

Karabagh President Re-Elected

Monitors Praise Vote for Transparency

STEPANAKERT (Combined Sources) – Incumbent Karabagh (Artsakh) President Bako Sahakyan won re-election on Thursday, July 19, taking 66.7 percent of the votes. Runner-up Gen. Vitali Balasanyan got 32.5 percent of votes, while Arkadi



President Bako Sahakyan cast his vote in Stepanakert.

Soghomyan received 0.8 percent votes.

In 2007, Sahakyan won by 85.12 percent, while his main opponent Masis Mailyan, by

An Olympic Love Story

By Megan Finnegan

NEW YORK (New York Press) – For Michael Gostigian and Sharon Monplaisir, the Olympics have always been a beacon of strength, perseverance, competition – and true love. The married Upper West Siders are both former Olympians, and they credit the games for bringing them together almost 20 years ago.

Gostigian competed in the pentathlon, an Olympic event in its 100th year this summer that includes swimming, cross-country running, pistol shooting, fencing and show jumping. He had trained as a swimmer as a teenager in the Philadelphia area and caught the eye of millionaire John Dupont, who was putting together a pentathlon team. He learned to shoot and run on Dupont's estate, then trained with an 80-year-old Hungarian fencing master. Gostigian competed in fencing tournaments while training for the pentathlon, which is how he first encountered the woman he would marry.

"We would cross paths at various fencing tournaments around the world," Gostigian, 49, remembers. "In the '92 Olympics, we were there together. She came see GOSTIGIAN, page 16



Michael Gostigian and Sharon Monplaisir

official data, scored only 12.53 percent. Thus, 80-90-percent victories were considered to be the norm in Karabagh, however, things have changed and "the bar is lower" now and Sahakyan has cleared it with 67 percent.

The lack of an opposition was actually the reason why two years ago the Freedom House organization ranked Karabagh "not free," removing it from the list of "partly free" countries.

see ELECTION, page 2

House Defeats Bill Giving Turkey Preferential Treatment On US Tribal Lands

WASHINGTON – This week, the House of Representatives defeated a measure that singled out Turkey for preferential treatment to engage in economic development projects on tribal lands in the United States, reported the Armenian Assembly of America. The measure did not receive the two-thirds majority required and failed by a vote of 222 in favor to 160 against.

Representatives Doc Hastings (R-WA), Tom Cole (R-OK), Virginia Foxx (R-NC), James Moran (D-VA), Dan Boren (D-OK) along with Delegate Eni Faleomavaega (D-American Samoa) spoke in favor of the bill, HR 2362, the Indian Tribal Trade and Investment Demonstration Project Act of 2011, while Representatives Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and John Sarbanes (D-MD) led the charge against the legislation.

During the debate, bill sponsor Cole noted that he was approached by the Turkish Coalition of America about the legislation. According to campaign contribution records, Cole has received \$6,000 in Turkish PAC money this cycle while Foxx received \$10,000. Cole argued that HR 2362 does not grant Turkey preferential treatment.

Armenian Caucus Co-chair Pallone, who indicated his support for "efforts to bring economic prosperity to Indian Country," voiced his strong opposition to the bill: "To put it quite simply, there is no good reason for passage of this legislation. In fact, there are a whole host of reasons why this legislation should fail today." Citing a litany of concerns, including Turkey's denial of the Armenian Genocide and "illegal occupation of Northern Cyprus," Pallone urged his colleagues to vote against it.

Hellenic Caucus Co-chair Maloney called the bill unnecessary, given that Congress has already adopted a more comprehensive measure, the Hearth Act (HR 205).

see LANDS, page 4



From left, Baydzig Kalaydjian, Dr. Nubar Berberian and Hagop Vartivarian

Zartong Editor Visits East Coast

BOSTON – Baydzig Kalaydjian, the editor of *Zartong* daily, the Armenian Democratic Liberal (ADL) Party's publication in Lebanon, visited Boston and New York as part of her tour of the US. Kalaydjian was accompanied by Hagop Vartivarian, the ADL Press Committee co-chair.

During her visit to Boston, Kalaydjian met with the editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, Alin K. Gregorian; Dr. Nubar Berberian, secretary of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Central Board of Directors; and Kevork Marashlian, executive secretary of the TCA Central Board of Directors. She also visited *Hairenik* editor Zaven Torikian and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Archives Institute Director Vatche Prudman, as well as Armenian Cultural Foundation Executive Director Ara Ghazarians.

During her visit to Boston, Kalaydjian was feted at a reception held in her honor on Monday, July 16, at the headquarters of the *Mirror-Spectator*.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sandcastle Girls Oprah Blog Book of the Week

CHICAGO – Oprah Winfrey's Blog declared *New York Times* best-selling author Chris Bohjalian's novel on the Armenian Genocide, *The Sandcastle Girls*, as the must-read Book of the Week, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

The announcement was first posted on Oprah.com, where the editors of *O* and Oprah.com informed their fans about "the newest releases that they couldn't stop reading." This week, *The Sandcastle Girls* was at the top of their list.

Oprah.com's Nathalie Gorman said, "Best known for his thrillers like *Midwives*, Chris Bohjalian has come out with a different kind of page turner – a searing, tautly woven tale of war and the legacy it leaves behind." She also said, "This rendering of one of history's greatest (and least known) tragedies is a nuanced, sophisticated portrayal of what it means not only to endure, but to insist on hope."

This is not the first time Winfrey has singled out a book by Bohjalian; she picked *Midwives* as her book of the month in 1998.

Komitas Memorial at Berlin University

BERLIN (Hetq) – A memorial plaque dedicated to Komitas Vartabed Soghomonian will be placed on one of the walls at Berlin University, noting that the Armenian musicologist and ethnographer studied there from 1896 to 1899.

Nara Mendelyan was chosen to design the plaque after winning a competition held by the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Culture.

The bronze plaque will be unveiled this fall.

Sargisian Heads to London for Olympics

LONDON (Combined sources) – Armenian President Serge Sargisian left for London on Thursday, July 26, and, together with other invited presidents, he attended the opening ceremony of the games on July 27.

No official send-off ceremony was held for the members of Armenia's Olympic team because most are training in European countries.

The National Olympic Committee announced on Monday that any member of the Armenian Olympic Team who medals in the upcoming games in London will be rewarded in cash for his/her medal. A gold medal will be worth \$100,000; silver, \$75,000 and bronze, \$50,000.

According to the Committee's general secretary, Hrachia Rostomyan, the government has also promised additional bonuses of \$50,000, \$37,000 and \$25,000 for the corresponding medals.

Armenia has sent 25 athletes in nine categories to the games, which will conclude on August 12.

INSIDE

Story of Repatriates

Page 10

INDEX

Arts and Living	10
Armenia	2, 3
Community News.	5
Editorial	14
International	4



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Village Civilian Shot While Farming near Azerbaijan Border

NERKIN KARMRAGHBYUR, Karabagh (ArmeniaNow) – A resident of this border village in the Tavush province was wounded by shots from across the Azerbaijani border last week. He is in stable condition.

Gor Parsyan, 25, said he was working in his farm, some 800 meters from the borderline when he was shot.

“We were reaping the grass in one of the fields near the village when suddenly they [Azeris] started shooting. There was no place to hide. One of the bullets came down near me, and the shrapnel wounded my elbow,” Parsyan said.

“They [Azeris] calmed down after shooting for about 15-20 minutes. My grandfather came to take me to the hospital by car. They started shooting again, but fortunately they did not manage to target the car,” Parsyan said.

Nerkin Karmraghbyur is around 200 kilometers from Yerevan. The village has become a routine target of attacks, especially in the past few months.

Early last month, another resident of Nerkin Karmraghbyur, 52-year-old Vachik Melkumyan, was wounded by an Azeri sniper in his vineyard near the Armenian-Azeri border.

A spokesman from Armenia’s Defense Ministry, Artsrun Hovhannisyanyan, said that: “We will not leave unanswered Azerbaijan’s action against an Armenian civilian, however, our actions will not be aimed against civilians.”

‘Three Apples Fell from Heaven’ Festival in September

YEREVAN (Hetq) – The Armenian Ministry of Culture and the Hovhannes Tumanyan Museum have teamed up again to hold the fourth “Three Apples Fell from Heaven” contest/festival, which is about the art of telling fables in a variety of dialects.

The event will run September 28 to 30 at the Hovhannes Tumanyan Museum in Yerevan.

All participants are welcome to enter the contest; all fables must be under seven minutes and told in the original dialect.

Members of the Assyrian, Russian, Greek, Ukrainian, Belarus, German, Polish, Kurdish and Jewish communities will be invited to attend alongside Armenian storytellers.

Sargisian Visits French Embassy on Bastille Day

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – President Serge Sargisian visited the French Embassy on Bastille Day, July 14. According to the president’s press office, Sargisian congratulated the ambassador, Henri Renaud, the embassy staff and the whole nation of France.

Sargisian sent a congratulatory message to French President Francois Hollande on the occasion of the national day of the Republic of France.

The message reads in part, “Dear Mr. President, I warmly congratulate and send best wishes to you and the friendly people of France for the national day of the Republic of France, July 14.

“I am confident that due to our joint efforts the high-level political dialogue between Armenia and France, the close cooperation within European institutions and international sphere, as well as the economic connections, inter-parliamentary and decentralized cooperation will strengthen and get a new stimulus in favor of deepening friendship between our peoples.

“Taking this opportunity, I once again thank for the important mission France implements as an OSCE Minsk Group co-chair country for the peaceful settlement of Nagorno-Karabagh and the peace, stability, security and cooperation endorsement. Armenia highly appreciates the conflict peaceful resolution efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries’ heads, the joint statement made by the presidents of France, the Russian Federation and the United States on June 19 in Los Cabos.”

Karabagh President Re-Elected

ELECTION, from page 1

The traditionally negative approach of the international community towards elections in Karabagh has seen some changes. Despite the fact that Baku and Ankara made critical statements that they do not recognize the elections, Russia, France and the US refrained from making any statements. Georgia did not hold back, however, announcing through its Foreign Ministry, that it “wishes to reaffirm the Georgian government’s unequivocal support for Azerbaijan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity” and that it “does not recognize the so-called ‘presidential elections’ which were held in Nagorno-Karabagh.”

European Parliament members Ewald Johann Stadler from Austria and Daniel Walder Stup from the Netherlands observed the elections. The observer mission from Europe included also experts from Bulgaria and Poland. Also monitoring the election was a delegation from the Canadian House of Commons and several Russian members of parliament. Russian Liberal-Democrat Party representative in the Russian State Duma Alexander Balberov stated: “The people have a right to decide which country to live in and under whose leadership, and which way of development to take.”

A total of around 80 international observers were present, from the US, Russia, Canada, France, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Ireland, Poland, Cyprus, Hungary, Bulgaria, Argentina, Uruguay and others, as well as a delegation of officials from Armenia.

Artsakh Republic President Bako Sahakyan issued an address on occasion of presidential elections. He said, “These elections marked a new victory on the path of building a legal state and realizing our national aspirations. They are another manifestation of the nation’s high civil stance and wisdom. The people of Artsakh once again reconfirmed their adherence to international norms and standards, their irreversible determination to build a free, independent and fair state. I express

deep gratitude to citizens of Artsakh for partaking in the elections, to my supporters who entrusted high confidence in me as well as those who voted for the other Presidential candidates. For me as the Artsakh Republic President there is no greater and binding power than my nation’s confidence and responsibility for our country’s future. We are ready and resolute in carving this future.”

Several members of Congress issued statements of support for the elections. Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA), a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs committee, released a statement on the July 19 presidential election in Karabagh.

“I congratulate President Bako Sahakyan of the Republic of Nagorno Karabagh on his reelection,” Sherman said. “Since independence, Artsakh has developed a democracy and a vibrant civil society despite remarkably difficult challenges. I also congratulate the people of Artsakh on their record of democratization. I will continue to work in the House Foreign Affairs Committee to make sure our foreign policy is supportive of the independence and prosperity of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic.”

Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-chairs Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Ed Royce (R-CA) congratulated the republic on its July 19 presidential elections.

“We join with Representatives Pallone and Royce in commending the people of Nagorno Karabagh as they exercise their right to choose their own government through democratic elections,” said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. “As we reflect on the Artsakh vote, we are reminded of the words of our own late President John F. Kennedy, who, on the day of his inauguration said: ‘We observe today not a victory of party, but a celebration of freedom.’”

In a statement Pallone noted, “As the co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, I wish to extend my congratulations to the Nagorno Karabagh Republic on their exercise of

democratic presidential elections. It is heartening to see their continued dedication to peaceful democracy. On September 2, 1991 the Nagorno Karabagh Republic declared the formation of an independent, democratic republic. On December 10, 1991 a referendum on the independence of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic took place and was overwhelmingly approved. I am pleased the Republic continues to hold regular parliamentary and presidential elections that have previously been viewed as free and fair by international observers.”

Royce concurred, noting “I commend the people of Nagorno Karabagh for holding peaceful and honest elections. Throughout the years we have seen a trend of its electoral system working in proper fashion and the most recent election maintains that precedent.”

Armenian political scientist Yervand Bozoyan said the elections bode well for Karabagh. “The world must realize that Karabagh, which has much more democratic and legal authorities, cannot be subjected to an authoritarian country,” he said, adding that these elections seem to be far more democratic than the ones in Azerbaijan.

The official international observer mission of the International expert Center for Electoral Systems (ICES) considers the presidential election process in Nagorno-Karabagh – or Artsakh – as an established democratic act of expression of will by the republic’s citizens, an act which is consistent with international norms, the aforesaid mission’s chief Alexander Tsinker stated during a press conference on Friday.

The observers also noted that falsification of election results was not recorded at the polling stations and when the records were being submitted to the Central Electoral Commission. The international observers visited 52 polling stations.

(Stories from Armenpress, ArmeniaNow and news.am were used to compile this report.)

American University of Armenia to Launch Undergraduate Program in Fall 2013

YEREVAN – The American University of Armenia (AUA) announced the launch of its four-year undergraduate program. Throughout its 20-year history, AUA has been a graduate institution, granting only master’s degrees. With the launch of the undergraduate program, AUA will expand its impact, educating the leaders of tomorrow in Armenia and beyond.

In making this announcement, AUA President Bruce Boghosian noted, “All of us at AUA are excited about reaching this new milestone – to offer a high-quality undergraduate education to the future leaders of Armenia and the region.” He added, “We remain committed to offer rigorous academics and an American education and look forward to a vibrant, international faculty and student body from Armenia and abroad.”

