church of Chicago, the Very Rev. Aren Jebejian was elected the Primate of Canada.

The annual meeting took place at the St. Gregory the Illuminator Church of Montreal, where the Primate is based. The meeting was attended by all members of the clergy of all the churches of Canada. There were two representative each of East and West Coast Dioceses.

As the by-laws dictates, there were three candidates approved by Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians. They were the actual primate Archbishop Bagrad Galstanian, Archbishop Dajad Yardemian and Very Rev. Aren Jebejian.

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Prince Charles meets with President Serge Sargsian.

Prince Charles Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (RIA Novosti and ArmeniaNow) – Prince Charles, the 64-year-old heir to the British throne, arrived in Armenia on Tuesday, May 28, on a first-ever visit by a member of the British royal family.

The private visit is scheduled to last until May 30, the UK embassy in Yerevan’s press service said. The visit was organized following an invitation from the Yerevan, My Love charity foundation, whose activities are directed at preserving landmark historic sites in Armenia’s ancient capital.

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Very Rev. Aren Jebejian

NEWS IN BRIEF

Scottish Parliament Adopts Genocide Remembrance Day

EDINBURGH (Public Radio of Armenia) – The Parliament of Scotland has passed the motion on “Remembering the Armenian Genocide” introduced by Marco Biagi from the Scottish National Party. It was signed by 65 members of Parliament.

The motion included the following statement: “The Parliament notes that April 24 is the anniversary of the government of the Ottoman Empire arresting Armenian intellectuals in 1915, which is generally considered to be the beginning of the forced relocations and expulsions that led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Armenians in a systematic genocide over the course of eight years; believes that the Armenian tragedy gives the people of every nation reason to pause and reflect; commemorates all those who have fallen victim to genocide or attempted genocide, and recognizes this and all other genocides as tragedies that should never be repeated in any part of the world.”

PACE President Says 2013 Could Be Turning Point in Karabagh

STRASBOURG, France (PanArmenian.net) – According to Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) President Jean-Claude Mignon, 2013 may become a turning point in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

Dwelling on Azerbaijan’s forthcoming chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CoE), Mignon hailed PACE’s opportunities to reconcile both parties and reach an agreement on the issue.

“We think 2013 will be a turning point, given Armenia and Azerbaijan’s chance to take specific measures. Both Yerevan and Baku will assume chairmanship in the CoE Committee of Ministers. Prevention of conflicts, as well as speedy resolution of the existing conflicts were among the key goals of the formation of the CoE Committee of Ministers,” Mignon said.

Chapel in Armenian Cemetery Restored

MALATYA, Turkey (PanArmenian.net) – The chapel and the outbuildings of an Armenian cemetery demolished earlier by city officials have been restored by the government and will be transferred to the city’s Armenian community.

The chapel will open its doors on June 29, the *Taraf* newspaper reported citing the head of the Armenian union, Hayder Khosrov Keleravitoglu.

This year cultural tours will be organized to take visitors to the chapel, Holy Trinity Armenian Monastery and St. Gregory the Illuminator.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Photo Exhibit on Genocide Orphans Opens

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – US Ambassador to Armenia John A. Heffern attended the opening of the photo exhibition, “Along the Trails of the Armenian Orphans,” at the National Gallery of Armenia.

The exhibition is a joint project of the Naregatsi Art Institute (NAI), the Near East Foundation (NEF) and the US Embassy. The exhibition illustrates the amazing story of Near East Relief – an American-led humanitarian mission that saved hundreds of thousands of Armenian orphans following the 1915 atrocities in the Ottoman Empire.

Heffern, NAI Founder Nareg Hartounian, NEF Chairman Shant Mardirossian and the director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, Hayk Demoyan, spoke at the exhibition opening, calling this “an important chapter” in US-Armenia relations.

In addition, the opening featured the screening of a documentary film, “Lest They Perish,” by Zareh Tjeknavorian and a musical tribute to Near East Relief performed by the Naregatsi Folk Instruments Ensemble.

The US Embassy, NAI and NEF opened similar exhibitions at the Naregatsi Art Institute in Yerevan on May 26 and the Terchoonian Home Orphanage in Gumri on May 27. All three exhibitions will be open and free of charge until June 8.

Artsakh President Honors Armenian-Russian Philanthropist

STEPANAKERT (PanArmenian.net) – The Nagorno-Karabagh (Artsakh) Republic President Bako Sahakyan met Russian philanthropist of Armenian descent Sergey Hambardzumyan on Monday, May 27, and awarded him the Vachagan Barepasht medal, in appreciation for his contribution to strengthening and development of Artsakh.

The meeting further focused on a number of projects being implemented in the region, the Central Information Department of Artsakh reported.

Raising Awareness for Children Fighting Cancer

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The Armenian DJ Association will organize a 12-hour charity marathon on June 1, Children’s Protection Day. The proceeds from the event will be donated to children battling cancer.

During the event, the top DJs from Armenia will be playing musical sets on Northern Avenue from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. The event will also feature dance and children’s fashion shows, as well as various games.

CDs will be sold at the event, with the funds collected to be donated to support the children with cancer.

Armenian Writer Refuses State Award

YERERVAN (RFE/RL) – A novelist has refused to accept a state award granted by President Serge Sargisian in protest against the socioeconomic and political situation in the country.

Levon Khechoyan was among several writers, artists and other intellectuals who were awarded a Medal for Services to the Homeland ahead of an independence holiday marked in Armenia on Tuesday. He boycotted the awards ceremony held in the presidential palace on the same day.

Khechoyan explained on Wednesday that his decision was an expression of protest against widespread poverty and injustice which is forcing many Armenians to leave their country. He also said he could not have accepted the medal amid continuing street protests by fellow veterans of the war in Nagorno-Karabagh demanding a sizable rise in their state pensions.

Speaking from a Yerevan hospital where he is currently undergoing treatment, Khechoyan made clear at the same that he is grateful to Sargisian for deciding to award him.

ATP Completes 39th Season of Tree Planting

YEREVAN – Armenia Tree Project (ATP) has recently completed its 39th season of planting. Nearly 44,000 trees were planted this spring throughout Armenia, including decorative and fruit trees and more than 10,000 reforestation seedlings in the Lori region. This brings the total number of trees planted and rejuvenated by ATP to 4,268,516 since 1994.

ATP’s Community Tree Planting (CTP) program revitalizes urban and rural territories by partnering with residents to plant at parks, public institutions and other sites in Armenia and Artsakh.

Plantings were organized this spring in 111 sites, 20 of which are new for ATP. The sites recently greened include museum grounds, schoolyards, hospitals, military bases, churches and orphanages. The first planting of the season was at Haghartsin, where 150 thuya (arbor vitae) evergreens were added to the green space around the monastery.

ATP also planted 2,144 trees in



ATP partnered with organizations and local residents of all ages to plant nearly 44,000 trees at 111 sites throughout Armenia and Artsakh this spring.

Prince Charles Visits Armenia

PRINCE CHARLES, from page 1

During his visit to Matenadaran, the ancient manuscript repository and research center in Yerevan, Prince Charles was greeted by a group of environmentalists protesting the opening of the Amulsar gold mine.

During his visit, Prince Charles also met with President Serge Sargisian at the presidential residence and leader of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.

The main purpose of his current trip is to promote a charity project, Yerevan, My Love, initiated by the UK-based former Armenian Prime Minister Armen Sarkissian.

As reported by the presidential press service, during the meeting President Sargisian welcomed the Prince of Wales in Armenia, where, according to him, he has an opportunity to get familiarized with the country, its people and historical-cultural heritage.

Emphasizing that Armenian-British relations have a centuries-old history and that the Armenian people have a warm attitude towards the British people and the royal family, the Armenian leader asked Prince Charles to convey his greetings and good wishes to Queen Elizabeth II. The president warmly recalled his meeting with the Queen and the Prince in London in 2010.

“The attitude of our people towards you is special. It is conditioned by the fact that you are involved in a great deal of charity. The brightest example of it is the Yerevan, My Love project with your active participation and contribution,” President Sargisian said.

He also thanked the Yerevan, My Love founder, Armen Sarkissian, for initiating the project and organizing the visit of the Prince of Wales to Armenia.

Prince Charles, for his part, expressed his gratitude for the warm reception and hospitality and thanked Sarkissian for the invitation. He attached importance to the charity project as well as the construction of an international school in Dilijan, saying that for about 14 years he has been chairman of the United World Colleges consortium.

Prince Charles stressed that he values the attention that the Republic of Armenia pays to education and youth development programs and expressed readiness to expand his program of supporting young entrepreneurs also to Armenia.

Artsakh, mainly in the liberated territories of Martuni and Hadrut at the military bases and the town of Berdzor. “It is of special importance for us to organize tree plantings in these strategic territories of Artsakh,” said CTP program manager Arthur Harutyunyan.

Special plantings were undertaken at the Paros Lighthouse Foundation center in Ptghunk, the Evangelical church in Pyunik, Kharberd Orphanage, Gavar University and several boarding schools.

Public tree planting days were also organized to celebrate Earth Day with partner organizations and volunteers. At the first event conducted with the United Nations and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, more than 300 trees were planted in the Avan community of Yerevan together with several ambassadors and members of the international diplomatic community. Another Earth Day planting was organized at Jrahovit School with the United States Embassy staff and members of the Armenian Volunteers Corps.

“The list of ATP partners is growing every year. Two more companies oper-

ating in Armenia sponsored plantings in local communities, which included an opportunity for employees to plant trees along with members of the local community,” added Harutyunyan.

Mentor Graphics joined ATP to plant 300 trees around St. Astvatsatsin Church in Shahumyan Village, and another 150 trees were planted by LTXC Credence at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. In total, 28,125 trees were planted by ATP’s CTP program this spring.

ATP’s SEEDS program planted 14,973 seedlings on a 5-hectare territory in the community of Koghges, located in the Lori region of northern Armenia. The newly planted forest is comprised of pine, ash, mountain ash, wild apple and pear trees. The SEEDS program, or “Social, Economic and Environmental Development for Sustainability,” was launched in 2011 to enable ATP to build capacity in its reforestation programs while improving results through new methods of program delivery.

For more information, visit www.armeniatree.org.

Genocide Resolution Introduced in Congress

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A newly minted congressman, Valadao represents the 21st district of California (Central Valley area) and serves on the House Appropriations Committee. Valadao most recently spoke about the importance of affirming the Armenian Genocide at the April 24th congressional observance on Capitol Hill.

“In the face of Turkey’s ongoing denial of the Armenian Genocide, it is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that the truth of history and the proud chapter in American history in helping to save the survivors is remembered, so that the lessons of man’s inhumanity to man will never be forgotten,” stated Armenian Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny.



President Serge Sargisian, third from left, was among the dignitaries attending the ceremonies marking the May 28 celebration. Other guests included the Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, second from left.

Armenia Marks First Republic Day

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Sargisian said the younger generations need to be reminded of the important message of the heroes who made May 28 a reality.

“Be united! Be consolidated by statehood! Rely on your own strength! Thus we are capable not only to restore our statehood and independence disrupted for centuries but make considerable achievements. Their foundations were laid here and today we are standing here proudly as citizens of a free and independent country, the heirs of heroic grandfathers,” he said.



INTERNATIONAL

Turkish-Armenian Blogger Sentenced to Prison

By Ivan Watson and Gul Tuysuz

ISTANBUL (CNN) — A Turkish-Armenian blogger vowed to appeal a day after an Istanbul court sentenced him to more than a year in prison for blasphemy.

In a phone interview with CNN, Sevan Nisanyan accused Turkey's Islamic-rooted government of politically persecuting him.

"When I attacked the Islamist establishment they felt I overstepped my boundaries," said Nisanyan, who is a member of Turkey's tiny Armenian ethnic minority. "Here I am an Armenian doing something no Armenian has done in a Muslim country. This is really the height of boldness, of impudence. This is something you are not supposed to do."

According to Turkey's semi-official Anatolian Agency, Nisanyan received a one year and 45-day jail sentence for "openly denigrating the religious values held by a certain portion of the population."

Anatolian reported that Nisanyan's initial nine-month jail sentence was extended because "the crime was committed through the press." Turkey is a majority Muslim country.

Nisanyan said the court cited a passage in his blog published last September that referred to the international uproar triggered by cheaply made Hollywood film called the "Innocence of Muslims." The film, which ridiculed the most revered figure in Islam, the Prophet Mohammed, sparked violent protests in Egypt and Libya. The Turkish prime minister also denounced the movie as "Islamophobic," though protests on Turkish streets were small and peaceful.

