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NEWS IN BRIEF

Amnesty Decries Lack of Protection for Gays, Dissenters in Armenia

By Richard Solash

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A new report by UK-based rights watchdog Amnesty International decries the lack of protections for Armenia’s beleaguered lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

Titled “Armenia: No Space For Difference,” the report also highlights the intimidation and harassment of journalists and activists who question the government’s official line on the conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabagh or

who expose abuses within the military.

Natalia Nozadze, Amnesty’s researcher on the South Caucasus, said that Armenia has made notable improvements in ensuring freedom of expression since its independence in 1991, as long as certain topics remain off-limits.

“These are usually the issues that are considered either very sensitive for the Armenian public or issues that fall outside of the mainstream view,” Nozadze said. “Those who exercise this kind of freedom of expression, we found, occasionally face harassment and threats. In analyzing those cases, it becomes clear that the Armenian government is failing

to protect the freedom of expression of those individuals.”

The report says that in condoning violence against both gays and dissenters on sensitive topics, officials often hide behind the so-called “will of the people” or deride the individuals as “un-Armenian” and a threat to “national interests.”

While Armenia decriminalized same-sex sexual relations in 2003, homophobic attitudes remain entrenched. Amnesty said statements by officials reinforcing those attitudes “lead to a climate where grave human rights abuses are perpetrated and tolerated.”

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Armenian Soldier Killed on Azeri Border

BAKU (RFE/RL) – An Armenian soldier was shot and killed along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan’s Naxcivan Autonomous Republic.

The Armenian Defense Ministry’s press service also noted that another Armenian soldier was also wounded by Azerbaijani snipers on August 23.

Azerbaijan’s Defense Ministry denied the Armenian statement, calling it “disinformation.” Azerbaijani reports say that there is data confirming that an Armenian soldier was killed and also that several others were injured in a scuffle inside an Armenian military unit.

Armenian Ambassador To UN Condemns Attacks against Syria

NEW YORK (Armenpress) – On August 19, the member of the United Nations Security Council met to discuss the issue of protecting civilians during armed conflicts.

The Armenian Foreign Affairs Ministry reported that the majority of speakers referenced the situation in Syria. Armenia’s representative to the UN, Garen Nazarian, in his speech particularly mentioned that the situation in Syria for Armenia is not just a news headline and the worsening humanitarian situation is greatly disturbing.

Nazarian condemned all attacks against civilians, kidnappings and terroristic acts highlighting the destruction of Armenian churches and how a lot of Armenians, like their Syrian brethren in Aleppo and Damascus, are trying to survive.

The ambassador also added that Armenia continues hosting refugees although many Armenians continue to live in Syria under increasing violence and a growing humanitarian crisis.

PM Sends Birthday Greetings to Karekin II

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian congratulated Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, on the occasion of his birthday, on August 21.

According to reports, Sargsian said, “Your Holiness, I congratulate on the occasion of your birthday anniversary on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Armenia and myself. I am hopeful that you will lead the faithful Armenian people with your wisdom for long years.”

Karekin II was born in the village Voskehat, near Echmiadzin, in 1951. On October 27, 1999, Archbishop Karekin Nersissian was elected the 132nd Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians and was consecrated on November 4, 1999.

Armenia Condemns Treatment of Armenian Captive in Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (ARKA) – Deputy Armenian Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan slammed international humanitarian organizations and human rights activists for their failure to respond to what he described as “Azerbaijan’s permissiveness” regarding an Armenian army conscript, Hakob Ijighulyan, captured by Azeri troops earlier this month near Nagorno-Karabagh.

Tonoyan’s remarks came as he met with representatives of the Armenian offices of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of Red Cross. He said Armenian authorities are concerned over the continued violation of the captured conscript’s rights.

Tonoyan was quoted as saying that no international organization has condemned the ‘interview’ with Hakob Ijighulyan, broadcast by an Azerbaijani TV.

The Azerbaijani side claims that Ijighulyan defected to its frontline troops on August 8 after being physically abused by one of his commanders. The Armenian

military denied this, saying the 22-year-old conscript accidentally strayed into Azerbaijani-controlled territory. It has condemned Baku for publically interrogating the POW.