Boghosian re-iterated AUA’s dedication to providing accessible education of the highest caliber. “AUA has a ‘full-need’ financial aid policy: That is, we are committed to the principle that no Armenian student will ever be denied an AUA education because of inability to pay tuition. AUA also has a need-

blind admissions policy: This means that students are admitted strictly on the basis of their academic merit, regardless of their need. Institutions that are both full-need and need-blind are rare anywhere in the world,” Boghosian said.

“Thanks to the generous support of our Board of Trustees and our supporters around the world, we are able to offer scholarships and tuition assistance to our undergraduate and graduate students,” noted N. Dennis Leavens, AUA’s newly-installed provost. “I invite all interested students to begin preparing to apply for the Fall 2013 Semester,” added Leavens.

The new undergraduate program has already received accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). This approval indicates endorsement that the undergraduate program maintains the highest educational standards of quality and effectiveness. The undergraduate program has also already received a license from the RA Ministry of Education and Science.

Enrolling approximately 300 students per year, AUA’s undergraduate program aims to have a total enroll-

ment in the vicinity of 1,200 by 2017. The new undergraduate program will offer the following majors in addition to a solid general education component:

- Computational Sciences: This degree will include topics in applied mathematics and computer science, as well as courses in computational techniques for the simulation and modeling of systems of relevance to science and engineering.
- Business: This degree will include a solid grounding in economics, finance, accounting, marketing, management and business communications.
- English and Communications: This degree will include courses in journalism, public relations, writing, translation and other aspects of communications.

All three programs will be taught in English. These new majors will complement the seven master’s degree programs that AUA currently offers.

Entrance requirements, including the standardized examinations necessary for admission and other admission requirements, including details about tuition, are on the web page, www.AUA.am/Undergraduate.



ARMENIA

Tekeyan Centre Fund Hosts Summer Camp in Lori

LORI, Armenia — Once again the Tekeyan Centre Fund (TCF) created a fun haven for 60 Tekeyan students from Yerevan, Gumri, Stepanavan, Karbi and Berdzor, from June 29 to July 6, at the summer camp, Gugark, located along the river, Debed, surrounded by mountains and forests. The natural beauty of the area and warm welcome of summer camp staff made for an unforgettable summer experience for the children.

The days in the camp were full of various programs and events. The sounds of the trumpet, morning exercises, swimming, line-up and marching were a part of the daily drills. Campers participated in sports, dancing, song clubs and achieved the best results at the competitions. Various intellectual quizzes, which were educational and infor-

mative, were also held.

TCF also organized a trip to Dsegh, to Hovhannes Toumanian's home-museum, where the children learned about the poet's life. During the days in Gugark, students enjoyed hiking to the mountains, walking tours and an excursion to Haghpap Monastery built in the 10th century.

On July 4, the camp solemnly celebrated its 54th anniversary. Many guests, amongst who was the managing staff of the South Caucasian Railway, were present at the ceremony. Tekeyan students together with other children in the camp held a music and dance festival to entertain the guests and to celebrate the event.

On the last day, the Tekeyan students had a farewell party with typical camp traditions, which was followed by speeches and messages



Morning exercises got the day started.



Circle dancing at the camp

of thanks. As the teachers noted, "children from five different schools arrived at Gugark, but they left as members of one big family — the Tekeyan family." This was due to the efforts of the teachers and the camp staff that did their best to create a peaceful and friendly atmosphere.

It was difficult for students to leave their friends from the camp which was called the "magic planet of childhood."



Campers and teachers visit Haghpap Monastery.

Gumri Mayor Resigns Ruling Party Post

By **Satenik Vantsian, Astghik Bedevian**

GUMRI (RFE/RL) — Gumri's controversial Mayor Vartan Ghukasian has resigned as a regional leader of the ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) amid growing signs that the government in Yerevan does not want him to run the country's second largest city any more.

Ghukasian, in office since 1999, was relieved of his duties as chairman of the HHK branch in the Shirak province, of which Gumri is the capital, at a weekend party meeting chaired by Parliament Speaker Hovik Abrahamian.

Abrahamian insisted that the mayor resigned the party post "at his own request" and was not forced out. "He has done a very good job," he said.

"I'm not a partisan figure by character," Ghukasian said. "I want to spend some time away from these political things a little."

Ghukasian's political future has been a subject of media speculation since Armenia's May 6 parliamentary elections. The HHK won the vote by a landslide. Still, it was defeated by the rival Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) in all three electoral districts covering Gumri.

Various Armenian media outlets reported in the following weeks that the HHK leadership in Yerevan holds Ghukasian responsible for those defeats and will not support him in the next mayoral election scheduled for September 9. Some news reports last week said that the ruling party headed by President Serge Sargisian has decided to endorse Samvel Balasanian, the BHK candidate for Gumri mayor, as part of a confidential deal with the BHK. The latter left Armenia's governing coalition after finishing second in the parliamentary elections.

Balasanian on Monday confirmed reports that he met Sargisian shortly before being officially nominated by the BHK last week. He claimed that the meeting had no connection with the Gumri election.

Abrahamian, who is also a deputy chairman

of the HHK, declined to specify whom the ruling party will support in the ballot. Eduard Sharmazanov, the chief party spokesman, said on Monday that the HHK leadership has made no decision to that effect yet.

"When the right time comes you will know



President Serge Sargisian (left) and Gumri Mayor Vartan Ghukasian visit a construction site in Gumri

the party's official position," Sharmazanov said. "There is no secrecy. The issue simply hasn't been discussed."

Ghukasian, meanwhile, would not say if he will run for reelection. "We will see," the mayor said.

Ghukasian has been dogged by controversy throughout his political career. Critics have long accused him of leading a business clan that controls much of the local economy and tolerates no competition. He has also earned notoriety for his flamboyant behavior that has occasionally turned violent.

In April 2007, Ghukasian narrowly survived an apparent assassination attempt when unknown gunmen opened fire on his motorcade outside Yerevan, seriously wounding him and killing three of his bodyguards.

Ghukasian, 51, has also been repeatedly embarrassed by his notoriously unruly elder son, Spartak. The latter was sentenced to 18 months in prison in 2007 for provoking a street

gunfight between two groups of young men in Gumri. He was granted parole after serving one-third of the sentence.

Media reports over the weekend claimed that Spartak Ghukasian shouted abuse and threats outside Balasanian's Gumri house after it was announced that the businessman will run for mayor on the BHK ticket. Balasanian said that "eyewitnesses" informed him about the incident. "It looks like there is an attempt to create tension," he said.

Ghukasian denied the allegations through a spokeswoman later on Monday.

Re-opening Stepanakert Airport Discussed

STEPANAKERT (ArmeniaNow) — Karabagh President Bako Sahakian last month received civil aviation officials from Yerevan to discuss the re-opening of an airport near Stepanakert that has been delayed several times.

According to the press office of the Karabagh leader, the meeting with the delegation from the Armenian Government's General Department on Civil Aviation, also attended by Karabagh Prime Minister Ara Harutunian, focused on the development of civil aviation in the unrecognized Armenian republic and possibilities of cooperation between the corresponding agencies of the two Armenian states.

Authorities in Karabagh have repeatedly promised that the region's only airport suitable for civil aviation will soon open for flights despite threats by Azerbaijan to shoot aircraft down.

The airport has been closed since 1992 when hostilities began in the area. Its reconstruction was launched in 2009 and originally it was expected to go into operation in 2010. But the opening of the airport was delayed several times because the news of imminent flights from and to Karabagh elicited a hostile reaction in Azerbaijan. Some officials in Baku went as far as threatening to bring down the civilian planes flying into or out of Karabagh.

The Karabagh military have given assurances that all measures would be taken to ensure the safety of flights. No precise date of when the Karabagh airport is to serve the first flight has been indicated yet. Still in March 2011, amid threats from Baku to shoot down Karabagh-bound civilian aircraft, President Serge Sargisian said he was going to be the first passenger of a Yerevan-Stepanakert flight.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Aram I Expresses Solidarity with Armenians in Syria

ANTELIAS, Lebanon (Hetq) – Catholicos Aram I of the See of Cilicia, who has been following the situation in Syria with the community leadership in Syria for the past year, expressed his solidarity with his people, making the following statement:

“I have been monitoring the situation in Syria with the Executive Council of the Catholicosate of Cilicia, and we urge the Armenian community to remain united in these difficult times.

“We have directed the church authorities to assist needy families. The leadership of the community should help families living in dangerous neighborhoods move to safety. Armenians in Syria and in the diaspora should not forget that the Syrian people welcomed the survivors of the Armenian Genocide by the Turks and accepted them as co-citizens. Systems may change, but people stay.

“Having been informed of the difficulties of the Armenian Schools in Syria, I instructed the dioceses under the jurisdiction of the Catholicosate of Cilicia to assist the schools.”

Concern Mounts for Armenian Community as Fighting Reaches Aleppo

DAMASCUS, Syria (ArmeniaNow) – While fighting continues to rage in Syria, its residents, including Syrian-Armenians, continue to escape. According to a United Nations survey, about 120,000 people have left Syria, most of them for Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon.

During the recent few days, there were heated clashes in the capital city Damascus, as well as near Aleppo, where about 45,000 Armenians live.

It is reported that Syrian-Armenians are being kidnapped and ransoms are demanded to set them free.

Despite these disturbing reports, on Sunday, a video appeared on YouTube where one of the generals of the Syrian free army, reporting about the “liberation” of Aleppo, which is considered to be the main base for President of Syria Bashar al-Assad’s supporters, said that the religious and ethnic minorities, including Armenians, had no reason to be worried about military actions there and that they would defend all of them.

The Syrian-Armenians who came to Armenia, leaving members of their families, relatives or friends in Aleppo, are worried that the Aleppo-Yerevan flights are limited; the prices of tickets have risen, and therefore it is difficult to travel to Armenia.

There are two airlines that carry out flights between Aleppo and Yerevan weekly, Armenia’s national air carrier, Armavia, and Syrian Airlines. Both are sold out of tickets up until September. Last week Armenia’s Diaspora Ministry asked Armavia to increase the number of flights and lower ticket prices. Armavia has not officially responded yet.

Armenia to Ratify Free Trade Area Agreement

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – This fall Armenia will ratify the Free Trade Area agreement within the framework of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Armenian and Russian parliament speakers said.

“I was pleased to learn that Armenian authorities have already developed documents on Free Trade Area agreement, with the latter to be ratified at the Republic of Armenia National Assembly’s fall session,” State Duma Speaker Sergey Naryshkin said.

“We hope Armenia will become the third country to ratify the document after Russia and Belarus,” Naryshkin said.

The prime ministers of the CIS member states signed a free trade agreement on October 18, 2011. The agreement eliminates export and import duties on a host of goods. It also contains a number of exemptions that will ultimately be phased out. The agreement was signed by all the CIS states except Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.



AGBU leaders and guests celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Milan Chapter. From left, Alexis Govciyan, Europe District chair; Ani Balian, committee member of the Italian Armenian Association; Krikor Istanbuli, Europe District member; Gueguel Khatchadourian, Milan Chapter Chair; Bruno Dapei, governor of Milan Province; Berge Setrakian, AGBU president; Joseph Oughourlian, Central Board member; Sona Attamian, Europe District member, and Baykar Svazlian, chair of the Italian Armenian Association

AGBU Celebrates Milan Chapter’s Centennial

MILAN, Italy – The 100-year anniversary of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Milan Chapter brought together several distinguished guests, including AGBU President Berge Setrakian, to look back on the highlights of Italy’s vibrant Armenian Diaspora community and plan for AGBU’s future both in the country and across Europe.

The occasion of the centennial also served as an opportunity for AGBU Europe to convene a board meeting, and from April 27 to April 29, a series of conferences were held alongside cultural events. Each was attended by Setrakian, members of the AGBU Central Board and Council of Trustees and members of the AGBU France and Paris Boards. The weekend commenced with a meeting led by the governor of Milan, Bruno Dapei, who greeted the delegation and gave an overview of themes concerning Milan’s Armenian community and Armenia as a whole. His remarks were followed by a dinner attended by more than 100 guests at one of the oldest restaurants in Milan.

On the second day, the AGBU Europe Board arrived at the Armenian House of Milan ready to discuss a number of items on their agenda that included AGBU activities in Europe, Armenia and Karabagh and youth programs globally.

As the centennial celebration drew to a close on Saturday, April 28, guests were treated to a special evening program filled with music and festivities. The night began at the Armenian House, where chapter chair Gueguel Khatchadourian delivered a speech applauding the hard work and dedication of former Milan Chapter chairmen, and introduced guest speaker Fr. Levon Zekian of the Mekhitarist Congregation of Venice, who spoke of the importance of charity in Armenian culture.

Following his words, pianist Nune Hayrapetyan performed the works of Aram Khachaturian, Arno Babadjanian, Sergei Rachmaninoff and other composers. When it came time to cut the celebratory cake, Mr. and Mrs. Karnig Yacoubian, AGBU benefactors, were invited to do the honors.

The AGBU Milan Chapter was one of the many that the organization established across Europe in its founding years, as it expanded rapidly to meet the growing needs of the Armenian diaspora. Then and now, the Armenian Diaspora community represented a small minority of Italy’s population. Nonetheless, over the past century,

Armenians across the country have carved a space for themselves, preserving their heritage while integrating into Italian culture. Setrakian noted at the conclusion of Saturday evening, “AGBU is an organization with a universal philosophy, aiming to preserve our identity, our church, our language and culture. The Milanese Armenian community is small in size, but great in its importance and achievements,” and went on to thank the Milan Chapter for organizing the weekend’s memorable ceremonies. For all those present, the occasion marked the end of one century of AGBU’s work in Milan and the start of yet another.

House Defeats Bill Giving Turkey Preferential Treatment on US Tribal Lands

LANDS, from page 1

Further, Maloney recognized the opposition of the ranking members of the House Natural Resources and Foreign Affairs Committees, Representatives Edward Markey (D-MA) and Howard Berman (D-CA), respectively, and also raised concerns about Turkey’s human rights record and restrictions on religious freedom.

Sarbanes closed the debate for opponents of the bill stating he did not believe that providing preferential treatment to one country, Turkey, can be “justified.” Echoing the sentiments of Representatives Pallone and Maloney, Sarbanes raised concerns about Turkey’s increasingly hostile actions to US allies, including Israel, Cyprus and Armenia and called for a recorded vote. Sarbanes also cited that two years ago, while serving as a member of the United

Nations Security Council, Turkey voted against sanctions on Iran to thwart its nuclear weapons program.

