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NEWS IN BRIEF

Putin Mediates NKR Talks

MOSCOW (*Wall Street Journal, Itar-Tass*) – Russian President Vladimir Putin met his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts on Sunday, August 10, calling for a negotiated and peaceful resolution to the armed conflict in the South Caucasus region of Nagorno-Karabagh.

The meeting, held in Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi, was the first face-to-face engagement between Azerbaijan's Ilham Aliyev and Armenia's Serge Sargsian since the recent surge of violence in the region.

Fighting erupted a week ago and has already claimed dozens of lives on both sides.

Putin has sought to act as peacemaker in the conflict despite accusations from the West that Russia is fueling a bloody separatist insurrection in another former Soviet republic—Ukraine.

"I state with pleasure that the president



President Vladimir Putin of Russia, center, with Presidents Ilham Aliyev, left, and Serge Sargsian, right, in Sochi

3 Armenians Killed as Rebels Throw Molotov Cocktails in Aleppo District

ALEPPO (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Molotov cocktails thrown by rebels late last week in the Nor Gyugh (New Village) district in the Syrian northern city of Aleppo killed three ethnic Armenians and damaged the buildings.

According to Kantsasar newspaper's Facebook post, those killed were identified as Melkon Palian, his brother Zhirair Palian and Harutyun Sargsian.

In June, the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (ANC Europe) published an open letter, along with a letter addressed to the European Union's foreign affairs representative, urging for action to be taken to stop the wholesale destruction taking place in the Armenian neighborhood of Nor Gyugh in Aleppo.

Earlier, the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) launched a #Save Aleppo campaign calling President Obama to stop anti-Armenian attacks in Syria. The campaign aims to urge President Obama to stop the rebel bombing of innocent Christians and all civilians in Aleppo, press Turkey to allow the free flow of Euphrates waters to Syria, answer the ANCA's concerns regarding Turkey's role in the forced depopulation of the historically Armenian populated city of Kessab.

Aliyev Threatens War Against Armenia on Twitter

LONDON (BBC) – Time was, heads of state would declare war in somber tones through radio and television broadcasts. But on Thursday, the president of Azerbaijan appeared to make the grave announcement on Twitter instead.

"We are not living in peace, we are living in a state of war. Everyone must know this," President Ilham Aliyev posted, amidst a string of tweets about the violent clashes with Armenia that erupted last week.

The last 10 days have seen the bloodiest fighting for two decades, prompting Aliyev to launch his tirade on the social network. "We will restore our sovereignty [over Nagorno Karabagh]. The flag of Azerbaijan will fly in all the occupied territories," he wrote, declaring "we are able to defeat them on the battlefield," soon afterwards.

The novelty of his approach was not lost on his audience, who offered a live commentary on Aliyev's posts. "Shows how far Twitter has come as a diplomatic platform. Now even wars are declared here..." wrote one user. And of course, it left him open to being heckled in real time. "@presidentaz just try :) we will kill you and your soldiers," said one, "Dream big, fail big," said another, and "Go home Ilham, you're drunk," replied a third.

Armenian Captive Dies in Azerbaijan

By Hovannes Movsisian

BAKU (RFE/RL) – A resident of an Armenian border village arrested by Azerbaijani security forces was reported dead on Friday one day after crossing into Azerbaijan in disputed circumstances.

The Defense Ministry in Baku said Karen Petrosian "suddenly" died in the morning.

A ministry statement cited by Azerbaijani news agencies claimed that "acute heart and lung failure" is the likely cause of his death. It said that forensic doctors in the western Azerbaijani city of Gyanja are now conducting an autopsy on the young man's body.

Armenia's government and military were quick to reject this theory and say that Petrosian was tortured to death. In a see CAPTIVE, page 4

of Azerbaijan has pointed out the need to solve the problem peacefully, and you [Armenian president] have said the same just now. This is really of the utmost importance, because there is no greater tragedy than the death of people," Putin said, according to a transcript of the meeting published by his press service.

However, no practical steps to end the conflict were announced. Putin said the issue will be discussed by the three presidents and later with "our colleagues."

During the meeting, Aliyev insisted that Armenia should comply with the United see TALKS, page 16

Yervant Babayan, Educator, Tekeyan, ADL Member, Dies at 101

LOS ANGELES – Writer, educator and veteran Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) leader Yervant Babayan passed away on August 6, 2014 in Los Angeles. He was 101.

Babayan was born in Aintab in 1913. His father was the famous Aintab cleric Rev. Nerses Babayan, a leader of the self-defense battles in Aintab after World War I. Surviving the Armenian Genocide and the unsuccessful return of Armenians to Aintab, Babayan and his family settled in Aleppo. He furthered his education in Paris but returned to Aleppo to serve 20 years at the Giligian School, first as teacher and then principal. In 1953 he moved to Beirut to become principal at the Vahan Tekeyan School, where he had a 40-year tenure and prepared generations of young Armenians. Simultaneously he continued his education at St. Joseph University and received a degree in Armenology and Oriental Studies. see BABAYAN, page 6



Yervant Babayan



Prime Minister (and president-elect) Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Criminal Case Filed against Erdogan for Racist Comments as He Wins Election

ANKARA (*Today's Zaman, Wall Street Journal*) – Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has been criticized recently for emphasizing the religious and ethnic backgrounds of his political rivals, made offensive remarks concerning people of Georgian and Armenian descent.

During a live interview on the private NTV channel last week, Erdogan complained that the opposition was carrying out a smear campaign against him by claiming that he was from another ethnic origin.

"They called me a Georgian. Pardon me for saying this, but they said even uglier things: They called me an Armenian!" Erdogan said.

"As far as I have learned from my father and grandfather, I am a Turk," he added.

His comment that it was ugly to be called an Armenian drew anger on social media, further inflaming tensions days ahead of Sunday's presidential election where Erdogan is hot favorite to become head of state.

Erdogan's comments have found rapid and angry backlash.

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"They called me a Georgian.... they said even uglier things: They called me an Armenian!"

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

August 11 Marks Ancient Holiday of Navasard

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – August 11 marks the holiday of Navasard, the pagan Armenian New Year, symbolizing Hayk Nahapet's victory over the Babylonian tyrant Bel.

The legend says that in 2492 BC on this day, Hayk Nahapet, the founder of Haykazuni dynasty, defeated Bel's army, thus giving rise to the Armenian state.

The word Navasard consists of two parts: "nava," which means new and "sard," which means year.

Navasard became one of the favorite pre-Christian holidays of the Armenian people. On that day festivities were held throughout Armenia to honor the pagan gods.

People believed that the gods came down to earth and bathed in the Aratsani River and then went up to the heaven, where they celebrated the holiday. An ox was usually sacrificed to the gods, and its blood was used to mark the foreheads of the feast participants.

Navasard is still celebrated in the ancient pagan temple of Garni.

Border Families Get New Homes after Shelling

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Two families from Aygepar village on the border with Azerbaijan, in Tavush province, whose houses were burnt after the Azerbaijani armed forces shelled the settlement, have a new place to live.

On the morning of August 10, the Azeri forces violated the ceasefire in several directions and shelled the villages of Aygepar, Vazashen and some other settlements in Armenia. As a result two houses were incinerated. After retaliatory measures, the fire was stopped, Armenian Defense Ministry spokesman Artsrun Hovhannisyan said in a Facebook post.

Government to Provide Funds to Farmers For Greenhouses

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – On August 12, Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamian visited several communities in the Armavir region.

The first stop for the prime minister's visit was at Arazap community's fields of vegetable crops. Here, the villagers expressed their gratitude to the government for providing effective means through the Ministry of Agriculture for fighting moths, as a result of which this year's harvest was extraordinarily abundant.

Later, Abrahamian noted that the government is working out plans to give long-term loans and developing greenhouse enterprises in order to contribute to the development of the agricultural sector. "We have a large resource of about 100 million drams, which will be provided to the farmers for the construction of greenhouses. It's a great opportunity to create jobs and to export products," said Abrahamian.

Armenian, Kyrgyz Premiers Hold Talks

YEREVAN (ARKA) – Prime ministers of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, Hovik Abrahamian and Joomart Otorbaev, respectively, discussed the process of the two countries' accession to the Eurasian Economic Union on phone on Monday, the press office of Armenia's government reported.

The sides also discussed issues of further cooperation between Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. The conversation was initiated by Otorbaev.

Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan signed an agreement about the Eurasian Economic Union in Astana on May 29. The agreement will come into effect on January 1, 2015. At the meeting Armenia's president Serzh Sargsyan said Yerevan intended to join the agreement by mid June, but the respective documents have not been signed yet.

Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan Continues Partnership with Fuller Center for Housing Armenia

GOGHT, Kotayk Region – The Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan staff led by the General Manager of the hotel, Ami Miron, joined Fuller Center for Housing Armenia team in the village of Goght, Kotayk region to help the young Navasardians family build their dream home, that will become the new beginning of their life and a basis for bright future.

The young Navasardians now lives together with the family father's parents and brother's family – 10 people in a small house.

In 2007 Edgar managed to buy a half-built house with a hope that one day he would be able to put the stone on the stone and make it a home. After seven years of hard work the dream seems to be not too far for this family, especially now when 20 members from Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan together with Fuller Center for Housing Armenia team came to help them build their home.

For the youngest members of the family, the 2- and 3-year-old Hrayr and Gohar, it was an inconceivable happiness to see so many people in front of their new, still half-built house; as if they were feeling that soon they will move to their new house.

This annual build day has become a way of realization of other people's having the right to live with dignity, a way of team building and fostering. Through this wonderful annual initiative Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan gives

one more Armenian family the opportunity to live in decent conditions.

"Spirit to Serve our Communities is one of the core values of Marriott International. Armenia Marriott Hotel, being an integral part of the Marriott

Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan.

"It is a wonderful opportunity to unite different organizations and individuals in one mission of helping families in need. The partnership with Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan has a



The volunteers

family has always put great emphasis on community based projects and we reach our hands to support our communities with all the possible ways we can. We are excited for this wonderful cooperation with Fuller Center for Housing, which every year brings together so many different organizations and people for this fascinating purpose," said Ami Miron, general manager of the

history of many years with strong basis. Adhering to the principle of corporate social responsibility every year Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan joins us to help one more Armenian family have a decent home, where the children will grow up with the sense of safety and personal dignity," said Ashot Yeghiazaryan, Fuller Center for Housing Armenia president.

Armenia's President Appoints New Ambassador to Belgium

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – President Serge Sargsian has signed a decree on Tatoul Markarian's appointment as ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium.

The President's Office reported that according to another presidential decree, Markarian was also appointed the head of the Armenian Representation to the European Union.

Markarian was appointed Armenia's ambassador to the United States on March 19, 2005. He holds the diplomatic rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. He also represents the Republic of Armenia in the Organization of American States, where Armenia has a status of observer.

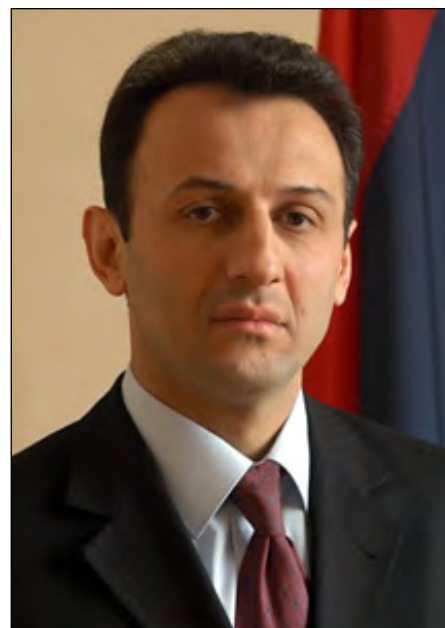
Prior to assuming this position, Markarian served as deputy minister of foreign affairs of Armenia since June 2000. In that capacity, his responsibilities included the Ministry's Departments of Politico-Military Affairs; International Organizations; CIS Countries; and Asia-Pacific and Africa. He was also the Armenian coordinator for the US-Armenia Strategic Dialogue as well as the NATO-Armenia Political-Military Dialogue. In 2002-2004, Ambassador Markarian was also Special Representative of the President of Armenia for Nagorno Karabagh negotiations. In 1999-2000, he served as advisor to the foreign minister.

From April 2012 to December 2013, he was also the ambassador of Armenia to Mexico.

Previous diplomatic assignments of

Ambassador Tatoul Markarian included a term as Deputy Chief of Mission and Minister-Counselor at the Armenian Embassy in Washington, DC from December 1994 to January 1999.

Before joining the Armenian Foreign Service, Ambassador Markarian served in newly-independent Armenia's legislative and executive branches.



Ambassador Tatoul Markarian

Markarian was born on April 1964, in Armenia. He holds a master's degree in international relations from the School of Advanced International Studies at the Johns Hopkins University, and a PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science. He graduated from the Yerevan University of National Economy, and completed a PhD in economics at the same University.

Economy May Be Affected by Sanctions On Russia

YEREVAN (ARKA) – The sanctions on Russia may have a negative impact on the Armenian economy, but not necessarily, President Serge Sargsian said in an interview.

It might happen because of the close links between the two economies, but the impact is not necessarily negative, the president said.

Sargsian also said the government program included preventive measures to minimize the negative effects.

The president said he was happy nobody was speaking about substantial price increases. The low economic growth is today's concern, he said.

"I would prefer myself 30-percent economic growth to 3 percent, but not all wishes come true. The important thing is to take the advantage of new opportunities", Sargsian said.

"We say sanctions are imposed on Russia and that it may affect the Russian economy, but we forget to say Russia as well has imposed sanctions on other countries. This means great opportunities for agricultural producers are opened up in the Russian market," he added.

Sargsian said producers will be promoted to increase their production and will get support for selling their goods in Russia. Many things are important, but hard work is the most important in helping us solve many problems, the president said.

In response to the West's sanctions on Russian individuals and organizations, on August 7 Russia banned imports from a number of countries, including EU members.



INTERNATIONAL

AGBU Honors New Brazil Primate

SAO PAULO – On June 14, 2014, the AGBU of Sao Paulo, Brazil, held a special dinner banquet in honor of the Very Rev. Dr. Nareg Berberian, the Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Brazil. Present were the Diocesan Clergy, Archbishop Datev Karibian, Rev. Yeznig Guzelian and Rev. Boghos Baronian, Diruhi Bourmaian, Armenia Consul General, Diocesan Council Chairman Andre Kissajikian, Sao Paulo Executive Board chairman, Prof. Antranik Manissadjian, representatives from Osasco Armenian community, and members from the local Armenian organizations.

The president of the AGBU, Helio Balukian welcomed the guests and congratulated the Primate. He explained the important role of AGBU in the worldwide and especially in the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin and promised to the new Primate to support his vision and the future Diocesan programs.