“It is evident that Azerbaijani authorities are exerting strong moral and psychological and possibly physical pressure on Hagop, forcing him to make contradictory statements. A forced interview can not be considered as grounds for his handing to a third country,” the Armenian Defense

Ministry said in a statement.

Tonoyan reiterated that Ijighulyan will not face prosecution once repatriated. The press service also said that no citizen of Armenia previously repatriated from Azerbaijan had ever been prosecuted.

The Armenian authorities offered last week to swap Ijighulyan for an Azerbaijani soldier who crossed into Armenia and was detained a year ago. There has been no official response to the offer from Azerbaijan thus far.



Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Nourhan Manoukian



Catholicos of All Armenians, His Holiness Karekin II

Anarchy in the Hierarchy

Armenians have become citizens of the global village, living in different countries and subject to different – at times contradictory – laws. Numerically, Armenians living in dispersion far surpass those living in the ancestral homeland.

This fragmentation behooves every single individual Armenian or group to rise above those divisions, imposed by history or unfortunate events, to realize that the survival of the nation requires cohesion, organization and unifying moral foundations adhered to by all segments of the nation. The moral high ground needs to be upheld by the clergy as well as lay leadership.

But what we observe at the present time is the opposite – disarray, chaos and confusion, where every authority is a fair target for denigration. Criticism – and constructive criticism – certainly would be welcome. But the Internet, which could have become a powerful tool to unify all Armenians, has become a jungle where every indignity is fair game. We have reached a point where freedom of speech has become a license to commit libel.

Therefore, any participation in raging diatribes – in support of or against debating parties – would only exacerbate the situation. But by the same token, to keep silent in view of unbridled self-serving pontification will further block the way for sober and civilized discourse aimed to resolve problems plaguing Armenians.

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Man Killed in Damascus Church Explosion

DAMASCUS (Armenpress) – Five people were wounded and one person died as a result of a rocket explosion in Surp Sarkis Church’s yard. According to *Azdrag* editor Shahan Gandaharian, the name of the deceased was Hakob Sargsian.

During the past week, the Syrian army carried out military actions in some regions of the city to demolish the centers of the militant forces. According to official reports, a considerable number of militants were killed and their bases were destroyed. Many Armenian families live and work in the affected regions and have been subjected to bombings.

The Surp Sarkis Diocesan Church in Damascus was built in 15th century. The Damascus Armenian community has always remained loyal to the supremacy of Holy Echmiadzin.

Syrians, including Syrian Armenians, are awaiting the decision of the US regarding an airstrike, in the wake of reports this week alleging the government killed around 1,500 with chemical weapons.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Mother See Celebrates Feast of the Assumption

ECHMIADZIN – On August 18, the Mother See celebrated the Feast of the Assumption. Bishop Mushegh Babayan offered the Divine Liturgy. During the services, Babayan reflected on the message of the feast and the virtuous image of the mother of Christ, which he called the “utmost example of virtue and purity, modesty and sacrifice; for families, Armenian women and for all Armenian Christians.”

Following the Divine Liturgy, a pontifical procession ascended to the St. Tiridates open-air altar, where Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, conducted the service for the Blessing of the Grapes. After the reading of the prayer of St. Nerses and singing of hymns, Karekin II blessed the grapes and harvest for the upcoming year.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Karekin II offered his blessings to all the faithful, asking, “God to fill their lives with heavenly grace and abundance.”

The deacons of the brotherhood distributed the blessed grapes to those in attendance.

Artsakh President Hosts Russian Public Figures

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – On August 26, Artsakh President Bako Sahakyan welcomed a group of Russian public figures and journalists.

Sahakyan discussed a number of issues related to the Artsakh’s domestic and foreign policy, as well as Russian-Karabagh relations with the visitors.

Chairman of the Russian-Armenian Cooperation Organization Yuri Navoyan and other officials attended the meeting.