In addition to speaking on the House floor, Sarbanes spearheaded a letter along with Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) as did Representatives Berman, Gary Ackerman (D-NY), Eliot Engel (D-NY), Shelley Berkley (D-NV), Markey, Pallone, Maloney, Nikki Tsongas (D-MA) and Brad Sherman (D-CA).

“We commend our friends and supporters, especially Representatives Markey, Pallone, Sarbanes and Maloney for leading the charge against this Bill,” stated Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. “We also appreciate the strong support of Representatives Ackerman, Berman, Berkley, Engel, Sherman and Tsongas. Today’s vote upholds our cherished values and reaffirms America’s commitment to human rights.”

Turkey’s Erdogan Says Syrian People ‘Close to Victory’

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said the uprising against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is “closer than ever to victory” and warned that Turkey will respond firmly to any hostility from Syria.

Turkey has called for Assad to quit after he failed to heed calls for reform and the country has harbored Syrian rebels and tens of thousands of refugees along its border with Syria.

Tensions between the two countries, which previously enjoyed warm ties, rose sharply last month when a Turkish jet was shot down by Syrian air defenses.

Ankara subsequently increased its military presence, sending anti-aircraft missiles to the border and scrambling planes when Syrian aircraft came close

to Turkish territory.

“We believe that the Syrian people are closer than ever to victory,” state-run Anatolian news agency quoted Erdogan as saying at a dinner for ambassadors in Ankara on Monday evening.

The Turkish prime minister also criticized the faltering peace plan drawn up by international envoy Kofi Annan after the UN Security Council voted on Friday to extend for 30 days the mandate of the UN monitoring mission in Syria.

“The Annan plan, which the international community including Turkey has supported in good faith, has become a vehicle for exploitation by the Assad regime in its current form. The international community must take more responsibility when faced with the unfolding developments,” he said.

Erdogan also issued a new warning to Syria, calling on it to heed Turkey’s firm response to the shooting down of the Turkish military reconnaissance aircraft on June 22 off the coast of Syria.

“If the Syrian regime does not learn the lesson of these developments and continues its hostile behavior, Turkey will not hesitate to give as good as it gets,” Erdogan said.

Syria says it shot down the F4 jet in self-defense without knowing that it was a Turkish aircraft after it flew into its air space at high speed and low altitude.

Turkey has said it violated Syrian air space accidentally for a few minutes but maintains its plane was shot down by a missile without warning in international air space off the Syrian coast.

(Writing by Daren Butler; Editing by Angus MacSwan)



Community News

Knights and Daughters of Vartan Hold Convocation in New York City

By Aram Arkun

NEW YORK – The Knights and Daughters of Vartan held their 94th annual Grand Convocation from July 4 to 7. Members came from lodges throughout the United States and Canada to participate in workshops and plan strategies and activities for the future. Along with meetings, they enjoyed various social activities, which culminated in an evening banquet in downtown New York. The Grand Convocation was hosted and organized by the local Mamigonian Lodge and the Anahid Otyag of Brooklyn.

In addition to the substantive two days of meetings, Grand Commander Dennis Papazian and Grand Matron Agnes Sahagian hosted an inaugural reception at the Trinity Place Bar and Restaurant for the participants where they could observe New York's world-famous fireworks on July 4. The next day, workshops were followed by a boat cruise around New York City and dinner at the Water's Edge Restaurant accompanied with music by DJ Alan, while Friday's entertainment included a luncheon hosted by the Daughters of Vartan and a "kef night" at Kavookjian Hall of the Armenian Diocese accompanied with dinner. Despite a long day, the attendees, including many in their 70s and 80s, danced up a storm to the Armenian music. The culmination of the week-end was a banquet on Saturday night at the Marriott Downtown, the New York base for the convocation's activities.

The 2012 convocation was the culmination of the activities of the last year under the leadership of Papazian. The motto of his two-year administration was modernization. As Papazian declared later, the goal was "to bring the Knights of Vartan into the 21st century. To accomplish that, I wanted to adopt all sorts of modern communication techniques to make our operation more efficient and bring our people together, somewhat parallel to the Facebook model, through constant contact, videos, and virtual visitations, while protecting the venerable traditions of the organization." A national office was donated to the brotherhood in Peabody, Mass., by Knights member Aurelian Mardiros and Daughters member Anahid Mardiros and a new national clerk was appointed. A digitalization process for the voluminous archives of the Knights was initiated. The organization's journal *Avarayr* was brought up to date.

Furthermore, the Knights and Daughters continued their programs to provide scholarships for Armenian Americans, and college assistance for young people in Armenia, while contributing to Armenian internships in Washington DC, the construction of homes in Armenia and the rehabilitation and renovation of schools there. The Knights reviewed a year of tremendous financial contributions, despite dire economic times. During the year, the Knights provided financial contributions to a broad spectrum of charitable institutions, activities and programs both in the United States, Canada and Armenia. The Daughters also contributed to various charities.

The Knight's Armenian School Support Program (ASSP), which in conjunction with the World's Bank 90/10 Program, supports school construction projects in Armenia. Because the World Bank matches each dollar contributed by the Knights with nine from its fund, to date, the

see KNIGHTS, page 6



The Arax Hamazkayin Dance Ensemble performed for the crowd.

Armenia Fest 2012 Bigger and Better Than Ever

ROYAL OAK, Mich. – It's one of Metro Detroit's finest moments, the annual community-wide event called Armenia Fest now into its fifth year organized and supported by the Armenia Fest Committee and the Knights of Vartan Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge. It took place on Saturday, July 14, from 5 to 10 p.m. at the downtown Farmer's Market on Eleven Mile Road with free parking and admission.

By Betty Apigian Kessel

Ribbon-cutting ceremonies were conducted outdoors where tents hosted thousands from the late afternoon sun. The gods of Mt. Ararat produced a perfect day for the crowd who watched Co-chairs David Terzibashian, Corinne Khederian and Ed Bedikian welcome all. They offered a traditional Armenian greeting of *Parev yev Paree Yegak*.

Terzibashian greeted compatriots warmly thanking the city of Royal Oak and its mayor for again welcoming Armenia Fest to his city. He brought to memory Edgar Hagopian, who passed away a year ago, whose vision it was that began the idea of an Armenian festival with the dream of bringing together the Detroit Armenian community in unity. He said, "God bless you, Edgar."

Deacon Rubik Mailian sang the American and Armenian national anthems on a stage flanked by flags of both countries.

Attending dignitaries and politicians were introduced to the audience but it was the popular and talented Arax Hamazkayin Dance Ensemble they were waiting to see perform. It was worth the wait. The dance troupe is going strong with new members joining as time goes on.

The Arax Troupe has it all perfected with beautiful, colorful costumes for male and female alike. Heavy applause greeted the conclusion of each dance. Then members of the troupe pulled folks from the audience and danced with individuals as the Big Band All Stars under the leadership of Vaughn Masropian played on.

Masropian is the festival's music director, emcee and the director of the Sunday Armenian Radio Program. It was his fine voice you heard on vocals during the evening.

Smiles were on everyone's faces. The "Tomzara" had couples stomping and twirling just like in the old days. How fun it was to watch.

Alice Derderian was attending for the first time and preferred the coolness of the indoor area where she sat with family and friends, welcoming me to sit with

see FESTIVAL, page 7



The Armenia Fest 2012 Committee members

Armenian Higher Education Initiative Completes 2012 Summer Program

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Armenian Higher Education Initiative (AHEI) completed its inaugural summer humanities program. Undergraduate university students of Armenian heritage came together from Georgia, Artsakh, as well as universities in Gumri, Kavar and Yerevan for an intensive program in the humanities and social sciences. The aim of the course was to stimulate critical thinking and provide sound fundamentals in the participants' areas of study, as well as to deliver valuable insights into subjects to which students would not otherwise have had exposure.

Core courses consisted of methodology seminars in political science and history, and they were complemented by lectures in a variety of other subjects given by local specialists. Classroom space was provided by Yerevan State University and Counterpart International.

AHEI staff members Asbed Kotchikian, Hamazasp Danielyan, Gayane Vardanyan and Arshak Balayan led the program, and visiting lecturers included art historian Lilit Sargsyan, Lara Aharonian of the Women's Resource Center in Yerevan, ethnologist Tigran Matosyan, Artak Kirakosyan of the Civil Society Institute, nationalism studies expert Mikael Zolyan and media expert Gegham Vardanyan. Danielyan and Ara Sanjian led the methodology courses, preparing students for long-term research projects that will take place in the coming months.

The program was sponsored by the Open Society Institute (OSI). OSI alumni participated in a debate with the AHEI group, and also gave presentations on their public service activities alongside AHEI final presentations at the end of the course.

Participants had the opportunity to travel to Echmiadzin, where they met with members of the Cross of Armenian Unity NGO. In addition, students met with members of the Armenian Volunteer Corps/Birthright Armenia, where they shared their respective experiences and agreed to cooperate on issues such as finding host families for one another and exchanging information on local organizations. Towards the end of the program, students attended a seminar with Jirayr Libaridian, former advisor to President Levon Ter-Petrossian, in which they discussed Armenia's current and future political situation.

AHEI participants expressed overwhelming satisfaction with the course and have already created active online networks with one another. The AHEI aims to create strong bonds between its staff and participants and provide alumni with valuable information and opportunities for future academic pursuits.

For further information about the Armenian Higher Education Initiative, contact Sarah Ludwig, executive director, at info@armhei.org or visit www.armhei.org.

AGBU 2012 World Games Set to Begin in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES – More than 500 young athletes from around the world are heading here this week as the countdown draws near for the AGBU World Games. Set to begin on Saturday, July 28, the event promises excitement and thrills both on and off the court, as the organization's youth take part in various sports competitions, social events and excursion tours as part of an Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) tradition that dates back to 1955.

The World Games' weeklong series of activities will start at the opening ceremony on Sunday, July 29, at the Pasadena City College Stadium. There, actor David Foster, as well as

see GAMES, page 6



COMMUNITY NEWS

Knights and Daughters of Vartan Grand Convocation in New York City

KNIGHTS, from page 5

Knights have raised, with matching funds from the World Bank, more than \$21 million for school construction and renovation in Armenia.

Grand Matron Agnes B. Sahagian of Worcester declared that the Daughters of Vartan had a new project, the support of the St. Tarkmanchatz School of Jerusalem. Though a new *obyag* or chapter was established in Costa Mesa last year, declining membership poses a challenge for the future.

Sahagian commented afterwards that she was able to meet with many present and past officials of the Daughters of Vartan in fruitful meeting at this year's convocation. She exclaimed, "It was wonderful!" Significantly greater unity was achieved between the men and women in this

year's meetings. Sahagian explained, "When the men were going to have the installation of officials, I went alone but one of the girls from Boston wanted to join, so I said of course. Then I decided that if I let one come all should be able to come with me. ... The men, I believe, were honored to have us there. Then the men came to our meeting hall to watch my reinstallation and the installation of other officials."

This year's convocation was important for the future direction of the Knights and Daughters. Nigoghos Atinikian began his term as the new grand commander for the period 2012-2013. He stated in his speech, "Today we mark a new beginning, a new beginning for the next hundred years. It is of vital importance that leaders, not only within the Knights, but as Armenians,



Seated from left, Avak Ter Sbarabed Nelson Stepanian, Avak Sbarabed Nigoghos D. Atinikian II and Avak Yeretz Armen Mahserejian; standing from left, Avak Araroghabet Robert Semonian, Avak Argughagal Michael Guleserian, Avak Tbrabed Kevork Marashlian and Avak Ted Jean Jacque Hajjar

AGBU 2012 World Games Set to Begin in Los Angeles

GAMES, from page 5

Armenian singers Silva Hakobyan and Hovhannes Shahbazyan, will take the stage and welcome participants, who are traveling from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, France, Uruguay and the United States. The event, which is free and open to the public, is expected to draw thousands. In the days that follow, the athletes will compete in basketball, chess, soccer, swimming, track and field and volleyball, relying on skills they have developed throughout the year with their local AGBU chapter teams.

When they are not on the courts or in the field, participants will have a chance to mingle with their peers at many social gatherings. The AGBU Young Professionals of Los Angeles (YPLA) has planned a summer soiree at the Sheraton Universal Hotel rooftop, for the evening of Tuesday, July 31; a private beach party will take place on Wednesday, August 1;

and on Friday, August 3, the AGBU Ardavazt Theater Group will perform their comedy "Ser Yev Dzidzagh" ("Love and Laughter").

After the winning athletes collect their medals, the World Games will come to a close at the Victory Ball on Saturday, August 4. The celebration, which will be held at the University Studios Backlot (New York Avenue), will feature London-based entertainer Kev Orkian and singers, Hakobyan, Armenchik, Joseph Krikorian, as well as other special guests.

The AGBU World Games 2012 Committee is led by Shahe Seuylemejian, who commends all of the volunteers for their hard work and adds, "I am proud to say that we enjoy the dedication of hundreds of individuals who have been working the extra mile for over a year to welcome their fellow AGBU teammates and supporters for an incredible week of good sportsmanship and fun." To learn more about the AGBU World Games, visit: www.agbugames.com.

OBITUARY

Haig Basdekian

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. — Haig Armenag Basdekian died on June 14. He was 81.

He was born January 15, 1931 in Washington, DC, and had three siblings, Edward, Naomi and Mary.

As a young man, he was a member of the Boy Scouts of America and later the ROTC. He also got involved in the Armenian community and the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA). He was a founding member of St. Mary's Armenian Church of Washington, DC and served as its first Parish Council chairman.

He was a member of the Knights of Vartan for 50 years and was instrumental in starting the Knights of Vartan Lodge in Washington, DC. He was a founding member and past commander of Hayasdan Lodge in Boca Raton, Fla. He was also a founding member and life charter member of the Ft. Lauderdale chapter of the

Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU).

In October 1957, he married Mary Ann Kalyjian of Philadelphia. They were married for 40 years until she passed away in 1988. The couple had two daughters, Andrea, who now lives in Washington, DC, and Ani, who now lives in New York City with her fiancée, Scott Yeckes.

In 1969, the family relocated to Ft. Lauderdale. He continued his career as a mechanic, opening Ike's Auto in Ft. Lauderdale. He continued this business right up until his last days, for the last 15 years with his colleague and close friend, Hrair "JR" Alboyadjian.

Service to his Armenian Church and community was always a mainstay of his. He was a founding member of what eventually became St. David Armenian Church, from its earliest years in Ft. Lauderdale. For the past 14 years, he was a faithful and committed member and supporter of the St. Mary Armenian Church of Hollywood and was one of the Godfathers of the church, representing the Knights of Vartan. His presence was a constant at St. Mary's, always supporting the church financially as a benefactor for many church projects include the playground, and physically with his continuing volunteer efforts whenever called upon to serve.