On Wednesday, Nisanyan published an English translation of the passage in question from his September 2012 blog post:

"It is not 'hate crime' to poke fun at some Arab leader who, many hundred years ago, claimed to have established contact with Deity and made political, economic and sexual profit as a result. It is almost a kindergarten-level case of what we call freedom of expression," Nisanyan wrote.

Since the blog was published last year, Nisanyan said, prosecutors have taken him to court simultaneously for this passage in three separate courts across Turkey.

Nisanyan said he represented himself at the criminal court in Istanbul, without the help of an attorney. He acknowledged that he took a confrontational approach in his statement to the court, arguing that no one should be prosecuted for discussing the historical background of a religious figure.

"In consequence of his claim to have established contact with Deity, this Muhammed, who was a lowly merchant, acquired political dominion over all Arabian and gained the financial means to raise 30,000-strong armies," Nisanyan wrote, citing his statement to the court.

"It is an incontrovertible historical fact that this person made political, economic and sexual profit from his alleged contact with Deity."

In his interview with CNN, Nisanyan recognized that he was deliberately throwing fuel on the fire regarding his conviction.

"I'm hoping to contribute to the ongoing debate in this country on freedom of expression and freedom of religion," Nisanyan said. "I think I'm performing a useful public service."

This is not the first time people have been convicted of insulting Islam in Turkey.

Last month Fazil Say, Turkey's most famous classical pianist, received a 10-month suspended jail sentence for insulting Islamic values in a series of statements disseminated on Twitter.

International press freedom organizations have slammed Turkey in previous

years for having more journalists in prison than any other country.

On April 30, the human rights watchdog Amnesty International denounced a new package of legislation sponsored by the Turkish government.

"Amnesty International believes the reform package will allow abusive prosecutions to continue, forcing still more political activists, journalists and human rights defenders to face jail sentences for carrying out their work," Amnesty wrote.

According to Anatolian, the judge in Istanbul ruled "not to postpone the punishment" for Nisanyan because he has a record of prior convictions.

Nisanyan served 11 months in prison a decade ago for committing building violations in the tourist Turkish village of Sirince, where he owned and operated a hotel.

Prior to becoming an outspoken political blogger and newspaper columnist, Nisanyan was a prominent travel writer and hotelier who promoted the boutique hotel and bed-and-breakfast industry in Turkey.

He said he is currently appealing a dozen convictions with sentences that add up to 20 years in jail.

During his previous prison term, Nisanyan wrote and published a dictionary of Turkish etymology, a study of the history of words.

Six Bosnian Croat Ex-Leaders Convicted of War Crimes

THE HAGUE (BBC) — A UN tribunal has found six former Bosnian Croat leaders guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the 1990s Balkan wars.

They were convicted of persecuting and murdering Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) and other non-Croats in a plan to create an ethnic Croat state in Bosnia.

The court in The Hague jailed Jadranko Prlic, the leader of the self-proclaimed state, for 25 years.

The other five men received prison sentences ranging from 10 to 25 years.

A three-judge panel at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) convicted the wartime leaders by a majority decision.

The judges ruled that murders, persecutions, rape and torture of Muslims "were not committed in a random manner by a few undisciplined soldiers" but were part of the plan to remove Muslims from the self-proclaimed Herceg-Bosna state in 1993-94.

They also said it was a religiously-motivated campaign.

Referring to the forcible expulsion of the Muslim population from the eastern part of the city of Mostar, the panel said: "Muslims were woken up in the middle of the night, beaten and forced to leave their apartments, often still in their pajamas. Many women, including a girl of 16, were raped by HVO [Croatian Defence Council] soldiers".

The aim of the Bosnian Croat campaign was to carve out an ethnic Croat mini-state, annexing it later to become part of a greater Croatia.

The judges also concluded that late Croat President Franjo Tudjman was a key participant in the plan.

The trial, which began in 2006, was the tribunal's longest running case.

The six men are now expected to appeal.

Very Rev. Aren Jebejian Elected Primate of Canada

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Jebejian was born on January 24, 1966, to Fr. Nersess and Yn. Aurora Jebejian in Detroit. At the age of 4, following his father's ordination to the priesthood, the Jebejians moved to the Springfield, Mass., suburb of Longmeadow. In 1983, his family moved to Florida, where he attended St. Thomas University in Miami, a private Augustinian School. He served on the editorial board of the university's newspaper and worked as a resident assistant. While at college, he was one of 30 students who spent a semester studying in El Escorial, Spain.

After graduating, he studied at Holy Echmiadzin from 1989-1990, where he was ordained as a deacon by Archbishop Nersess Bozabalian on June 24, 1990. Jebejian returned to the United States and graduated in 1994 from St. Nersess and St. Vladimir Seminaries with a

Master of Divinity degree. He has also completed a three-month clinical pastoral education internship at Jean's Hospital in Philadelphia and studied classical Armenian and liturgics in Jerusalem.

He served as a steward at the 1991 Central Committee Meeting of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland; at the WCC Faith and Order Meeting in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, in 1992; and as a youth representative at the WCC Central Committee Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1994.

In January of 1996, he was tasked with working to revive the ACYOA Seniors. During his two-year tenure working in the Diocesan Department of Youth Ministry, he oversaw the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the ACYOA and worked to revitalize the seniors, juniors, and the ACYOA Armenian Studies Program.

In January of 1998, he was assigned to the St. Gregory the Illuminator parish of Chicago, IL, as its deacon-in-charge. He serves on the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago and was a founding member of the Chicago Ecumenical Millennium Committee. Since 1991, he has been a member of the National Oriental Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue.

In September 1999, Jebejian served as a delegate from the Eastern Diocese to the National Ecclesiastical Assembly to elect the 132nd Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin I.

He was ordained as a priest April 24 and 25, 2004, by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian at St. Vartan Cathedral in New York City.

Jebejian serves on the Hye Camp board of directors as well as the Midwest Regional Council of Armenian Churches.

International News

Azeri MP Offers to Involve NATO in Karabagh Settlement

BAKU (PanArmenian.net) — A member of Azerbaijan's Milli Majlis said this week that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) possesses powers to monitor all of the ingoing regional and international processes.

In this context, Zahid Orudzh attached importance to the institution's involvement in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, stressing the need to intensify ties with NATO.

"Despite our membership in the Non-Aligned Movement, North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the current security format. We will have to intensify efforts to deepen ties with NATO, in case of Baku's decision against joining Russia-formed military blocs," he said.

"NATO is against open intervention in regional problems and well aware of those issues. Documents protecting Azerbaijan's territorial integrity were adopted during the institutions' summits in Washington and Istanbul. Any agreement on Karabagh issue must enter into force with the help of a certain institution," Orudzh said, adding that OSCE lacks a military institution.

Israel Armenians Open Evening School

JERUSALEM (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The opening of an evening school is the greatest achievement of Ararat, the Union of Armenians of Israel, the press attaché of the union said this week.

Mendel Korsunski said the evening school can help uphold national identity among Armenian children. "The school promotes native language study and national culture awareness, so that despite the distance, children don't lose touch with their historic homeland," he said.

As he noted, the project became possible through the efforts of a member of the Armenian community of Israel Knarik Gevorgyan, with the Armenian Diaspora Ministry extending significant assistance.

Azerbaijan Using Drug Charges to Stifle Dissent, HRW Says

BAKU (Agence France-Presse) — Azerbaijan is increasingly using false charges of drug possession to arrest government critics in a bid to stifle dissent ahead of presidential polls in October, Human Rights Watch said May 27.

Four activists critical of strongman Ilham Aliyev's government were detained between March and May this year on "bogus" drug charges as part of a growing crackdown on civil society groups in the former Soviet state, the rights group said in a statement.

"The latest cases are part of an intensified government campaign against its critics as elections grow near," Giorgi Gogia, senior South Caucasus researcher at Human Rights Watch, was quoted as saying in the statement. "These arrests and beatings send a very clear message to anyone who wants to engage in serious activism." The four men, a blogger, an opposition activist, a youth movement member and an imam, were detained by police after they were allegedly found in possession of small amounts of narcotics.

The activists, who remain in pre-trial detention, all deny the charges and three of the four say they have been badly beaten by security officials while in custody, the rights group said. Any display of public discontent or political dissent usually meets a tough government reaction in Azerbaijan. Earlier this year security officials suppressed a rare spate of protests, including one against alleged hazing in the army, and detained scores of activists across the country.

Aliyev has been in power since succeeding his father Heydar, a former KGB officer and Communist-era boss. He looks almost certain to win the presidential election in October. Human Rights Watch says authorities have previously used unfounded allegations of drug and weapon possession to detain critics, arresting five activists on drug charges between August 2011 and May 2012.



Community News

Anthony Jelenkerian Shoots for the Stars

By Arthur Hagopian

SYDNEY — Ever since he was a child, dribbling a dilapidated football across the footpaths of Hadjen, the Armenian “suburb” of Beirut, Vatche Jelenkerian had aspirations of one day joining the ranks of an elite football team and kicking a real ball.

The dream was shattered, along with a broken bone in his leg and the ligaments in his knee, when a bomb exploded near him in 1975 at the height of the Lebanese civil war. The shrapnels narrowly missed his heart, one of them lodging in the vicinity, a permanent reminder of his brush with mortality.

“It’s a miracle I am alive,” he said.

A lifetime later, in Sydney where he has found refuge, and started his own auto mechanic workshop, his son Anthony stands poised to rekindle that old dream.

As he gazed at the youth, 18, sipping his first beer at a family barbeque, Vatche Jelenkerian’s said his heart was filled with pride and confidence.

“I know the boy will make it. He has what it takes,” he said.

“It is what I’ve always wanted,” Anthony Jelenkerian said. “It’s the sport that I love to play. It’s the only one I am interested in and I just love the game,” he explained.

“He has always supported me,” Anthony Jelenkerian said of his father. “My mom and sisters do not like me to be away on practice for long, but they understand. At least the two older ones do. Little Mary, though, finds it difficult. She is very attached to me, but is too young to understand what is happening,” he added.

Anthony Jelenkerian said he knows it will not be easy, but with his determination that is the hallmark of the Jelenkerian clan (his sister, Siroun Jelenkerian, has been featured on TV, and has won prizes for dancing,) he is prepared to undertake all the travails of dedicated sportsmen in order to reach his goal.

“This is for keeps,” he said. “I want to be a professional football player.”

As an only son, Anthony Jelenkerian tends to be shy, but says he is prepared to be more assertive and outgoing when he is on a team.

Anthony Jelenkerian said his ultimate goal is to play for an English team on their home turf. Two years ago, he traveled to the UK’s Sheffield Academy to do some preliminary training and liked the ambience of the soccer field there so much, he did not want to return to Sydney.

At the end of this month, he will be heading to England again, along with the whole Jelenkerian family, for some training and exploratory approaches to prospective teams.

Asked about his favorite football player, Anthony had no hesitation in saying, “Fernando Torres when he first joined Liverpool.”

He will be staying in England for at least five weeks to undergo trials for some teams, and is not sure yet which team he will eventually sign up with.



Anthony Jelenkerian, budding football star in action



The three honorees, standing, Virginia Ohanian and Nevart Telanian, with Ann Hintlian, seated

Assembly Pays Tribute to a Trio of Veteran Supporters

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Warriors come in all shapes, sizes and ages. For the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA), the term defines a trio of women who have stood by the Assembly since its inception almost 40 years ago. On Thursday, May 16, the organization paid tribute to Ann Hintlian, Virginia Ohanian and Nevart Talanian at an elegant reception high atop the Hyatt Hotel, during which each of the three received the organization’s Distinguished Humanitarian Award.

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

The program featured tributes to the three, as well as a visit from US Rep. Edward Markey (D-Ma), a candidate to fill the Senate seat of John Kerry, who was appointed Secretary of State by President Barack Obama.

During the program, Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian spoke about entering the race for the US House seat of Markey, should he win the Senate race.

The program was started by Registrar of Motor Vehicles Rachel Kaprielian, who introduced Koutoujian, the program’s master of ceremonies. Kaprielian, a former colleague of Koutoujian in the Massachusetts State House, called him her “khna-mi,” or family. She showered him with praise, saying he was “doing incredible things that have never been done” by someone in that office, including bringing a more enlightened approach, such as turning an unused room into a chapel for reflection and prayer.

Koutoujian, when he took the podium, praised the Assembly’s role in pushing the Genocide issue as well as better relations between the US and Armenia. “We’re here to celebrate the work of the Armenian Assembly as well as the work of these three women, Ann, Ginny and Nevart.”

The three, he said, have made contributions both in terms of money and volunteer hours to “allow the Assembly’s important work to go on. It is an organization that educates both locally and nationally. I have relied on their information frequently.”