YSU Opens Islamic Studies Center

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Yerevan State University (YSU) recently opened its new Islamic Studies Center. YSU Director Aram Simonyan and members of the delegation of the Institute for Humanities and Culture of Tehran attended the grand opening.

“The Institute for Humanities and Culture of Tehran and the Yerevan State University have been implementing different programs in the field of translation, science and research and education. 56 faculties function for those particular programs. The Center for Islamic Studies will work to study Islamic philosophy, literature, ethics, translation, aesthetics and other fields,” said Simonyan.

In 2012, a faculty of Armenian Studies was opened at the Institute for Humanities and Culture of Tehran.

EU Delegation Launches Online Civil Society Dialogue

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – The European Union (EU) Delegation to Armenia has launched an online civil society dialogue page in an effort to take account of the views of civil society in different policy areas and to help it to conduct more focused consultations, EU Neighborhood Info Center reported.

The main aim of the site is to give civil society participants the opportunity to exchange their opinions with each other and with the EU delegation to Armenia about important questions for the future development of EU-Armenia relations.

Discussion topics range from draft political and operational documents, consultations on ad hoc initiatives and establishment of priorities of programs. A press release from the EU delegation to Armenia said the new online tool would give a “productive and useful record of interaction between the European Union and civil society.”

Those wishing to participate in the first consultation session should first register their organization online.

President: Students Are the Future of Armenia, Education as Important as Army

YEREVAN (Hetq) – President Serge Sargisian this week received numerous schoolchildren and students from the capital and provinces who had demonstrated excellent results last academic year as well as the winners of different science olympiads.

At the Presidential Palace, medal winners who were graduates of the republic’s secondary education establishments for the academic year 2012-2013, medal winners of the international scientific Olympiads for schoolchildren conducted in 2013, medal winners of five international Olympiads for schoolchildren held in 2013, the winners of the Kangaroo-2013 international competition in mathematics, schoolchildren of excellent performance from the provinces of different age groups as well as the students who won medals at the 27th World Student Games held in Kazan, Russia. At this traditional meeting they received their awards, which were medals, certificates and souvenirs from the president of the



President Serge Sargisian addresses the young students.

Republic of Armenia.

Sargisian congratulated all the students, wished them success and answered their questions.

He spoke at length, praising the young scholars and encouraging them.

He said, “After being elected President of the Republic of Armenia in 2008, I promised to hold meetings with the medal winner graduates of

the schools and medals winners of the international science Olympiads. Please be assured that no matter how busy I am and regardless of the number of small and large problems to be addressed, I will keep my word and every year I will be meeting with the young people.”

He continued, “In this hall, we hold meetings with foreign dignitaries. We hold receptions for them right here but trust me, today’s meeting is no less important. You are the heroes of our country, you are the heroes of our times, and our country needs such heroes.”

He praised the number of medals the Armenian students have won, compared to other nations. “You have already won 11 medals at the science Olympiads – one silver and 10 bronze, which is exactly as many as your peers from Georgia and Azerbaijan combined. I am confident that we are yet to register success in the area of astronomy, and I want us together to wish success to our young people.”

“Well done! Thank you, trust me you’ve made a great job; last year as well as this year, we have registered outstanding results.”

He specifically thanked the students that had participated in the Kazan Student Games, winning 10 medals. “Never before in our modern history have we been able to win so many medals at the Student Games,” he said.

He praised the education standard not only in Yerevan, but in the provinces. “It is gratifying that secondary education in Armenia is developing not only in Yerevan, as many would say, but also in our provinces. It is testified to by the increased number of the medal recipients not only in Yerevan but also in Goris, Sisian, Hrazdan, Gumri. It is great. Be assured that the process will go on.”

Nairit Plant Closes, Loan Records Still Missing

YEREVAN (Hetq) – Over the course of 2013, Hetq has published a series of articles revealing how \$180 million in loans granted to Nairit Plant has literally vanished through a maze of offshore companies.

In June, the ARF faction in parliament today introduced a motion calling for the creation of ad-hoc committee that would look into the operations, loan obligations and privatization of the Nairit Rubber Plant.