In addition, he was a benefactor and supporter of the Diocese's Ararat Center, the Armenian Tree Project and in Armenia, where he donated a patient room to the Children's Hospital in Yerevan.

In addition to his service to his Armenian church and community, he has always been a dedicated and devoted family man, always available with his love, his support, his encouragement and guidance to not only his children, but also his siblings and his many nieces and nephews. In recent years, he was a family man for Cookie Devers and her family, son Lloyd, daughter-in-law Ivy and their children, Andrew and Tatiana.

The funeral service was held on June 16 at St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church, Hollywood. Fr. Vartan D. Joulfayan and Rev. Nersess Jebejian officiated.

Sonya Ourfalian

WATERTOWN, Mass. — Sonya (Kouyoumjian) Ourfalian, of Watertown, died on July 20.

She leaves her husband, Kevork Ourfalian; children, Sarkis Ourfalian and his wife, Seta; Seta Jaklian and her husband, Garbis; Missak Ourfalian and his wife, Angelique; and Nora Halibian and her husband, Vasken; grandchildren, Kevork, Alex and Sonia Ourfalian, Nina and Ara Jaklian, Natalie and Ani Ourfalian and Melanie and Angelina Halibian; and siblings, Adour Kouyoumjian and his wife, Anahid; Georgette Kradjian and her husband, Vahe; and Maro Nasr and her husband, Elias.

Funeral service were held at St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, Watertown, on July 25.

Interment was at Ridgelawn Cemetery, Watertown.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to the church or to St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Heritage Park Hosts Early Morning Walks

BOSTON (*Boston Globe*) – Early risers can enjoy the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway before the heat of the day sets in by participating in a walk around the labyrinth inside the Armenian Heritage Park.

Beth Burnham Mace, founder and president of the Labyrinth Guild of New England, will host a series of monthly 7 a.m. labyrinth walks on the following Wednesdays: August 15, September 19, and October 17. (One took place on July 18, also.)

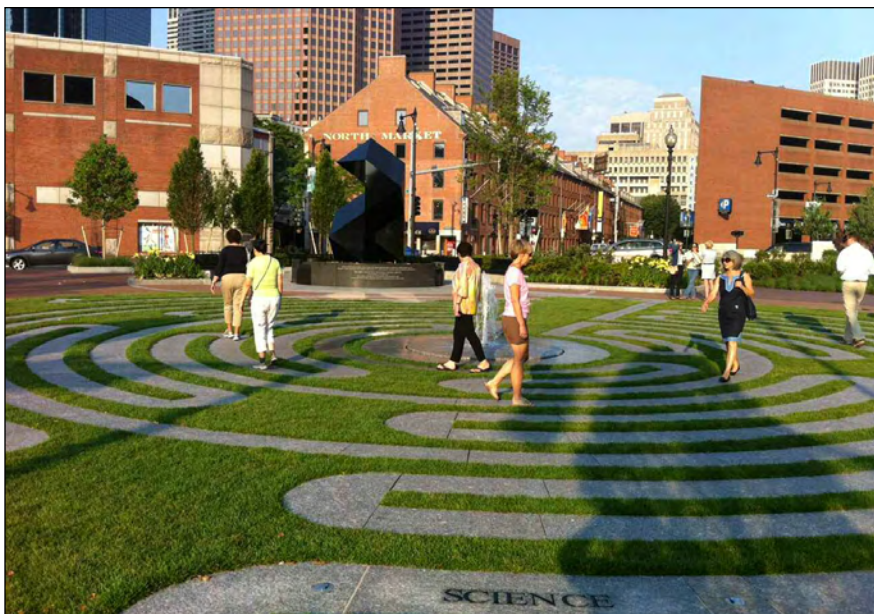
Mace formed the guild in 1999 to celebrate labyrinths across the region and create a community of those who enjoy walking labyrinths and exploring their meanings, according to the guild's website.

The Armenian Heritage Park, located northwest of Mercantile Street between Faneuil Hall Marketplace and Christopher Columbus Park, celebrates Armenian immigration to the US with an abstract sculpture representing the immigrant experience and a labyrinth that represents life's journey.

The sculpture, a dodecahedron split and mounted in a reflecting pool, can shift its position to represent the re-shaping of immigrant communities in a new land.

The labyrinth honors the achievements of Armenian immigrants, listing names of many who achieved success in the arts, sciences, business, education and public service.

The park was built by the non-profit



On July 18th, people explore the labyrinth inside the Armenian Heritage Park.

Armenian Heritage Foundation, a coalition of more than 35 Armenian-American religious, cultural, educational and philanthropic organizations from around the Commonwealth.

At the park's opening in late May, Gov. Deval Patrick spoke of its symbolic value.

"This is a proud symbol of resilience for

our Armenian community and our Commonwealth," said Patrick, according to a press release.

"It is a tribute to those who have, against many odds, contributed so much to Massachusetts, and a marker for future generations to see our state as a place to reach for their dreams," he added.

Armenia Fest 2012: Bigger and Better Than Ever

FESTIVAL, from page 5

her to get acquainted. That is one of the benefits of this festival, meeting new Armenians. Unfamiliar faces were everywhere.

Attorney Marjorie Nanian, a professor who teaches at Schoolcraft College had this to say, "We are so lucky to have these young Armenian dancers to remind us of our culture." Nanian knows Armenian history and has lectured extensively on the subject of the Armenian Genocide at the college.

There is no doubt our hearts remain in the Highlands of Hayastan. There is no doubt the 1915 Genocide survivor generation knows tradition is being honored. Village music and dance still remain the favorite type of Armenian entertainment for the majority.

It still seems strange to those of us who have attended all the festivals to not see our beloved Edgar proudly surveying the throng approvingly moving from table to table engaging in conversation with one and all. One fact must never be forgotten – it was Edgar Hagopian who tried valiantly to bridge the community, to heal old wounds and to partially accomplish that with this festival and other events. He remains irreplaceable. Some folks are, you know.

The outdoor tents filled to capacity, so too was the vast cool market building. Families and friends occupied tables where they filled plates with an array of Armenian food by Gary Reizian's Uptown Deli. There was the usual *lahmajoun*, meat balls, cheese *boereg*, spinach pie and much more.

In addition to the regular booths selling books, pastry, specialty items, etc, there was a new addition of an art exhibit featuring different artforms from talented local Armenians organized by Ani Kasparian. The artists were Leda Seyranogly, Levon Kafafian, Rina Movsisyan and Michael Stambouljan.

Proceeds raised from Armenia Fest are designated for Armenian humanitarian projects.

What do you say to a group of Armenians who put their hearts and souls into a full year's planning to bring the focus of the *Hye* community to Armenians and non-Hyes alike with the capability to get along well and perform their assigned duties to a "t"? You say a big "thank you." They are Corinne Khederian, David Terzibashian, Ed Bedikian, Hagop Alexanian, Ara Belian, Ray Boujoulian, Ken Khezarian, Paul Kulhanjian, Shirley Sarkisian, Madeline Thomasian, and the glue that really holds it altogether, the lovely Pam Coultis, who has a personality that never ends. She was the dedicated administrative assistant to Edgar Hagopian. She is still with his company in Birmingham.

Isabel Kazarian had this to say, "I'm having a great time, loving every minute of it. I'm proud, very proud to be Armenian."

Armenian Fest is self-supporting but acknowledgement must be given to those who respond with their support. They are: the Ajemian Foundation, Mark Artinian's Bosco's, Debbie and Tom Krikorian, the Jane and Richard Manoogian Foundation and the Mardigian Foundation.

The impressive ad booklet contained the names of predominately Armenian professionals and businesses. The community is urged to support them for their generosity.

Happily this event was attended by a great many Armenian youth of all ages, but the youngest had to be darling little Sevana Derderian, no more than six-weeks-old sitting comfortably in her stroller gazing out at admiring faces as proud parents, Armen and Teleen Derderian, took congratulations on their first born. Sevana represents the future. The beat goes on.

Winner of the hand-knotted rug made in Armenia containing the Hyegagan Alphabet was Ray Boujoulian. The raffle was sponsored by Hagopian World of Rugs.

May those gods on Ararat be kind to us all so that we can attend next year's sixth annual Armenian Fest in a continued effort to fulfill Edgar Hagopian's vision of a united metro Detroit-Armenian community.

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Trip to Holy Land Helps 33 Young Adults Find Deeper Connection to their Christian and Armenian Roots

By Kiersten Johnston

NEW YORK — As they traced the footsteps of Christ during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land this month, a group of 33 young leaders had an opportunity to strengthen their faith and gain a deeper understanding of biblical history. During the nine-day journey, June 9-18, pilgrims engaged in thought-provoking *Bible* study sessions, took part in *badarak* services and learned about 1,600 years of Armenian presence in the Holy Land.

The pilgrimage was led by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern). Assisting the Primate were Rev. Mardiros Chevian, dean of New York's St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral and Deacon Justin Ajamian, deacon-in-charge at St. Sarkis Church of Dallas, Texas.

"I felt blessed to have another opportunity to travel with a group of Armenian pilgrims to the Holy Land, which is the birthplace of our Christian faith the holy apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew brought to Armenia," Chevian said.

The pilgrimage began in the birthplace of Jesus: Bethlehem. The bustling early morning hours were spent celebrating the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Holy Nativity, where the young pilgrims served as the choir, as they would



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian gives a sermon at the Holy Grotto in Bethlehem.

America (ACYOA) Central Council member from the St. Gregory the Enlightener Church in White Plains.

Experiencing this physical aspect of Christ's ministry instilled a new appreciation and humility in everyone. The group found relief from the suffocating humidity in a visit to the Dead Sea, where everyone relaxed in the water and reveled in its history.

Helping the Patriarchate

In Jerusalem's Armenian Patriarchate, the ACYOA Central Council presented a check for \$1,000 to Archbishop Nourhan Manougian, the patriarchal vicar. The Diocesan youth organization makes such a contribution to the Armenian Patriarchate every year, to honor those who sustain the Armenian presence in Jerusalem.

"Any little bit we can do to help is beneficial," said Ani Grigorian, a Central Council member from St. Mesrob Church in Racine, Wis.

"Knowing that the ACYOA Central Council is giving back what they can and playing a part in that is a very fulfilling feeling."

On a tour of the Patriarchate, the pilgrims saw the Calouste Gulbenkian Library, home to countless rare volumes, and the Holy Archangels Church, site of the prison where Jesus was tor-

The tour concluded with lunch alongside some of the members of the Brotherhood of Sts. James and after that a vespers service in Sts. James Cathedral. There, in the holy atmosphere of one of the cathedral's many altars, the pilgrims had their most memorable experience of the day, when they saw one of their peers, Noel Dawood of the St. George Church of Waukegan, Ill., receive the sacrament of chrismation from

liest examples of the Armenian written language. Its powerful inscription reads: "To the memory and salvation of the souls of Armenians, whose names are known to God alone."

With these words in mind, the pilgrims made their way back to Jerusalem via the Mount of Olives, walking the path that Christ did on Palm Sunday. In Jerusalem they paused at the Pool of Bethesda, where Christ healed the paralyzed man, before walking the "The Way of the Cross." As it did for Jesus, that trail ended for them with the site of Christ's crucifixion, burial, and resurrection — enshrined within the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

"The pilgrimage came to an end and beginning here," explained Jonathan Pelaez, an ACYOA Central Council member from the St. Mary Church of Livingston, NJ. "This was where Jesus died and rose. This was the end of our pilgrimage — and the beginning of a new perspective on life."

That evening, the pilgrims had an opportunity to meet with local youth in the Armenian Quarter. They joined together in dancing and singing and viewed a strongly contested soccer match that energized the entire group.

Before their departure from the Holy Land, they would meet with the local Armenian community once more for a farewell celebration at the Shahanian family residence located within the Armenian monastery. They also engaged in a discussion on the Armenian presence in Jerusalem with resident historian Kevork Hintlian. The pilgrims expressed their gratitude to the local community for the warm welcome and hospitality.



Pilgrims prepare for a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee

throughout the services in the days to come.

In his words that morning, Barsamian set the tone for the journey awaiting the group: "The ground we are standing on is where Christ's journey began.... When the baby Jesus opened his eyes for the first time, to look up at the night sky, he was looking upon the stars that he had created, untold ages before. With those same eyes, our Lord spent his earthly ministry looking at the landscape around us, with many of its landmarks still in place since that time."

"Now, you too have reached this place," the Primate continued. "You are having this experience. And we as a group will be able to share that experience, as we embark on a journey that has the power to shape us, and direct us, throughout our lives."

Following the service the group proceeded to the Armenian monastery and later walked through the Shepherds' Field, where the angels passed on the joyous news of Christ's birth.

The Jordan River, where Christ was baptized by St. John the Baptist, was the first destination of the following day, where the pilgrims took part in the "Blessing of the Water" ceremony led by Barsamian.

Still tracing Christ's footsteps, the group braved the desert temperatures to view the Mount of the Temptation. "We felt the intensity of the heat for only a few hours. But we could never imagine what Christ experienced during the long days of his time," said Olivia Derderian, an Armenian Church Youth Organization of



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian performed the "Blessing of the Water" ceremony and presented the cross used for the ceremony to Enna Tunyan, a pilgrim from St. Sarkis Church of Charlotte, NC.

tured before his crucifixion. Tradition identifies a nearby tree as the one to which Christ was tied for scourging by the Roman soldiers.

The pilgrims especially enjoyed their glimpse into life at the Sts. Tarkmanchats School. The school holds its students to high standards which include learning a minimum of four languages. Most of the students also participate in sports, with soccer being a particular favorite.



Pilgrims pose for a group photo outside the Church of the Nativity of Christ.

Barsamian.

A day trip took the group two hours north of Jerusalem, to Jesus' home province of Galilee. They visited Mount Tabor, the mountain of the Transfiguration; the Church of Beatitudes on the site of the Sermon on the Mount; Nazareth, the town where the Holy Family lived; Capernaum, the home town of the disciple Peter; Cana where Christ performed his first miracle at a wedding and Tabgha, where Christ multiplied the loaves and fishes.

The last stop was the Sea of Galilee — an important site throughout Jesus' ministry, where he walked on water and saved his disciple Peter from drowning. The boat ride on the Sea of Galilee sparked powerful spiritual feelings in the pilgrims. In that atmosphere Chevian led them in meditation. As the sun moved over the sea towards the horizon, the group listened closely to his words on the storms of life, and how faith can overcome doubt.