Van Krikorian, chairman of the Assembly, spoke next, saying that after hearing the previous speakers, he had to scrap his previously written comment. “I was struck by Peter’s and Rachel’s comments. We are honoring [the honorees’] spirits and families,” he said. He singled out the Massachusetts Armenian community “where the Assembly has such a solid base. The Massachusetts Armenian community is one of the strongest and best.”

He praised the trio for their zeal and their urging on the Assembly. “Frankly, we felt like we were working for our mothers,” he said. “We are honoring that spirit.”

He also praised the Assembly’s “particular attention to the future” in the form of internships.

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St. John Parish Commemorates Armenian Genocide

DETROIT — On April 24, Fr. Garabed Kochakian led a commemoration of the Armenian Genocide at St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit. This year, a new monument stood adjacent to the 1915 Martyr’s Monument, and with it, a new tradition of remembrance emerged.

The new monument was a project that spanned several years and remembered the pogroms of 1988-1991 of Armenians in politically-unstable Azerbaijan. Shortly after the collapse of the Soviet government, thousands of Armenians suffered this “smaller scale genocide.” Eventually, those who survived found refuge across the globe and many settled in metropolises like Brooklyn, NY, Detroit, Mich. and Los Angeles, Calif., to name a few. Many of these survivors set the unpleasant memories aside and were left to pick up the pieces of their life and move forward.

But their struggles would not be a forgotten page in a long chapter of struggles that the Armenian people have faced. The idea of Kochakian, the memorial dedicated to survivors of these tragic events was guided under leadership of Ed Korkoian, called “Haigy” at the St. John Parish. Korkoian has been a member of the church for more than 50 years, committing himself to various Armenian causes. The vision also could not have been executed without the time, trove and talent of Arthur Lazaryan, the architect of this meaningful project.

Fast forward several years and the vision finally became a reality. The church sanctuary was married with solemn music and prayers as the evening began with a requiem. Once the church ceremony was over, parishioners and visitors shifted outside. “And then,” Kochakian said, “It was as if God pushed the clouds aside and let the sun peek out.”

The change of venue from ambient lighting to bright surroundings revealed a record-breaking amount of people. Some were faces Kochakian sees every Sunday, like Deacon Mihran Hoplamazian, while others like the Der Boghossians came from Grand Rapids, Mich. — a journey that takes three hours each way.

After Kochakian read a prayer for the 1915 Martyr’s Monument, he moved on to bless the new Baku-Sumgait-Kirovobad Memorial. Tears were shed as those who lost family in the Armenian Genocide were reminded that the struggle for survival continues into the present.

After the flowers were laid, a traditional Madagh dinner was served inside the Cultural Hall. It was here that guest speaker Chris Bohjalian spoke about his most recent publication. Deacon Richard Norsigian, co-chair with Edward Korkoian, served as MC. He welcomed all those present and introduced Bohjalian who explored his personal journey to writing *The Sandcastle Girls*, a sweeping historical love story deeply steeped in his own ethnic Armenian roots. Bohjalian narrated his journeys to Armenia and the inspiration that led pen to paper. Later in the evening, Bohjalian signed copies of both *The Sandcastle Girls* and *Midwives*.



COMMUNITY NEWS

AGBU FOCUS 2013 to Benefit GenNext Program

SAN FRANCISCO – This summer, the seventh AGBU FOCUS weekend heads west to California. As literary icon William Saroyan once proclaimed, “No city invites the heart to come to life as San Francisco does. Arrival in San Francisco is an experience in living,” which

AGBU’s programs on generations of Armenians. For the past 12 years, AGBU FOCUS has brought together more than 2,500 YPs in five different cities: New York City (2001, 2007), Montreal (2003), Miami (2005), Chicago (2009) and Paris (2011). Now in 2013, FOCUS

members take on San Francisco and hope to attract new individuals.

“We are thrilled to host this exciting event in our backyard and look forward to welcoming a truly global young professional crowd. An incredible weekend awaits attendees of this year’s FOCUS. For the first time on the west coast, the four-day event-filled weekend will showcase San Francisco and wine country in unique ways exclusive to

FOCUS 2013,” said AGBU FOCUS 2013 Co-Chair Steven Cherezian.

AGBU FOCUS 2013 kicks off Thursday, August 1 with Perspectives, a panel discussion and networking opportunity for guests to share viewpoints on a hot topic. The panel will be held downtown at Spur Urban Center, a non-profit incubator for research, education and advocacy. On Friday, August 2, an all-inclusive wine tour, lunch and tasting will take place at Chateau St. Jean Winery in Sonoma wine country and Friday night, the action will shift to one of San Francisco’s nightclubs. Saturday, August 3, features FOCUS on Art at SoMA dis-

trict’s 2nd Street Gallery and culminates that evening with the FOCUS 2013 Gala set in San Francisco City Hall. A farewell brunch on Sunday will offer YPs the opportunity to bid farewell to the friends and the city. AGBU FOCUS 2013 will raise funds for AGBU’s Generation Next Mentorship Program (GenNext) in Los Angeles. Created in 1997 by a handful of YP volunteers under the auspices of the AGBU, and with the assistance of the Glendale Unified School District, the goal of GenNext is to assist Southern California youth of Armenian descent by providing them with positive role models, guidance and support. Through one-on-one mentoring, monthly group activities, and parenting seminars, the program has aided and supported Armenian students who are faced with difficult choices in today’s often tense school environment including issues of acculturation, drug and alcohol abuse, peer pressure, violence in schools, gang involvement and other serious adolescent challenges. Throughout the year, mentors and mentees make a commitment to one another, developing a friendship which helps the mentor to become a guiding force in the student’s life.

“One of the highlights of AGBU FOCUS is

the charitable aspect of the event. With FOCUS being hosted in California for the first time, GenNext is an ideal benefactor. Our fundraising is underway, and the event will also help increase awareness of the important work AGBU GenNext is accomplishing in Southern California,” expressed AGBU FOCUS Co-Chair Greg Nemet.

Hundreds of young Armenians have already benefitted from GenNext’s programming; however, with a waiting list of more than 90 at-risk adolescents at any given time, today’s fundraising efforts are critical to the program’s long-term sustainability and expansion. AGBU FOCUS donors will be making a direct and lasting impact on the future of the bright and promising youth in Southern California.

AGBU FOCUS 2013 ticket packages are on sale now and weekend accommodations are available at a discounted rate at the Hotel Adagio near Union Square. For more information about the weekend’s events and to register, purchase tickets or book hotel rooms, visit www.agbufocus.org. To donate to FOCUS 2013 in support of AGBU GenNext, visit www.agbufocus.org/donate.

For more information about AGBU and its worldwide programs, visit www.agbu.org.



YPs from around the world gathered in Paris for AGBU FOCUS 2011.

hundreds of AGBU young professionals will discover in August.

The four-day event will take guests through the city’s culture and nightlife, to the region’s scenic wine tasting and picturesque backdrops, offering visitors and locals alike a new FOCUS experience.

Since its launch in New York City in 2001, AGBU FOCUS has distinguished itself as an event for Armenian young professionals (YPs). What started as an anniversary celebration is now a biennial weekend event, offering YPs an opportunity to connect with hundreds of international peers while highlighting the impact of

Assembly Pays Tribute to Veteran Supporters

TRIO, from page 4

In her comments, Ohanian said, “I hope each and every one of you remains good Armenians and don’t forget your roots. That small nation is mighty strong.”

Talanian said she was speaking on behalf of Hintlian too, noting, “It means a lot to us. We would not be honored for our philanthropic work if not for three very dear people, Deran, Michael and Charlie [their husbands]. Their hard work and perseverance allowed us to be philanthropic to others.”

Hintlian has been a member of the Holy Trinity Armenian Church. She has been a Life Trustee of the Assembly, and was a donor to the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Plain. She has supported the Armenian Heritage Park.

Ohanian and her husband, the late Michael Ohanian, were Life Trustees of the Assembly. After visiting Armenia, she became a major donor to the Armenia Tree Project as well as founding the Michael and Virginia Ohanian Center for Environment Studies in Armenia. She also is a member of Holy Trinity Armenian Church.

Talanian, another Holy Trinity member, is a Life Trustee of the Assembly and a supporter of the Armenia Tree Project.

Anthony Barsamian of the Assembly read a letter from Carolyn Mugar, who could not be present at the event. “They have been at the heart of our work. ... I am with you in spirit. I

hope you know how deeply you are in my heart,” he read.

Barsamian praised the Assembly not only for the work it does lobbying, but the work “behind the scenes,” including making the position of Armenia more valuable to the US government. One area, he stressed, was communicating Armenia’s peaceful intentions and values.

In introducing the evening’s guest, Markey, Koutoujian said that he had been “a friend to our community for 40 years,” and that he had represented his district, which includes Watertown, well. Koutoujian said that Markey had been a longtime member of the Armenian Caucus in Washington and a “proponent of Armenia.”

Speaking briefly, Markey said he was “proud” of Watertown’s response during the recent terror attack. “It was tragedy and triumph at the same time,” he said.

He said the time was right to recognize the Armenian Genocide and let the Turkish government know that they could not erase a people from their midst. He also praised the local Armenian community for its drive and success.

They also singled out longtime supporters of the Assembly James and Marta Batmasian, who were in Massachusetts for the program, for their work with inner city youth. “They make difference. Jim and Marta go to mass with the kids and they make sure they feel love. It is very inspirational,” Koutoujian said.



From left, Anthony Barsamian, LuAnn Ohanian, Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, Virginia Ohanian, Rep. Edward Markey, Nevart Talanian, Registrar Rachel Kaprielian and Armenian Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny



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COMMUNITY NEWS

OBITUARY

Dr. Jack Hachigian

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — Born in Paterson, NJ, in 1929, Dr. Jack Hachigian attended elementary school there and graduated from Eastside High School. He was an altar boy starting at age 6,



Dr. Jack Hachigian

was ordained as a deacon in the Armenian Apostolic Church in 1951 and spearheaded the successful campaign to build a new church in Westchester, New York.

He graduated from the University of Michigan with a BA in 1950 and took his first job at the Manhattan

Project at Columbia University, as a Research Assistant to Dr. C.S. Wu (a member of the National Women's Hall of Fame).

Commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the US Air Force during the Korean War, Dr. Hachigian attended electronics school for one year in Biloxi, Miss. Receiving his Ravens Wings, he was sent to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (Research and Development Command), where he worked on the design of electronic warfare and reconnaissance equipment. He was the unit chief responsible for developing the first spy satellites, and electronic data processing using computers.

He completed his doctorate at Indiana University while writing his dissertation at Brown University after leaving the Air Force. His specialties were in Markov Processes, computer simulation of Random Processes and the sterilization of food. He published 26 research papers in leading journals and taught advanced mathematics as a professor at Cornell University and City University New York. He also served as the President of the American Statistical Association.

Hachigian retired to San Diego in 1990. In retirement, his interest turned to creating

ceramic crosses based on miniatures found in ancient Armenian manuscripts (9th to 14th centuries). He created more than 20 designs. His works have been purchased and can be found all over the United States, Europe and even in Zimbabwe. He also published three articles on ceramics, with a front cover review article on the works of Wang Chen Wen (a now famous ceramist in China) and a piece about his ceramic crosses, in *Ceramics Monthly* magazine.

Keenly aware of his heritage and the history of the Armenian people, and having been ordained as a deacon in 1951, he designed a monument to commemorate their tragic past, based on their three pillars of strength: culture, faith and language. His passionate efforts drove the building of several pieces of the Monument, which is scheduled to be installed in 2015 for the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

For many decades Hachigian was a member of St. John Garabed Armenian Church in San Diego, where he served as Parish Council chairman and spearheaded the campaign to pay off the mortgage. He was an advisor for several years to Junior Achievement of Armenia, and he organized several years of the Armenian Opera Night in San Diego, whenever Armenian vocalists made appearances with the San Diego Opera. He was also a member of the Knights of Vartan, an Armenian fraternal organization, and was instrumental in the formation of its San Diego Chapter. He served as a member of the Trex Armenian Fraternity since 1991. He also authored his Musa Dagh-themed cookbook, *Secrets of An Armenian Kitchen*.

In 2006, he received an Encyclical from Catholicos Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch of the Armenian Apostolic Church, honoring him for his years of service to the Armenian church and community.

He is survived by his children, Garo Hachigian and Nina Hachigian (Joe Deegan-Day), his two grandchildren, four nephews, many grandnieces and grandnephews and cousins.