Based on our articles the Prosecutor General launched an examination of the matter, the results of which were then forwarded to the Police Department’s Anti-Organized Crime Division. After two months of dragging its feet, the Unit transferred the case material to the Prosecutor General’s Office.

In response to our written inquiry as to where the Nairit case stood, Hetq received the following from the Police.

“We wish to inform you that the Police Department’s Anti-Crime Division has rejected the Nairit case according to Article 35, Part 1, Point 2 of the RA Criminal Procedural Code.”

Article 35 deals with “Circumstances Excluding Criminal Prosecution.” The

cited clause states: “A criminal case cannot be instituted and criminal prosecution may not be started and the instituted criminal case is subject to suspension, if the alleged act contains no corpus delicti.”

It turns out that the Police Department, in the person of Police Chief Vladimir Gasparyan, has opted to bury the matter, despite the existence of sound evidence that large amounts were laundered and illegally appropriated.

Armenia’s Energy and Natural Resources Minister Armen Movsisyan, who was directly responsible for the loans and who was directly involved in the Nairit transactions, nevertheless remains in office. Now, he is busy implementing two mining projects in Artsakh.

Also continuing in office is Vahan Melkonyan, the former director of Nairit and the Interstate Bank representative in Armenia.

Given these developments, Hetq again asks Police Chief Vladimir Gasparyan and Prosecutor General Aghvan Hovsepian what happened to the \$180 million in loans.

Amnesty Decries Lack of Protection for Gays, Dissenters in Armenia

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The report quotes Eduard Sharmazanov, the spokesperson for Armenian’s ruling Republican Party and the deputy speaker of parliament, as calling an arson attack in May 2012 on a gay-friendly bar in Yerevan “completely right and justified.”

He claimed that supporters of gay rights were “perverting our society and defaming Armenian national identity.”

On August 7 the country’s police had proposed a ban on promoting “non-traditional sexual relationships.”

The bill, perhaps drafted to emulate similar measures recently codified in Russia, was quickly withdrawn from consideration.

“The fact that the bill was proposed in the first place probably shows the attitude of the police and law enforcement agencies toward LGBT [individuals], and [they are] actually the institu-

tion that should be protecting them,” Nozadze said. “As to why it was withdrawn, there are several reasons that local civil society has mentioned, and I think most of it has to do with pressure from the West rather than, unfortunately, the genuine will of Armenian law-enforcement or policy-making agencies.”

Amnesty said several NGOs have reported that “questioning the official and mainstream view on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict or even using the phrase ‘territories occupied by Armenia’ carries the risk of being labeled as traitors.”

The report notes two attempts in April 2012 by civil society activists to hold a festival of Azerbaijani films, an event meant to promote cultural understanding.

Amnesty said authorities apparently supported protesters who obstructed

the first attempt and that police officers did nothing when protesters vandalized the location of the planned second attempt.

The report also decries official intimidation of journalists and activists who expose hazing and abuses within the military.

“Even where the investigation and questioning does not lead to prosecution or cases are subsequently withdrawn, such action has a chilling effect on the work of journalists and human rights defenders, raising concern about Armenia’s commitment to its international human rights obligations,” Amnesty said.

The watchdog called on Yerevan to ensure that minorities and dissenting views are protected as the country hopes to sign an Association Agreement with the EU ahead of November’s Eastern Partnership summit.



INTERNATIONAL

Syria Crisis: Russia and China Step up Warning over Strike

DAMASCUS (BBC) – Russia and China have stepped up their warnings against military intervention in Syria, with Moscow saying any such action would have “catastrophic consequences” for the region.

The US and its allies are considering launching strikes on Syria in response to deadly attacks last week.

The US said there was “undeniable” proof of a chemical attack, on Monday.

UN chemical weapons inspectors are due to start a second day of investigations in the suburbs of Damascus.

The UN team came under sniper fire as they tried to visit an area west of the city on Monday.

A spokesman for UK Prime Minister David Cameron says the UK is making contingency plans for military action in Syria.

Cameron has cut short his holiday and returned to London to deal with the Syrian crisis.