On behalf of AGBU, Alexander Bourmaian presented a plaque to Berberian. In his message, Berberian said, “I want to thank the AGBU for hosting this beautiful dinner in my honor as the Primate of the Diocese of



Alexander Bourmaian and Helio Balukian present an appreciation plaque to the Primate.

supported my vision and opened your facility to hold special programs. Thank God it has been very successful. I look forward to continuing and even introducing new programs through your support. AGBU is one of the most important Armenian Organizations in the world. It has a great mission in educa-

He added, “I look forward to your cooperation in enriching our community. I have many projects that need to be accomplished in our community. Soon I will unveil all those projects and through the support of all the Armenian organizations, we must overcome every obstacle and succeed in our mission.”

One of his projects, he said, is the commemoration of the Genocide’s centennial.

“This event must bring us all closer to each other and we must work together in harmony for the memory of 1.5 million of Armenians,” he noted.

The participants then had a chance to ask questions from the new Primate.

Iraq Supplies Kurds with Ammo in Unprecedented Act of Cooperation

BAGHDAD (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The Iraqi government provided a plane-load of ammunition to Peshmerga fighters from Iraq’s semi autonomous Kurdish region on Friday, August 8, a US official said, in an unprecedented act of military cooperation between Kurdish and Iraqi forces brought on by an acute militant threat.

The official said Iraqi security forces flew a C-130 cargo plane loaded with mostly small-arms ammunition to Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, in a move that American officials hope will help the region’s Peshmerga fighters keep militants from the Islamic State, an al Qaeda offshoot, at bay.

“This is unprecedented,” the official said on condition of anonymity.

“Developments over the last few days have refocused the issue, and we’ve seen unprecedented cooperation between Baghdad and Erbil in terms of going after (the Islamic State), not only in terms of conversation but in terms of actual support.”

In the first airstrikes in Iraq since US forces withdrew in 2011, US warplanes bombed Islamic State fighters several times on Friday, in an increasingly urgent attempt to halt the militants who have seized a wide swathe of territory since they swept into northern Iraq in June. The hardline fighters now appear set on trying to take the Kurdish capital.

The grave threat to Erbil, seat of the regional government and a hub for foreign firms in Iraq, appears to have at least temporarily eased a long-running feud between leaders of the Kurdistan region, who have long dreamed of an independent state, and the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, a Shi’ite who has sparred with Kurds over land and oil.



Very Rev. Dr. Nareg Berberian, Primate, with the AGBU Executive Board of Sao Paulo, Brazil

the Armenian Church. From the first day of my arrival, I felt a deep connection with the AGBU Board Members, and your support of me is greatly appreciated. You and the Clube Armenio have

tion and cultural fields. Its influence in Diaspora and Armenia are remarkable. Sao Paulo Armenian Community is truly blessed to have such a wonderful organization.”

Criminal Case Filed against Erdogan for Racist Comments as He Wins Election

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CHP deputy Hursit Günes filed a criminal complaint against Erdogan on Wednesday. Günes announced his plan to take legal action on his Twitter account, saying Erdogan had violated Article 10 of the Constitution and Articles 122 and 216 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK) against discrimina-

tion. In remarks to show his reaction, Günes said: “Look at this disgrace. Erdogan said being Armenian is ugly on NTV. What a shame! Calling a person Armenian, even if it is untrue, is not ‘ugly.’ Seeing this as such is a low form of racism! Erdogan doesn’t hear what he says. If he becomes president, Turkey will not have only chosen a tyrant, but at the same time a racist.” He also appealed to Turkey’s citizens of Armenian descent not to be offended. “His mind isn’t in the right place,” he said, adding: “The world should know this is a racist person. He has defined the claim that he is Armenian as ‘ugly’ slander. His name is Tayyip Erdogan.”

He also said Erdogan’s mentality was what caused the death of journalist Hrant Dink, who was assassinated by an

ultra-nationalist teenager in 2007.

Shortly after announcing his intention on Twitter to file a criminal complaint, Hursit Günes went to the Ankara Courthouse and did so.

Erdogan swept to a landslide victory in Turkey’s first direct presidential election on August 10, extending his 12-year grip on power and securing a mandate to fulfill his pledge of creating a “new Turkey.”

The country’s election board announced Erdogan had won according to preliminary results, obtaining enough votes to avoid a runoff. With 99 percent of the ballots counted, the premier had secured 52 percent, far ahead of his nearest opponent Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, a diplomat with a low profile in domestic politics who garnered 38 percent of the vote, according to state-run Anadolu news agency.

In a victory speech to thousands of flag-waving supporters at his governing Justice and Development Party’s Ankara headquarters, Erdogan called for societal reconciliation after a brutal campaign that was widely seen as hardening divisions across the country. But he also warned his political enemies against undermining Turkish security.

International News

Belarus Citizen Lands In Sevan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Ministry of Emergency Situations of Armenia received a call on the evening of August 11 saying that a Russian citizen fell on the mountain near the Botanical garden of Sevan with a parachute and hurt his leg. A citizen of the Republic of Belarus Dennis Tughtov (born in 1991) failed landing with parachute on the mountain near the botanical garden in Sevan city and hurt his back.

The rescuers gave first aid and brought him to the waiting ambulance with a stretcher. The victim was hospitalized at the Sevan Medical Center, then Saint Gregory the Illuminator Medical Center, where doctors assessed his condition as serious, but stable.

Japan to Provide \$1 Million for Preventing Landslides

YEREVAN(ARKA) – The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will earmark more than \$1 million to Armenia’s Emergency Ministry for controlling landslides in the country, Representative of JICA Office in Uzbekistan Iida Jiro told journalists on Tuesday after signing an agreement with Armenian Emergency Minister Armen Yeritsyan.

Prevention of landslides is very important to Armenia, he said. He said many disasters relating to landslides happen here, and therefore the JICA has decided to provide assistance to Armenia.

Yeritsyan said that 4.1 percent of Armenia is under the threat of landslides, and “the work, on which we are embarking now, is very important to the country.”

Monitoring of landslide hazard areas of Armenia’s territory will be conducted and the database of landslides will be updated as part of the program.

9 Rescued From Mine Collapse in Turkey

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) – Nine miners were rescued from a collapsed mine on Tuesday, August 12, after being trapped inside for several hours, Turkey’s state-run news agency said.

The accident occurred just months after 301 miners were killed in the country’s worst mining disaster.

The coalmine in Zonguldak, on Turkey’s Black Sea coast, collapsed at around 3 a.m. but authorities were not notified for several hours, delaying the rescue operation, Gov. Ali Kaban said.

The miners were brought out of the mine in the afternoon and immediately hospitalized, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported.

It was not immediately clear what caused the cave-in. Kaban told Anadolu that the miners had been trapped in an area close to the mine’s exit.

In May, a fire inside a coalmine in Soma, western Turkey, killed 301 people.

NATO Will Take Action If Turkey Threatened by Islamic State

BRUSSELS (PanArmenian.net) – The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would take all steps necessary to defend member Turkey if it were threatened by Islamic State fighters who have made gains in Iraq and Syria, Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said on August 11, according to Reuters.

“We are very much concerned about the activities of the so-called Islamic State, which is a bunch of terrorists, and it is of utmost importance to stop their advance,” Rasmussen said.

“If any of our allies, and in this case of course particularly Turkey, were to be threatened from any source of threat, we won’t hesitate to take all steps necessary to ensure effective defense of Turkey or any other ally,” he said.



INTERNATIONAL

New Julfa, the Armenian Quarter of Isfahan

By Simone Zoppellaro

ISFAHAN, Iran (Osservatoria Balcani e Caucaso Comunità) – In the Iranian town of Isfahan, in the ancient district of New Julfa, lives an Armenian community. From the Ararat supermarket to the Ani cafe, everything here is reminiscent of the deep link of the Armenians to their homeland.

I arrive in New Julfa on a late July afternoon, with a scorching heat and such strong light that the few streets that make up the Armenian quarter of Isfahan almost seem to disappear. We are in the last days of Ramadan, and despite being a place with a strong Christian presence, all the cafes are closed. There is a good number in the neighborhood: most of them are well-furnished, a bit larger than a room, and wrapped in a penumbra created specifically to protect the privacy of the young Christians and Muslims who, in the context of a closed and sometimes tough city like Isfahan, can find here some relief. In one of these cafes, a few hours before sunset, I shall have occasion to order something to drink, which is not so common in Iran in the month of Muslim fasting.

No trace of Armenians today; only Persian is heard in the streets among the few passers-by. I meet just one, the aged clerk of a supermarket where I enter to buy some water.

At first glance, New Julfa immediately displays a distinctive character compared to the rest of the urban fabric of Isfahan: it is an elegant residential neighborhood, which is also the shopping destination for the urban bourgeoisie. Among the many shops available, and some small shopping centers, I catch sight of a Benetton store. The streets seem very well kept, with wide paved walkways that make strolling pleasant. The impression, similar to the one I had in other Christian districts in the Middle East, is that of widespread economic wellbeing: it is thus in Beirut, but also in pre-war Damascus and Aleppo.

Making the quarter even more distinctive, and giving it somehow a European character, is the presence of some squares where young and old spend their time talking. Above all, there is the Julfa square, surrounded by a beautiful colonnade. Here is the Armenian supermarket

Ararat, where you can also buy ham, made of pork of course, with the curious lettering “reserved for the religious minorities.”

Strolling around, signs of other businesses reveal their Armenian nature. I encounter a coffee named after Ani, the ancient capital of western Armenia, a pastry called Akhtamar, as the island on Lake Van which is the site of a major cathedral, and a gym known as Masis, after the highest peak of the sacred Mount Ararat. These are significant names that speak of the deep connection of these people with their homeland.

Finally, what is arguably the most important treasure of this quarter is its thirteen 17th-century churches. The most famous, the Holy Savior Cathedral, which was announced in May as a forthcoming entry in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, is a remarkable synthesis between Islamic, Armenian and European architecture. No less elegant and beautiful, and equally covered with sumptuous frescoes, is the nearby Church of St. Bethlehem, the only other open to visitors. Anyone who has seen the churches of the Caucasian Armenia will be taken by surprise here: the former are bare and essential, while the ones of Isfahan are rich and sophisticated, designed to abduct the eyes and hearts of those who enter, just like the contemporary mosques of the city.

Underlying this process of acculturation is a history longer than four centuries. Arriving in Isfahan in 1604 at the behest of Shah Abbas I, one of the greatest rulers in the history of Iran, the Armenians played a key role in the heyday of the Safavid Empire. Skilled traders, they were deported from the Ararat plain and the town of Julfa (in today's Azerbaijan) to the capital of Isfahan, with the double aim of using a scorched earth policy in a border area disputed by the dreadful Ottoman neighbor and of giving a new impetus to the economic development of the capital.

Located outside of the town, over the river banks of Zayanderud (the urban limit at the time, later engulfed by the city expansion), the Armenians enjoyed a great religious freedom and soon, after the tragedy of exile, also considerable wealth. They named their new settlement New Julfa, in memory of the lost homeland, and were able in a few years—aided by the support of the Safavid crown—to create a network of businesses whose branches extended from Malaysia and India to Russia and Europe.

Armenian Captive Dies in Azerbaijan

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statement, a government commission dealing with Armenian prisoners of war, hostages and missing persons said that Petrosian never suffered from heart disease. It demanded an international forensic examination of his body.

“We didn't expect anything different from the Azerbaijani propaganda machine,” said Artsrun Hovannisian, the Armenian Defense Ministry spokesman.

Officials in Yerevan and Chinari, a village in the northeastern Tavush province where Petrosian lived, insisted on Thursday that he crossed the Armenian-Azerbaijani border by accident.

Initial news reports from Baku said that Petrosian was detained by villagers in Azerbaijan's Tovuz district bordering Tavush and handed over to military authorities. The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry claimed afterwards, however, that he is a member of an Armenian commando squad that tried unsuccessfully to conduct a cross-border sabotage attack. It said Azerbaijani troops captured him after killing four other Armenian soldiers. The Armenian military laughed off that claim.

Images released by the Azerbaijani authorities late on Thursday showed two masked men in army fatigues posing for a photograph with Petrosian. The latter wore army boots and a camouflage vest in that photo. Earlier pictures of the Armenian villagers, which were apparently taken by Azerbaijani civilians, showed him wearing sneakers and no pieces of military uniform.

Azerbaijani TV channels also broadcast video of Petrosian being taken to military headquar-

ters in the town of Shamkir and interrogated there by an Azerbaijani general. “What do you all want from Azerbaijan?” the general asked the terrified man after accusing him of being an Armenian soldier sent to Azerbaijan for sabotage purposes.

“Please, take me back to Armenia, to my home,” pleaded Petrosian.

Petrosian's death will rekindle memories of Manvel Saribekian, a 20-year-old resident of another Armenian border village who was captured by Azerbaijani soldiers in September 2010. A visibly injured Saribekian was paraded on Azerbaijani television, saying that he is a member of an Armenian commando squad that planned to carry out terrorist attacks in Azerbaijan.

Saribekian was found hanged in an Azerbaijani detention center shortly afterwards. The Azerbaijani authorities claimed that he committed suicide. The Armenian government said, however, that Saribekian was tortured to death or driven to suicide. Both the government and Saribekian's family insisted that the young man was a civilian who accidentally crossed the Armenian-Azerbaijani border while grazing cattle.

Two residents of another Tavush village, Verin Karmiraghbyur, were detained on the Azerbaijani side of the frontier in separate incidents in January and March. They were freed after spending more than one month in captivity.

One of those villagers, the 77-year-old Mamikon Khojoyan, died in May after undergoing medical treatment in a Yerevan hospital. Doctors there said he suffered serious injuries in Azerbaijani custody.

The next day, I talk about the history of this neighborhood with Artin Mouradian, director of the Diocesan Council of the Armenians in Isfahan. While I wait to be received, sitting in the waiting room of the offices behind the Cathedral, I observe significant comings and goings in the hallway. I cannot help but think: here are the Armenians! The impression is that in fact many of them lead a separate existence from the rest of the city, enclosed in their own spaces. I am surprised by the figures that Mouradian gives me: there are approximately 10,000 Armenians in Isfahan, and over 500 students in the Armenian schools of New Julfa. These are numbers that sound even more remarkable if we consider that the Christians in Iran (not only Armenians) detected by the census of 2011 are only 117,704.

With the pride of knowing he is connected to an important history, Mouradian tells me of the many activities of his community, ranging from music (two choirs) to sports (as in other Iranian cities, there is an Armenian community center) and publishing (in New Julfa, in the seventeenth century, Armenians created the first typogra-

phy of the country). With the centenary approaching, a mention of the Armenian Genocide could not be missing; and so Mouradian speaks to me of their commitment in order to attain even in Iran an official recognition of this tragedy.

From a religious point of view, Isfahan is, along with Tehran, Tabriz and Urmia, one of the three dioceses of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Iran. Every Sunday the Mass is held in rotation in two of the thirteen churches, so to keep them all in operation. In New Julfa there is also a small Catholic and Protestant minority.

In the context of a Middle East in flames, where some of the oldest Christian communities are in danger of disappearing along with their spiritual and material heritage, the community of New Julfa is a reality that deserves to be preserved and known. In Iran, the only Armenian communities that have remained numerically relevant are those of Isfahan and Tehran. Others, because of internal (toward the capital of Tehran) and external migration (to the United States, in particular) seem doomed to rapid extinction.