Inurnment at Fort Rosecrans Military Cemetery was on Tuesday, May 30. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the St. John Garabed Trust Fund, 4473 30th Street, San Diego, CA 92116.

Donations

The following donations were made to the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc. in lieu of flowers for the passing of Arsen Demirjian in Chicago, member of the ADL District Committee of US and Canada and the Tekeyan Cultural Association Central Board of Directors:

Dr. Armen and Levon Demerdjian, \$1,000; Mr. and Mrs. Vartan Paylan, \$200; Mr. and Mrs. Sarkis Tokat, \$125; Oscar Tatosian, \$100; Seta Vartivarian, \$100; Dr. Charles Pounian, \$100; Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Daleiden, \$100; 8. Harout and Never Seferian, \$100; Vartan Seferian, \$100; Mr. and Mrs. Ara Fermanian, \$100; Edmond and Nora Azadian, \$100; Sirop and Maro Bedrosian, \$100; Dr. and Mrs. Berj Gueyikian, \$100; Mr. and Mrs. William Green, \$50; Martin Abezetian, \$50; Zohrab Balian, \$50; L. Tcheupdjian, \$50; Mariam Tatosian, \$50 and Professional Limousine Service, \$25.

Wishes for Health

Wishes for a speedy recovery go to ADL District Committee Co-Chairs Papken Megerian and Edmond Azadian. Megerian is recovering from a fall at home which resulted in him requiring surgery. Azadian had cataract surgery.

We wish them both a speedy recovery.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Knights Send more than \$400,000 in Medical Gear to Rural Armenia

By Jack Medzorian

BOSTON – In April the Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge team completed its ninth 40-foot container of medical equipment and supplies for shipment to hospitals in Armenia. This container, with goods valued at \$354,300, is destined for a hospital in the remote village of Artsvaberd, located in the northeastern corner of Armenia in the Shamshadin region of the Tavoush marz, on the Azerbaijani border, five hours by car from Yerevan.

The 30-bed hospital in Artsvaberd, the largest village of the Berd territory with a population of 3,600, serves the medical needs of the 16,000 inhabitants in its nearby villages. There is a polyclinic in Berd, but it is not easily accessible to the Artsvaberd region villagers because of poor roads. The hospital has six doctors, including a gynecologist, family doctor, internal medicine doctor, dentist, radiologist and general medicine/ultrasound specialist, 32 nurses and a total of 51 workers. The building is a sturdy

stone structure with 30 patient rooms, five for maternity, 15 for general patients and 10 for children. One third of the building was renovated a short while ago and is in very good condition, with new windows, floors, bathrooms and a new roof. The rest is in poor condition. The Knights have appealed to the new minister of health, who has promised to complete the renovation. The hospital is also responsible for three clinics in nearby villages.

The population is confronting economic difficulties, with 80-percent unemployment, as well as attacks by neighboring Azerbaijan. Though there has been a cease-fire agreement since 1994, the Azeris engage in regular unprovoked attacks, terrorizing civilians using snipers, incursions into Armenian territory, bombing homes and even machine-gunning schools to frighten the population to get them to leave the territory. There are casualties and deaths among not only military personnel but also civilians in the area. But the population persists in staying there at all costs.

Jack Medzorian, director of the Knights of Vartan Armenia Medical Aid Project, stated,

“During my trip to the area in May 2012 I made a needs assessment of the hospital, based on which I prepared a preliminary configuration for a 40-foot container including medical equipment and supplies, considering not only the needs of the hospital, but also the capabilities of the personnel and available utilities.” Partners on this project are the International Medical Equipment Collaborative Inc. (IMEC) in North Andover, Mass.; the SHEN NGO, the Knights’ coordinator in Armenia and the United Armenian Fund (UAF) that handles shipment of the container to Yerevan – all of which are non-profit, humanitarian organizations.

The container for Artsvaberd includes suites for critical care, patient exams and physical therapy, patient room beds and furniture, a complete doctor’s office donated by a retiring doctor, an infant incubator, a dental suite, a colposcope, patient monitoring



From left, Dr. Nishan Goudsouzian, Jack Medzorian and Sarkis Gennetian at IMEC packing supplies and equipment for Armenia



From left, Jack Medzorian and Dr. Gagik Dallakyan, director of Artsvaberd Village Hospital

systems, EKG machines, and numerous medical supplies for the hospital and the three village clinics that it serves.

In addition, three pallets of equipment have been included in the container for the Arabkir Children’s Pediatric Hospital in Yerevan, including an anesthesiology machine, patient monitors and orthopedic equipment and supplies. Also donated was the expense to repair the hospital ambulance, which was idled because of needed repairs. The container, valued at \$354,300, is expected to arrive in July-August.

The volunteer team that worked on this project is headed by Medzorian, assisted by Sarkis Gennetian, Dr. Nishan Goudsouzian and other members of the Knights, including Krikor Shaboyan, Richard Cherkerzian, Aurelian Mardiros, Albert Movsesian, Paul Boghosian, Haig Deranian, Greg Yergatian, Nishan Moutafian and Raffi Yeghiayan.

Medzorian commented, “We are grateful to the above volunteers and others at IMEC who worked faithfully to pick, pack, strap and wrap the 20 pallets of equipment and supplies for

this container and the numerous donors who contributed generously to our fund-raising appeal to help cover expenses.”

St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School Hosts Science Fair/STEM Expo

WATERTOWN – This year, St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School’s Annual Science Fair, held on April 26, became an all-day STEM Expo.

In 2011, a four-year grant from the Gelfand Family Charitable Trust helped the school establish the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Initiative throughout the school, in order to create and support a deep culture of inquiry-based teaching and learning that excites and inspires the students.

The STEM Expo was planned by the STEM Team, composed of Principal Houry Boyamian, Dr. Sevan Ficici and Kimberly Kamborian and supported by the teachers and the STEM Parent Group. The activities created excitement and interest in the students.

Among the activities were:

-A whale and marine life presentation by Cynde McInnis, who brings into schools her passion for and knowledge of whales to help shape future generations of ocean advocates. After her PowerPoint presentation, the students entered by groups of 25 a huge inflatable whale and were able to learn about the structure and interior organs of whales.

-A video conference with NASA scientist Arbi Karapetian, who spoke live about the Curiosity Mars rover from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena via web cam, and answered the students’ questions.

-Representatives from iRobot presented practical robots and the science behind them.

-Engineers from the Boston Society of Civil Engineers led students to design a new transportation system for Boston.

The STEM Expo ended with a viewing of the students’ science fair projects.

To learn more about St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School, visit www.ssaes.org.



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New York METRO

New Tekeyan Center Opens in New Jersey

Dignitaries Celebrate New Site for Community Activism

By Baydzig Kalaydjian

ENGLEWOOD, N.J. — Since its inception in 1947 and until the present time, the local chapters of the Tekeyan Cultural Association have been the guarantors of the organization's health and vitality. In the past, in other Armenian communities, Tekeyan chapters have played a dominant role. With the opening earlier this month of a new Tekeyan center in New Jersey, the community will be better able to connect with its cultural heritage.

Guests and various dignitaries were welcomed by the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) executive committee members upon their arrival.

With the participation of benefactor Nazar Nazarian, Primate of Eastern Diocese Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Armenia's Ambassador to the United Nations Garen Nazarian and Dr. Nubar Berberian, the traditional ceremony of ribbon cutting and blessing of bread and salt took place.

The Primate delivered an opening statement in which he said, "We announce the opening of this center so that this organization will continue its cultural mission. We are all well aware that the TCA has never deviated from its principles in the United States, Middle East and Armenia. It has successfully carried all responsibilities entrusted to it and has preserved the Armenian cultural heritage and identity and has passed on from one generation to the next. I am pleased to see that today, dedicated members of the TCA continue their mission with exuberance. We bless today not also this center but all future cultural activities that will offer joy to the general public."

Welcoming remarks in Armenian were presented by Hilda Haroutunian, who welcomed all gathered. She said that the TCA will encourage all socio-cultural initiatives undertaken by the youth and that it will have its presence and its roles within the Armenian-American community life.

"Although it puts us under financial obligation to have such



Hagop Vartavarian, left, presents a gift to retiring TCA Executive Secretary Kevork Marashlian.

a center, it makes a lot of sense in terms of geography, since a number of our members and friends come from Long Island and southern New Jersey," she said.

Haroutunian underscored the center's strategic significance. "Not only for the United States is New York an important city, but also internationally. It is indeed important for the Armenian-American community, because it is the seat of the Eastern Diocese, the headquarters of the AGBU and is home to Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations. Thus, it is imperative that the TCA and its sponsor organization, the ADL, enhance their presence here."

A member of the TCA Central Committee, Hagop Vartavarian, touched upon the world-wide activities of TCA and alluded to the Armenian-American community life. "There is no doubt that the leaders of organizations in this area rejoice with the opening of this center, which throws open its doors not only for our membership but also for the community at large, without any prejudice. This center is also a living testament of our community's active life and the firm determination of our national leadership, thus supporting the effort to preserve our Armenian identity and also establishing harmonious cooperation with existing organizations."

"Today is the realization of many years' dream," continued



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate, greets Armenia's Ambassador to the United Nations Garen Nazarian, right, and Hagop Vartavarian of the ADL and Tekeyan Cultural Association.

Vartavarian. "I also know that the friends of the TCA believe that it is an urgent necessity for our community to have a youth cen-



From left, Ambassador Garen Nazarian, TCA's Baydzig Kalaydjian and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian

ter to prevent assimilation. Our generation and generations that followed us received their national awareness in such centers and thus dedicated themselves to community life."

Dr. Vaghenag Tarpinian, co-chairman of the TCA, gave an overview of the past and a brief history of its establishment.

"The Greater New York Chapter of the TCA was established in New York city in 1969. Mr. Antranig Poladian, a founding member of the TCA, undertook this initiative. The newly-formed chapter convened its very first meeting at St. Vartan Cathedral Complex during which time then-Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, offered his blessings. Since then, we have maintained a cordial and friendly relationship



Koko Salbashian, Dr Noubat Berberian, Norair Meguerditchian



From left, Natalie Gabrielian, Hagop Vartavarian, Hilda Haroutunian and Diana Mekhitarian

with the Diocese and the Primate and the presence here today of Archbishop Barsamian is a vivid example of that," Tarpinian said.

Tarpinian then spoke about the history of the chapter, with its first chairman in New York being Souren Manuelian, a community activist who was executive director of the Diocese.

During the founding of the chapter, committee members included Lucy Piligian, Jack Antreasian, Antranik Poladian and Krikor Maksoudian.



Harout Chatmadjian

Added Tarpinian, "Thus TCA became to be known as one of the pillars of the cultural life of our community."

He noted that the TCA maintains close relations with the AGBU and many AGBU members financially have supported TCA activities, including Alex Manoogian, Edward Mardigian, Nazar Nazarian and Souren Fesjian, among others, who have been staunch supporters of the TCA. Tarpinian continued to say that in 1973, the first convention of the TCA in North America and Canada, was held at Kavoukjian Hall in New York. "It is a pleasure to see two of the participants of that con-



Hilda Haroutunian



From left, Dr. Vaghenag Tarpinian, Shahe Jebejian, Irma Der Stepanian, Olympia Jebejian

vention, Mr. and Mrs. Papken and Anahid Megerian, who are with us today."

Since 1969, TCA has been a strong cultural bridge between the Diaspora and Armenia. "In the past, during the Soviet era, their ties were with individual artists and friends," said Tarpinian. "Yet today we maintain those traditional ties with the leaders of independent Armenia and cultural activists. We commemorate Armenia's independence and the Liberation of Sushu in cooperation with other organizations. We are pleased to say that those ties have deepened thanks to our ambassador, Garen Nazarian."

Armenia's Ambassador to the United Nations, H. E. Mr. Garen Nazarian underlined the role played by the TCA in preserving the Armenian identity, language and culture. He also mentioned that the Armenian Church, Diasporan Armenian political parties and cultural organizations have played a parallel role.

Ambassador Nazarian thanked the TCA membership for



New York METRO



Hagop Vartivarian speaks at the program.

their patriotism and dedication. He alluded to the fact that during past years, the TCA and the Armenian Permanent Mission to the UN have jointly organized public events such as Armenian Independence Day, Armenian Army Day, liberation of Shushi and the 20th anniversary of Armenia's admission to the United Nations.

TCA New York Chapter Co-Chairman Harout Chatmajian expressed his appreciation for all those who supported the establishment of this center. He added that the center will enhance Tekeyan activities and become a gathering point for all Armenians.