Endings and Beginnings

On the next day the pilgrims visited the Chapel of St. Polyeuctes, site of a sixth-century Armenian mosaic that represents one of the ear-

Early the next day, the group returned to the Holy Sepulchre. Traveling in silence through dark alleys and under ancient arches, they arrived at the tomb of Christ, where Barsamian celebrated the *badarak* at 4 a.m., with several of the pilgrims serving on the altar alongside him, and the entire group joining their voices together in the singing of the *sharagans*.

In an unexpected final ceremony which lifted their spirits even higher, Barsamian performed a traditional ring-blessing ceremony over fellow pilgrims Nadia Silk and Vache Soghomonian, who had become engaged during the pilgrimage.

"The entire pilgrimage was surreal," said Soghomonian, who hails from the St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Church of Wynnewood, Penn. "We do not understand the magnitude of our journey, until we pull away from it."

His new fiancée, from Holy Trinity Church in Cheltenham, Penn., said she would always carry with her a concern for the welfare of her countrymen in the holy city. "Every Armenian that we talked to, whether lay-person or clergy, said the best thing we could do was pray for Jerusalem, as Jesus did."

Summer Interns Arrive at the Diocese

NEW YORK – The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) will have two interns – Kiersten Johnston and Maral Firkatian Wozniak – joining the Diocesan team for an eight-week summer program.

The interns will assist with projects in the Diocese’s Communications Department and the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR). In addition, they will take part in a spiritual and educational program, which includes morning prayer, Bible-study sessions, weekly lunch meetings with area clergy and Armenian-language instruction.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Diocesan Primate, and members of the Diocesan Council welcomed the interns to the Diocese on Tuesday, June 26. “It’s wonderful to have young people who are interested in learning about our church join our Diocesan family for the summer months,” Barsamian said. “The internship program is a good opportunity for participants to build on their skills while gaining a deeper understanding of their faith and a familiarity with the operations of the Diocesan Center.”

Johnston, 18, of St. Leon Church of Fair Lawn, NJ, will work in the Communications Department, where she will write for the Diocesan e-newsletter, blog and website, and learn about video production.

An English and communications major at Fordham University in New York, Johnston attends services at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in Manhattan during the academic year. She has volunteered for the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia, where she helped build a house in a village in the Armavir region.

This summer she hopes to learn more about her heritage. “An internship with the Armenian Diocese seemed unique,” she said. “I liked the idea of a work environment immersed in an Armenian atmosphere.”

Wozniak, 22, will intern with FAR, where she



Kiersten Johnston (left) and Maral Firkatian Wozniak with Archbishop Khajag Barsamian at the Diocesan Center

will write articles and blog posts about the organization’s programs in Armenia. She also will do writing for the Department of Christian Education.

Wozniak hails from Bloomfield, Conn., and attends the nearby St. Stephen Church. A graduate of the University of Hartford, Wozniak studied creative writing and minored in French. She is a member of her local church choir and has taken part in Camp Hayastan and the Eastern Prelacy’s Datev Institute.

“I want to give back to the community that has always supported me and made me feel like I was part of something,” she said. “I am eager to not only strengthen my own relationship with my Armenian roots, but to help others do so as well.”

Nancy Basmajian, executive secretary of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, is overseeing the summer program, which the Diocese offers annually in partnership with the Armenian General Benevolent Union. Johnston and Wozniak are living in student housing at New York University, along with some 30 summer interns participating in the AGBU internship program. They will join AGBU interns for several educational, cultural and social activities throughout the summer.

AMAA Organizes Kids’ Camps in Armenia, NKR

NEW YORK – When the first warm days of summer come, most people are eager to get outside and bask in the sun and/or find relief in a cool body of water. Each year, it also means thousands of children in Armenia and Karabagh know the time for summer camp is drawing near. The camping missions of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) not only enrich the children’s lives spiritually and physically, but also provide relief from the hot summer sun. Campers enjoy leisure time in a wholesome environment created especially for them while they learn about the love of God. Camp ministries continue to be one of the most effective methods to bring children closer to God.

A donation of \$70 will help a child be able to attend an overnight camp this summer and a donation of \$40 will help a child attend a day camp for a week.

The AMAA operates two overnight camps in Armenia and Karabagh, Camp Sheen Shoghig in Hankavan, Armenia and Camp Bedrosian in Shushi, Karabagh – and 46 day camps in other areas throughout the homeland. Campers come from impoverished families, thus the AMAA does not charge them any fees and instead relies on donations.

AMAA encourages financial support as it makes a huge positive impact for the children attending the camp.

For more information about the summer camps and how to help, call the AMAA or go to the website at www.amaa.org.

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Sun.	At sea	-	-
Mon.	Cozumel, Mexico	8:00 AM	5:00 AM
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Wed.	Cayman Islands	10:30 AM	6:30 AM
Thu.	Montego Bay, Jamaica	8:00 AM	3:00 AM
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Arts & Living

Rev. Bedros Shetilian Conducts in St. Petersburg, Russia

INDIAN ORCHARD, Mass.— Rev. Bedros Shetilian is the pastor of St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church in Indian Orchard, Mass. and Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church in Troy, NY, but before becoming a clergyman, his first calling was music and conducting.

He received his initial musical training at Yerevan Musical College and then at St. Petersburg Conservatory in Russia under Yuri Temirkanov. Shetilian has worked with many orchestras, including both the St. Petersburg Philharmonic and the Moscow Chamber Orchestra. He has also participated in a number of international music festivals including the Moscow Easter Festival and the Borgholms Music Festival in Sweden. In addition to his work in Russia, Shetilian has toured extensively in Europe and received critical acclaim. He was awarded both a medal and diploma of the Russian Cultural Foundation for his achievements in conducting. Shetilian is also the founder of the Troy Orchestra in Troy, and he recently participated in the St. Petersburg Palaces International Music Festival in Russia. Currently, Shetilian combines both his callings, being a clergyman and a conductor. He regularly writes on a number of topics for the Armenian newspapers. His wife is a music educator and their daughter is a senior at Harvard University.

Q: Can you give us more information about the festival?

Shetilian: The festival is called the St. Petersburg Palaces International Music Festival and was founded in 1990 by a directive from Vladimir Putin, who was the deputy mayor of



Rev. Bedros Shetilian conducting in Russia

St. Petersburg at that time. There was a break in the festivals between 1994 to 1997, so that is why this year is the 20th anniversary. It was celebrated with a concert and a banquet in the Russian president's Konstantinovsky palace in St. Petersburg and a congratulatory letter was received from President Putin.

Q: Is this the first time that you have been invited to conduct for the festival?

Shetilian: In 1997, when I was still living in Russia, I conducted the Italian International Orchestra during the festival.

Q: What orchestra and choir did you conduct for this program?

Shetilian: The orchestra is called Konstantinovsky. It is named after the Russian president's Konstantinovsky palace in St. Petersburg and it functions under the festival's management. The name of the choir is Smolny Choir and it is under the auspices of the Smolny Cathedral. Smolny is a beautiful 18th-century Russian cathedral in St. Petersburg, built by the famous Italian architect, Rasterelli. The church was closed during the soviet era and is still not consecrated. It functions as a concert hall.

Q: You have conducted one of most impressive pieces of the classical music repertoire, Mozart's *Requiem*. What is your impression?

Shetilian: First, this was not the first time see CONDUCTOR, page 11



Chris Bohjalian has launched an aggressive national tour to promote his new book on the Genocide, titled *The Sandcastle Girls*, considered to be his most poignant work.

Chris Bohjalian Brings Theme of Armenian Genocide Mainstream

BURLINGTON, Vt. — Chris Bohjalian is the kind of author who grabs you by the heart and refuses to let go. How he can manipulate several plots simultaneously, travel cross-country to promote his work, raise a family and enjoy a private life either is a supreme juggling act.

By Tom Vartabedian

Of the 15 books he has written, his latest — *The Sandcastle Girls* — could very well be his best. If not the ultimate, it is at least the most ambitious and personal novel in a career that has spanned more than 25 years. If anything, it is a testament to his Armenian ancestry, which is often exemplified on his many tours.

The work is not merely a historical love story, but a sweeping saga set in the cauldron of World War I, a tale of love and loss — and a family secret that has been buried for generations.

The book enhances Bohjalian's stature in the world of Armenian-American literature and makes it a must read for anyone in search of adventure.

One of his first novels, *Midwives*, was a number one *New York Times* best seller. Bohjalian's work has been translated into more than 25 languages and three have been turned into movies. He lives in Vermont with his wife and daughter.

The Sandcastle Girls is dedicated to the memory of his mother-in-law Sondra Blewer (1931-2011) and his father Aram Bohjalian (1928-2011).

"Sondra urged me to write this novel and my father helped to inspire it," he noted.

A question-and-answer session with the author follows:

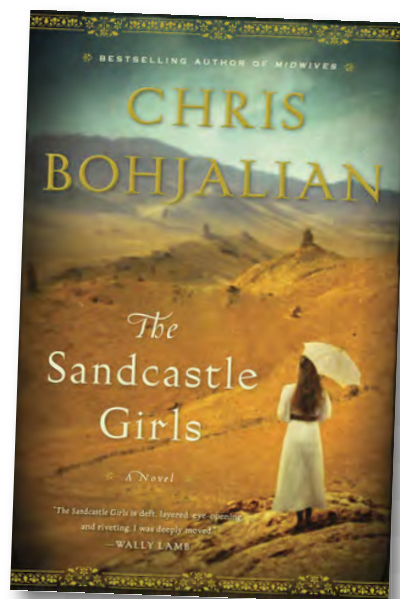
Tom Vartabedian: What prompted you to write *The Sandcastle Girls*?

Chris Bohjalian: I've been contemplating a novel about the Genocide for most of my adult life. I tried writing one in the early 1990s between *Water Witches* and *Midwives*. But it was a train wreck of a book. If I'm going to be kind, I might simply call it "apprentice" work. But "amateurish" would be fitting, too. (Scholars and masochists can read the manuscript in my alma mater's archives.)

A few years ago, my Armenian father grew ill. And as we visited, we pored over family photos together and I pressed him for details about his parents who were survivors from Western Turkey. I also asked him for stories from his childhood. After all, he was the son of immigrants who spoke a language that can only be called exotic in Westchester County during the 1930s.

Finally, a good friend of mine who is a journalist and Genocide scholar urged me to try once again to write a novel about what is, clearly, the most important part of my family's history. So I did. And this time, it all came together.

see BOHJALIAN, page 12



Now Embarking: An Artistic Interpretation of the 1947 and 1949 Armenian Repatriation

By Hazel Antaramian-Hofman

I was born in 1960, in Yerevan, Armenia, yet spoke little Armenian and what I did speak was Western Armenian. As a young child, I always wondered why I came from such an exotic place when my father was born in Kenosha, Wis., and my mother was from Lyon, France. Only after years of hearing stories did I realize that I was the product of two Armenian Diaspora post-World War II repatriate children, who were compelled by their father and mother's emotive sense of *hayrenik* to leave one known cultural and ideological ground for another.

The post-WWII repatriation movements uprooted many Armenians from all over the world: France, Lebanon, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Syria, Bulgaria, Romania, Palestine, the United States, even some from Sudan, Iran, Iraq, India, Uruguay, Argentina and China. It was an orchestrated campaign to repopulate what fraction that remained of a vast land well-documented as the ancestral home of Armenians from the time of Darius the Great. But the repatriates were headed not to the romanticized, vast ancient land of their forebears, but to a "Sovietized" Armenia under Stalin. It was a migratory event complete with personal and spiritual dispossession and cultural disparity.

The Republic of Armenia was in a state of extreme poverty after World War II. By November 1945, Stalin authorized the return of Armenians to Soviet Armenia with the incentive of bringing in new life in the construction, vitalization and economic development to a destitute Soviet Republic. Armenian nationalistic organizations, political parties and religious leadership organized efforts of the repatriation. The Armenian Repatriation Committee stressed the need to nationally support the country of Armenia while downplaying the reality that Armenia was now a Soviet-dominated country.

The basic repatriation story is riddled with individual twists and turns, but in most cases, there was a common thread: more often, a nationalistic, or at times, a socialist-leaning decision was made by a patriarch or a matriarch, who uprooted their family in response to an emotional global appeal encouraged by Soviet propaganda. The call to Armenians worldwide was a maneuver to attract young people of child-bearing ages; to secure skilled workers and professionals from developed countries; and to obtain new technologies and products. Encouraged by promises of free housing, land to build upon and job opportunities, those who left the diaspora made their life-altering move with false hope. Upon their arrival, they witnessed unimaginable social and economic conditions, with no opportunity to leave the Soviet bloc Armenia or regain their confiscated see REPATRIATION, page 13



ARTS & LIVING

Fundraising Concert Held at Havertown Church to Benefit Avedisian School

AMAA Program Features Jazz Musician Grace Kelly

By Eileen Chopourian Stephey

HAVERTOWN, Penn. — The Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church hosted a benefit concert on June 2, which featured the Grace Kelly Quintet. The concert raised money and awareness for the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School in Yerevan, Armenia. The evening, co-chaired by Eileen Chopourian Stephey and Tom Momjian, was supported by the Armenian and local communities with more than 200 attendees filling the sanctuary. Light refreshments were provided before the concert.

Grace Kelly's Quintet performed the hymns *Blessed Assurance*, *Amazing Grace* and *Sweet Hour of Prayer* from her CD, "Grace." Saxophonist Kelly also sang some of her own compositions. The musicians, which included Jason Palmer on trumpet, Evan Gregor on bass, Pete McCann on guitar and Jordan Perlson on drums, quickly established a warm rapport with the audience and received a standing ovation following their final number. Kelly and her fam-



From left, Tom Momjian, AMAA Board member and concert co-chair, with Edward and Pamela Avedisian

ily are active supporters of the Avedisian School building project and performed at a fundraising concert in Lexington, Mass. in January for the school.

Pamela and Ed Avedisian attended the concert, and Ed Avedisian spoke briefly about the award-winning Avedisian School and invited the audience to participate in this project with their financial support. Groundbreaking for the new school took place on June 22. This school will employ state-of-the-art, energy-efficient technology in its construction and become the first LEED-certified building in Armenia.



Gracy Kelly performs.

The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) serves the religious, educational and social needs of Armenian communities around the world. It was founded in 1918

in Worcester, Mass. and was incorporated in New York in 1920. AMAA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

For more information about Kelly, go to www.gracekellymusic.com.

For more information about the Avedisian School Building Project and ways to help, go to www.amaa.org.

Little Singers Make Big Impression in Japan

TOKYO — The Armenian Little Singers choir — whose repertoire includes classical songs, modern music, jazz and bossa nova — are touring Japan for the first time.