Kasparov Loses Chess Presidency Bid

HELSINKI (Hetq) – Former chess world champion Garry Kasparov has lost his bid to become president of the World Chess Federation after a contentious election that involved President Vladimir Putin of Russia and allegations of bribes and corruption.

Members of the federation, also known as FIDE [Federation Internationale des Echecs], voted 110-61 in favor of incumbent president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov at FIDE's general assembly in Norway. Ilyumzhinov, a native of Kalmykia, a Russian republic notable as the only Buddhist region in Europe, has been president of FIDE since 1995 and was also Kalmykia's president from 1993 to 2010.

In a statement issued through a spokesman, Ilyumzhinov told the *New York Times* (NYT), “We have big differences with my opponent: I believe that chess should be clear of politics, while he thinks that it is a political tool.” Kasparov is a vocal Putin critic, and Russian embassies in many countries contacted chess officials to campaign for Ilyumzhinov, according to the NYT.

Allegations of bribery and corruption were made against both sides. A contract was revealed in which Kasparov agreed to pay Ignatius Leong, FIDE's general secretary, to campaign on his behalf. The contract stipulated that Leong would be paid \$500,000 and another \$500,000 would be donated to a chess academy Leong founded. If Kasparov won, further donations would follow and a FIDE office would be established in Singapore with Leong paid to run it.



Garry Kasparov



Kirsan Ilyumzhinov

events. Andrew Paulson, Agon's founder, and spokespersons for Ilyumzhinov acknowledged the contract's validity but claimed it was an “early draft” of the agreement between FIDE and Agon.

During his presidencies of Kalmykia and FIDE, Ilyumzhinov has attracted controversy for his claims of being abducted by aliens, publicly appearing with Muammar Gaddafi shortly before he was overthrown in the Libyan civil war, and the 1998 murder of journalist Larisa Yudina, who accused him of corruption. When asked about Sergey Vaskin, a former aide and one of two men convicted of Yudina's murder, he told the *Times*, “There were 1,000 people on my staff. He was one of the members who worked in my administration ... You have the staff of the *New York Times*. Tomorrow one of your staff kills somebody. That does not mean that the editor ordered this.”

Community News

LA County DA Jackie Lacey Guest Speaker At AIWA Program

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles Affiliate of the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) announces that Jackie Lacey, District Attorney of Los Angeles County, will be the Guest Speaker at a luncheon on September 9. This event will be held at The Athenaeum, California Institute of Technology, 551 South Hill St., Pasadena, with a reception at 11:30 a.m., followed by luncheon at noon.

Silva Katchiguan, president of AIWA-LA, stated that a capacity crowd is expected to hear from the first woman and first African-American to serve as Los Angeles County District Attorney since the office was created in 1850.

"We are very excited that District Attorney Jackie Lacey will take time from her busy schedule to address our guests and to bring us up to date on the operations of the office, the major types of crimes and cases prosecuted by the office and the high-level policy decisions affecting the pursuit of justice," Katchiguan said.

Lacey was sworn in as the 42nd District Attorney on December 3, 2012, and oversees roughly 1,000 lawyers, nearly 300 investigators and about 800 support staff. She has spent most of her professional life as a prosecutor, manager and executive in the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office.

A Los Angeles native and graduate of the University of Southern California Law School, Lacey joined the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation in 1986 as a Deputy District Attorney and worked her way through the ranks as a front-line prosecutor.

While serving as a Deputy District Attorney, Lacey prosecuted hundreds of serious criminal cases, winning national attention for her successful prosecution of the county's first race-based, hate-crime murder. She was recognized by the US Department of Justice in May 2000 for prosecuting this case and for participating on the Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee. Starting in 2000, Lacey took on management and executive roles in the District Attorney's Office. Her duties included reviewing nearly every major



Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey

case the office prosecuted; serving on the office's special circumstance committee that reviews death penalty cases, and making decisions affecting the management of the office

In 2011, she was named Chief Deputy District Attorney responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the office. She has overseen the development of several groundbreaking initiatives within the office, including the nation's first Animal Cruelty Protection Program, the Graffiti Prosecution Program and the Project Safe Neighborhoods Gun Prosecution Program. As a result of Lacey's career achievements in trial, and her leadership efforts, the *Los Angeles and San Francisco Daily Journal* named her one of the Top Women Litigators of 2009.

Many prominent members of the Armenian community have had successful careers in the Los Angeles County District Attorneys Office. The alumni include Robert Philibosian who served a two-year term as District Attorney; former Supreme Court Justice Armand Arabian, former member of the California Legislature Walter Karabian, Paul Geragos and Arthur Avazian served as Deputy District Attorneys. Lily Balian served as executive assistant to District Attorney Evelle J. Younger during his two-term tenure.

For information and/or reservations contact Houry Aposhian, hourly@phbancorp.com.



From left: Mardy Kazarians, Talin Petrosian, Marina Guevrekian, Richard Ohanian, Garen Khanoyan, Alfred Khashaki, Vasken Yardemian, Sasoon Petrosian, Razmik Garakanian, Vazgen Ghoogassian

AESA Presents 'From Earth to Mars and Beyond'

PASADENA, Calif. – On July 8, the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESA) hosted an informative lecture on NASA's Mars Science Laboratory mission at the Parson Engineering lecture room in Pasadena, presented by three scientists from Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) Richard Ohanian, Garen Khanoyan, and Alfred Khashaki.

The lecture was so popular on this particular day that there was standing room only in the lecture hall where the audience which was made up with people of different ages watched the presentation on large television screens. The three speakers gave a captivating lecture with animation and real videos on how the Curiosity Rover landed on Mars on August 6, 2012, where it captured the world's attention.

"We were very pleased to have these three esteemed scientists from JPL who presented difficult science to the public in a simple way to understand like storytelling method"

They discussed the challenges of building and landing the Rover safely on Mars and future missions to Mars and what the Curiosity rover has been up to since it landed on the red planet.

"We were very pleased to have these three esteemed scientists from JPL who presented difficult science to the public in a simple way to understand like storytelling method" stated AESA President Vasken Yardemian. "AESA has planned a series of lectures during this year featuring Armenian engineers and scientists who will share their knowledge, experience, opinions and accomplishments, discussing timely topics."

Ohanian holds a BS in applied physics from Azad University, Tehran, Iran, and a BS and MS in electrical and computer engineering from California Institute of Technology. As adjunct faculty at Glendale Community College, Richard has helped establishing GCC's Robotics Academy where he has developed and is currently teaching courses in Electronics and Robotics.

Khashaki received a BS in electrical engineering from Cal Poly Pomona. Currently he is a member of the Flight Electronics and Software Systems Group and has contributed to several major projects such as Deep Space 1 and Microwave Limb Sounder. He has spent almost a decade either directly or indirectly contributing to the MSL and was the lead on the MSL's Telecom Interface FPGA.

Khanoyan joined JPL in 1998 and holds a BS in electrical engineering and an MS in computer sciences from University of Southern California. He is a member of the Advanced Computer Systems & Technologies Group at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. He is currently involved with the development of several next generation landing technologies, including Lander Vision System and Low Density Supersonic Decelerators.

The lecture series presented by AESA are open to the public and free of admission charge.

Fr. Yessai Bedros Appointed Pastor of St. Paul Armenian Church in Fresno

FRESNO – St. Paul Armenian Church of Fresno announced this week the appointment of Rev. Yessai Bedros as its new parish priest. His appointment was made by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, on August 6.

Bedros was born in Kamishli, Syria, and graduated from the Armenian Seminary of the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia in 2006. He was ordained into the sacred order of priesthood that same year and has served in parishes in Isfahan, Iran, and Lebanon. He recently joined the Burbank-based Western Diocese of the Armenian Church.

He and his wife, Vartine, have two young sons.

While Bedros has been a guest celebrant at St. Paul on several occasions since May, his first service as parish priest was on Sunday, August 10 at the annual Grape Blessing Picnic on the grounds of the California Armenian Home located at 6720 E. Kings Canyon Road.

At 29, he is an energetic young priest and brings to the parish a new level of excitement. His dedication to the Church and the Armenian people is founded in a deep level of spirituality.



Rev. Yessai Bedros

Ararat Youth and Conference Boston Harbor Cruise

BOSTON – The Board of Directors of the Ararat Youth and Conference Center plans a fundraiser cruise through Boston Harbor on Saturday, October 25, to benefit the continued growth and development of the Ararat Center.

The Ararat Center, located in Greenville, NY, was procured by the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) in 2004 to establish a permanent home for the St. Vartan Camp Program. It is also home to many organizations and groups that return annually to the center, which is situated in the base of the Catskill Mountains.

Each year since its purchase, the Ararat Center Board of Directors continues to upgrade the facility, including the construction of the Grand Pavilion with five classrooms, a worship hall and a large sheltered event space, the newly-renovated, handicapped-accessible pool and the modernization of the main kitchen and dining hall.

On October 25 at 7 p.m., the Odyssey Cruising vessel will leave Rowe's Wharf, Gate B. The dinner-dance aboard the ship will include live Kef music. It will cruise through Boston Harbor and Seaport, past George's Island and Spectacle Island, and return ashore by 10 p.m.

Tickets for adults, 21 and over are \$175, while for under 21, \$100. Sponsorship options are also available.

For tickets and more information, write to BostonCruise@AraratCenter.org.



OBITUARY

Haig Kasparian, Fresno's Go-to Guy for Paint

FRESNO (*Fresno Bee*) – Haig Kasparian of Fresno died on July 29. He was 80.

For many commercial and industrial painters and homeowners in the Fresno area, Haig Kasparian was the go-to guy for paint.

His store, Kasparian's Paint Center in central Fresno, provided the paint for the Save Mart Center at Fresno State and supplied 30,000 gallons to the contractor who painted the Aladdin Resort and Casino in Las Vegas.

But beyond the Pittsburgh Paints that he sold, family and friends knew him as a sports fan and a ping-pong great would take anyone on no matter their age or experience.

Kasparian, founder and owner of Kasparian's Paint, died on July 29 after a brief illness. He

was 80.

Known as "Chief" around the store, Kasparian worked in the paint business for more than 50 years, first as a salesman and manager and then as an owner.

He never retired and continued to show up to work until his illness made it difficult for him to walk, said son Michael Kasparian, who now runs the store where he has worked alongside his dad since 1988.

"He really was respected, even among his competitors," Michael Kasparian said. "He was always kind, always had a smile on his face. He would always listen to people's problems and be sympathetic to people. He really had a big heart. I think that was a big part of his appeal

to everybody."

Kasparian was born in Fresno to Armenian immigrant parents who came to the area in 1919. He attended Fresno schools and graduated from Roosevelt High School in 1952.

Kasparian then spent four years in the US Coast Guard before returning to Fresno, where he held a few odd jobs before starting a career with PPG Industries in 1959 as a salesman and manager.

When the company sold off its stores, Kasparian bought it and founded Kasparian's Paint Center on First Street, near McKinley Avenue, in 1986. He grew it from a four-employee company to a little more than a dozen workers today. The store moved to Cedar Avenue in 1996 and expanded in 2006.

The store ranked No. 1 of 240 Pittsburgh Paint dealers for eight consecutive years, according to a Bee story published in 2006. Kasparian credited his employees with his success.

When not working, he loved to watch and play sports, including basketball, softball, tennis and his beloved ping pong.

Stephen Love, owner of Valley Wide Painting, recently bought a ping-pong table for his Madera home after years of playing with his longtime friend.

"I didn't play all that much but I got a table out at my house here several months ago so he would come out and play ping pong," Love said. "He'd take anybody on and really beat them."

Love was a new business owner when he met Kasparian, who offered him a line of credit at the First Street store. Without the credit, busi-

ness would have been tough, Love said.

"He wanted you to do good," Love said. "He didn't want to see you fail."

It wasn't unusual to get a daily phone call from Kasparian or to be invited to lunch after a stop by the store, Love said.

Kasparian even liked to make site visits to see how his paint was being applied.

"He'd come out with his dry mil gauge and check my work," Love said. "I'm good with that because that kept my guys sharp. Not only am



Haig Kasparian

Lt. Col. David B. Davidian Sr.

WEST YARMOUTH, Mass. – Lt. Col. David B. Davidian, Sr. died on March 12, at the age of 89, at Mt. Auburn Hospital, with his family by his side.

He was the husband of the late Mary (Dolbashian) and Roxy (Shrestinian) Davidian. He was the son of the late Bagdassar and Mary (Oozonian) Davidian.

He was a graduate from Classical High School and Clark University with a degree in history and international relations.

Davidian enlisted in the US Army Air Corps in 1943. He was stationed in England during WWII. He was a lead navigator in the 301st AAF BU and flew a B17 conducting bombing raids over Germany, earning him an Air Medal. He was recalled during the Korean War in 1951 and later during the Cuban Missile Crisis. He retired in 1974 as a lieutenant colonel. His WWII crew was a tight group of friends. They had a 50th reunion at his home in West Yarmouth, a historic event that made front page of the Cape Cod Times.

He was the father of David B. Davidian, Jr. and his wife Innessa Antonian of Belmont, Mass., Christyne Davidian of Petaluma, Calif., Susan Davidian Kinnear and her husband Michael Norman Kinnear of Watertown, and the late Melanie Davidian of Burlington, Vt. He leaves his grandchildren, Shant Davidian of Waltham, Mass., Ani and David Davidian III of Belmont, Matthew Ray and Gregory Davidian Hubert of Petaluma, Michaela Araxi and David Aram Kinnear of Watertown. He

survived two sisters, Ojen Fantazian of Arlington, Mass. and Vartouhi Merzigian of Worcester. He also leaves many nephews, nieces, grandnephews and grandnieces.

He worked for New York Life Insurance for more than 40 years. He built a nursing home Medway Country Manor, from the ground up, with his partner, John Peters, Jr. and worked as the treasurer until he retired in 1992.

He was a member of the Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church in Worcester, served on the Board of Trustees, and was a member of the Men's Club for many years. He was a member of the ARF, was on the board that formed the Worcester AYF Juniors and helped with the construction of Camp Haiastan in Franklin, Mass.

In lieu of flowers, donation can be made to the Armenia Tree Project, 65 Main St., #3, Watertown, MA 02472.

Notes of comfort and sympathy may be sent to the family at www.MorrisOConnorBlute.com



Lt. Col. David B. Davidian

Yervant Babayan, Longtime Educator, ADL Member

BABAYAN, from page 1

Babayan was one of the founders of the Armenian General Benevolent Union Youth Association, and became its chairman in 1935. In 1934 he also became one of the founders of the Arek Cultural Society.

During World War II he raised money for Soviet Armenia's David of Sasun Tank Division, and after the war served as secretary of the [Armenian] Repatriation Committee of Syria and the Armenian National Council, which pursued Armenian political goals. From 1967 to 1971 he was chairman of the executive committee of the TCA.

During the Lebanese Civil War, Babayan served from 1977 to 1978 as chairman of the Regional Committee of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party. In 1986 he moved with his family to Los Angeles, and from 1987 to 1993 worked as TCA executive director.