"We are certainly indebted to the Armenian churches and the 'Hye Doon' [in Cliffside Park] which has provided their



Those gathered prayed at the beginning of the program.

facilities without charge," said Chatmajian. "Nevertheless, it was high time for us to have our own place. First and foremost, this center will serve as a studio for the TCA Mher Megerdichian theatrical group, which will celebrate the 15th



From left, Dr. Nubar Berberian, Hagop Vartivarian, Nazar Nazarian and Dr. Raffy Hovanesian

anniversary of its inception. We have come a long way in the service of Armenian culture. We have contributed immensely to the theatrical life of Armenian through our tours."

Chatmajian enumerated five events that will be the core of the center's activities. The center will serve as an exhibition hall with the assistance of Shoghag Hovhanesian, a recent recipient of the Ellis Island Medal, and a well-known figure in the art world.



From left, Baydzig Kalaydjian, Nver Gulekjian and Shoghig Chalian



From left, Dr. Jacques Gulekjian, Haroutiun Diratsuyan, Hagop Vartivarian and Shahe Jebejian



Committee members of the New Jersey/New York TCA with Primate Khajag Barsamian and Ambassador Garen Nazarian

It will also be used to hold receptions for guests from Armenia as well as literary meetings. Most importantly, the center will serve as a meeting place for the youth, he said.

"This will be indeed the meeting place of our future writers, composers, musicians, artists and writers," said Chatmajian. "From these ranks will emerge our future leaders, political thinkers and advocates for the Armenian cause. Those clubs have a very significant role to play in preparing our future leaders. It should be recalled that a few months back, our dear benefactor, Mrs. Nazarian, declared publicly that she 'received her national education' in the ADL Watertown Chapter and from the pages of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*."

On behalf of the TCA Central Committee, Dr. Nubar Berberian welcomed the attendants and congratulated the TCA membership for this achievement. "On behalf of the TCA Central Committee, I wholeheartedly congratulate you for this initiative," said Berberian. "The faith and the enthusiasm you can preserve, but not the language."

He continued: "Our life is split into two, happiness and concern. Today is the day of happiness. Imagine, one hundred years ago, according to a reliable German source, 10 percent of the population of Constantinople was composed of Armenians and Armenians published as many newspapers as the Turks did. Today our happiness is doubled despite the many difficult days through which we lived. One of the saddest events was the termination of the Baikar newspaper. That day I cried like no other day in my adult life. Today my happiness is multiplied because the TCA has not only main-

tained its center, but it is expanding it considerably.

He continued, "For the last 24 years, we had an executive secretary, Mr. Kevork Marashlian, who has recently decided to retire. For many years, for his dedicated and faithful service, he was held with high esteem by the Central Board. From now on, we will have Baydzig Kalayjian, the chief editor of Beirut's Zartonk Daily. She is one of the most outstanding female representatives in our diaspora. We applaud her for staying on

that position for so many years."

The evening's closing remarks were made by Barsamian, who spoke about the service for the welfare of Armenia as well as about a trip he made last year to Historic Armenia.

"Last year, during our journey, we visited Gesaria, the birthplace of famous poet Vahan Tekeyan and offered a requiem services at St. Garabed Church in his memory. I am pleased that



Dr. Vaghenag Tarpinian, Shahe Jebejian, Irma Der Stepanian, Olympia Jebejian

the spirit of Tekeyan is still alive and this comes through the activities of the Tekeyan Cultural Association. Based on Armenian spirit and moral principles, our leaders of the past have built their march to existence."

At the conclusion of the program, at the recommendation of many ADL members, Shoghig Chalian was accepted to the ranks to the Ramgavar Party by taking the oath of allegiance with the participation of numerous members.

(Translated from the Armenian by Taleen Babayan)



Hagop Semerdjian, Zarmine Boghossian, Missak Boghossian, Dr. Nubar Berberian, Harout Chatmajian, Shnorig Minassian, Haroutiun Diratsuyan



Arts & Living

Armaras Art Alliance To Present 'Young Stars' Concert

BOSTON – Young musicians will perform at the Armaras Art Alliance's "Young Stars" concert at New England Conservatory's Brown Hall on Sunday, June 2 at 4 p.m. The goal of the Young Stars program is to encourage musically gifted children in the greater Boston community and introduce their talented teachers.

The concert will feature 24 young people between the ages of 8 and 15 and will be hosted by 15-year-old pianist Shant Der Torossian of Waltham, and 16-year-old pianist Kristina Ayanian of Burlington.

Performers include Michael and Carina Bagdasarian of Newton; Alexander Solakhyan, Nicolo Carere, Alik Khatchigian, Nare Parseghian, Antranig Boynerian, Lea Babroudi, Moushegh Babroudi, Ariana Mahserejian and Meghri Der Vartanian of Belmont; Derek Nong of Westwood; Costa Angelakis and Sarine Meguerditchian of Arlington; Annie Pepanyan and Emily Danielian of Watertown and Serena Hajjar of Lexington.

The mission of Armaras is to create opportunities for people to get involved in culture, observe and enjoy the traditions and customs of diverse communities and help keep the Armenian society vibrant.

For ticket prices and reservations, contact Armaras Art Alliance at dianenahabedian@yahoo.com.

Composer to Celebrate 75th Birthday with Music Marathon

WESTON, Mass. – The Rivers School Conservatory will host a 75th birthday celebration and "Marathon of Music" of the works of Belmont composer, Dianne Goolkasian Rahbee. The celebration will take place on two consecutive Sundays, June 23 and June 30, in the A. Ramon Rivera Hall, 333 Winter St. The event is free and open to the public.

Rahbee has written more than 200 works for various instruments and voice.

More than 140 performers of all ages and levels including several distinguished concert artists will participate, coming from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington DC, Georgia, Michigan, Texas, California and Belgium. There will be 16 world premieres performed over the two days.

The premiere of two early romances for violin and piano will be performed by the composer's sister, violinist, Priscilla DerAnanian along with the *Violin Sonata Op.50* written for DerAnanian's 50th birthday. DerAnanian will be accompanied by pianist Kathryn Rosenbach.

The premiere of *Toccata Op. 229 Hygagan in Memoriam of Dr. Elizabeth "Betty" Gregory* will be performed on June 23. Mikaelian Meschian, a Brookline pianist and Amelia Donoghue, student of Ani Hovsepien, will perform.

On the June 30, during the 1 p.m. program, *Bagatelle Op. 213 Thank You Notes*, written for and dedicated to the great Russian Armenian pianist, Maria Gambarian, will be performed by Irina Baghdasaryan.

Of particular interest to Armenians, the *Piano Sonata No.5, Op.185, Kiss of Peace* chant from the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, will be performed during the June 23, program 1 at 1 p.m. by Rebecca Raffaelli, and again during program 2, at 3:30 p.m. by Kathryn Rosenbach.

For more information, contact gdranne3@gmail.com.



Razmik Tchakmakian

Young Diasporan Armenians Keeping Culture Alive One Song at a Time

TORONTO – Ten bold, black letters of the Armenian alphabet are etched across Razmik Tchakmakian's left upper arm, the letters comprising a powerful word that has been central to the plight of Armenians and significant to our endurance as a people. *Veradznoot*: rebirth. Above it rests a symbol of Armenian survival, Tsitsernakaberd, the Armenian Genocide Memorial, with a flame emerging from the steel slabs.

By Taleen Babayan

Though born thousands of miles away from the monument and his homeland, Tchakmakian and his two childhood friends, Sevag Titizian and Sevag Haroutunian's submerged patriotism is not only skin-deep, but entrenched in their hearts. So much so that these former Armenian school classmates decided to parlay their individual passion for music and become part of an Armenian band to continue the musical traditions of our culturally rich past.

Pyunik, which means "phoenix" in Armenian, pays homage to the lineage of talented Armenian musicians and singers who have helped sustain the unique melodies and compositions of Armenian musical traditions.

see PYUNIK, page 11



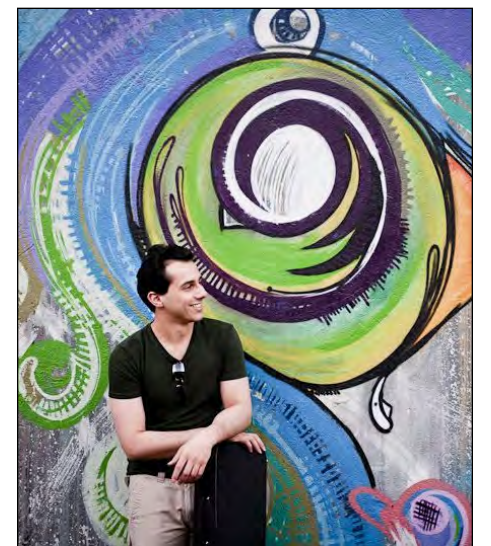
From left, group members Sevag Titizian, Sevag Haroutunian and Razmik Tchakmakian

Pomegranate Music Releases 'Surfboard,' Music by Classical Guitarist João Kouyoumdjian

OAKLAND, Calif. – Award-winning independent record label Pomegranate Music recently announced the release of "Surfboard: Solo Guitar Works from Brazil," the debut album from Brazilian-Armenian classical guitarist João Kouyoumdjian. Featuring a wide-ranging all-Brazilian program, "Surfboard" includes world premiere compositions dedicated to Kouyoumdjian by noted composers Raimundo Penaforte and Ricardo Calderoni, as well as a new arrangement by Carlos Barbosa-Lima. Other works include pieces by Antonio Carlos Jobim, Garoto and Villa-Lobos as well as other gems from the rich Brazilian classical guitar catalog.

Early praise for "Surfboard" has arrived quickly from noted classical guitar masters such as Lorenzo Micheli (SoloDuo), stating the album is: "Brilliant. Full of life and colors. A delightful collection of musical jewels, played with sensitivity and taste." Brazilian classical guitar legend Paulo Bellinati has also chimed in stating Kouyoumdjian "pays homage to Brazilian guitar, breaking every frontier that still may exist between classical and popular music."

Kouyoumdjian was born to an Armenian



João Kouyoumdjian

father and Brazilian mother in São José do Rio Preto, Brazil. A student of Grammy-Award-winning classical guitarist Sharon Isbin, he obtained his master's degree in music at the Juilliard School and placed first in the XXI Souza Lima National Guitar Competition in São Paulo, Brazil, in 2010.

Kouyoumdjian has performed with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra in Yerevan, as a guest soloist, presented various concerts at Carnegie Hall (Weill Recital Hall) and has appeared at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, as well as a number of prestigious concert halls in his native Brazil. He has been featured in *Classical Guitar Magazine* (UK) as a "Brazilian-Armenian guitarist of distinction" and has appeared on Brazilian television as a rising star in the music world.

This album is released on the Oakland-based record label, Pomegranate Music. The label is noted for branding and establishing the recording career of the Italian classical guitar duo SoloDuo (Lorenzo Micheli and Matteo Mela), as well as other noted classical and world music artists.

"Surfboard" took one year to produce spanning four different countries. The recording was done in Athens, Greece, design and art direction in Armenia, with post-production in the United States. This is Pomegranate Music's first album release in four years.

This album is available worldwide on Amazon.com, iTunes, and CD Baby.com

ARTS & LIVING

Young Diasporan Armenians Keeping Culture Alive One Song at a Time

PYUNIK, from page 10

“It was kind of like a young band rising out of the ashes of those artists before us,” said Tchakmakian.

Playing everything from covers of Harout Pamboukjian’s patriotic tunes to Tata’s crowd pleasers, Pyunik seeks to entertain and enliven the spirit of Armenian *kef*, no matter what the occasion.

Formed in 2006 by Haroutunian, the group had its beginnings at St. Mary’s Armenian Apostolic Church in Toronto, under the auspices of Fr. Meghrig Parikian, where the group would practice in the church’s hall. Although the group has shifted its members over time, it has found a successful harmony among its current members, who have all been musically inclined since childhood.

While Haroutunian, 25, Titizian, 25, and Tchakmakian, 23 brought a range of talents to the band, each grew up with an appreciation and emphasis placed on music and the arts in their households.

Playing the violin at the age of 9, Haroutunian switched to piano when his older

brother brought a keyboard home one day. He soon began taking private lessons with teachers who were experienced in jazz, classical music and the Divine Liturgy.

Veering more towards percussion, Tchakmakian started playing the drums at 10 and picked up the dhol and dumbeg over the years. Titizian, who is on vocals for Pyunik, also plays the piano and drums.

The band members’ musical influences also show diversity, which add to their originality as a group.

As a vocalist, Titizian has been heavily influenced by singers as diverse as Paul Baghdadian, Stevie Wonder, James Brown and Frank Sinatra.