The singers — 40 girls, aged 11 to 18 — are all students of music schools in Yerevan. The group was originally founded by Tigran Hekekyan, professor of choral conducting at

the Komitas State Conservatory in Armenia, in 1992, and it has since won many awards at international chorus competitions, according to Min-On Concert Association, the choir's Japan tour organizer. It also tours Europe and the United States every year.

For this extended tour of Japan — which includes 16 venues, some of which have already sold out — the girls are singing several hymns such as *Ave Verum Corpus*, as well as a George Gershwin medley, *The Girl from Ipanema*, *In the Mood* and other popular songs.

Thus far, crowds have been dazzled, packing the halls and cheering on the young performers.

The concerts got underway on July 13 at the Sano Culture Center in Tochigi, with performances in Kita Kyushu, Marugame Civic Hall in Kagawa, Nitori Bunka Hall in Sapporo, July 23; Iida Cultural Hall in Nagano, July 26; and will include upcoming dates in Acros Fukuoka, July 30; Mizayaki Municipal Culture Hall in Miyazaki, August 1; Nagasaki Brick Hall in Nagasaki, August 2; Watanabeo Kinen Kaikan in Ube in Yamaguchi, August 4, and Ishikawa Ongakudo in Kanazawa, August 8.



Some of the members of the Little Singers on tour in Japan

Rev. Bedros Shetilian Conducts in St. Petersburg, Russia

CONDUCTOR, from page 10
that I conducted this masterpiece. I conducted it on April 24, 1995, for a memorial concert at the St. Petersburg Philharmonia big hall, dedicated to the 80th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and sponsored by the Armenian Apostolic Church in St. Petersburg. What can I say about this masterpiece? The only thing that I can think of is that such works are created not only by the efforts of human beings, but also by inspiration from above; in other words by inspiration from Holy Spirit. Of course, Mozart was a genius, a very big and a unique genius. This work was his last one. In contrast to his early years, Mozart had religious feelings in his latter years. It is believed that when he received the suggestion to compose a Requiem he said, "I am going to compose my own Requiem." To finish about the Requiem, I want to mention that the soprano soloist for the Requiem was the famous Italian singer, Chiara Taigi, from La Scala.

Q: What other pieces have you conducted for

the program?

Shetilian: The Russian Orthodox Church's external relation's department chairman, Metropolitan Hilarion, is also a composer. As a composer he is well known in Russian. For the first part of the concert I conducted his recently composed piece, *Stabat Mater*. That was a premier performance of this piece in St. Petersburg. *Stabat Mater* is a Catholic Church ritual and it is about the suffering of the Mother of God during the crucifixion.

Q: Was the concert dedicated to a special occasion?

Shetilian: Yes, it was a charity concert. Before the concert started there was a presentation of a new charity center, whose construction started in St. Petersburg. It belongs to the Russian Orthodox Church. Before the Bolsheviks such tradition existed in Russia. Now they are renewing it. Actually, Armenians and the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic

Church, each one has had its part in this concert. I think this was a wise project accomplished by the festival. Such initiatives also help to create a positive opinion about the Armenians. I call it Big Politics when a nation not only pursues a political agenda, but also uses its other treasures (such as religion, culture, arts, etc.) in the process. In the long run, I think this approach is more productive.

Q: In the booklet of the festival there were some Armenian names. Could you please tell us more about Armenians who were part of the festival?

Shetilian: Sure. Maria Safariants is a violinist and she is also the artistic director of the festival. She is a well-known artist and a cultural activist in Russia. Konstantine Orbelian is a conductor and is the founder of the festival and its former director. He is the nephew of a well-known musician with the same name, who was for many years, the artistic director of the Armenian Pops Orchestra during the Soviet era.

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ARTS & LIVING

Bohjalian Brings Theme of Armenian Genocide Mainstream

BOHJALIAN, from page 10

TV: How long did it take you to write?

CB: I started the novel in the summer of 2010 and finished it in the fall of 2011.

TV: Was the story factual or fictional – or a cross between the two?

CB: Oh, it's a novel. Absolutely. Nevertheless, my narrator Laura Petrosian is a fictional version of me. Her grandparents' house was my grandparents' house. But Elizabeth Endicott and Armen Petrosian were not my grandparents. But I hope the history is authentic. I did my homework. I hope my characters' stories are grounded in the particular ring of Dante's *Inferno* that was the Armenian Genocide. I hope I have accurately rendered that moment in time.

TV: Any Turkish resistance to the book?

CB: Not yet.

TV: Any chance of this being promoted to television or Hollywood?

CB: One can always hope. If you know any producers, let me know.

TV: How has it been received by the Armenian reading public?

CB: Early reactions have been very encouraging. And here, I think, is the reason why.

A few years ago, I heard the incredibly inspiring Gerda Weissmann Klein speak at the University of Texas Hillel. Gerda is a Holocaust survivor and author of (among other books) *All But My Life*. Someone asked her, "What do you say to people who deny the Holocaust?" She shrugged and said simply, "I tell them to ask Germany what happened. Germany doesn't deny it."

As Armenians, we have a Genocide in which 1.5 million people were killed – fully three-quarters of the Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire – and yet it remains (to quote my narrator in *The Sandcastle Girls*) "the slaughter you know nothing about." It is largely unrecognized.

And so when Armenians have read advance copies of the novel, they have been deeply appreciative of the story and the way it tells our people's history.

My point? We are hungry for novels that tell our story – that tell the world what our ancestors endured a century ago.

TV: How has the book benefited you in terms of promoting your own heritage and culture?

CB: It has helped me to understand more about who I am – the geography of my own soul.

TV: Was there a correlation between the characters and those in actual life?

CB: The big connection is that the Armenian-American novelist at mid-life who narrates parts of the novel, Laura Petrosian, is a female version of me.

TV: How does this relate to your other works?

CB: Pure and simple, the best book I will ever write – and the most important. I know this in my heart.

TV: During its conception, was there any connection made with notable Armenian historians and writers like Peter Balakian?

CB: The epigraph is from one of my favorite Balakian poems. And Khatchig Mouradian (Armenian Weekly editor) was more generous with his time than you can imagine. I learned so much from him. And I still do, even though the novel is finished.

TV: Who might your favorite Armenian writer be?

CB: I am deeply appreciative of the work rendered by Nancy Kricorian, Mark Mustian, Carol Edgarian, Peter Balakian, Micheline Aharonian, William Saroyan and Eric Bogosian. Pick one? Not a chance!

TV: Whatever happened to the first Genocide book you wrote 20 years ago?

CB: It exists only as a rough draft in the underground archives of my alma mater. It will never be published, even after my death. I spent over two years struggling mightily to complete a draft and I never shared it with my editor. The manuscript should either be buried or burned. I couldn't bring myself to do either. But neither did I ever want the pages to see the light of day.

TV: Collectively, as a diaspora, what can be done to observe the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 2015?

CB: Well, recognition by the Turkish govern-



The group of high school finalists at the Armenian Library and Museum of America with curator Gary Lind-Sinianian, Acting Director Berj Chekijian and Board Chairman Haig Der Manuelian

High School Finalists on Holocaust Essay Contest Visit ALMA

WATERTOWN – On Wednesday, June 27, 10 high school finalists from all over the country, along with five teachers and two representatives from Facing History and Ourselves, paid a visit to the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA). Two representatives from the international law firm of Holland & Knight LLP also accompanied them. They were all involved in the annual Holocaust Essay Contest of that law firm, which this year was programmed by its Boston office.

Although they made their visit to ALMA in order to see the permanent Armenian Genocide Exhibit and the Ukrainian Genocide Exhibit, they took pleasure in viewing ALMA's other exhibits of artifacts as well as the "Who are the Armenians" exhibit.

They were able to see and get a taste of artifacts representing 3,000 years of

Armenian culture. They were amazed to learn that Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity and the many references to Armenia in the pre-Christian era by Greek scholars. Some had never heard of the Armenian Genocide. Eagerly, they asked for various explanations, which were provided by ALMA's curator Gary Lind-Sinianian, Berj Chekijian, acting director, and Haig Der Manuelian, chairman of the board as well as a senior partner of Holland & Knight.

Two students were so impressed that they asked why Armenian history was not being taught in high schools in America. Others were surprised to learn that more than 35 emperors of the Byzantine Empire were of Armenian blood and that one of them, a woman, was the chief executive officer of that vast empire for almost two years. Representatives from Facing History and Ourselves commented on ALMA's rich col-

lection.

The finalists were treated to various other sights in the Boston area as well as further classroom instruction. The final prize winners were announced at a banquet at the John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse in Boston.

Der Manuelian also participated in a program the following day, Thursday, June 28, at the Boston Public Library as part of a four-member panel dealing with issues involving the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide and the Rwandan Genocide.

Holland & Knight, with offices on three continents besides numerous offices throughout the United States, has a major commitment to perform pro bono services annually. In addition, one of their charitable activities is the sponsoring each year of a national high school competition for essays on the Jewish Holocaust.

Lecture at NAASR by Shahkeh Setian on *Humanity in the Midst of Inhumanity*

BELMONT, Mass. – Dr. Shahkeh Setian will discuss her book, *Humanity in the Midst of Inhumanity*, which provides stories submitted by 16 descendants of survivors who were saved by Muslims during the 1915 Armenian Genocide, on Thursday, August 9, at 8 p.m., at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) Center, 395 Concord Ave.

Setian graphically presents the vicious treatment of victims in order to convey the horrors committed by government officials and out-of-control citizens in order to illustrate that the victims of the Genocide were

not simply numbers but were breathing, living, women, men and children.

Some brave Muslims – Turks, Kurds and Arabs – risked their lives to save Armenians. *Humanity in the Midst of Inhumanity* features many stories of such individuals, as well as missionaries and others who came to the aid of suffering Armenians. Despite the threat by the government against such actions, brave individuals acted out of their humanity. Lives were saved, but a nation was lost.

The daughter of Genocide survivors, Setian is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She has three chil-

dren and five grandchildren and lives in Cape Cod. She lived for a year as an independent volunteer in post-war Nagorno Karabagh (Artsakh). She has taught at Springfield College, Cape Cod Community College and Artsakh State University, and has facilitated workshops and presented talks about genocide, injustice and values.

More information about Setian's lecture or NAASR and its programs for the furtherance of Armenian studies, research and publication may be had by e-mailing hq@naasr.org or writing to NAASR, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont, MA 02478.

ment would certainly be nice. It would also be encouraging to see a sitting American president acknowledge what happened and use that dreaded "G" word. Seriously, what does "realpolitik" get us with this issue? Regardless, I expect poignant and powerful observances around the world.

TV: Living in rural Vermont, do you feel isolated from the Armenian community? How has it impacted your heritage and that of your family?

CB: I love Vermont, I really do. But I think the fact I live in Vermont was one of the reasons why my visit to Beirut's Armenian quarter and Yerevan was so meaningful this spring.

I try to remind myself of something I saw written as part of a Musa Dagb mural on a column in Anjar, Lebanon – where the survivors of Mush Dagb were resettled: "Let them come again. We are still the mountain."

The reality of the Armenian Diaspora is that

70 percent of Armenians don't live in our homeland. And yet, somehow, we have retained a national identity.

I think that whoever wrote, "We are still the mountain," wanted the sentence to be interpreted two ways. Certainly, he meant Musa Dagb: Attack again if you want, we are still those warriors. But he also meant Ararat. Even here in Lebanon, we are still Armenians.

And so for me, even though I am in Vermont, I am still a part of that mountain.

TV: What are your impressions of Armenia?

CB: I was so happy there this spring. My hotel was on Abovyan Street and it intersected with Aram Street two blocks away. Well, Abovyan was the first modern Armenian novelist and Aram was my father's name. He passed away last year and his death made my journey to Armenia all the more important to me. To see his name intersecting with a great Armenian novelist was a wondrous and unexpected blessing – a gift!

Obviously, like many post-Soviet nations, Armenia has a lot of monumental economic hurdles. And those hurdles are exacerbated by its place in the Caucasus region. But, my Lord, is it beautiful! I have never been better cared for and felt less like a stranger in a strange land.

TV: You are scheduled to appear at the Armenian Library and Museum of America, July 26. What might we come to expect?

CB: Stand-up comedy. Free T-shirts. A PowerPoint presentation. Family slides. You know, the sorts of things you might see at any literary gathering.

TV: Will there be a sequel to *The Sandcastle Girls* or another work related to Armenian literature?

CB: I don't know if there will be a sequel. I have never written a sequel. But there will be more Armenian or Armenian-American-set fiction. That's very, very likely.

ARTS & LIVING

An Artistic Interpretation of the 1947 and 1949 Armenian Repatriation

REPATRIATION, from page 10
citizenship papers. The collective social memory of many hayrenadartsner was one of betrayal and deceit under the guise of a patriotic call. Those who survived the times would later tell stories concerning backward social economics, disease, discrimination, psychological anxiety and physical brutality encountered under the Soviet system. Zabel (Chookaszian) Melconian, a 23-year-old New York native left the United States in 1947, to support her father's decision to move to Armenia. After experiencing abysmal living conditions, she recalls trying to warn her relatives in America not to come to Armenia by sending them cryptic messages in outbound letters, which were routinely censored.

Scholarly articles, lectures and testimonial documentation have only begun to shed light on this period in Armenian history. Crosby Phillian, a native New Yorker, who left the United States in 1949, at the age of 16, says that "survival" was the sole mantra of many repatriates who when living in Armenia had to sell their personal belongings on the black market for a few rubles in order to eat for the week. The sale of goods on the black market became a ritual every Sunday. Anxiety-ridden *akhbars* were at the mercy of those who had some money and knew how to work the system. Phillian, who currently lives in France, also notes that the unwritten law in the Soviet Union at the time seemed to be standing in long lines to buy basic food items, such as bread, meat or cheese. Bursting crowds, arguments and physical fights were not unusual occurrences in these lines. There was even an occasional death. Phillian remembers when a man who was trying to simply buy some cheese was killed by a woman's shoe heel striking his head.