From 1971 to 1978 Babayan edited the *Nor Aintab* quarterly, and was always a frequent contributor to the Armenian periodical press in general. He is the author of numerous textbooks, histories and memoirs in Armenian.

Babayan received numerous awards throughout his long life. They include the medal of merit from the Lebanese Ministry of Education and the Teacher's Medal of Honor; gold medals from the municipality of Sin-el-Fil in Lebanon and the Vahan Tekeyan School of Beirut; Certificate of Honor of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Armenians Abroad of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia; and Honorary Member of the President's Circle of

Armenian American International College. Catholicos Vazgen I bestowed upon him the Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Medal of Honor. The Teacher's Lounge of the College's Dadian Center was named after Yervant and Rosine Babayan, while Mashdots College bestowed upon him the title of Honorary Professor of Armenian Studies. The Armenian General Benevolent Union granted him the President's Medal of Honor in 2010.

When Babayan turned 100, a celebration at the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America was held with more than 450 guests. The commemorative booklet included letters of congratulations from prominent politicians such as the mayor of Los Angeles and members of Congress.

Funeral services took place on August 14 in Old North Church at the Hollywood Hills Forest Lawn Cemetery. Survivors include his wife, Rosine Babayan; children and their spouses Prof. Silva and Dr. Sarkis Karayan, Nerses and Hermine Babayan, and Ara and Sonia Babayan; grandchildren Zella and Khatchik Karakozian (and their own children Tamar and Patil), Yervant Ara Babayan, Yervant Nerses Babayan, Taleen Babayan, Alex and Tamar Babayan; and nephews and nieces and their spouses Khachig and Shushan Babayan, and Lena and Ishkhan Jinbashian.

In lieu of flowers, the family requested that donations be made in memory of the deceased to the Ararat Home in Mission Hills, Calif., and the Yervant Babayan Saturday School of the Armenian Church of Crescenta Valley.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

After 40 Years, Warwick Gets Around to a Bypass in Apponaug Village

By Barbara Polichetti

WARWICK, R.I. (*Providence Journal*) – Orange traffic barrels and lane closures don't usually make people happy, but city officials say they welcome the sight in Apponaug. It signals the start of roadwork that eventually will eliminate the racetrack-like "circulator" that for years has sped up traffic and slowed down business in the village.

"This will solve a problem that has gone on for nearly 40 years," Mayor Scott Avedisian said of the state project that will take about three years to complete and cost more than \$30 million.

While there are many aspects to the project, it basically will accomplish two things. It will eliminate the circle of one-way roads that loops around the historic village where City Hall stands, replacing them with two-way streets that will feature new sidewalks and better parking. And it includes a bypass road that will dramatically reduce the number of cars that race through the small business district on their way somewhere else.

When the project is completed – sometime in fall 2017 – the number of cars passing City Hall on Post Road is expected to drop from nearly 29,000 per day to 5,000 or 6,000, said Avedisian and Rick Crenca, principal planner for the city.

A certain amount of traffic is good for local businesses, Avedisian said, but when the state created the one-way Apponaug circulator in the late 1970s, it ended up funneling too much fast-moving traffic into the area. Ironically, it was only supposed to be an experiment, intended to boost the Apponaug business district. "It didn't work," he said. "And it turned out to make things worse."

Turning the sections of Post Road and Veterans Memorial Drive that encircle Apponaug into one-way streets, Avedisian said, resulted in multilane roads that inadvertently sped up traffic and made Apponaug Village bad for parking, pedestrians and shoppers. The stretch of Veterans Memorial Drive that skirts the village's north side is four lanes wide and handles about

49,000 cars per day – most of which are just cutting through the village to reach West Shore Road or the Route 95 ramps on Centerville Road. With such a high volume of cars zipping through, many locals call the circulator the "Mini-Indy," a wry nod to the famous Indianapolis racetrack.

"It's almost impossible to cross the street," Avedisian said as he looked out his office's front window at the steady stream of cars roaring by. "It's just bad for business," he continued. "Usually, by the time someone sees a place where they want to stop, they've gone by it. And then you've got fast-moving traffic behind you."

Avedisian said that it didn't take past city officials long to realize Apponaug needed to go back to having two-way streets, but it has taken decades to get state and federal funding, plus a design acceptable to engineers, residents and the business community.

When the project is done, Veterans Memorial Drive (where the police station and main fire station are located) will be changed from four lanes of one-way traffic to a divided two-way road, Crenca explained. The parkway, as well as Route 5 (Greenwich Avenue), will have direct access to the new bypass road that will connect with Route 117 (Centerville Road).

All but one section of Post Road also will carry two-way traffic. The only one-way stretch will be in front of City Hall, where the road also passes by a library branch, the Warwick Museum of Art, a post office and most of the village's small businesses.

That stretch will have wider parking lanes and a bicycle lane, Avedisian said, and be much



Mayor Scott Avedisian, right, with Rick Crenca, principal planner for Warwick, says the high volume of traffic at high speeds in Apponaug is "just bad for business." They are walking near a large sign on Veterans Memorial Drive.

more like the old-fashioned Main Street it was intended to be. The village intersections will no longer be right-angle junctures, he said, but will be "roundabouts" – small-diameter rotaries intended to slow down traffic but also keep it flowing.

Landscaping is a key part of the state's plan for the village, Crenca said. Old curbing and crumbling retaining walls in front of homes and businesses also will be replaced. "This will really be a transformation for Apponaug," Avedisian exclaimed. "It's not just about building new roads and new sidewalks." He added that taming the traffic, particularly along Veterans Memorial Drive, will make some properties that are now fallow more attractive for business development.

While the roadwork just began a week ago, Avedisian noted that the state has been working in the area for months, clearing overgrowth and taking down buildings to make room for the new bypass road and roundabouts. The city, he said, is working on preserving the distinctive old "saw-tooth" factory building – so named because of its jagged roofline – near where the bypass road will connect to Route 117.

Despite the project's enormous scope, Avedisian said, there are no plans for complete road closures during construction. There will be lane closures, and that will cause some traffic snarls, he said. "We just ask that people be patient."

"In the end," he said, "this project will be worth it, and will fix something that was supposed to be temporary nearly 40 years ago."

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COMMUNITY NEWS

New England Committee to Celebrate ATP Anniversary in Boston on November 8

WATERTOWN – A group of volunteers is hard at work on the next celebration of Armenia Tree Project's 20th birthday. A major event is planned for Saturday, November 8, at the atrium of the John Joseph Moakley Courthouse overlooking Boston Harbor.

The 20th anniversary fundraiser is being chaired by Nina Festekjian and Nicole Babikian Hajjar, who are coordinating a team of more than two dozen ambassadors for the event.

The first gathering was a festive outdoor gala at the Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens in California in May, where ATP debuted a new promotional video "Plant a Tree, Plant Hope." The event was attended by more than 200 friends and supporters of the organization, who were energized by an evening of food, music, and remarks from community leaders.

"ATP's founder had great foresight when she started planting trees 20 years ago during the difficult years of early independence," noted Managing Director Tom Garabedian. "To celebrate this new milestone in our history, Carolyn Mugar has asked us to organize something that captures the spirit and personality of Armenia and ATP. This will not be a traditional banquet by any means...our organization has a diverse constituency and we are bringing a unique set of ideas to the table for this event."

"Moakley is a spectacular venue and our goal is to wow everyone and broaden our reach in the diaspora and in Armenia," added Garabedian. "We are expecting guests from



Sports Announcer Bob Lobel (seated, center) celebrate with Armenian Museum Trustees and Sports Raffle winners at the with 2014 Sports Raffle Drawing.

A Sporting Chance at Armenian Museum of America

WATERTOWN – The Armenian Museum of America concluded its ninth annual Spring Sports Raffle, with great style and success, bringing in proceeds that support the museum's exhibitions, programs and operating expenses. The annual Spring Sports Raffle concluded with a lively party and reception for the participants, who enjoyed the Fenway-style menu of pizza, popcorn and hotdogs, and beverages.

Sports announcer Bob Lobel drew the winning tickets, to cheers

and applause. Winning prizes included a Grand Prize of 22 seats in the Fenway Park Luxury Box, as well as 11 other sets of tickets to see such favorites as the Patriots, the Bruins, the Celtics and more Red Sox games. Congratulations to all the winners! The Armenian Museum of America extends its sincere gratitude to everyone who bought tickets, to our donors, and everyone who worked to help make the 2014 Sports Raffle a huge success.

New England, California, and everywhere in between for this event. More details will be available soon by mail and online, so we hope everyone will 'save the date' and stay tuned for an event you will not want to miss."

Since its inception in 1994, ATP has planted nearly 4.5 million trees, established three nurseries and two environmental education centers, and has greened villages, churches, parks, and open spaces throughout Armenia. In the process, the organization has provided employment for hundreds of people and provided vital resources to thousands of villagers throughout the country.



The John Joseph Moakley Courthouse overlooking Boston Harbor

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Kirikian Armenian School of St. Thomas Armenian Church Holds Yearend Program

By Nadine Mekjian

TENAFLY, N.J. — The Kirikian Armenian School of St. Thomas Armenian Church ended the school year with a spectacular graduation and end-of-year program. A Saturday Armenian school dedicated to teaching students to read, write and speak in Armenian and teaching Armenian history and culture, the school offers four pre-school classes and two classes, a bilingual and Armenian speaking class, for grades 1-7. The school, headed by the V. Rev. Papken Anoushian, Principal Ani Capan, 23 teachers and 15 administration and staff, has been educating young Armenians for over 50 years.

The end of year program was a two-hour spectacular that demonstrated the school's curriculum and activities.

Capan's welcoming speech, given in Armenian, emphasized the school's mission, to teach the Armenian language and to instill the Armenian spirit in each student. The core message of her speech was the importance of teaching young Armenians the language so that it continues to live and unify Armenians. Capan urged parents to speak to their children in Armenian. She said, "It is a people's language that gives them their identity and it is the language of a people that provides us with a view into their minds." Capan added, "the Armenian language is like a diamond, revered by world renowned linguists. This language, so revered, is already ours; why not use it, protect it and not let it die?" She quoted Khachadour Apovian, an early 19th-century writer and national public figure: "It is our language and our faith that protects us and keeps us united. Change your language and deny your faith,



The graduating seventh graders with teachers and principal Ani Capan

with what are you left with to define your ethnicity?"

Quoting Avedik Isahagian, also an Armenian poet, Capan reminded us of our responsibility to protect the Armenian language as our forefathers had painstakingly done ahead of us. In quoting Isahagian she said, "It is the Armenian language which embodies the Armenian people's soul and it is for this language that our forefathers spilled their blood to the sea."

Capan reminded parents that it was through the Armenian language that they could instill and foster their children's Armenian spirit. She said, "The Armenian language provides its people with a key to think and feel Armenian. When one knows the language and reads its books and newspapers in Armenian, they begin to think, feel, believe and act Armenian."

It is with the backdrop of Capan speech that the day's program continued and demonstrated the wealth of language, culture and history poured into the minds of its students throughout the year. The program captured the hearts of the audience at the start with the entrance of 110-strong student body. They led the audience in the *Hayr Mer* (the Lord's Prayer). Next, the school's chamber choir, led by Dr. Levon Capan, sang a few hymns from their repertoire. The choir participants, consisting of the school's

from Armenia.

The school's Youth Chamber Ensemble also performed. This group, led by Diana Bourghol, performed the Armenian national anthem, *Mer Hayrenik*, and *Karoon Karoon*. The group featured students on piano, violin, cello, oboe and percussion. The Youth Chamber Ensemble members meet on Saturdays after regular Armenian School hours and is open to participation by all children of the Armenian community. In its infancy, the school is always looking for more students to participate and representation by other instruments as well.

The highlight of the day was performances, recitations and a skit by the graduating class.

The graduating class, taught by Sirvart Demirjian and Arsho Sabbagh, performed a skit written by Demirjian and based on the Cultural Olympics, where each student recited various



The nursery and kindergarten students



The graduating kindergarten students



The graduating seventh graders with their diplomas

students in fourth through seventh graders, are also invited to participate in Divine Liturgy each Sunday.

The graduating kindergarten class, taught by Mary Kuruzian, participated in the preschool choir, consisting of the nursery, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes, recited poems in Armenian and finally received their diplomas graduating to first grade.

The students performed numerous Armenian dances, choreographed by dance teacher, Simone Shenloogian. The various dances displayed an array of styles from the playful "Play Dance" to the rhythmic style of the "Sardarabad" dance. The dances were also an opportunity to view the school's new costumes

highlight in Armenian history and culture. In addition, students gave a farewell speech, in both Armenian and English, promising to keep the school's message alive. They each promised to support their school and their church. In fact, this year eight members of last year's graduating class returned to help as teacher's assistants.

Following the distribution of seventh-grade diplomas and awards to those students who excelled in reading, writing and history, the entire student body gathered once again on the school's stage to sing Armenian songs. The day's events ended with prayer and the graduates, family and friends were invited for refreshments hosted by the School.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian-American Community Gathers to Celebrate 125 years in Pasadena

PASADENA – Hundreds of members of Pasadena's Armenian community celebrated the 125th year of the Armenian settlement in the City of Roses in July through live music, multicultural dances, arts and crafts, raffles and other family-friendly activities at Victory Park, Pasadena Now reports.

The event paid tribute to the Pashgian brothers who are considered by many to be the first Armenians to settle in Pasadena in 1889. One of the brothers, M.S. Pashgian, was the Tournament of Roses grand marshal in 1915.

"We're proud to be Pasadenans," said Chris Chahinian, chair of Armenian Community Coalition-Pasadena, the event's organizer. "Our culture is rich and we have lots of things

to share with our community."

Pasadena Mayor Bill Bogaard congratulated the Armenian community, saying, "This festival demonstrates first of all, how deep the roots are for the Armenian community, and for all that it represents in this country and in its own country of Armenia.

"It also demonstrates the diversity and the optimism of this great city," Bogaard continued. "We welcome and celebrate different cultures and learn from one another. That makes Pasadena a more enjoyable and a more stimulating, and a more, let me say, intelligent city than it would otherwise be if there weren't the diversity that we have and the opportunity to learn from one another."

Pasadena Police Chief Phillip Sanchez also

congratulated the community, saying, "We have many things to celebrate in Pasadena and one of our rich traditions is this seventh annual festival to celebrate Armenian, the great culture of Armenia."

"I'm proud to announce that in the great history of the Pasadena Police Department, about six months ago, we hired our first Armenian woman," he added.

"We have a great city and a great police department," Sanchez continued, "and many of the lessons learned come from our Armenian brothers and sisters. The influence you have in Pasadena is extraordinary, in medicine, engineering, and entrepreneurship."

The celebration became especially significant this year with the announcement of the

first Armenian float set to join the Rose Parade on January 1, 2015.

"We're also going to display at the event the first Armenian float," Chahinian said. "That's a historic event that's happening on January 1. We're so proud of the Armenian community and the Tournament of Roses."

About 20,000 Armenians currently live in Pasadena, Chahinian said. The 2000 census states that the highest concentration of Americans of Armenian descent is in the Greater Los Angeles area, where 166,498 people have identified themselves as Armenian.