“Armenian music has been a big influence in my life,” said Tchakmakian, who cites Harout Pamboukjian and Rouben Hakhverdyan as singers who have inspired him. “But rock music and classic rock have also played a significant role.”

Haroutunian’s musical interests also span genres and include French-Armenian favorite Charles Aznavour, Canadian guitarist Jesse



Sevag Titizian



Sevag Haroutunian

Cook and the American heavy metal band Metallica.

“They all paint different colors in my palette which allows for interpretation and usage of elements from each type of genre,” said Haroutunian.

“Armenian music is close to my heart,” said Haroutunian, who sang in the ARS Armenian School of Toronto’s school choir and church choir. “And we believe that young people around our age need to listen and dance to more Armenian tunes.”

Tchakmakian echoes Haroutunian’s words and though he has played in rock music bands, he says Armenian music, “is our own and the younger generation has to carry it on.”

Pyunik, which has steadily been making a name for itself over the years, has performed at a plethora of Armenian events both in Canada and in the US, including the AYF Olympics in Chicago, Montreal’s Kermese and Toronto’s Winterfest. Their most recent performance was on the Armenian Heritage Cruise earlier this year, which displayed their talents to a wider audience.

“Performing on the cruise was great,” said Tchakmakian. “There’s a cultural aspect that people may not have access to in their own communities.”

“It was a different dynamic to perform for people from all over the world,” said Titizian. “The vibe was great and it was nice to see everyone having a great time.”

The band would like to continue performing, writing more of their own music and eventually putting out an album. In the meantime, they are focused on their professions and their own independent projects, in which the childhood friends support each other’s creative endeavors, such as Titizian’s recently released *Du Im Sern Es*, a contemporary Armenian song with an energetic dance beat. Haroutunian composed the musical arrangements and Tchakmakian makes a cameo in the music video, which was shot on location in downtown Toronto. The song, written by Titizian, has already reached over 10,000 hits on YouTube. Tchakmakian’s YouTube channel, “Chaks Drums,” in which he covers popular songs, has already had more than 7,000 views in its short history.

“We are all children of a great community and an even greater culture who have lots to offer to the world,” said Haroutunian.

Their devotion to Armenian music brought them together. The commitment to their culture will keep them connected for years to come.

“All of us have the same passion of being Armenian and supporting Armenian causes,” said Titizian. “We are trying to keep our culture alive. If we don’t do it who will?”

Sponsor a Teacher in Armenia and Karabagh 2013



Since its inception in 2001, TCA’s ‘Sponsor a Teacher’ program has raised over \$563,000 and reached out to 4,440 teachers and school workers in Armenia and Karabagh.



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The Greedy Sparrow Wins Nautilus Silver Book Award

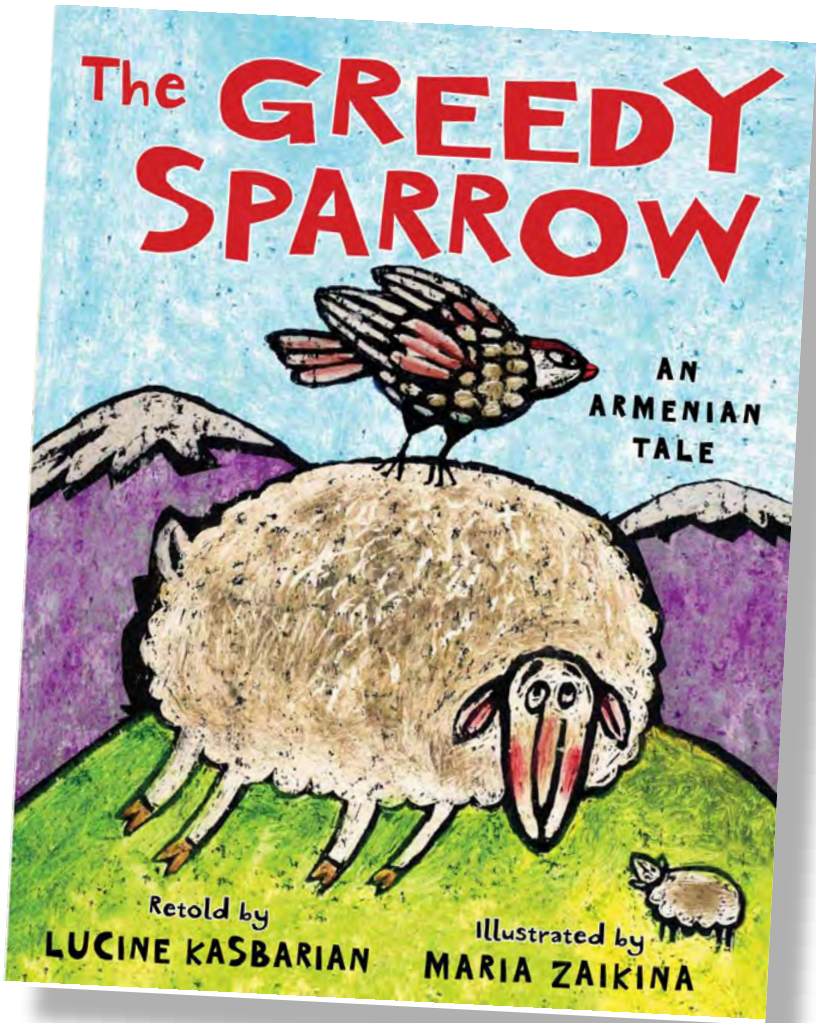
BELMONT, Mass. and TEANECK, N.J. — *The Greedy Sparrow: An Armenian Tale* has won the 2013 Nautilus Silver Book Award in the Children’s Picture Book category (readers 3 to 6 yrs.). The tale is retold by Lucine Kasbarian, illustrated by Maria Zaikina, and published by Marshall Cavendish (now Amazon Children’s Books).

The Greedy Sparrow is an English-language retelling of a traditional Armenian folk tale about a bird who travels the countryside, encounters natives practicing traditional folkways, and gets a comeuppance for his trickery. Kasbarian and Zaikina convey ethnic authenticity in their adaptation of this tale from the Armenian oral tradition. Kasbarian is a children’s author known for her book, *Armenia: A Rugged Land, an Enduring People*. The Moscow-based Zaikina is an illustrator beloved for her companion animation to singer Hasmik Harutyunyan’s folk lullaby, *Agna Oror*.

“Witnessing near-annihilation and exile as a result of the Armenian Genocide,” said Kasbarian, “my surviving grandparents felt that our people might one day become extinct. From that grew a profound desire to preserve as much of our culture as possible, such as our language, songs, dances, cuisine and stories. While her infant children perished in the death marches, my paternal grandmother managed to smuggle out the deeds belonging to our family’s confiscated property. Those were the only material possessions that made it to America. Thus, non-material possessions, such as what was carried in memories, become precious links to our identity and past. The Greedy Sparrow tale was one such heirloom, and UNESCO calls such treasures part of a people’s ‘intangible cultural heritage.’”

The Greedy Sparrow was also named a 2012 Honor Book in the Storytelling World Awards. It was in School Library Journal’s “Fuse #8 Production” blog’s “100 Magnificent Children’s Books of 2011” and in the Children’s Literature Network’s “Snipp Snapp Snute” blog’s “Favorite Folktales published in 2011.”

Further information is available at the author’s website: <http://www.lucinekasbarian.com>. The Nautilus Awards recognize books that promote positive social change, spiritual development and conscious living as they stimulate the imagination and inspire the reader to new possibilities for a better world.



‘Armenian Coffee’ Among Latest Microbrew Concoctions

By John Verive

LOS ANGELES (*Los Angeles Times*) — Summer is quickly approaching and the Southland’s craft breweries are preparing a varied slate of new brews to bottle (or can) for summer-time celebrations.

Beachwood Brewing is prepping another special bottle release, and it is time for another big stout from the acclaimed Long Beach brewpub. System of a Stout is an “imperial Armenian coffee stout” brewed with molasses, green cardamom and a custom Armenian coffee blend from Portola Coffee Labs. The unique beer will be available in 22-ounce bottles around town beginning on Friday, and it is sure to go quickly.

Golden Road Brewing has begun to can a new seasonal beer for the warmer months. Their new Cabrillo Kolsch will be available in four-packs of colorful 16-ounce cans beginning this week. Check your local Whole Foods or craft beer bottle shop for this pool-side libation.

For fans of hoppy beers, try Wolf Among Weeds from the Atwater Village brewery. They have made the hoppy double IPA a year-round release with new batches rolling out to retailers regularly.

Golden Road also has a new IPA headed to cans in June. Heal the Bay IPA is a citrus-forward IPA that generated some good buzz when it premiered

at the Santa Monica Pier’s Earth Day celebration. The beer was brewed in partnership with the non-profit organization dedicated to improving Southern California’s coast areas, and proceeds from the IPA will benefit Heal the Bay’s efforts.

Orange County’s the Bruery is celebrated its fifth anniversary in May, and the festivities culminated in the anticipated release of its anniversary brew. Every year the brewers blend a special beer inspired by the traditional wedding gifts — their first anniversary brew was Papier, the second Cotton — and this year’s brew, Bois, is a celebration of wood. The brewers took potent strong ale and aged it in a bourbon barrel resulting in a 15 percent ABV beast with big flavor to match its boozy punch. A 750 milliliter bottle will run you about \$30, and it should be on shelves by the end of May.

Saison Tonnellerie is a new beer made for the Preservation Society — the Bruery’s beer subscription service — and the oaky and slightly tart farmhouse ale will get limited distribution in LA and Orange counties this month as well.

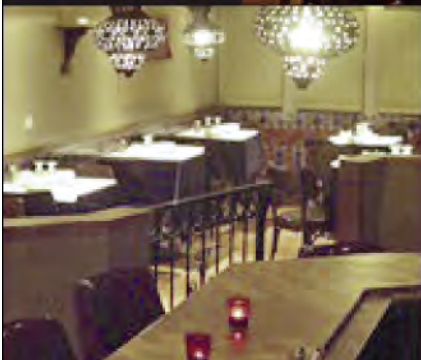
Whether you want a light, refreshing summer ale, a hoppy IPA, or a high-ABV brew for that special occasion, Southern California breweries are packaging a variety of new brews.



Located just steps from Michigan Avenue in the heart of Chicago’s thriving Streeterville neighborhood, Sayat Nova is a cozy, romantic enclave tucked back from the city’s urban sprawl. Since 1970, we have offered Armenian cuisine that presents a slightly earthier variation on typical Mediterranean fare.

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ARTS & LIVING

Sara Bogosian to Speak at St. James Men's Club Event

WATERTOWN – President and acting executive director of the Whistler House Museum in Lowell, Mass., Sara Bogosian will speak at the St. James Armenian Church Men's Club dinner meeting on June 3. Bogosian will speak on the topic, "From Whistler To Gorky." The Whistler House Museum of Art is the historic birthplace of the famous American artist, James McNeill Whistler.

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Bogosian (Mezian-Yeminidjian) has served her community for more than 30 years.

As president and now acting executive director of the oldest incorporated art organization in the country, the Lowell Art Association and Whistler House Museum of Art, she has brought international recognition to the museum and to the state through the acquisition of works by the famous abstract expressionist artist, Arshile Gorky. Her work has taken her, along with the Gorky Foundation team, promoting the 2009 Gorky Retrospective to such art institutions as the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Tate Modern in London, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Whitney in New York and the Gagolian Galleries in New York and London.

As a community activist, her reach has been widespread, serving in more than 20 organizations representing churches, schools, universities, the city, hospitals, arts and culture. These organizations include, the Whistler House Museum of Art, Girls Inc., Greater Lowell Community Foundation, Saints Medical Center, Lowell General Hospital, Friends of Pollard Library, Sts Vartanantz Armenian Church, Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, AHANA at



Sara Bogosian

Boston College, The Pike School in Andover, St. Robert's School in Andover and St. John's

Prep in Danvers.

Throughout her career, she has worked for and with some of the leading Fortune 500 companies in the country and the region. She founded her own business in 1994, SMB Associates Consulting, a firm specializing in development, marketing, public relations and fundraising, serving companies in the region, such as, Sun Oil, Lahey Clinic, MIT, Columbia University, Beacon Companies and EUA Cogenex. She's also worked along side many local organizations and businesses such as Merrimack Repertory Theatre as their executive director of development and UMass Lowell as their executive director of special projects raising millions of dollars for development and scholarships.

Bogosian presently serves on the board of directors of NAASR (National Association of Armenian Studies and Research) promoting Armenian Studies throughout the world with educational partners such as Harvard, Columbia, Stanford, Tufts and Clark Universities, just to name a few.