My own personal memory of life as a child in Armenia is limited and untainted by the social conditions experienced by my elders. Later in my life, when I listened to family stories, I knew that there was a painful difference in the cultural experiences of my parents between the times they grew up as youth outside of Armenia and later as they matured during their formative years in Armenia. Upon reflection, I can only imagine the culture shock witnessed by those who grew up in the late 1940s in the United States, where the sounds of Count Basie, Benny Goodman and Frank Sinatra were popular, and the faces of Cary Grant, Humphrey Bogart, Lana Turner and Loretta Young dominated the silver screen. To understand and to retell the story, I turned to ethnographic research and to my art. In 2010, I began personal interviews and the collection of family photographs, memoirs and travel papers. Based on these sources along with historical documentation, my interest was to capture this multi-faceted story through paintings, drawings and installation art, as an expression and interpretation of social experiences. When author and family friend Tom Mooradian visited Fresno in the fall of 2009 (and then later in 2011), during the promotion tours of his memoir, *Repatriate: Love, Basketball and the KGB*, I found that we shared each other's understanding that there were more personal histories that needed to be documented. But as I indicated to Tom, my goal was not to write people's individual biographies, but to use imagery and text to narrate the story of the late 1940s repatriation within the manifold of 20th-century Armenian history. Not only would I better understand my own early personal story, but I would be able to collect oral history to artistically interpret the culture shock, loss of freedom and the ideological turmoil that shaped the historical time of the *akhbars*.

In December 2011, I traveled to Paris, France, to make contact with old family friends who had repatriated in 1947 and left Armenia in 1966. Stories about the post-war departures from France to Armenia were convoluted, depressing and at times surreal. Over six decades have passed since a bizarre stand-off at the Marseilles port just days before the Russian repatriation ship set sail on December 24, 1947. Stranded aboard the Pobeda, 300 French-Armenians awaited their travel plans. They were denied permission by French authorities to sail from Marseilles and subsequently told to disembark. The ship eventually set sail with 1,122 Armenians, without the 300 French-Armenians who the French considered part of their citizenry. Twelve-years old at



Repatriates in Yerevan 1950-51 with the Antaramian American Nash Ambassador (known as the car with the visor)

the time, Virginia (Hekimian) Antaramian, who was born in France to foreign born parents, recalls several sketchy events of that day. She remembers being surreptitiously guided to the ship by her communist Uncle Hagop Chiljian like many other French-born children of French-Armenians, then waiting in hiding onboard expecting to be joined later by her parents. For the French, who lost many citizens in the war, it was a matter of safeguarding their young popu-

lace. Virginia heard about other children who were placed in a similar situation. They were covertly taken to the main ship in small boats in the middle of the night to get on board without knowledge of the French authorities, or were carted in large crate boxes to the Pobeda. Ultimately, those who were not originally given permission to sail from Marseilles were allowed to leave France.

In March 2012, I took my second journey to

collect stories and photographs for my project. I went to Yerevan to visit an old family acquaintance and her family. She was not part of the repatriation, but during her younger years she had befriended many Armenians who came from America and France. As we gathered for our evening meals, neighbors or workplace friends, people who either remembered stories of repatriates or were themselves children of repatriates but never had an opportunity to leave the country, came to tell stories. The most interesting stories shared were those of the unrecognized contributions in technology and specialty trades that Armenians from the diaspora made to Armenian society. All in all, the cosmopolitanism of Yerevan was born from those Armenians who came from the outside.

I have just begun my artistic journey of the postwar Armenian repatriation. From my visits thus far I have collected over 45 black and white photographic images of repatriate children and families taken in Armenia from 1947 to 1966. The photographs collected are to be compiled in a database for my artistic interpretation as well as archival documentation. In a mélange of drawings, paintings and installation art scheduled for exhibition in spring/summer 2013, the imagery will be used to interpret the cultural, social and economic situations of that period. I am also documenting short stories that narrate the circumstances and emotions of the people who experienced the events during this particular episode in Armenian history. Clearly, it is another facet of the social aftermath of the Armenian Genocide.

(Hazel Antaramian-Hofman is interested in collecting more photographs and interviewing more people for their stories. If readers are repatriates or know of others, they can contact her at hazelantaramhof@yahoo.com, with "repatriate project" in the subject line.)

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

AUGUST 1 — Emmy-nominated documentary "Orphans of the Genocide," will be presented at St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church Hall, 1 Artsakh St., Watertown, by filmmaker Bared Maronian, at 7 p.m. The film recounts the story of more than 150,000 orphans and their stories.

OCTOBER 25 — K. George and Carolann S. Najarian Endowed Lecture on Human Rights. Speaker: Ambassador Edward P. Djerejian, founding director, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, Rice University and former US ambassador to Israel (1992-1994) and the Syrian Arab Republic (1988-1991). Faneuil Hall, Boston. Thursday, 7 p.m. An endowed public program of Armenian Heritage Park. Free and open to the public.

NEW JERSEY

AUGUST 10-12 — Return to Asbury, Armenian Kef Weekend at the Beach. For tickets and information, visit returntoasbury.eventbrite.com. The event is sponsored by the ASA.

OCTOBER 5 — Save the date. His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate, Diocese of Armenian Church, invites everyone to attend a tribute banquet in honor of Hrant Gulian. Details to follow.

OCTOBER 21 — The Armenian American Support and Educational Center, the Hye Doon, celebrates its 35th anniversary. Bergen County Academies, 200 Hackensack Ave., Hackensack, with the participation of Akh'Tamar Dance Ensemble of the Hye Doon, Arev Armenian Folk Ensemble of Hamazkayin of Boston and other talented guest performers.

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

NOVEMBER 17-18 — Musical theater presentation by TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group, Yervant Odian's "Love and Laughter" (Ser yev Dzidzagh), directed by Krikor Satamian, with more than 20 actors participating. Dwight Englewood High School, Englewood Cliffs, 8 p.m., Saturday and 4 p.m., Sunday. \$25, \$35, \$50. For tickets, call Marie Zokian or Noushig Atamian.



On August 26, the Armenian Church at Hye Pointe will hold a picnic at American Legion Farm, 1314 Main St., Haverhill, Mass. from noon to 5 p.m., featuring the Jason Naroian Ensemble, pictured here, as well as Armenian cuisine, raffles and gift certificates. Bring your own lawn chairs. For more info, visit www.hyepointechurch.org or call (978) 372-9227.

NOVEMBER 18 — TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group Cast Party and tribute to Karnig Nercessian on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the group. Special program and dinner, with Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of the Armenian Church, presiding. St. Thomas Armenian Church, Tenafly. Donation, \$30. For tickets, call Marie Zokian or Noushig Atamian.

NEW YORK

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

COMMENTARY

Karabagh Marching towards Democracy

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Whether the international community recognizes it or not, Karabagh is marching towards democracy and self-determination. The international community has another agenda, which certainly does not include the security and the well being of the population in that trapped enclave. It is up to that population to determine its future and to guarantee its rights and prosperity.

It seems to be perfectly acceptable to that very same international community the transfer of power from father to son in Azerbaijan, in a dynastic set-up, thumbing their noses at international law or democratic norms, as long as they can have access to the rich energy reserves.

Karabagh was an autonomous *oblast*, even during the Soviet period, and it was allowed to elect its own rulers.

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet empire, Karabagh exercised the same procedures prescribed in the Soviet Constitution to secede from the Union as did Azerbaijan, a process that does not impinge on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, contrary to what the latter is arguing in various world bodies.

As the negotiations have been continuing for two decades, Karabagh's people did not have to wait for the outcome of those negotiations to elect their leaders and to develop the infrastructures of their government.

Besides, when the time comes to involve Karabagh in the negotiating process, certainly these elected representatives should be invited to participate in those negotiations on behalf of the people of Karabagh.

The people of Karabagh elected their president on July 19 through a democratic process. The participation of voters was significant: 73.4 percent of the eligible voters cast their ballots. Incumbent President Bako Sahakian garnered 60 percent of those votes, while his top challenger Vitali Balassanian received 32.5 percent of the votes and Arakady Soghomonian came in third.

Dozens of international observers characterized the elections as free and fair, despite some irregularities which ultimately did not impact the outcome of the elections.

Of course, opinions are divided on these elections and their outcome; Armenians in Karabagh and Armenia believe that the elections have resulted in a new political situation, which places Karabagh on an irreversible course of democracy, while the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group representatives and Armenia's neighbors have other opinions. Armenia's Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian, after congratulating the people of Karabagh, commented: "The international com-

munity will certainly be interested in dealing to deal with authority elected by the people of Karabagh, especially in view of the fact that the Minsk Group's agenda has mandated such a prospect." Continuing his comments he said, "the people of Karabagh once more proved their determination to achieve their destiny through a democratic process."

Even a few US congressmen hailed the process and the outcome at these elections, including Howard Berman, Adam Schiff, Frank Pallone and Ed Royce.

The latter commented that the "electoral process is working in Karabagh. The voting proved that democracy is active there."

It would have been too good to be true had the Minsk Group representatives given the same positive assessment. Instead, they issued statements underlining that no country recognizes Karabagh's independence and that these elections do not have any bearing on the ongoing negotiations, nor on their outcome. However, there is a positive element in their statement that "the co-chairs of the Minsk Group accept the need for the de facto authorities to regulate the life of the people through these democratic processes."

Once again mischief comes from Armenia's only fellow Christian nation in the Caucasus, Georgia. Indeed, Georgia's Foreign Ministry issued a statement on the site of Gruzia online that it does not recognize the "so-called presidential elections" in Karabagh.

Had the Georgian authorities been satisfied with that statement, no sinister intention would have been inferred, because observers know that is a position of principle for Georgia, as Tbilisi has lost two regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Nor has Tbilisi recognized Kosovo's independence, despite the decision of the International Court of Justice on July 22, 2010 that Kosovo's independence does not violate international law. By the same token, the Tbilisi government has not recognized the independence of South Sudan. But the Georgian authorities have gone further to betray their perennial animosity towards Armenia by stating: "The Georgian Foreign Ministry unequivocally supports Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and does not recognize the so-called 'presidential elections' in Karabagh."

Every time, the authorities in Yerevan come out with statements that relations between Armenia and Georgia are improving, the leadership in Tbilisi manages to torpedo those positive statements by corresponding acts of enmity.

The people of Karabagh have beaten their oppressors in a war forced upon them. They maintain their vigilance and combat readiness for any eventual danger while they build a democratic society which could never have existed under Azeri rule.

The people of Karabagh have expressed their will through the recent presidential elections and they are marching towards democracy in unison.

Turkey's Human Rights Hypocrisy

By Taner Akçam

A new political order is emerging in the Middle East, and Turkey aspires to be its leader by taking a stand against authoritarian regimes. Earlier this week, Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, went so far as to denounce the Syrian government's continuing massacres of civilians as "attempted genocide."

Turkey's desire to champion human rights in the region is a welcome development, but Mr. Erdogan's condemnation of Syria is remarkably hypocritical. As long as Turkey continues to deny crimes committed against non-Turks in the early 1900s, during the final years of the Ottoman Empire, its calls for freedom, justice and humanitarian values will ring false.

Turkey's attempt to cultivate an image as the global protector of Muslim rights is compromised by a legacy of ethnic cleansing and genocide against Christians and terror against Arabs and Kurds. Memories of these crimes are very much alive throughout former Ottoman territories. And Turkey cannot serve as a democratic model until it acknowledges that brutal violence, population transfers and genocide underlie the modern Turkish state.

Using documents from the Ottoman government archives in Istanbul, which were once classified as top secret, I have sought to pull back the veil on Turkey's century of denial. These documents clearly demonstrate that Ottoman demographic policy from 1913 to 1918 was genocidal. Indeed, the phrase

"crimes against humanity" was coined as a legal term and first used on May 24, 1915, in response to the genocide against Armenians and other Christian civilians.

Britain, France and Russia initially defined Ottoman atrocities as "crimes against Christianity" but later substituted "humanity" after considering the negative reaction that such a specific term could elicit from Muslims in their colonies.

Today, Mr. Erdogan is seeking to be a global spokesman for Muslim values. In June 2011, he told thousands gathered to celebrate the landslide victory of his Justice and Development Party, known as the AKP: "Sarajevo won today as much as Istanbul; Beirut won as much as Izmir; Damascus won as much as Ankara. Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza won as much as Diyarbakir."

Speaking in support of oppressed Muslims has earned him popularity. But if Mr. Erdogan aspires to defend freedom and democracy in the region, he must also address the legitimate fears of Christians in the Middle East. Just as the European powers opted for universalism in 1915 by denouncing "crimes against humanity," Mr. Erdogan must move beyond his narrow focus on "crimes against Muslims." All oppressed peoples deserve protection.

It isn't a coincidence that many Christians and other minorities in Syria support Bashar al-Assad's Baath Party; they are willing to sacrifice freedom for security. While Turkish rhetoric appeals to the Sunni Muslim majority's demand for freedom in Syria, it does not relieve Syrian Christians' anxiety about their future. On the contrary, Syrian Christians listening to Mr. Erdogan and his denialist rhetoric are reminded of 1915, and that makes Turkey look very much like a security threat to them.

Confronting the past is closely linked to security, stability and democracy in the Middle East. Persistent denial of historical injustices not only impedes democratization but also hampers stable relations between different ethnic and religious groups.

This is particularly true in former Ottoman lands, where people view one another in the cloaks of their ancestors. In addition to the reverberations of the Armenian Genocide, mass crimes against Kurds and Alevis in Turkey, violence against Kurds and Arabs in Iraq and Christian-Muslim tensions in Syria and Lebanon continue to poison contemporary politics.

The popularity of the AKP in Turkey and the Muslim world affords Mr. Erdogan an opportunity to usher in an era of tolerance. By acknowledging the genocide against Christians and crimes against other groups, the Turks can become leaders in the realm of human rights. But Turkey's efforts to paint itself as a beacon of freedom and democracy will fail so long as Turkey refuses to atone for Ottoman sins.

Moral purists and hard-nosed realists mistakenly believe that pursuing justice and national interests are mutually exclusive. But acknowledging historical wrongs is not a zero-sum game.

In the Middle East, the past is the present. And truth and reconciliation are integral to establishing a new, stable regional order founded on respect for human rights and dignity. Turkey should lead by example.

(Taner Akçam, a professor of history at Clark University, Worcester, Mass., is the author of *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*. This piece originally appeared in the *New York Times* on July 19.)

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

DNA Study Busts Myth that One Million Appalachians Are of Turkish Descent

For decades, Turkish pseudo-historians and propagandists have made bizarre claims about Turks being the ancestors of various ethnic groups around the world, including Native Americans, African-Americans and the strangest of all – Melungeons – a little-known group of dark-skinned residents of Appalachia.

To counter Armenian political activities in Washington, the Turkish government regularly reaches out to anyone who could be co-opted with all-expense paid trips, special gifts and other financial inducements, including funding studies and conferences on the alleged Turkish origin of Melungeons. Even though these 1 million Appalachians do not carry much political clout in Congress, Ankara is interested in claiming them to be of Turkish descent, hoping to strengthen its political and economic clout in the United States.