The administration has deliberately left

itself almost no room for maneuver – its credibility would now be zero if it failed to take some form of military action”

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashovich has called on the international community to show “prudence” over the crisis and observe international law.

“Attempts to bypass the Security Council, once again to create artificial groundless excuses for a military intervention in the region are fraught with new suffering in Syria and catastrophic consequences for other countries of the Middle East and North Africa,” he said in a statement.

Late on Monday, the US said it was postponing a meeting on Syria with Russian diplomats, citing “ongoing consultations” about alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Hours later, Russia expressed regret about the decision. The two sides had been due to meet in The Hague on Wednesday to discuss setting up an international conference on finding a political solution to the crisis.

The Russian deputy defense minister, Gennady Gatilov, said working out the political parameters for a resolution on Syria would be especially useful, with the threat of force hanging over the country.

On Monday, Cameron spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin who said there was no evidence yet that Syria had used chemical weapons against rebels, Cameron’s office said.

The official Chinese news agency, Xinhua, said Western powers were rushing to conclusions about who may have used chemical weapons in Syria before UN inspectors had completed their investigation.

UN visit

Both the Syrian government and rebels have blamed each other for last Wednesday’s attacks.

Medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres said three hospitals it supported in the Damascus area had treated about 3,600 patients with “neurotoxic symptoms”, of whom 355 had died.

US officials said there was “little doubt” that President Bashar al-Assad’s government was to blame.

UN inspectors spent nearly three hours in the western district of Muadhamiya on Monday where they visited two hospitals and interviewed survivors, eyewitnesses and doctors.

A UN spokesman said they had collected some samples.

Earlier in the day, the UN convoy came under fire from unidentified snipers and was forced to turn back before resuming its journey.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon condemned the shooting and asked the

UN team in Syria to register a complaint.

In the most forceful US reaction yet, US Secretary of State John Kerry on Monday described the recent attacks in the Damascus area as a “moral obscenity.”

He said the delay in allowing UN inspectors to the sites was a sign the Syrian government had something to hide.

He said Washington had additional information about the attacks that it would make public in the days ahead.

“What we saw in Syria last week should shock the conscience of the world. It defies any code of morality,” Kerry said at a news conference on Monday.

“Make no mistake, President Obama believes there must be accountability for those who would use the world’s most heinous weapons against the world’s most vulnerable people.”

John Kerry: “There is a clear reason that the world has banned entirely the use of chemical weapons”

Washington has recently bolstered its naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean and military leaders from the US, UK and their allies have convened a meeting in Jordan.

Analysts believe the most likely US action would be sea-launched cruise missiles targeting Syrian military installations.

But Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters on Monday the West had not produced any proof that President Assad’s forces had used chemical weapons.

He was responding to suggestions from some Western countries that military action against the Syrian government could be taken without a UN mandate.

Lavrov said the use of force without Security Council backing would be “a crude violation of international law.”

Earlier, UK Foreign Secretary William Hague told the BBC an international military response to the suspected use of chemical weapons would be possible without the backing of the UN.

The UN Security Council is divided, with Russia and China opposing military intervention and the UK and France warning that the UN could be bypassed if there was “great humanitarian need.”

In a column in The Times newspaper, former UK PM Tony Blair has written that if the West does not intervene to support freedom and democracy in Egypt and Syria, the Middle East will face catastrophe

The UN says more than 100,000 people have been killed since the uprising against President Assad began more than two years ago. The conflict has produced more than 1.7 million registered refugees.

Egoyan, Khanjian Appeal for Release Of Canadians Arrested in Egypt

TORONTO (*Globe and Mail*) – Filmmaker Atom Egoyan and his wife, the actress Arsinée Khanjian, have joined a growing chorus of calls to release two Canadians arrested by Egyptian authorities more than a week ago.

In a brief video posted to YouTube, the Cairo-born Egoyan asks for the immediate release of “our good friends,” filmmaker John Greyson and emergency-room physician Tarek Loubani. “These are very, very important members of our community, they’re very, very dear friends, they’re people of the highest, highest character, and I think this has all been a tremendous misunderstanding.”