A 12-year breast cancer survivor, Bogosian

started a network of women battling the disease and helped support the establishment of the Healing Garden in Harvard, Mass., a haven for women battling breast cancer. She continues to help newly diagnosed women face the challenges of breast cancer through personal training and support. Fluent in several languages, Bogosian also helps women of foreign descent understand the medical needs required with a life threatening illness.

She holds degrees in education, business and art history from Indiana University, University of Pittsburgh and attended the Wharton School of Business (University of Pennsylvania), New York University and UMass Lowell.

Bogosian has been married for 36 years and has two children.

The social hour starts with *mezza* at 6:15 p.m., followed by a complete Losh Kebab and Kheyma Dinner at 7 p.m. The even will take place at the Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn St. Ladies Welcome. For information and ticket prices, contact the church office.

CALENDAR

Ararat Eskijian Screens 'In the Footsteps of the Argonauts'

MISSION HILLS, Calif. – The Ararat Eskijian Museum will host a screening of the documentary "In the Footsteps of the Argonauts," accompanied by a lecture by Niko Michailidis, PhD candidate in Anthropology from Princeton University on June 9, at 4 p.m. at the Ararat Eskijian Museum.

The lecture and screening discuss the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Greek communities of Pontos which managed to survive from the genocidal policies of the Young Turks regime in the beginning of the 20th century and how they were relocated in mainland Greece and in other countries. The memories and experiences of that generation passed on to the younger through oral narratives, creation of archives, personal memoir publications, music, dance and lectures organized and supported by an extensive network of cultural associations that had been founded in Greece since 1923.

The current generation of Pontian-Greeks, that grew up without having any significant immediate contact with the elder members of the community who were born and raised in Pontos, face further challenges of memory loss and struggles to maintain a sense of Pontian-Greek identity by making use of all these diverse mnemonic practices. Learning the history of the ancestors is central to their attempt to form their subjectivities.

The documentary "In the Footsteps of the Argonauts" constitutes such an attempt "to learn, to remember and to belong." This lecture will serve both as an introduction to the documentary and as a presentation of the current quest of younger Pontian-Greeks to form a modern sense of identity that maintains lively links with the past and with a geographic region that has been lost.

Admission is free (donations appreciated.) A reception will follow the program and

Nikolai Michailidis will be playing a few traditional songs with the Pontian Lyra (Kemenche). The event will take place in the Hasmik Mgrdichian Gallery, 15105 Mission Hills Road.

For more information, contact the Ararat-Eskijian Museum at ararat-eskijian-museum@netzero.net.

CONNECTICUT

JUNE 15 – Remembering Lili Chookasian, 7 p.m., Clinton Town Hall, Clinton; friends, colleagues and former students will pay tribute in performance, anecdote and video. Proceeds to benefit Metropolitan Opera Auditions, tickets \$25.

MASSACHUSETTS

JUNE 22 – Tekeyan Cultural Association of Boston Presents Music of the People, performance by Rouben Hakhverdian, at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, 7:30 p.m. 200 Lexington St., Belmont.

JULY 17 – Presentation by Margaret Ajemian Ahnert, author of The Knock at the Door, 7:30 p.m., at ALMA, 65 Main St., Watertown.

JUNE 3 – St. James Men's Club will host speaker Sara M. Bogosian, president and acting executive director, Whistler House Museum of Art. Topic is "From Whistler to Gorky." Losh kebab and Keyma dinner, social hour 6:15 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m.. \$12 per person, St. James Armenian Church Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, Keljik Hall, 465 Mount Auburn St. Ladies welcome.

JUNE 9 and 13 – Soprano Knarik Nerkararyan appearing in the lead female role of Sergei Rachmaninoff opera "Aleko" by Commonwealth Lyric Theater, 1845 Commonwealth Ave., Brighton; two appearances June 9, 3 p.m., and June 13 at 8 p.m. For tickets, visit www.CommonwealthLyricTheater.com.

JUNE 13 – St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of Merrimack Valley Men's Club Fourth Annual Cigar Night & Dinner, in memory of Fr. Vartan Kassabian; surf & turf dinner, open bar, cigars, live & silent auctions, raffles; tickets \$150, contact Greg Minasian @gminasian@verizon.net, or 978-470-3075; 158 Main Street, No. Andover, 01845.

JUNE 17 – The Gregory Hintlian Memorial Golf Tournament, this year remembering Dan Dorian, sponsored by Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, Marlborough Country Club, Marlborough.

NEW YORK

JUNE 7 – The Hamazkayin Armenian Cultural Association of NY presents a concert dedicated to the 300th jubilee of Sayat Nova, 8 p.m. featuring Elie Berberian (Canada) and his band performing songs by Sayat Nova and other favorite minstrels, suggested donation \$25 post-concert reception included at the Armenian Center, 69-23 47th Ave., Woodside. Contact gradaranik@gmail.com or call (212) 689-5880 for tickets.

JUNE 8 and JUNE 9 – The John Berberian Ensemble will entertain at St. Peter Church Festival in Watervliet. Weekend includes kebab, games, raffle, vendors. Free parking and admission. Weekend room block rates available at Hampton Inn Albany Airport 518-782-7500. For more info, call the church at 518-274-3673.



On June 9 at 3 p.m. and June 13 at 8 p.m., soprano Knarik Nerkararyan will appear as the female lead in Sergei Rachmaninoff opera "Aleko," presented by the Commonwealth Lyric Theater, 1845 Commonwealth Ave., Brighton, MA. For tickets, visit www.CommonwealthLyricTheater.com.

JUNE 15 – St. Nersess Seminary annual Summer Picnic, noon to 7 p.m., performances by John Beberian Ensemble and Akhtamar Dance Ensemble; kebab, super raffle, children's entertainment, tavloo tournament; free parking and admission, rain or shine; 150 Stratton Road, New Rochelle.

JUNE 25 – The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) will host its third annual Summer Soiree from 7 to 10 p.m. at the PH-D Rooftop Lounge at Dream Downtown Hotel in New York City. The event will help raise funds and awareness about COAF; for tickets and information, visit coafkids.org or call 212-994-8234.

Free Calendar Submissions

The *Mirror-Spectator* accepts calendar submissions free of charge. Calendar entries of a maximum of five lines can be submitted to mirrorads@aol.com; entries exceeding five lines will be subject to charge. We encourage readers and community members to submit their events so that we may provide readers with a comprehensive calendar of events.



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

An Urgent Problem Whose Urgency Is Fading

By Edmond Y. Azadian

An ARF political thinker named E. Agnoui has encapsulated the Armenian people's propensity to emigrate away from their native land by a perfectly rhyming sentence in Armenian: *Hayeh Amen tegh eh penderoom apastan, batsi ayn teghits voreh kochvooom eh Hayastan* (The Armenian is seeking a haven in all places but the place called Armenia.)

This tendency has political, military and economic roots, but over the centuries, it seems that Armenians have more easily decided to go with the current than fight meaningfully against it. Our literature and music are replete with songs of yearning, nostalgia and love for the native village, city and country, but seldom of fulfillment, recovery or restoration of sovereignty.

In addition to external causes, a sense of inferiority has permeated the subconscious and psyche of the Armenians to serve alien forces and to try to excel in proving their prowess to their overlords. Indeed, there were emperors, princes and generals of Armenian extraction in the Byzantine Empire, even when the Byzantine armies had been attacking and sacking Armenian kingdoms, principalities and historic centers like the medieval Armenian metropolis of Ani, a rival to its contemporary centers such as Damascus, Baghdad and Istanbul.

There was Armenian military aid to the Muslim forces conquering Egypt, especially Alexandria in the ninth century.

World War II brought forth the military genius of the Armenians, always under the Soviet flag; indeed the valor of Marshal Hovhannes Baghrarian, Admiral Issakov, General Nver Safarian and Nelson Stepanyan wrote the glorious pages of World War II. And lest one forget, General Anastas Mikoyan, the member of Politburo and president of the Supreme Soviet, in effect, the leader of the Soviet Union.

In another front, Missak Manouchian and his team were heading the French Resistance movement in liberating France.

Last but not least, the 5000-strong Armenian Legion, which broke through Ottoman-German fortifications on September 19, 1918, at the Battle of Arara in Palestine, of course, under Allied command.

Paul Ignatius was one of the prominent secretaries of navy in the US.

We can go on citing more and more examples, but the sampling of these historic cases prove a theory that has plagued our destiny throughout our history.

Against this backdrop, one case of treachery is enough to demonstrate the above theory that we serve foreigners well, but hinder our own. Thus, in February 1918, when the defeated Ottoman army was running for cover and the retreating Russian army had left a huge amount of food and armaments behind, Eastern Armenian volunteers, who had joined the Russian army, refused to fight under General Andranik to defend the fortress of Kars. Had they supported our national hero, most probably Kars and Ani at least would have remained within Armenia's current borders.

By the same token, any citizen in Armenia believes that he or she can make a better president than the one in power. As the saying goes, too many chiefs and no Indians.

The Armenian dispersion has its roots way back in the Middle Ages, when the bustling metropolis, Ani, was destroyed and its citizens fled to distant destinations.

Ani was first attacked by our Christian brothers, the Byzantines, in 1044, followed by a Seljuk Turk attack in 1064, eventually to fall under the Ottoman rule in 1579. The city, which had a population of 100,000-200,000 in its heyday, was depopulated in the 18th and 19th centuries and reduced to ruins. Its population migrated to Ukraine, Poland, Hungary and Romania. They gradually assimilated with the local population and disappeared.

The migration trend which extended to central and southern

Asia Minor helped the emergence of the Cilician principalities which developed into the Cilician Kingdom from the 11th to the 14th centuries. Cilicia fell to the Mamluks in 1375 and its king, Levon Lusignan VI, was taken to Egypt as a prisoner.

Armenian migration has such a central place in Armenian history that many scholarly volumes are dedicated to the topic. Ashot Abrahamian, in Soviet Armenia and Arshag Alboyadjian in the diaspora are the major historians who have done in depth treatments of the migration history.

As we analyze the root causes of migration, we find out the overwhelmingly important factor is outside forces. Although there are different interpretations of the phenomenon and history cannot be changed, we can better educate ourselves to see the future more clearly. For example, 19th-century novelist Raffi said that all the investments Armenians have made in creating chalices and other religious objects could have been used to manufacture armaments so that our nation could be free today.

Historically, the depopulation of the Armenian homeland was caused by the clashes of the empires that overran Armenia while our people dreamt of a free and independent Armenia from 1375 to 1918, when the first republic emerged. From 1920 to 1991, the Soviet Republic of Armenia gave some semblance of a state identity to our people. And despite all the atrocities and human rights violations in the Soviet Union, the Armenian people enjoyed stability, security and above all, unprecedented development in arts, literature and science in Soviet Armenia.

It is perhaps ironic that the Iron Curtain had trapped the population by limiting migration, which in turn contributed to the population growth. With Armenia's independence, the floodgates of emigration were thrown wide open, and today, no one dares to come up with an accurate number of people leaving Armenia.

This time around we can no longer blame outside forces as a cause of depopulation; perhaps, we can partially blame Turkey, as the blockade has been crippling the economy and driving the population to poverty. But, surprisingly, the blockade has not stopped the rich from becoming richer.

Today Armenia's depopulation is the number one cause for concern for the republic. If Armenia is depopulated and overrun by the Azeris (as Azeri President Ilham Aliyev is predicting,) there will not even be the monument of Tsitsernakaberd for us to go to and cry to in memory of the Genocide victims.

We cannot ignore the outside factors, but there are areas where Armenians as a whole can improve. The government, especially, can apply drastic measures to stop the hemorrhaging.

A new parliament was formed and the president has been re-elected. Technically, it is a one-party rule, as the opposition was crushed during the elections. Given the power structure of Armenia, one-party rule leads to one-person rule. President Serge Sargsian has all the power to stop the trend, even if that means he comes to rule Armenia as a benevolent potentate.

The rate of economic growth given in statistics does not translate yet into food on the table of families.

Oligarchs enjoy the best of both worlds; they conduct their business in Armenia as long as it lasts and they have their capital in foreign countries, should the ship sink in Armenia.

Foreign investments are encouraged verbally, but discouraged by the extant red tape and corrupt laws. Even patriotic Armenian investors from around the world have had bitter experiences trying to invest in Armenia's economy. How many Diaspora Armenians have to be beaten, bullied or killed so that the authorities will finally create a tolerable atmosphere for foreign investments?

Patriotic rhetoric no longer lures anyone to invest in Armenia.