The event was cosponsored by the Pasadena Library, Congresswoman Judy Chu and the City of Pasadena, Pasadena Now, and others.

Schiff, Sherman Condemn Azerbaijan Aggression against Nagorno-Karabagh Republic

WASHINGTON – Representatives Adam Schiff (D-CA) and Brad Sherman (D-CA) commented on the latest Azerbaijani aggression against the people of Nagorno-Karabagh last week, condemning the aggression. (The comments were made before a meeting took place in Sochi, Russia, between the Armenian and Azeri presidents.)

Schiff said, "For two decades, the people of Nagorno-Karabagh have lived with constant threats and sniper fire from Azerbaijan, which

seeks to reassert control over the overwhelmingly Armenian population of the region. Last week, Azeri forces again attacked across the Line of Contact, resulting in casualties on both sides. This latest resort to violence must be condemned in the strongest terms, and America should call upon the Azeri government to withdraw its forces and renounce the use of snipers, especially against civilians, and all American military assistance should be suspended until Azerbaijan does so.

"Armenian President Serge Sargisyan and Azeri President Ilham Aliyev plan to meet starting tomorrow, but if their talks are to have any chance of bearing fruit, President Aliyev is going to adopt a sharply different tone from his remarks of late, when he asserted that Azerbaijan had the means to destroy 'any facility in Nagorno-Karabagh' and again trumpeted his country's military prowess.

"Since breaking free of a regime that encouraged violence and pogroms against its Armenian Christian citizens, the people of Nagorno-Karabagh have sought to build democracy and a market economy at home. Baku has responded with an oil-boom funded military build-up and a campaign of bellicose rhetoric and has so imbued its citizens with blood lust against Armenians, that an Azeri army captain who beheaded a sleeping Armenian colleague during a NATO Partnership for Peace exercise was treated as a hero and promoted to major after his transfer from a Hungarian prison in

2012. Now is the time for the Minsk Group to assert itself in this long-running and increasingly dangerous dispute. The people of Nagorno-Karabagh have the right to determine their own future, free from Azeri threats and violence, and they also have the right to go about their lives without fear of being shot in the back by a sniper."

Sherman noted: "I am deeply saddened by the recent reports of escalated violence on the Nagorno-Karabagh and Armenia border and the deaths of several Armenian and Azeri soldiers. I am taken aback by Azerbaijan's attacks on Red Cross staff in a border village in Armenia and Baku's decision to use sniper rifles in this conflict after several years of respecting the decision by both sides to refrain from doing so. It is my sincere hope that Azerbaijan will abstain from further sniper attacks and instead engage in meaningful resolution talks with Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh."



Rep. Adam Schiff, left, and Rep. Brad Sherman

Vegas Marquee Hotel Once Owned by Kerkorian Renamed

LAS VEGAS (AP) – The storied former Las Vegas Hilton (LVH), famous for staging Liberace and more than 800 sold-out Elvis Presley concerts in the 1960s and 1970s, has a new name and owner.

Florida-based time share company Westgate Resorts announced it purchased the LVH hotel from Goldman Sachs and Gramercy Capital and would rename it Westgate Las Vegas Resort Casino. Some of the nearly 3,000 rooms and suites will be converted to time share villas, while others will remain open to regular hotel guests.

"We will be providing the best of both worlds on our resort property," said new owner David Siegel. "We are very excited to be taking this important part of Vegas history and reinventing it for the next generation of Las Vegas visitors."

With 1,500 rooms, the property was the largest hotel in the world when billionaire investor Kirk Kerkorian opened it as The International Hotel in 1969. Barbra Streisand performed an inaugural series of concerts there before Elvis Presley began a 58-show series that broke Las Vegas attendance records.

He later went on to set up his own penthouse in the hotel and generated millions in ticket sales in the years before his 1977 death.

The hotel was the site of the famous 1978 fight in which Leon Spinks defeated



Kirk Kerkorian

Muhammad Ali for the world heavyweight championship. It was also the site of an arson that killed eight people in 1981, just 90 days after a fire at the nearby MGM Grand casino that killed 85 people.

The hotel was renamed the Las Vegas Hilton in 1971 and retained the name for 40 years before its licensing agreement with the Hilton hotel chain expired. It was christened the Las Vegas Hotel Casino, or LVH, in 2012.

ARMENIA
TREEPROJECT
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Vahag and Lusine Baghdasaryan and little Carlos
Aghavnavank Village, Tavush Region

PLANT
HOPE
WITH AS LITTLE AS
\$20

THE BAGHDASARYANS moved to Aghavnavank in 1988 from Dagestan, Russia, and have been planting seedlings with Armenia Tree Project (ATP) since 2011. With six members in the family, grandfather Karlen notes that this backyard nursery program has been crucial in helping to pay off debt, and keep the two small grandchildren Carlos and Hasmik fed. This ATP micro-enterprise initiative provides 10 Aghavnavank families a steady source of income and is one of many programs we conduct in Armenia to provide jobs and environmental assistance.

SINCE 1994, we have planted and restored more than 4.5 million trees and created hundreds of jobs for Armenians in seasonal tree-related programs and backyard nursery programs.

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Arts & Living

Ultra-Nationalists Greet First Turkish Film on Armenian Genocide Angrily

By Orhan Kemal Cengiz,
Translator Sibel Utku Bila

ISTANBUL (Al-Monitor) – German-Turkish director Fatih Akin and the bilingual Turkish-Armenian weekly *Agos* have been receiving death threats from nationalist Turks since *Agos* interviewed the director about his new film last month. The content of the messages, the outpouring of support for the threateners and the authorities' inaction come as a grim illustration of the current atmosphere in Turkey. The death threats are an omen for the coming year, the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Akin – the director of films such as “Head-On,” “Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul” and “Soul Kitchen” – gave a long interview to *Agos* on July 30 about “The Cut,” his new film that focuses on the Armenian Genocide.

Akin said he considered making a film about the life of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, the former *Agos* editor who was assassinated in 2007, but none of the Turkish actors he approached would take the role.

Akin then began to work on a new project, the story of a Turkish-Armenian who embarks on a worldwide search for his daughters after surviving the 1915 massacres. Akin wrote the



Director Fatih Akin

script in German, but later decided to shoot the film in English. He sought help from Mardik Martin, an American screenwriter with Iraqi and Armenian roots who has contributed to the scripts of Martin Scorsese's films. According to Akin, Martin not only translated but modified and “intensified” the script.

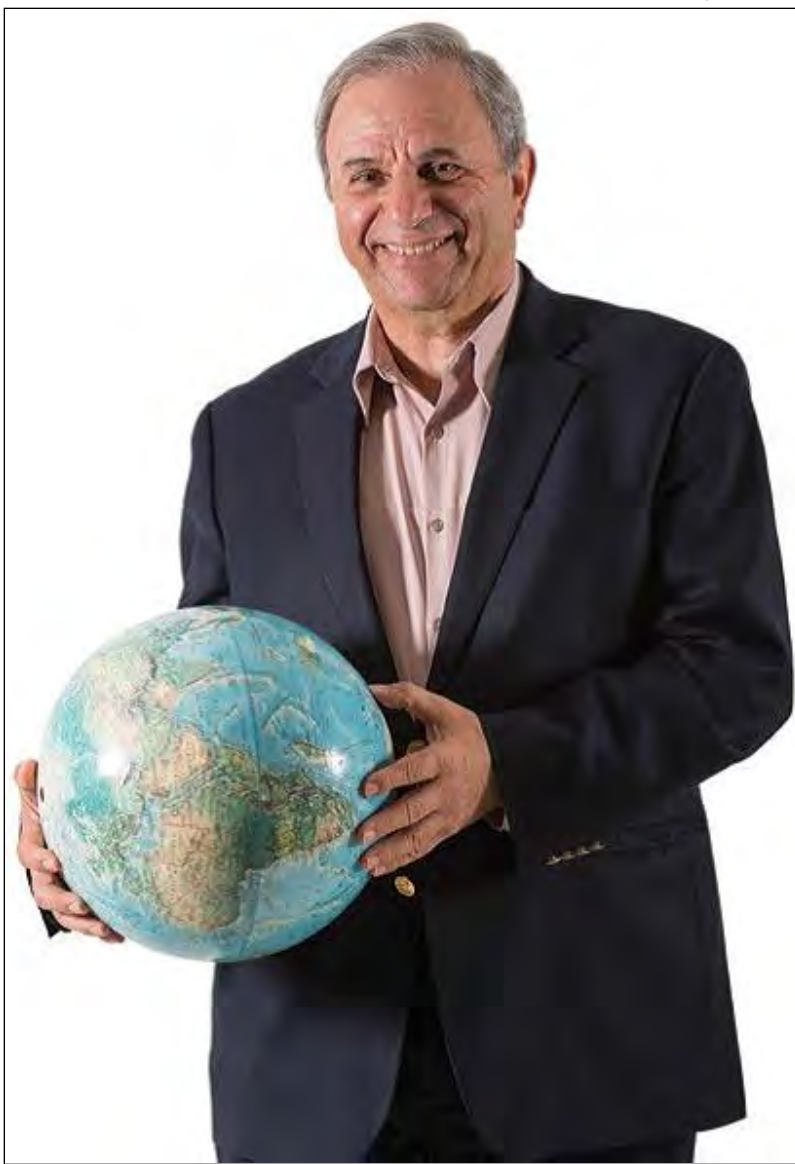
The film, starring French actor of Algerian origin Tahar Rahim and Turkish actor Bartu Kucukcaglayan, was shot in Jordan, Cuba, Canada, Malta and Germany. It is scheduled to premiere at the upcoming Venice Film Festival, and only a trailer is currently available.

Akin told *Agos* he did not consider “The Cut” a film about the Armenian Genocide but rather an adventure movie. He said he had no political motives in making the film and hoped it would “receive due respect in Turkey and be shown in large, modern theaters.”

Akin was aware his film would not be treated as just another movie in Turkey. “The Cut,” after all, is the first film by a Turkish director that addresses the events of 1915. The director, however, remained optimistic that the film's showing in Turkey would be trouble-free. “I'm confident that the Turkish people, to whom I belong, are ready for this film,” he told *Agos*.

Yet as soon as the interview was published, a tweet by the ultra-nationalist Pan-Turkist Turanist Association suggested that Akin might have been overly optimistic.

The message read, “Efforts are underway, under the leadership of *Agos* newspaper, for the screening of Fatih Akin's film about the so-called Armenian Genocide, ‘The Cut,’ in Turkey. see AKIN, page 13



Prof. Vahram Shemmasian lectures all over the globe.

Armenian Studies at California State University Northridge

NORTHRIDGE, Calif. – The largest Armenian student body in a four-year university outside of the Republic of Armenia in the West studies at California State University at Northridge (CSUN). CSUN is situated in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley and for more than 30 years, has had an Armenian Studies program.

Founded by Hermine Mahseredjian, it now is run by Dr. Vahram L. Shemmasian and presents these students, as well as non-Armenians, with the opportunity of studying the Armenian language and learning more about Armenian culture.

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

Mahseredjian explains that the program began with one class in 1983. Several students, including Mahseredjian's daughter, met in the family's home and wanted to improve their knowledge about Armenian culture and language. They decided to form an Armenian students' association, and Mahseredjian offered to teach them for free. This turned into a five-year commitment, with Mahseredjian continuing to volunteer her services.

This first course, established without any outside organizational assistance, became the nucleus of the Armenian Studies program, founded in 1988. Mahseredjian established 17 different classes for this program. At present there are 14 due to the elimination of independent study by the university. An Armenian minor was established in 1991. The Alex Manoogian Cultural Fund was a major financial supporter once the program got underway. An agreement was reached between CSUN and Yerevan State University for a cultural immersion program.

Mahseredjian, a licensed marriage and family psychotherapist, retired from the CSUN program in 2007. She now is co-chairperson of the governing board of the Ararat Charter School in Van Nuys, and a proponent of the expansion of the charter school movement for Armenians.

Associate Professor Shemmasian took over as director of the program in 2006. He received his doctorate in Armenian history from the University of California, Los Angeles, with a historical and ethnographical study on the Armenian villagers of Musa Dagh. Previously, at various times, he worked as the principal of three Armenian day schools in the Los Angeles area. He has published several articles on the state of Armenian Genocide survivors after World War I.

Shemmasian explained that Armenians today form approximately 10 percent of the CSUN student body. This means that out of roughly 35,000 students, as many as 3,500 are Armenians at any one time. While Glendale Community College has more Armenian students, it is not a four-year institution like CSUN. Every year four to six hundred Armenians graduate from CSUN. It takes most more than four years

see NORTHRIDGE, page 12

Church Organist Celebrates 66 Years

By Tom Vartabedian

HAVERHILL, Mass. – The year is 1948. The 33-RPM record made its debut to the vinyl industry. The game of Scrabble took America by storm while Judy Garland was strolling along in her “Easter Parade.”

A young 14-year-old choirgirl volunteered to play the organ in her church – and never stopped. Instead, she has been pulling all stops over the past 66 years.

You'll find her every other Sunday accompanying the Mass at Armenian Church at Hye Pointe, formerly known as St. Gregory the Illuminator Church, 110 Main St., alternating with another named Virginia Tavitian, her sister-in-law, who has played there for 45 years.

Furthermore, she's playing on what's called “a miracle organ” donated by a benefactor after the church's regular pipe organ was ruined by a storm. The instrument is a product of the Berj Jamkochian Organ Fund, which has supplied some 15 organs to Yerevan, Armenia's capital city.

Jamkochian was the principal organist for the Boston Pops and Boston Symphony until his death and started the fund to create a better musical society for his ancestral homeland.

But back to Sylvia Tavitian. On a hot summer's day, with no air-conditioning in the sanctuary, one can find this organist pounding the keyboard.

At one time, she was joined on the altar by her late husband, Paul, a choir chairman, and two sons who were sub-deacons. Now she has grandchildren who are active in the Armenian Church. Three sisters and a brother were also active members of the Apostolic faith.

“We grew up inside an ethnic home where church was priority,” she reflected. “Our parents made it mandatory. Being from the first nation that adopted Christianity as a state religion was Armenia's greatest contribution to society – and



Sylvia Tavitian

we lived up to it.”

It all started in 1948. Sylvia Tavitian was already singing four years in the junior choir at a Lowell Armenian church when an opportunity arose. A new electronic Hammond Organ had been acquired and needed a player.

“There were six of us who were taking piano lessons and two of us actually volunteered,” she recalled. “I remember the teacher telling me I would never amount to being an organist.”

Sylvia went forth and got a part-time job that paid 50 cents an hour for organ lessons,

see ORGANIST, page 13



ARTS & LIVING

Old State House and Unicorn – an Unfolding Story

By Donald J. Tellalian

BOSTON – The restoration process of an historic landmark so often yields surprising discoveries. Old newspapers and handwritten notes buried in walls, names and initials of workmen carved into timbers are some of the delights of discovery. This August, the anticipated restoration of the copper Lion and Unicorn, iconic figures gracing the top of the East Façade of Boston's Old State House, may prompt such discoveries.