He adds: “They are exceptional human beings.”

Greyson and Loubani were detained on August 18 when their supporters say they got lost in Cairo and wandered into a police station to ask for directions. They were arrested along with seven other foreigners, none of whom has been charged. Despite protests by the Canadian government, Egyptian prosecutors last week obtained an order permitting the men to be held for an additional 15 days without charge.

The men had arrived in Cairo intending to continue on to Gaza, where Loubani trains physicians in advanced cardiac and trauma life support, but the turmoil in Egypt had delayed their travel.

In the YouTube video, which has been posted on TarekandJohn.com, Khanjian greets viewers in Arabic and explains that she is good friends with the two men. She then adds in English: “They have been very actively important members of our community, as artists, as members of our civil society, they have represented our culture, our arts, and – in the case of Tarek – the sciences in this country.”

A petition on Change.org calling on the Canadian government to “help free Tarek and John” had more than 82,000 names as of noon on Tuesday.

The men are expected to appear before an Egyptian prosecutor on Wednesday afternoon to present documents proving they were not part of the anti-government protests that have roiled Egypt this summer.

Turkish Taksim Square Protester Wins German Human Rights Award

BERLIN (PanArmenian.net) – Turkey’s “Standing Man,” a performance artist who became an icon of anti-government protests this year, will receive a major German human rights award on September 5 in Potsdam.

Erdem Gunduz, a 34-year-old dancer and choreographer, will be honored for his “courageous commitment to freedom of expression and human rights” with the M100 Media Award, awarded annually by a jury of journalists.

Gunduz became known for remaining motionless for hours in Istanbul’s Taksim Square during protests that challenged Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan during the summer.

“With his silent protest, he became the icon of peaceful resistance and has been emulated around the world,” said the jury.

“His weapon is creativity, his trademarks are courage and perseverance. That is what you need to promote free speech and human rights,” said Potsdam mayor and M100 chair Jann Jakobs.

International News

UEFA Bans Two Armenian Officials

NYON, Switzerland (Associated Press) – The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) has banned two Armenian football referees for life for trying to fix a Europa League match in a betting scam.

UEFA says referee Andranik Arsenyan and assistant Hovhannes Avagyan admitted trying to corrupt Vikingur’s 1-0 win at Inter Turku in Finland. UEFA investigated after its betting monitoring unit “detected suspicious betting patterns” during the July 11 match.

Both officials, who were expelled by the Armenian football federation, had been approved by FIFA for international matches since January 2012. The UEFA can ask FIFA to apply the bans worldwide.

Arsenyan awarded two penalties late in the then-scoreless match, reportedly to help ensure both teams scored. Vikingur, a team from the Faeroe Islands, scored its penalty in the 78th minute and Turku missed from the spot two minutes later.

Ataturk Museum Re-Opens in Greece

THESSALONIKI, Greece (AP) – A museum dedicated to the founder of the modern Turkish state reopened earlier this month in his native city in northern Greece following a year’s restoration work.

Greek and Turkish government officials said the museum, at the house where Mustafa Kemal Ataturk is believed to have been born in 1881, would help efforts to strengthen ties between the two historic rivals.

The three-level house inaugurated in Thessaloniki on August 16 lies within the Turkish Consulate complex. It has been declared a modern monument by Greek cultural authorities, and was restored to the appearance it had in 1881.

Ataturk lived part of his childhood in Thessaloniki.

Kurdish Militants in War Of Words with Turkey

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – A Kurdish militant group said on Monday it was keeping its side of the bargain in a peace process with Turkey to end a 29-year-old insurgency, rejecting Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan’s accusation it had failed to withdraw most of its fighters.

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) said Ankara had failed to take steps beyond halting military action to end a conflict, which has killed more than 40,000 people.

PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, jailed on an island near Istanbul, declared a ceasefire in March after months of talks with the Turkish state and his militants began moving to Iraq in May under a deal envisaged boosted Kurdish rights.