The courts, through corrupt judges, undermine the rule of law necessary for the formation of a middle class — a class which is the backbone of any country's economy.

Celebrations and pomp and circumstance during the visits of foreign dignitaries provide a veneer while the starving population abandons the land and drives the country to confront a big Shakespearean question: "To be or not to be?"

LETTERS

Resources for Those Who Stutter

To the Editor:

I am a PWS (person who stutters) and feel an obligation to help other members of the Armenian community in the US learn about resources for stuttering.

A nonprofit organization called the Stuttering Foundation offers many free resources and information on stuttering to adults, children and parents. The website of the Stuttering Foundation (www.stutteringhelp.org) offers these free resources, which includes a brochure entitled "Special Education Law and Children Who

Stutter" that explains the little-known fact that for more than 40 years our national healthcare policy has given every child in the US the right to free speech therapy from preschool through high school. This astounding benefit of free speech therapy includes all the types of speech problems. All children are eligible and the economic status of a family is irrelevant.

One percent of adults and 4 percent of children stutter. These percentages affect all populations in the same proportion, including the Armenian-American population and all Armenians worldwide.

For decades, much evidence pointed to the influence of genetic and neurological factors in stuttering. Finally, in 2010 researchers for the first time identified "stuttering genes" that comprise about 10 percent of the cases of stut-

tering. It is likely that in the near future more and more cases of stuttering will have a proven genetic basis. As for me personally, I have struggled with stuttering in my life, as has a first cousin of mine in England. As adults my cousin and I learned that our grandfather's younger brother, who never left the farm in Armenia, was a lifelong person who stutters.

I hope that you will publish this letter to help others in the Armenian community who stutter, especially children. It is important to note the right to free speech therapy for all children in the US encompasses all speech problems. It is a shame that not many people know about this free speech therapy because more children could be helped.

— Kevork Garabedian
Studio City, Calif.

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Plaintiffs File Response to US Government's Anti-Armenian Brief

Lawyers on behalf of Armenian plaintiffs responded last week to the US government's brief which had urged the Supreme Court not to review a Federal Appeals Court decision striking down a California law extending the statute of limitations on Armenian Genocide-era insurance claims.

The Solicitor General, on behalf of the US government, had filed a politically-motivated and flawed brief that completely misrepresented the insurance case and raised unwarranted questions about the legality of the California law.

In his brief on the plaintiffs' behalf, Igor Timofeyev, argued that the California statute (Section 354.4) does not violate any established federal policy and should therefore not be preempted. He asserted that California has the right to regulate the obligations of insurance companies, a traditional sphere of state competence and jurisdiction.

The plaintiffs' lawyer accused the US government of advancing "an unprecedented theory of federal affairs preemption: all claims arising out of international incidents are committed exclusively to the federal competence, even when

these claims involve private actors and private contracts, and the federal government has taken no action to resolve them."

Timofeyev qualified the US government's position as "revolutionary" and "antithetical to the respect due to the states as separate sovereigns." He then summarized his counter-arguments in the following six points:

1) "To justify the Ninth Circuit's aberrant decision, the government articulates a foreign affairs field preemption theory of unprecedented breadth." Timofeyev asserted, "Petitioners' claims are against a private [German insurance] company, not against a foreign sovereign. Nor are these claims integral to 'a major foreign policy dispute' between the US and a foreign nation." The state of California, being "home to the overwhelming majority of Armenian-Americans," has "a legitimate interest in securing compensation for its injured residents, irrespective of whether the underlying injury occurred in-state or abroad."

2) "The court of appeals committed a fundamental error: It adjudged illegitimate a state's well-established interests in regulating insurance, setting the statute of limitations for state-law claims and ensuring compensation for its injured residents simply because the events giving rise to these claims occurred overseas. That is not the law."

3) Countering the government's contention that Section 354.4 is based on "a distinct political point of view on a specific matter of foreign policy — one that decries the actions of the Ottoman Empire," Timofeyev reminded the court that President Obama himself acknowledged that the Ottoman mass murders were "one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century." Furthermore, the president commended states for commemorating "the massacre [of Armenians] in the final days of the Ottoman Empire." Timofeyev also asserted that "the president's repeated praise for states' commemorative efforts is fundamentally inconsistent with

the government's claim that the foreign affairs doctrine automatically preempts any state action expressing a 'point of view' on this issue."

4) "The government tries to bootstrap its preemption argument by invoking the US efforts to negotiate a resolution of World War I era claims. The government concedes that Section 354.4 'does not conflict' with any of these diplomatic efforts. Indeed, the government acknowledges that 'the United States did not...attempt to negotiate the resolution of claims by Armenians who were injured by the Ottoman Empire during that period.'" In fact, one of the reasons why the US senate refused to ratify the American Treaty of Lausanne was "the absence of provisions for the Armenian refugees and exiles from the Ottoman Empire."

5) The government seems alarmed that Section 354.4 "imposes the politically charged label of 'genocide'" on Turkey, which "could provoke Turkey's ire. But fear of 'upsetting foreign powers...even when the federal government desperately wants to avoid upsetting foreign powers' is not a legitimate reason to preempt traditional state activity. The government cannot explain why, if the term 'Armenian Genocide' employed by Section 354.4 would have an adverse effect on foreign affairs, the same would not hold equally for laws and resolutions adopted by about forty states that expressly recognize the Armenian Genocide by name. Nor does the government explain why a statute 'creating judicially enforceable rights' is more offensive to Turkey than state laws including the Armenian Genocide as part of mandatory school curricula."

6) "The Ninth Circuit's aberrant decision is generating confusion among lower courts." Timofeyev rightly concluded his brief by urging the Supreme Court to "review and correct the Ninth Circuit's decision before it causes greater mischief."

Hezbollah's War in Syria Threatens to Engulf Lebanon

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has crossed the Rubicon.

The Hezbollah chairman who said exactly 13 years ago that his resistance movement would not cross the Israeli frontier — that it was for the Palestinians to "liberate" Jerusalem — has declared that Hezbollah has crossed the Syrian frontier. Not only that, but Nasrallah said at the weekend he would fight "to the end" to protect President Bashar al-Assad's regime. Hezbollah, he said, was entering "a completely new phase." He can say that again.

I was standing on a rooftop in the south Lebanese town of Bint Jbeil when I heard that promise from Nasrallah all those years ago. Hezbollah would not be advancing into

Palestine. We all sighed with relief. What happened? In those days, Nasrallah appeared in person, standing amid his adoring fighters and their families. Now he lives in hiding. Is there tunnel vision at work? He said he receives letters from families begging him to let their sons fight in Syria. Coffin vision, perhaps?

It was, of course, inevitable. Only last month, I discovered Hezbollah men "protecting" the Sayda Zeinab mosque in south Damascus. "Don't say you saw me here," one of them told me. A friendly soul who had pinned a picture of Nasrallah and of Iran's supreme leader Khamenei to the wall of his office, he came from that very same town of Bint Jbeil.

Two days later, Hezbollah admitted their men were "guarding" the front-line shrine. Then they said 12 of them had been killed. I do not know if my interlocutor was among them. For several months, Hezbollah had been quietly admitting that their fighters were also "protecting" Shia villages inside Syria whose inhabitants were Lebanese. Then the bodies started to come home. One at first, then six, then they came by the dozen.

Once Hezbollah was committed to the battle for Qusayr alongside Syrian troops, a spokesman for this most efficient and ruthless militia claimed its fighters had been on their way to the shrine in Damascus but had been misdirected and found themselves in a firefight in no-man's land. A likely story. Qusayr — just off from the highway to Latakia and the Syrian coast — is well over 100 miles from Damascus. Then 30 more bodies came home to Lebanon. So Nasrallah only said what he had to say. Much did he speak of Palestine and the al-Aqsa mosque. But his men were moving east into Syria, not south into Palestine, and history will judge Nasrallah on this speech.

He talked, of course, about the danger of "extremists" trying to overthrow Assad, claiming they were also a danger to Lebanon, that Assad's Syria was a backbone of Hezbollah "and the resistance cannot stand with its arms folded while its back is broken

What he did not say was that his Shia militia was fighting

Syrian Sunnis — whose co-religionists make up around 30 per cent of Lebanon's population. Which is why the battle between the Sunnis and the Alawite Shias of the north Lebanese city of Tripoli broke out so ferociously on the day Hezbollah took up the fight for Qusayr alongside Assad's men.

Quite simply, this is potentially the greatest danger to Lebanon's people — not to mention the sovereignty of its sectarian state — since the 1975-90 civil war.

"If Syria falls into the hands of America, Israel and Takfiris [Sunni extremists], the resistance will be besieged and Israel will enter Lebanon and impose its will." This is what Nasrallah said on the huge screen erected in the town of Mashgara on the 13th anniversary of south Lebanon's liberation from Israeli occupation on Saturday night. What he meant was that if Assad falls, Hezbollah's own political support and weaponry — originating in Iran — will come to an end. And then there will be no more Hezbollah to drive out the Israelis when they return.

And before we bellow with hollow laughter, let's just remember that the destruction of the Islamic Republic of Iran — as a theological state created by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 — is currently the be-all and end-all of US and Israeli policy towards the country once called Persia. The 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah was an attempt to destroy Iran's Shia ally in Lebanon. The battle against Assad — a struggle supported by the US, the EU and those wonderful, freedom-loving democracies in the Gulf — is an attempt to strike down Iran's only Arab ally. Western-supported rebel battle for Syria is therefore a proxy war against Iran. No wonder Hezbollah has come clean about their involvement.

If — as Nasrallah insists — Hezbollah is really a "resistance" movement, how come it did not support the resistance against Assad? Besides, if Hezbollah is a purely Lebanese creature — and again, this is what Nasrallah insists — what right does it have to send hundreds, even thousands, of its men to fight Assad's battles?

Officially, Lebanon has "dissociated" itself from Syria. But if fighters from its largest Muslim community have gone to fight for Assad, what is left of its claim to political neutrality? Nasrallah may be Hezbollah's chairman, but he's not Lebanon's president. Which is why President Michel Sleiman warned just a day before Nasrallah spoke that Hezbollah should not allow Lebanon to plunge into a sectarian war. "How can a nation provide such a wonderful example of resistance and sacrifice," he asked, "while promoting sectarian differences?" Good question.

In his speech, Nasrallah promised supporters "a new victory." Macbeth couldn't have put it better. Blood will have blood, they say.

(Robert Fisk is a columnist for the *Independent*. This column originally appeared in the May 26 edition of the paper.)

Lessons for Graduating Students

I did not become a chemist, an occupation to which I once aspired.

As a child, I had been groomed to take over my father's luncheonette one day. When I did not, it broke his heart, but it healed mine. I was not interested in dishing out burgers for the rest of

my life. A 16-hour workday was typical. Becoming a funeral director was furthest from my mind, even

though a battery of tests pointed me in that direction.

Instead, I chose journalism and here I am 50 years later, writing to you about it.

I mention this because countless high schools and colleges hold their commencements this time of year. Some will embark upon a career in the military. Others from the university level will finally choose a vocation, or perhaps, the job will choose them.

More often than not, life becomes happenstance. Just when you think you may be cut out for a certain position, along comes the fickle finger of fate and points you in another direction. The journalism graduate will wind up in a classroom. The accountant will open a grocery store. The chemist will go into retail.

And the guy who graduated summa cum laude in engineering will take over his father's confectionary business. In all of these cases, it becomes the luck of the draw. You are dealt a certain hand and play your cards to your best advantage.

Putting three children through college seemed like an impossible task on the meager salary of a newspaperman and a teacher. Somehow, we managed, even though we had two in college at the same time attending choice schools.

One opted for journalism, another went into engineering, while the third selected marketing.

I remember when I first started at the paper. The newsroom was filled with writers and editors. The pressroom and composing room were so congested, it looked like Boston's South Station during the evening commute.

People left, attrition hit hard, changes evolved, staff reductions began taking their toll and suddenly the whole face of journalism changed before my very eyes.

To all of you graduates, no matter what the plan, keep a stiff upper lip in the face of adversity. A smile goes a lot further than a frown. Be aggressive and set goals. Your beginning comes after the commencement is over.

Failure is not an option — success is the only way and that comes disguised in many faces. A journalism teacher in college once told me that you are only as good as your last story. Nobody remembers what you wrote a month ago.

Reputations are superficial. They have no substance. Friendships are real. As you journey forth, keep your associations intact. Keep less emphasis on cents and more on sense.

Treat each day as a bonus and do not put too much emphasis on the future. It never becomes serious unless it is too late.

Dear high school and college graduates: this is your world. It is all yours. Take it and become the best you can be.

By Tom Vartabedian



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