The Old State House, at the head of State Street, has offered a veritable odyssey of reincarnation. The building dates from 1713. Yet, as with so many long-lasting structures, over the past 300 years it has lent itself to changes in use and appearance: site of colonial government, then town hall, then state house, then physical reconfigurations to house commercial offices and retail establishments.

Since 2006, restoration/rehabilitation and retrofit efforts, commissioned by The Bostonian Society, have been ongoing. This year a key element of these initiatives will be the removal, inspection and restoration of the copper Lion and Unicorn. The originals, in polychrome wood, symbols of British rule, were removed and burned during the American Revolution. In 1882, when the building was restored to its “colonial appearance,” replacements were carved and installed. Again during a period of restoration/renovation, those two rotting wood figures were removed and a Boston coppersmith, Movses H. Gulesian, was commissioned in 1900 by the state to replace the wooden Lion and Unicorn with copper ones.

Gulesian himself has an intriguing history. Motivated by an almost utopian vision of America and fearful of the repression and dangers of late 19th-century Ottoman Turkey, he left his home and family in Marash at age 17 for a long and dangerous passage by way of Smyrna and Palermo, arriving in New York City in May 1883. He survived with a few Turkish coins in his pocket and slept on a park bench. After many days, he managed to connect with a fellow countryman who took him in to wind bobbins in a carpet shop. After seven months, somewhat overwhelmed by the pace of New York City, but with a growing proficiency with his new language and a sense



The Old Massachusetts State House

of security in his newfound country, he left seeking continuation of his apprenticeship with copper and sheet ironwork in Worcester.

Ultimately the penniless, yet hardworking immigrant would seek citizenship, thrive and achieve fortune in late 19th-century Boston.

While personal security, substantial fortune and entrepreneurial opportunities were realized in Gulesian's adopted country, his commitment to good works and philanthropy was not forgotten. He not only sponsored the immigration of his extended family, but sponsored, during the late 1890s, scores of refugees from Ottoman Turkey, giving many employment and transitional lodging in his Waltham factory building. His efforts in this regard encouraged a longstanding relationship with Mrs. Samuel Barrows, Clara Barton, Frances E. Willard, William Lloyd Garrison and aid organizations, including the United Friends of Armenia, the Red Cross and the World Christian Temperance Union.

To most who have heard of Movses Gulesian, he is remem-

bered as the one who saved Old Ironsides. In December 1908, he had read in the daily paper that Charles J. Bonaparte, US Secretary of the Navy, considered the deteriorating ship one that was no longer needed and might possibly be towed out of Boston Harbor, used in target practice, ultimately to be scrapped.

Gulesian, grateful for the opportunities available in his adopted country, had become a passionate student of US history. To him, Old Ironsides was an icon, launched in Boston in 1797, built with the timbers of a Boston shipwright, gun carriages built in South Boston, sails made in Boston and copper bolts and spikes made by none other than Paul Revere.

His offer of \$10,000, via telegram to Bonaparte, drew a prompt response that the US Navy had no authority to sell the ship, requiring Congressional action. The telegram was made public by the Navy Department through the Associated Press and thus an article in the *Boston Evening Transcript*. With that publicity, citizen and government petitions forced Congress to act – Old Ironsides would be saved.

Publicity and controversy were also to emerge regarding the authorized copper fabrication of the Lion and Unicorn. The *Pilot*, on June 28, 1902, referenced them as “Relics of Royalty,” reminding its readers that 125 years ago, in celebration of the National Birthday, the patriotic citizens of Boston tore down those reminders of British rule, “burning them, along with every sign that belonged to a Tory.” Yet in 1882, the Common Council of Boston had those “emblems of royalty” replaced. At “the dawn of another Fourth of July in Rebel Town,” the *Pilot* argued for their permanent removal.

In contrast, the *Boston Transcript* viewed the Lion and Unicorn as merely “orphaned emblems of British Sovereignty.” The *Transcript's* position was that the replacement of the Lion and Unicorn was appropriate to the “completion of the old building as an antiquity.” Despite this degree of opinion and passion concerning another “replacement” with Gulesian's new copper Lion and Unicorn, they were ultimately installed.

As footnote, the Superintendent of Public Buildings informed the Common Council as to what articles were deposited in a box placed inside the head of the Lion. So, we look forward not only to the restoration of the Lion and the Unicorn, but, as with that process of historic restoration often yielding surprising discoveries, to a search for that Box!

(This article originally appeared in On King Street, The Official Blog of the Bostonian Society in July 2014. Donald J. Tellalian, AIA, founding Principal of Tellalian Associates Architects & Planners, LLC, has led the preservation projects at the Old State House with the Bostonian Society since 2005.)



Armenian Studies at California State University Northridge

NORTHRIDGE, from page 11

to graduate because many have to work simultaneously to support themselves, and in addition there are frequently shortages or waiting lists for courses necessary for various requirements. CSUN's students are very good, though the university is not as selective as the University of California system (e.g. UC Berkeley or UCLA).

The Armenian program is part of CSUN's Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures, and its core is Armenian language and culture courses. Around 80 to 85 percent of the enrolled students in these classes are of Armenian background. Those who are non-Armenian often are motivated by an Armenian friend or partner/spouse. Some are interested in learning an “exotic” language.

Roughly half of the Armenian students speak Western Armenian, and half Eastern, but their knowledge of the language is at varying levels. The language classes are all in Western Armenian but special effort is made to accommodate Eastern Armenian speakers.

Shemmasian attempts in these courses to offer in addition to the official topics as much general information as possible about Armenian culture and history. As he puts it, “this may be the only time in their lives that these students take a formal course on an Armenian topic, and I want to make sure that they learn at least the basics about their culture. I also try to encourage them to choose an Armenian-related hobby that they can pursue for the rest of their lives.”

Roughly 95 percent of the Armenian students have not attended Armenian school but are public school graduates who primarily learned about Armenians through family life, so they too often do not have much knowledge of Armenian Studies.



A potluck party with Armenian food at the end of the spring 2014 semester for the course Changing Roles of Armenian Women.

Aside from language and literature courses, there is a course on modern Armenian issues which covers many aspects of life and politics in Soviet and contemporary Armenia and the diaspora. A course on the changing roles of Armenian women is popular.

There is a course on the Armenian-American child which satisfies a California teaching credential requirement. It covers the rearing of children in Armenia, the Ottoman Empire, Russia and other places where Armenians have lived, as well as migration to the US. It examines the worldview and lifestyle of Armenian immigrants, and how they attempt to cope with life in the US, whether they are in private or public schools. Integration, bilingualism, assimilation, Saturday and Sunday schools, and many other issues pertaining to education are treated.

The program offers an Armenian minor, and six years ago the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures introduced a new major, Languages and Cultures. The latter offers Japanese, Italian, French or Armenian as

options for study. The number of students enrolled in an Armenian minor or major is not that great because students are concerned that they might have difficulties finding suitable employment after graduation. The Liberal Arts major for teachers also has an Armenian concentration, requiring the completion of a certain number of courses.

Each class of the Armenian Program usually has 30 to 35 students, and Shemmasian teaches four classes per semester, making for eight in the academic year. In addition to Shemmasian, Dr. Hasmig Baran has taught one course per semester beginning in the fall 2013.

Shemmasian points out that his classrooms are always full. Demand is great for more courses, or sections of courses. Often he must put students on waiting lists because there are not enough spaces in a course.

CSUN could be a good feeder for Armenian Studies graduate programs but there is no encouragement for these students to pursue these fields. Future teachers, translators, lectur-

ers or clergymen also could benefit from CSUN's Armenian classes. The Armenian community does not seem to be sufficiently encouraging the development of a cadre of professionally trained leaders by hiring people with such backgrounds, or by funding programs to prepare more such leaders. If money could be raised for an endowed professorship at CSUN, for example, the Armenian Studies program could be expanded.

There are several forms of outreach to the Armenian community and to non-Armenians at CSUN which are connected to the program. The Alumni and Friends of the Armenian Studies Program (AFASP) association organizes a few functions a year like banquets to raise funds and expose the Armenian community to the program. The program head is advisor to the CSUN Armenian Students Association, which several times has been named the best CSUN student association. There is also an Armenian sorority and fraternity at CSUN. These student groups have their own activities, manning booths or tables at certain events or festivals on Armenian culture. Armenian Culture Day is held once a year and of course there are Armenian Genocide events on April 24.

Shemmasian is active as a lecturer in the community, particularly on Musa Dagh. He also organizes many conferences. This fall, there will be a workshop at CSUN on the revitalization of Armenian language in the diaspora. On October 18, CSUN, together with the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, will have a conference on Armenian Art and Culture in the Ottoman Empire before 1915, with eight lectures on topics concerning jewelry, photography, architecture, music and theater, at the museum's facility. From January 31 to February 1, 2015, Shemmasian is organizing a conference at CSUN with panels on language as a victim of genocide, the Kurds and the Armenian Genocide, Islamized Armenians, international law and the pursuit of justice and rights, and teaching the Armenian Genocide at various levels.

For further information, email <vahram.shemmasian@csun.edu>.



ARTS & LIVING

Church Organist Celebrates 66 Years

ORGANIST, from page 7

determined to prove herself capable. After marrying her husband Paul, they moved to Plaistow, NH, and made St. Gregory the Illuminator their church over the past 53 years.

The two were honored with the prestigious St. Vartan Award before his death by the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America for their dedicated service to the community.

"I swell with pride and tears when I think about my family being together in the service of God and the church," she admits. "It was our responsibility instilled by our parents and we passed that tradition onto our kids and now the grandchildren. It's a cycle that has kept our wonderful heritage alive."

Sylvia has never considered herself a professional. While organists in other churches get paid, she donates her time.

In all, she has been at the church long enough to see eight different pastors lead it, through the present, Rev. Vart Gyozealian, who's delighted to have an organ duo at his disposal. When Sylvia went to visit her 93-year-old sister in Florida recently, she handed the pedals over to her sidekick Virginia.

Other veterans like Sue Kezerian and Alice Kasparian also have 50 years service with the choir.

"I'm not any different than people like that," Sylvia points out. "I'll play for as long as I'm able, giving what I can of a God-given talent. The ideal situation would be to pass it on to a younger member."

At a time when most people her age are retired, Sylvia still works part time as a billing coordinator at Associates in Orthopedics in Haverhill where she started in 1974.

Another passion has been the Daughters of Vartan, where she has belonged since 1971, twice serving as a member of the Grand Council.

Just how much longer she'll play the organ, she cannot say. But each day she's at the console, it's another day in paradise.

She looks to the icons in her church and therein lays the answer. "God only knows."

'The Cut' Dares to Explore Turkish History

AKIN, from page 11

"The Cut" is the first leg of a plot to make Turkey acknowledge the Armenian genocide lies ahead of 2015 and we ... will not allow it to be screened in Turkey. We are now openly threatening the *Agos* newspaper, Armenian fascists and the self-styled intellectuals. That film is not going to be shown in a single theater in Turkey. We are following the developments with our white berets on and our Azeri-flagged glider. Let's see if you can!"

The "white beret" metaphor carries a sinister message. Ogun Samast, Dink's suspected assassin, wore a white beret when he shot Dink in the neck outside the *Agos* office in downtown Istanbul on January 19, 2007. The white beret has since become a symbol displayed frequently at anti-Armenian racist and nationalist demonstrations.

The Turanist Association's threat received a series of supportive messages by other ultra-nationalist groups on social media.

The ensuing events demonstrated that the Turkish authorities haven't learned their lesson from Dink's murder, which was preceded by similar threats. Under the Turkish penal code, those messages constitute a criminal offense on several grounds, from containing threats to spreading hate speech. The prosecution of these offenses does not require a complaint by injured parties. The law automatically entitles prosecutors to launch probes. Sadly, hate speech against minorities fails to attract prosecutors' attention.

In remarks to *Al-Monitor*, *Agos* editor-in-chief Robert Koptas said the publication has become used to receiving threats, and described the authorities' inaction as the norm. "For us, this is not an extraordinary situation. And the fact that it is not extraordinary is in itself an indication of what an atmosphere we live in," he said.

"We had to file a complaint this time again,

CALENDAR

CALIFORNIA

AUGUST 16 — The Armenian National Committee of America Professional Network (ANC-PN) and the Armenian Engineers & Scientists of America (AESAs) joint cocktail networking event at the exclusive CBS Studios Backlot "New York Street" at 7:00 p.m., Studio City. The event will feature an open bar for all guests, appetizers, and music by DJ Arak. Cocktail attire is recommended. Donation is \$45 through August 8 and will increase thereafter. Purchase tickets by August 13, 2014 at the latest. Tickets are limited due to capacity, so make sure to buy yours early via the link below: https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=BP5YAPFE7JX8S

CONNECTICUT

AUGUST 17 — Armenian Festival hosted by the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection (rain or shine), on the church grounds at 1910 Stanley St, New Britain. Noon to 6 p.m. FREE admission. Shish kebab, Pilaf, Khema, Losh Kebab Burgers, Hot Dogs, beverages and other delicacies and pastries. Live music with the Harry Bedrossian Ensemble featuring Harry (oud/vocals), Mike Kassabian (clarinet), George Righellis (guitar) and Gary Hovhannessian (dumbeg). For more details, call Gary 860-690-5959.

MASSACHUSETTS

AUGUST 24 — Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Picnic to be held at American Legion Farm, 1314 Main St., Haverhill MA (take Rte. 495 to Exit 51 B onto Rte. 125 N), noon to 5 p.m. Music by the Jason Naroian Ensemble. Menu includes Shish, Losh, & Chicken Kebab Dinners, Kheyma, Pastries, & Beverages. Raffles for Cash prizes & Gift Certificates. Air Conditioned Hall. Bring your lawn chairs. For more info visit www.hyeptointechurch.org or call (978) 372-9227

SEPTEMBER 7 — Picnic Festival, sponsored by St. Gregory Armenian Church of Merrimack Valley, 158 Main St., North Andover, featuring musicians Leon Janikian, Jason Naroian, Johnny Berberian and John Arzigian; appearance by Siroun Dance Ensemble of Central Mass.; 12:30-5:30 p.m., church grounds; shish, losh & chicken kebab dinners, veggie plates, Armenian pastries; family games and activities.

SEPTEMBER 12 — COMEDY NIGHT - An invitation to attend and enjoy a fantastic night of fun, laughter, food, music and dancing! Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston presents the world-renowned Armenian comedian/pianist, Kev Orkian, direct from the UK and for the first time in Boston. Finalist in "Britain's Got Talent" and having performed for Britain's royal family, he is now ready to wow his audience in Boston. Friday, at 8 p.m. at St. James Cultural Center, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. Please reserve your tickets now and save. \$40 if reserved by 9/1; otherwise, \$45. Call 617-852-1816 or 508-397-7977 ASAP. First come, first served. Tables of 10 recommended. For more details and flyer, visit www.sayatnova.com.