The Turkish initiative faced one “minor” problem: there was no evidence that Melungeons were descendants of Turks. This issue was easily resolved when the Turkish government provided a “research grant” to a Melungeon named N. Brent Kennedy. In April 1995, he flew to Istanbul and wrote a book showing that hun-

dreds of captured Ottoman sailors were dumped on the shores of North Carolina by Sir Francis Drake in the 16th century!

Kennedy compiled a long list of “amazing” similarities between Turks and Melungeons, such as eating beef and mashed potatoes, the habit of hugging each other, Appalachian quilts having Ottoman designs, Anatolian folk dancers performing square dance and Turkish music sounding like Bluegrass! He discovered that the Turkish word “neyaygara” sounds like Niagara, “dilhah yer” is pronounced Delaware, “tenasuh” means Tennessee, “kan tok” is Kentucky and “allah bamyä” is Alabama!

Kennedy further stated that Turkish scholars have “long believed that a connection existed between themselves and eastern seaboard American Indians, based on both physical appearance and shared words and customs.” He gathered these “important facts” from Turkish “historians” during his meetings at Marmara University in Istanbul. “Several hundred Ottoman sailors could exert a powerful genetic, cultural and linguistic influence on the 16th-century Native American Tribes into which they married,” Kennedy confidently concluded.

Appalachians, however, were infuriated by the distortion of Melungeons’ ethnic origin and exploitation of their history. Historian and award-winning journalist Tim Hashaw of Houston, Texas, sent a letter asking me to “investigate the tawdry connection between the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) and the Melungeon Heritage Association.” Hashaw asserted that “Melungeons are an obscure tri-racial (white, black and American Indian) community in Appalachia – Virginia and Tennessee. We are not now, nor have we ever been, Turkish. Yet, Melungeons are being wrongly exploited by Turkish associations to deny the Armenian Genocide and to support questionable Turkish agendas

in Washington DC.”

Hashaw revealed in his letter that Turkey “sent gifts such as water fountains (*cesme*) to those who deny the Armenian Genocide. They have said in the press that they expect our support in Washington, DC. I kept asking myself: why is the very influential Turkic World Research Foundation bothering to pay for airfare to send waves of humble Appalachian hill folk from the US to Turkey? We are not a large or affluent people. Why do the President and Prime Minister of Turkey give personal interviews to Melungeons from Appalachia when they visit? Why are the ATAA and the Istanbul Alumni group paying to send Melungeons to New York in order to honor them in recognition for their services to Turkey?”

Hashaw’s published works regarding the ethnic origins of the Melungeons were validated by a new DNA study published in the *Journal of Genetic Genealogy* which disproved the “wild claims” that Melungeons are descendants of Turkish slaves. Instead, the research indicated that they were the offspring of “sub-Saharan African men and white women of northern or central European origin.” Shortly after release of this study, the red-faced leader of a Turkish-American group gave his followers the bad news: “Appalachia’s Melungeons are not Turks!”

Despite the incontestable DNA evidence, incorrigible Turkish propagandists may not be deterred by scientific studies. They will continue to claim that just about everyone on Planet Earth somehow originated from Turks! As Tim Hashaw mockingly wrote:

“Abraham Lincoln was a Turk! Elvis Presley was a Turk! American Indians are Turks! Obama’s mama was a Turk! Melungeons were born in the country of the Hatfields and McCoys. The blood feud is in our DNA. The Turks do not know yet, but they will regret bribing greedy ignorant people to deny the Armenian Genocide.”

Redefined ‘Diaspora’ or ‘Just Memory’ Strategy: Turkey’s New Perspective on the Armenian Genocide

By Aris Ghazinyan

Since early this year, the Turkish Foreign Ministry has been trying to adopt a new political course that Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu has called “strategy of just memory.”

Today’s Zaman wrote that Davutoglu “wants to contextualize what happened in 1915 in the broader framework of a humanitarian disaster caused by a crumbling Ottoman Empire.”

“In addition to Armenian sufferings, he wants to refer to the Turkish losses in the Balkans and Caucuses, millions of Muslims killed or uprooted from their lands before and during World War I, the losses at Gallipoli and Sarikamis as “our shared tragedy,” wrote journalist Omer Taspinar.

Davutoglu indicated to a group of Turkish journalists last week to show empathy for 1915 as long as the context is defined as a “broader framework of a ‘shared tragedy,’ where there is also Armenian empathy for Turkish losses.”

“Although problematic, this is a step in the right direction. Talking about a shared tragedy is better than denying what happened to Armenians in 1915,” said Taspinar. “However, one thing should be clear: unless there is an official Turkish apology for the tragedy of 1915 (no need to call it genocide), similar to the one Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan articulated for Dersim a few months ago, such a narrative about ‘fair memory’ will fall on deaf ears.”

Experts in this field admit that the main reason behind this “fair memory” strategy is the looming 100th anniversary of the genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

“The Turkish Foreign Minister openly acknowledged that his urgent efforts are prompted by the looming 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide that hangs

like a Damoclean Sword over his country,” wrote Harut Sassounian, publisher of the *California Courier*.

It should be noted that after the signing of the Armenian-Turkish protocols in 2009, Davutoglu started the development of a new strategy for relations with the Armenian Diaspora.

This was conditioned by the fact that the traditional Armenian Diaspora, unlike official Yerevan, took a tougher position on possible reconciliation, especially if it meant bypassing official Ankara admitting the Armenian Genocide.

To pursue this stratagem, in April 2010 Davutoglu met in Washington with Turkey’s ambassadors to the United States and Canada and consul generals in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles and Toronto. He instructed them to contact Armenians who are open to dialogue and to avoid “hard-line groups,” according to *Today’s Zaman* newspaper.

“Initially, Turkey registered some success when the Armenia-Turkey Protocols were signed by both countries, under the guise of opening their mutual border. However, this latest attempt to drive a wedge between ‘soft’ Armenian officials and ‘hard-line’ Diasporans also failed, when the much-tout-

ed Protocols were not ratified,” wrote Sassounian. “Realizing that Turkey had to deal with the diaspora, not just Armenia to resolve genocide related issues, Davutoglu once again turned his attention to Armenian communities worldwide.”

In December 2011, Turkey announced a revised concept of the diaspora to include all descendants of Anatolia, regardless of their religion or sect.

In an interview published in the Turkish *Milliyet* on July 7, Davutoglu announced that he has sent a directive to all Turkish embassies in which he redefined the Turkish diaspora.

“We consider all those who emigrated from those lands, and not only the Turks, to be the diaspora – the Armenians, Jews, Greeks, the people called El Turco in Latin America and the Arabs in Argentina... Those are our people... Those are people whose culture and language resemble ours.”

Based on these “redefined criteria,” Turkish representations around the world “will now open their doors to those people who were once Ottoman subjects, they will contact them, and they will even invite them to national days. The contacts with the Armenian Diaspora are said to have

already started,” reported Milliyet.

Earlier, in spring, Davutoglu spent several hours in Washington meeting privately with several Armenians and non-Armenians from the Los Angeles area to discuss Armenian-Turkish reconciliation.

During the May meeting Armenian participants told the minister that Ankara has to be persistent in terms of meeting the Armenian demand to admit the genocide and give compensation, only after which they can talk about “reconciliation.”

“Despite Davutoglu’s seeming sincerity, Armenians have reasons not to trust such initiatives, factoring in that over dozens of years Turkey has been denying the Armenian Genocide and is leading a hostile policy towards the Diaspora, the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh,” wrote Sassounian.

He believes that no Armenian organization or individual should get involved with separate negotiations with Turkey.

“Only Armenian officials and credible leaders with diplomatic expertise should be negotiating with shrewd and skilled Turkish diplomats,” Sassounian concluded.

(Aris Ghazinyan is a staff writer for ArmeniaNow.)

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

daytime telephone number.

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- Photos will be published without charge at the discretion of the editors and art director. Photos will be returned only if a self-addressed and stamped envelope is included.
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- Telephone numbers, ticket prices and other details (at the discretion of the editors) will not be included in press releases.

Holy Trinity Sunday School Graduates Seven on May 20

By Seta. A. Buchter

CAMBRIDGE, Mass – Sunday, May 20, was a day of celebration and pride in the life of Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston. On this day, seven Grade 12 students, having completed the required course of Christian Education as set forth by the Department of Youth and Education at the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), graduated from the Sunday School in a ceremony in church at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. This year’s graduates were Christina Azarian, daughter of Vickie Alani of Belmont and the late David Azarian; Daniel Coste, son of Dr. Gerard and Diane Coste of Lexington; Lilit DerKevorkian, daughter of Dr. Nazareth and Lena DerKevorkian of Lexington; Nerses Haroutunian, son of Leo and Narine Haroutunian of Watertown; Caleb Haydanek, son of Brian and Renee Tellen of Mansfield; Amanda Tabeek, daughter of George and Audrey Delanjian Tabeek of Dedham; and Casey Tellen, daughter of Brian and Renee

exemplary record throughout their years as a student of the Sunday School, was awarded to Christina Azarian and Amanda Tabeek. The Arsha Sarkisian Award, which is presented to an “Outstanding Sunday School Student of the Year,” was given to Nerses Haroutunian, a graduating student.

The Order of Graduates was then presented to Kouzouian. Each graduate received his/her Sunday School diploma from Kouzouian and a gift of the book, *Armenia: A Journey through History*, by Arra Avakian.

Due to the large size of this year’s graduating class, each graduate’s remarks on “What Sunday School or Church Means to Me” was printed in the Graduation Program along with a brief biography of each graduate. Two students, Casey Tellen and Christina Azarian, were asked to speak on behalf of the graduating class. Their remarks were a composite of each graduate’s responses to a number of questions. Tellen spoke about the people who influenced the graduates and what they liked most about attending Sunday School and Church. Azarian talked about the graduates’ most memorable moments or experiences, the lessons that have



Sunday School Graduates with Fr. Vasken A. Kouzouian and Seta A. Buchter, Sunday School superintendent

Tellen of Mansfield. Serving as ushers and participating in the graduation ceremony were Grade 11 students Rose Arslanian, Nayiri Ayanian, Ani Hollisian, Allison Jakob, Melissa Sahagian and Caroline Thayer.

The morning began with the graduates attending church services, reading the Confession and receiving Holy Communion. The graduation ceremony, which was presided over by Fr. Vasken Kouzouian, pastor of Holy Trinity Church, began with opening remarks by Seta A. Buchter, Sunday School Superintendent.

She stated, “We have watched our graduates, over the years, grow and develop into the wonderful young adults they are today. For each of them, their years attending Sunday School, has been a journey in discovering who they are as Armenian Christians. During this journey, it has been extremely gratifying to witness our graduates’ strengthening of their faith, their greater appreciation and understanding of their religion, culture and heritage, and their growing dedication and commitment to the Armenian Church, especially Holy Trinity Armenian Church.”

Buchter also noted the strong bonds of friendship this class has developed, not only through the Sunday School program, but also through the graduates’ participation in the ACYOA Juniors program where many served on the Executive Committee over the years, and through their continued attendance in the St. Vartan Camp program.

Two awards were then presented. The Bagdasar and Elmas Garabedian Award, which recognizes two graduating students of the Holy Trinity Sunday School who have maintained an

stayed with them throughout the years, their year of service, and the future.

Dan Coste presented this year’s class gift to Kouzouian, which was 14 copies of the Holy Bible, Armenian Church Edition, for the pews in the Church Sanctuary. Lilit DerKevorkian offered the Bible reading of the day from the Book of Proverbs, Chapter 1, verses 1-5.

The ceremony concluded with the graduating class, in a symbolic gesture, passing a lit candle to the students of Grade 11 with the words, “As the 2012 Sunday School Graduating Class of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, we pass on to you this symbol of our faith with our Hope and Love.” The candle, which represents the passing of leadership from the outgoing graduating class to the incoming one, was passed from Haydanek to Hollisian.

In offering the closing remarks, Kouzouian congratulated all the graduates for their commitment to learning about their faith since they were young children. He reminded the congregation that today’s graduation fell between two great feast days: The Feast of Ascension and the Feast of Pentecost. In drawing on a quote from the *Bible*, Kouzouian connected the lives of the graduates to their Christian responsibility in life as young adults. Kouzouian concluded by thanking “the parents of our graduates and all the teachers who had a hand in helping these young men and women reach this milestone in their lives, and most especially, Seta Buchter, our dedicated superintendent.”

Following church services, the graduates, their families and invited guests were honored at a luncheon held in Johnson Hall.

An Olympic Love Story

GOSTIGIAN, from page 1

and watched me compete all the time. One of her teammates had a crush on one of my teammates; she was dragging her to all the events.”

Monplaisir had risen through the ranks of women’s fencing after taking up the sport in high school. Raised in New York City, she looked to fencing as a way to guarantee a college education and a better way of life for herself.

“I tried all the sports,” said Monplaisir, 51. “I couldn’t swim, I couldn’t jump hurdles; they didn’t have baseball for girls back then. Fencing was the last one to try and I ended up being good at it.”

She practiced every chance she got and joined the New York Fencers Club, which gave her a scholarship. By 1984, she had made the Olympic team and competed in Los Angeles. She went on to compete in 1988 and 1992, the year she first really noticed Gostigian.

“He and I were always on a ‘hi, bye’ basis,” Monplaisir said. “And one night I realized how cute he really was!”

They began writing to each other after the Olympics and had their second date a year later. They called each other every day, racking up phone bills higher than their rents, Monplaisir said, as they each flew around the world for competitions. After three-and-a-half years of sporadic visits, Gostigian proposed on a Hawaiian beach and the couple settled happily on the Upper West Side.

“In honor of the Olympic calendar, we got married on a leap year [on February 29], so every four years, we celebrate our anniversary,” Gostigian said. (His wife asserts that he still buys her anniversary gifts every year.) By then, he had also competed in the Olympics three times.

The couple has 9-year-old twins, a boy and a girl, and Gostigian works as a private fitness trainer; he helped train a young Upper West Side fencer who is competing in foil fencing in this year’s games. He also tried out for the Olympic pentathlon team himself this year, just for fun, he said, after qualifying for the trials.

“My kids got to watch me compete this year,” he said. “That’s a thrill, to be connected to the Olympics. We do watch a lot of the events, because we still know a lot of people at the Olympic levels, especially with fencing and pentathlon.”

Monplaisir doesn’t fence much anymore, but said she may get involved in a senior league eventually.

“Fencing has given me so much in my life,” she said. “Meeting the most amazing people in the world, great friends, a wonderful husband – what more can you ask for?”

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