SEPTEMBER 14 — Trinity Family Festival, 12-5 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Delicious Armenian food; Armenian music by the Greg Krikorian Ensemble featuring Greg Krikorian, oud & vocals, Leon Janikian, clarinet, George Righellis, guitar & vocals, Michael Sabounjian, keyboard & vocals, Charlie Dermenjian, dumbeg and Steve Surabian, tambourine; fun games and activities for children; Blessing of Madagh at 4 pm, raffle drawing and more. For further information, contact the church office, 617.354.0632 or email office@htaac.org.

SEPTEMBER 21 — Sunday Afternoon at the Park for Families & Friends! 2-4 p.m. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston between Faneuil Hall Marketplace and Christopher Columbus Park. Enjoy the music of Mal Barsamian, oud; Leo Janikian, clarinet; Kenny Kalajian, guitar and Jay Baronian, dumbeg. Game for the Kids at 2:30pm. Bob Lobel, Emcee. www.ArmenianHeritagePark.org



It is family time on Sunday, September 21 at the Armenian Heritage Park in Boston's Greenway, between Faneuil Hall and Christopher Columbus Park. From 2 to 4 p.m., participants can enjoy the music of Mal Barsamian and Leo Janikian, Kenny Kalajian and Jay Baronian, with games for kids at 2.30 p.m. Bob Lobel will emcee.

SEPTEMBER 26, 27 — Armenians and Progressive Politics Conference returns to Boston. Keynote speaker will be Noam Chomsky. Details to follow.

OCTOBER 4 — YerazArt, a group committed to young musicians from Armenia, will hold a dinner and benefit concert. Belmont. Venue, time and ticket prices to be announced soon.

OCTOBER 11 — Armenian Friends of America presents Hye Kef 5, 7:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m., Michael's Function Hall, 12 Alpha St., Haverhill; tickets, \$50, students 21 & under, \$40, proceeds to benefit Armenian churches of Merrimack Valley; individually served mezza platters and pastries; musicians, Mal Barsamian (clarinet), John Berberian (oud), Bob Raphaelian (violin), Bruce Jigarjian (guitar), Jason Naroian (dumbag & vocals); tickets, call either John Arzigian, 603-560-3826; Lucy Sirmaian, 978-683-9121; Peter Gulezian, 978-375-1616, or Sandy Boroyan, 978-251-8687. No tickets sold at the door.

OCTOBER 23 — Najarian Lecture on Human Rights at Faneuil Hall, Boston. 7:30 p.m. An endowed public program of Armenian Heritage Foundation, sponsor of Armenian Heritage Park on Greenway. Details forthcoming. www.ArmenianHeritagPark.org

NOVEMBER 8 — Armenia Tree Project's 20th Anniversary Celebration. Reception and dinner at the Grand Atrium of the John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse overlooking the Boston Harbor. Reserve the date, additional details to follow. For information about ATP's programs, visit www.ArmeniaTree.org

NOVEMBER 15 — The 39th Annual Luncheon/Auction of the Armenian Women's Welfare Association will be held at the Burlington Marriott Hotel. Funds raised will support programs at the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Plain, Mass and Hanganak NGO Health Clinic in Stepanakert, Karabagh, for senior women in need. For more information, call Karen Hovsepian at 617-898-8619.

though the police and the judiciary were supposed to have already taken action. We are not asking for any special protection, but we are a publication editor-in-chief of which was murdered outside his own office. Thus, the threats we receive are supposed to have an extra meaning for the police and prosecutors," Koptas said. He added that no government official has called him about the threats or made any public statement on the issue.

The threats indicate that certain tensions and troubles are in store for Turkey in 2015, the

centenary of the Armenian Genocide. The debate on the Armenian Genocide in Turkey in recent years has become as free as never before. Commemoration events are now held across Turkey on April 24, the genocide remembrance day. Yet the latest incident suggests that ultra-nationalist groups are in a state of alert as the anniversary draws near.

The threats directed at Akin's film demonstrate that some quarters in Turkey have lost none of their intolerance and, emboldened by the judiciary's failure to act, feel free to target

anyone they like. It seems no lessons have been learned from the past.

(Orhan Kemal Cengiz is a human rights lawyer, columnist and former president of the Human Rights Agenda Association, a Turkish NGO that works on human rights issues ranging from the prevention of torture to the rights of the mentally disabled. Since 2002, Cengiz has been the lawyer for the Alliance of Turkish Protestant Churches)



COMMENTARY

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COMMENTARY

Karabagh Solution Stymied by New Cold War

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev has not been conducting himself as the head of a country which was beaten back after initiating an aggressive war against Armenia and Karabagh, our historic Artsakh. Instead, he is threatening Armenians with a new war counting on the expansion of his country's military. Some of his comments are outrageously threatening and bordering on the declaration of war.

Recently visiting a military unit near Agdam, Aliyev offered some bellicose remarks to his soldiers, hoping that his threats would be heard across the border in Armenia and spread terror among the population.

He specifically stated, "Today, the fascist leadership, the military junta of Armenia, is leading the country into an abyss. They have occupied our lands, but at the same time, they have occupied the whole of Armenia. The Armenian people should get rid of the criminal and corrupt leadership. Otherwise, huge disasters are in store for Armenia. If the Armenian fascist state does not give up its dirty deeds, the very existence of the Armenian state can be called into question."

This very much sounds as if Aliyev has borrowed it from the opposition leaders' rhetoric in Armenia or from the mantra of its diasporan surrogates.

When the enemy is at the gate, any similar statement by any Armenian is not patriotic, to say the least.

But Aliyev also has his own rhetoric and does not owe authorship to any one else as he states: "Azerbaijan has been producing modern weaponry and equipment. At the same time, the equipment, machinery, weapons and ammunitions we purchase from foreign sources also meet the highest standards. The most advanced air defense installations have been acquired. Our army has the most powerful artillery. High-precision missile systems with great destructive power, combat and transport helicopters, combat aircraft, armored vehicles, tanks – all of those are factors that form the potential of the Azerbaijani army today. Today, the Azerbaijani army is capable of destroying any object in Nagorno-Karabagh." Former Azeri president, Ebulfez Elçibey, made similar statement during the Karabagh war. That is why by the time of the ceasefire, most of the Azeri military hardware was in the hands of the Armenian forces.

Not only that, Aliyev threatens to occupy "the Erivan Khanate," including Zangezur, and eventually hoist the Azeri flag over "all the occupied territory, including Shusha and Khankhendi [Stepanakert]."

In an article in Outlook.com, Mark Dietzen, who is criticizing US Ambassador James Warlick's unilateral plan to resolve the Karabagh conflict, also qualifies Aliyev's statements in the following manner: "This is not the behavior of a losing side seeking reconciliation, but a losing side seeking revenge."

Indeed, Azerbaijan's arms build-up has been alarming in recent years. Following its defeat at the hands of the Armenian forces, Azerbaijan launched an arms race to destroy Armenia's economy. Funded by its oil wealth, Azerbaijan has been on a military spending spree, allocating \$3.44 billion for defense in 2013. Its defense budget has skyrocketed by 493 percent since 2004, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Armenia has tried to follow suit, spending \$427 million on defense, a 115-percent increase from 2004, according to the same source. While Armenia's spending is in the millions, rather than in the billions like Azerbaijan, the country does not have the all-important oil spigot to flood its coffers with money.

Most of Azerbaijan's armaments are supplied by Israel and Russia. Even if Israel does not harbor any hostility against Armenia itself, its geopolitical interests compel it to have a foothold on the Iranian border, since the Azeri government also has a bone of contention with Tehran, over the so-called "Northern Azerbaijan" province in Iran.

The Russian Uralvagonzavod Concern just announced that it will send a new batch of military equipment to Baku at the order of Azerbaijan.

In view of Azerbaijan's declared hostility against Russia, one would be at a loss to explain, let alone justify, Vladimir Putin's policy of arming Azerbaijan. In a recent UN vote condemning Russia for taking over Crimea, Azerbaijan voted with the US against Russia. Azerbaijan has also cut an energy deal with British Petroleum worth \$45 billion to supply Europe with oil and gas, bypassing the Russian territory.

It is believed that Moscow still entertains the notion of enticing Azerbaijan to join its Customs' Union. It also has its own prospects for energy deals with Baku.

Just this past week, the Russian cabinet approved Armenia's accession to the Customs Union, though it is hard to see the cohabitation of two enemies in the Russian camp.

Many people are alarmed and have been questioning the causes of recent border flare-ups between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Every time a summit meeting is planned between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Baku govern-

ment orders intensified attacks, hoping to extract some concessions from Yerevan at the conference table. This time around, those clashes sounded like the beginning of an all-out war. The Azeris suffered significant losses and withdrew. There were fewer casualties on the Armenian side, but in a war situation, the statistics always remain questionable.

Armenia, in turn, raised its own war rhetoric. Reporting about the border situation to Armenia's cabinet, Minister of Defense Seyran Ohanian concluded his remarks with the following statement: "I believe that they have fallen victim to their own lies. For years, they have preached to their people that they have a powerful army, that they are constantly rearming, that they are invincible. In this context, I must say that the Turk remains a Turk and we will act towards them according to the same rules that they wish to use against us."

President Serge Sargsian's comments were equally harsh. When referring to Aliyev's bellicose tone, he said, "Armenia has ballistic missiles that have a range of 300 kilometers and can ruin any city. If they don't care about their own lives, if they are aiming at Yerevan, let them consider the consequences."

The escalation in tensions in the Caucasus cannot be viewed in isolation. Armenia and Azerbaijan are not alone in this game. The tensions in the Caucasus are the direct result of global power alignments. Although President Obama emphatically denied that instituting sanctions against Russia dance on the brink of a new Cold War, US actions in the world, supported by the European powers, are nothing less than the beginning of a new Cold war, with policies aimed at containing Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet empire, in a unipolar world, the US enjoyed the privilege of global hegemony and obviously does not wish to retreat from that position. Despite promises given to Mr. Gorbachev, however, the West has been expanding the NATO alliance to encircle Russia.

As if reckless aggressions against Iraq, Libya and Syria had been in full compliance of international law, Russia's annexation of Crimea has been treated by the US and its allies as the only violation of international law governing sovereign nations.

For 20 years, Russia, the US and France were cooperating within the framework of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), but the US suddenly broke ranks and declared a unilateral policy to resolve the Karabagh conflict. That policy was enunciated by Ambassador Warlick, who has represented the US on the body, and later repeated by the US Ambassador to Armenia John Heffern. The new policy dissected the Madrid Principles to give an edge to Azerbaijan in the ultimate solution, but above all, introduced the element of peacekeeping forces on the Karabagh border. It was not difficult for analysts to conclude that under the guise of peacekeeping, the US is seeking a foothold in the Caucasus on the Iranian border, a foothold which will also doubly serve to encircle Russia.

Armenia refused the offer of peacekeepers, even when its ally, Russia, intimated that it could send its own peacekeeping forces, because once Armenia cedes power to foreign forces, it surrenders its right to negotiate on its own.

The most frequently-asked question recently has been who can win the war if events lead to that state. It is very difficult to predict the outcome. The result will be determined by the alignment of forces. Will Turkey participate? Will Russia intervene? There is more of a tendency in Washington for interventionism, especially when there may be a prize at the end to introduce a new wedge in the sanitary cordon around Russia.

One thing is clear that Russia does not wish to lose Azerbaijan to the West nor to alienate Armenia, more than it has already. Therefore, the status quo is the best solution for Russia by default. And it looks like that has also been the outcome of the much-anticipated recent summit meeting in Sochi, where President Putin brought together Presidents Sargsian and Aliyev. We need to be reminded that there was a similar offer by the French president, Francois Hollande.

But Putin took the first opportunity to bring the parties together. Aliyev's pre-meeting maximalist stance that Armenia must return all occupied territories unconditionally was dampened. Instead, Aliyev played the UN card and accused Armenia of ignoring UN resolutions, after which Armenia's president asked which UN resolution was honored by Azerbaijan itself? In the end, no party gave in and apparently Putin's goal also was met. At the conclusion of the Sochi summit, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov summed up the conclusions: "The meeting was important. The presidents have confirmed their commitment to the principles outlined by the co-chairs of OSCE at the presidential level and those principles imply a necessity to seek a peaceful solution which respects the territorial integrity and the right of the people to self-determination."

By the way, the concept of "territorial integrity" means different things to different parties in the dispute.

This means we are back at square one. Tensions may subside for a while, waiting for another cycle of cross-border shooting.

Is the Karabagh conflict contained? Certainly not. It has merely been postponed to another round.



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Turkic Groups Fund Questionable Congressional Trips to Azerbaijan

The international media is replete these days with scandalous stories about European and American politicians being wined and dined in Azerbaijan and Turkey, for self-serving ulterior motives.

The latest such exposé, published by the *Houston Chronicle* on July 27, was titled: "Congress members' trips raise red flags." The article revealed that five Turkic non-profit groups spent \$274,459 for the lavish travel of 10 members of Congress and 35 staffers to Azerbaijan in May 2013. The funds were contributed by:

- Turquoise Council of Americans and Eurasians (Houston): \$101,680
- Turkish American Federation of the Midwest (Chicago): \$68,324
- Turkic American Alliance (Washington, DC): \$52,975
- Turkic American Federation of the Southeast (Atlanta): \$26,550
- Council of Turkic American Associations (New York): \$24,930

The 10 members of Congress travelling to Baku on all-expenses-paid trip were:

- Danny Davis (D-IL): \$24,084

- Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX): \$19,962
- Jim Bridenstine (R-OK): \$14,173
- Ted Poe (R-TX): \$13,431
- Steve Stockman (R-TX): \$13,431
- Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM): \$12,780
- Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX): \$12,034
- Leonard Lance (R-NJ): \$9,798
- Yvette Clark (D-NY): \$8,701
- Gregory Meeks (D-NY): \$6,431

The actual purpose of the congressional trip was to attend a conference sponsored in part by SOCAR (Azerbaijan's national oil company) which along with one of its partners, NIOC (Iran's national oil company), was embarking on a \$28-billion project to develop the Shah Deniz gas field. It was no coincidence that the junket was organized at a time when Congress was considering additional sanctions against Iran. The Azeris and their Iranian partners desperately needed an exemption from Congress to carry out their mega-project. Not surprisingly, less than two months after the congressional delegation's return from its extravagant trip, the House of Representatives went along and approved the sought after exemption!

The *Houston Chronicle* explained the speedy approval of this bill by a usually slow-moving Congress by the fact that "SOCAR, along with other Azeri government interests, has become one of Washington, D.C.'s big spenders in efforts to win American allies to get its petroleum products to markets worldwide.... Lobbyists, the Azeri government and energy companies all participated in the elaborate Baku gathering" at the plush Heydar Aliyev Center with Pres. Ilham Aliyev as keynote speaker. "At least four congressmen took along a spouse or a fiancé. Some flew first-class and extended their trips with stays in luxury hotels in Turkey. The congressional travel tabs alone totaled \$270,000."

Interestingly, the Turquoise Council of Americans and Eurasians, the main organizer of the visit, "did not dis-

close any corporate support or foreign government assistance for the Baku congressional trips," as required by Federal law, the *Chronicle* reported. The five Turkic non-profit organizations and 10 Members of Congress may have violated congressional ethics rules and federal law by not disclosing corporate donations for the trip, the *Chronicle* stated.

Records show that Meeks "did not disclose his Baku trip expenses until a year after the deadline," the *Chronicle* disclosed. Moreover, Stockman had received an additional \$5,000 in campaign contributions in three installments, during the same month as the trip, from Kemal Oksuz, president of the Turquoise Council, who leads two non-profits that share the same address in Houston. "Both groups were identified as sponsors or organizers of the Baku conference, and both have accepted money from SOCAR. One group, the Assembly of the Friends of Azerbaijan, operates as a US-based public relations arm of SOCAR," according to the *Chronicle*.

Oksuz reportedly told an American journalist in Baku that the oil conference had cost \$1.5 million. He also said that some guests had received hand-woven rugs as gifts – which would be a violation, if not reported to the proper US authorities.

The *Chronicle* revealed that "many of those non-profits are led by followers of Fetullah Gulen, a moderate Turkish ex-Imam who lives in exile in an enclave in Pennsylvania.... Collectively, Turkic groups have funded 272 foreign trips for members of Congress and their staffs from 2009-2013" to Azerbaijan and Turkey.

In addition to its eye-opening investigative article, the *Houston Chronicle* published a blistering editorial, chiding the 10 members of Congress for "being distressingly naïve or disgustingly corrupt," and in return for "a few well-placed donations," serving the interests of Azerbaijan, "a corrupt kleptocracy ruled by the Aliyev family, which lines its pockets while keeping political dissent firmly quashed."

Home to Diyarbakir

Part I

By Raffi Bedrosyan

One sunny August morning a bus left Diyarbakir, Turkey, with 50 passengers, and traveled to Yerevan, Armenia via Georgia. At the same time, a man flew from Canada to Yerevan to meet this busload of passengers and lead them on a two-week tour of Armenia.

Organizations such as the Gulbenkian Foundation, Hrant Dink Foundation, AGBU, and a few individual Armenians from the U.S. and Canada helped finance the tour. The Armenian minister of diaspora and several senior government officials are scheduled to greet the group.

But what is so special about this group? Why all this attention? They are residents of Diyarbakir, range in age from 18-83, chat in Kurdish or Turkish... Wait, no, they all speak Armenian. But there are no Armenians left in Diyarbakir, except for an old couple (and Bayzar yaya, the female half of the couple, just passed away two months ago).

So, who ARE these people?

Three years ago, when the biggest Armenian church in the Middle East, Surp Giragos Church, was resurrected from its ruins, it served as solid and indisputable evidence of an Armenian presence in historic Armenia before 1915. Some Turks and Kurds, kept in the dark about the facts of 1915, started to question the

state version of history, and some initiated the search for the truth. The church also became a living genocide memorial for thousands of Armenians from Armenia and the diaspora visiting the historic homeland. But, more significantly, it became a beacon or a magnet that attracted "hidden Armenians" from various regions near and far. They gathered and met at Surp Giragos. Islamicized, Kurdified, or Turkified, they started exchanging family stories and attending cultural events and concerts in growing numbers.

Seeing all this activity come to life, two years ago the church board and the local Diyarbakir Sur municipality decided to offer Armenian-language classes. And now, as a reward for completing the Armenian-language course, the 54 graduates are headed on a tour to Armenia so that they can practice their newly acquired language skills, and develop their understanding of Armenian history and culture.

Almost all of them have some level of "Armenianness" in their family. Some of their families were forcibly converted to Islam in 1915; others have an Armenian grandmother in the family, who was taken in by their Kurdish/Turkish ancestors as a maid, daughter, wife, or worse...

But we don't need to judge or go into the past; rather, we need to focus on the present, on the grandchildren who have now courageously decided to "come out." Some have decided to identify themselves as Christian Armenian, others as Muslim Armenian. Some have changed their Turkish names to Armenian ones, others have still hung on to their names. The one common denominator is their desire to learn the Armenian language, history, and culture.

Yet, to truly understand the depth of their courage in "coming out," we must be reminded of the realities in Turkey. Until recently, speaking the Kurdish language was forbidden. Kurds were told they don't exist as a people, that they are mountain Turks who make sounds like "kart kurt" when walking in the snow... The

official state policy denied the living existence of Kurds, just like it denied the extermination of the Armenians. These hidden Armenians of Diyarbakir saw their relatives and neighbors lose their jobs, homes, and lives, they saw them arrested, tortured, and "disappeared" by Turkish security forces for speaking Kurdish. And yet, here they are, willing to learn the Armenian language and come out with an identity much more hazardous to their health than the previous Kurdish identity.

In previous articles, I've outlined certain facts about the hidden Armenians of Turkey. In 1915, there were tens of thousands of Armenian orphan boys and girls forcibly Islamicized and Turkified, many more captured from the convoys along the deportation routes to the Syrian desert. There were tens of thousands of Armenians who were given protection by a few friendly Kurdish and Alevi tribes, and who eventually got assimilated. There were also quite a few Armenians who converted to Islam to avoid the deportations and massacres in various provinces, at least for a few months in 1915. These people all became the "living victims" of the genocide. Independent studies projecting the Islamicized Armenian population numbers, from 1915 to the present, have concluded that the "potential" number of people with Armenian roots in Turkey is in the millions—and more than the present population of Armenia. Of course, it is impossible to predict what percentage of them would be willing or able to "come out" and reclaim their Armenian heritage. But, there is a "back to roots" movement in historic Armenia, even among the Hamshen Armenians in northeast Turkey, who were converted to Islam centuries ago.

A century ago, a 4,000-year-old tree was chopped down, burned, and uprooted in historic Armenia. Spores and seeds from the toppled tree were scattered to all corners of the world, creating the Armenian Diaspora. But some of the roots survived, and after staying dormant for a hundred years, tiny seedlings are sprouting again. This trip is a historic first in nurturing those seedlings, a first step perhaps in re-creating an Armenian presence in historic Armenia. It will introduce Armenia to the hidden Armenians, but it will also introduce the hidden Armenians to Armenia.

In addition to the triple realities of Armenians in Armenia, Artsakh, and the diaspora, we now have a fourth reality of emerging hidden Armenians. In the next few days, we will observe many emotional highs and lows while touring Armenia, visiting Etchmiadzin, the

Genocide Museum, and many historic and cultural sites. We will record their reactions to Armenia, and the reactions of the local Armenians to them.

(Raffi Bedrosyan is a civil engineer and concert pianist, living in Toronto, Canada. He has donated concert and CD proceedings to infrastructure projects in Armenia and Karabagh, in which he has also participated as an engineer. He helped organize the reconstruction of the Surp Giragos Diyarbakir/Dikranagerd Church and the first Armenian reclaim of church properties in Anatolia after 1915. He gave the first piano concert in the Surp Giragos Church since 1915.)

LETTERS

Presidency in Armenia

To the Editor:

Mr. Azadian has given us an informative description of the candidates for President of Armenia. However, we don't know what being President of Armenia means. How much power as a leader does he have? In the US system, the President is the titular leader of the country, but as a result of the Founding Father's error in distributing power among three equal branches of government, his attempts at leadership can be severely constricted. In my opinion, a Parliamentary form of government is the better option. In that form, power is invested in a Prime Minister, who also being the legislative leader, precludes the kind of gridlock we are experiencing here. Another advantage of this system is that an effective leader can stay in power as long as the people support him, thus eliminating the periodic electoral circuses we indulge in every four years. However, self-governance in Armenia will always be a problem because of the Armenian disposition toward individualism as opposed to unity, as evidenced by all the political parties that exist there.

Berge Tatian
Stoneham, Mass.a

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From Aleppo to Armenia: Syrian Auto-Repair Tycoon Starts over

By Karen Leigh

YEREVAN (Syria Deeply) – He still has the same cell phone, an early smartphone purchased in Aleppo before Syria's three-year-long conflict turned the life of this formerly well-off businessman upside down. On it are photos of a life now long gone – a happy extended family of Syrian-Armenians posing in its well-appointed home, unaware of what was to come.

In Aleppo, Sako, aged 60, owned an auto-repair business that employed 15 workers. He made a substantial amount of money, he says – enough to buy four apartments in Aleppo and two cars, and eat out regularly at the city's pricier spots. Then the war hit his business, forcing him to flee with his wife to Yerevan, the Armenian capital, where years earlier he had sent one of his sons to study to be a pharmacist.

Now he rents and operates a small, tidy falafel and sharma stand in the center of town, while his wife, a former anesthesiologist, manages another outpost next door. Here, they share a one-bedroom apartment with several other family members. There are no more nice cars, few restaurants, no employees to perform the manual labor.

"It's like going from a royal lifestyle to a

gypsy lifestyle," he says.

Sako and his wife, also 60, are among tens of thousands of people seeking refuge in Yerevan. While hundreds of thousands of refugees wear out their welcome in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, the government of Armenia, which considers itself the global center of the diaspora, sees the thousands of Syrian-Armenians fleeing the conflict as undertaking a homecoming of

were doing very well. We had four apartments in Aleppo. We had a spare car-parts business in the industrial area. That's where our garage was. Business was very good. And it was good even after the conflict started. People still needed auto parts. But when violence finally reached Aleppo, it stopped. Six months before coming to Armenia, the business just stopped. Because of the lack of security on the roads, we

"Some of my friends are still in Aleppo, others have gone to Beirut, to the US. At night when I can't sleep, I stay awake and I talk to them."

sorts. UNCHR has estimated that there were up to 80,000 Syrian-Armenians living in Syria before the conflict, and that 11,000 of them have moved to Armenia.

On a hot summer day, Sako served falafel on the shady, tidy patio of his kiosk and discussed adjusting to life now – and dealing with memories of a different time:

"I left Aleppo two years ago and came directly to Armenia, it was September 11, 2012. We

weren't able to go to our workplace. It was 15 kilometers away from my house, and the journey was very dangerous. I won't give you an exact figure, but I had a 93 percent drop in profits. There, I had 15 workers. Here, it's just me. I am the only worker.

"I had two cars, a Hyundai Sonata and a Kia. Then cars for my wife and my son. At least once a week, we went to nice restaurants and cultural events.

Allahshukur Pashazade Replies to Karekin II's Letter

BAKU (Armenpress) – Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, Grand Mufti of the Muslims of the Caucasus, spiritual leader of Azerbaijan, replied to the letter of Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, regarding the recent escalation of situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and Karabagh-Azerbaijani line of contact. The Azerbaijani APA agency reported that in his letter Pashazade shared the concerns of Karekin II on the loss of servicemen and deterioration of conditions of the border villages' residents.

Notwithstanding, the spiritual leader of Azerbaijan did not want to stray from the message of the country's leaders and championed the idea as if "it is the Armenian soldiers, who violate the ceasefire." He urged the Armenian side "to adopt a more constructive approach" in the resolution of the issue.

Taking no notice of his own country's

actions, Pashazade reiterated the propaganda thesis of Azeri political leadership on withdrawing the Armenian forces from the liberated territories of Nagorno Karabagh.

Previously it was reported that on August 5, His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, sent a letter to Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, Grand Mufti of the Muslims of the Caucasus, urging him to apply efforts, so that the peaceful settlement process of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict will not be endangered by the countries authorities.

In the letter, the Armenian Pontiff said, "The continuous firing on the border settlements by Azerbaijan, the diversionary operations and the ongoing ceasefire violations presents a serious threat to the fragile but precious peace achieved in our region. We are deeply concerned about the tense situation,

which has taken the lives of soldiers, and violated the peaceful life of border residents. God-given human life is sacred, and the right to life is sacred. The endangerment of human life is unacceptable.

"Provocations and military operations cannot be an alternative to a peaceful settlement of the Karabagh conflict through negotiations, in accordance with international standards.

"Remaining faithful to the peaceful spirit of the tripartite meetings of spiritual leaders of the region, which was the initiative of Patriarch Kirill I of Moscow and All Russia, We appeal to You, as spiritual leader of Azerbaijan, to apply all efforts, so that the authorities of your country stay committed to the earlier agreements, uphold the ceasefire, and not impede the Karabagh conflict settlement process with their activities, allowing for peace and stability in the region."

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"Before we came, we were very connected to Armenia because my oldest son studied pharmacy here. I sent him here to study. A year before coming here, we applied for Armenian passports. We came here to sign the papers and things got even worse in Aleppo, so we couldn't go back. We stayed for good. Remember, Armenia is not taking all Syrians, it's taking only Armenian-Syrians.

"A lot of Syrian-Armenians who are here now who came after the conflict are not finding proper jobs, it's been a lot more difficult. After we came, we were here for nine months doing nothing. We had savings. [Still], we didn't have enough cash, but I had relatives who loaned me money. After nine months I realized I wasn't going back to Aleppo and I would be here a long time. I knew I could prepare good food, good sandwiches, so I decided to rent this place and start the business."

He continued, "We are living in a one-room apartment, all of us together. We've been trying to find another place close to this area but everything is too expensive. Our main residence in Aleppo was 170 square meters, six rooms. The other three apartments, I bought for my sons. My biggest worry now is to be able to get back to Aleppo to sell everything and to have money for me and my sons for the future.

"Some of my workers went to Latakia and are working in different places, some are in Beirut and some joined the Free Syrian Army. I'm only in contact with the workers who are still in Latakia.

"I miss my home, my lifestyle, my freedom, my social life. Some of my friends are still in Aleppo, others have gone to Beirut, to the US. At night when I can't sleep, I stay awake and I talk to them."

(Sako's name has been changed and his answers have been edited for clarity. Katarina Montgomery and Syria Deeply contributor Abu Leila contributed reporting.)

Putin Mediates NKR Talks

TALKS, from page 1

Nations Security Council resolutions and withdraw its forces from Nagorno-Karabagh, while his Armenian counterpart accused Azerbaijan of not following the same resolutions. Nevertheless, both said the issue should be resolved through negotiation and "compromises."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said after the meeting that although the presidents of the two countries agreed to continue the dialogue, "the practical aspects of the conflict settlement have not been agreed on yet."

Sargisian said on Monday the Nagorno Karabagh problem should be solved by peaceful means.

"We believe that there can be no military solution to the Karabagh conflict. If that's the case, the problem should be solved in negotiations," Sargisian told ArmNews TV Company.

"This is why we always agree to meet without formalities, especially at a high level. And this meeting was not an exception. We gave our consent to the Russian president's proposal to meet in Sochi," he said.

"This meeting was important for the Russian president to understand whether the parties are willing to solve the problem and find out their expectations. I believe that the President of Russia achieved his goal," Sargisian said.

"No separate agreement [on de-escalation in the region] has been reached. It's pointless to talk about new documents because previously, in 1994 and 1995, the parties signed two agreements [on ceasefire] and they must comply with them," he said.

But if new circumstances develop, they may lead the way to an agreement on the non-use of force which would have a much higher status than ceasefire agreements, Sargisian said.

"An international incident prevention and response mechanism will be a more effective option. If we can create such a mechanism, this will provide a very serious motive. It is necessary to work in this direction," he said.