Erdogan was quoted as saying last week that the PKK had not kept a promise to withdraw from Turkey, with only 20 percent of PKK rebels leaving, mostly women and children.

“Our forces have followed the withdrawal decision to the letter and the implementation process is continuing,” the PKK said in a statement, without specifying how many fighters had left. It added it would continue to do what was required.

The ceasefire has largely held but PKK commanders have warned of new clashes if Turkey does not take concrete steps to advance the process by September.

In addition to more Kurdish-language education, the Kurds, who dominate Turkey’s southeast and account for about a fifth of the population, want anti-terrorism laws softened, the electoral threshold to enter parliament lowered from 10 percent, and more powers for local governments.

To keep the process on track, the government is expected to begin debating a package of reforms this week. Erdogan, under pressure from nationalists for offering concessions to militants, said last week the measures would not “disturb the Turkish public.” He ruled out any general amnesty for PKK fighters, according to Turkish newspaper reports.

Community News

Nishanians Awarded St. Nersess Medal

WASHINGTON – On Sunday, August 18, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese, visited the St. Mary Church. On the name day of the church, the Feast of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God, the Primate celebrated the Divine Liturgy and performed the Blessing of Grapes service.

After the services, Barsamian presented the St. Nersess Shnorhali Medal to Jirair and Anahid Nishanian, longtime members of the Washington parish and benefactors at the local, diocesan and international levels. The Primate presented the medal to the Nishanians on behalf of Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

In the pontifical encyclical accompanying the medal, Karekin II wrote: “As dedicated members of St. Mary Church of Washington, DC, you have offered, with love, your financial support towards the prosperity of the church. Your contributions testify to your love of church and nation.”

In presenting the honor, Barsamian extolled the efforts of the Nishanians on behalf of the church, including their renovation of the main altar of St. Mary Church and thanked them for their support of scholarships in Armenia. “For many years now, Jirair and Anahid have been providing moral and material support for the edification of our people,” he said.

Jirair Nishanian was born in Iran, the son of Genocide survivors. Educational opportunity brought him to the US, where he has had a



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian presents the Nishanians with the St. Nersess Medal.

career in engineering and commercial development. Motivated by the experiences his parents had during the Genocide, Jirair Nishanian was inspired to provide assistance to the children of Armenia – especially to orphans, the underprivileged and promising students seeking higher education.

The Jirair Nishanian Foundation currently provides scholarships to nearly 60 students in the homeland. His foundation also works with the Fund for Armenian Relief in a number of charitable efforts. The couple has three children and five grandchildren.

“I feel humbled,” Jirair Nishanian said as he accepted the medal. “I did not expect any award, because I feel that it is my duty and responsibility to support my church, heritage and homeland.”

During the luncheon following the services, St. Mary’s pastor Rev. Hovsep Karapetyan called the occasion “a day of joy for all of us, as we celebrate the name day of our beloved home St. Mary Church.” He added, “Today is a day of personal renewal and re-commitment to St. Mary Church and to our Christian identity as children of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church.”

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Gagik Hovhannisyan with his mother, Jasmin Khazarian

Armenian Man Thanks North Shore-LIJ Doctors For Life-Saving Surgeries

NEW YORK (*Jewish Voice*) – Three months to the day after being admitted to North Shore University Hospital (NSUH) for treatment of brain seizures, a 30-year-old Armenian man had the opportunity on Thursday, August 8, to thank the two local surgeons who changed his life.

“I am so grateful to you all,” Gagik Hovhannisyan of Yerevan, Armenia, said via an interpreter during a press conference held at NSUH.

“For the first time in my life, I am not having seizures,” said Hovhannisyan, with his mother by his side and his father and sister joining in from Armenia via Skype. “I can go home, drive a car, and do all the things that I could never do before. This is a miracle to me.”

Hovhannisyan was 7 in 1990 when he was brought to Cohen Children’s Medical Center (then Schneider’s Children’s Hospital) under the auspices of the Russian Gift of Life and the International Rotary. His mother, Jasmin Khazarian, was told her son had been born with a congenital heart condition known as Tetralogy of Fallot – a rare condition that occurs in about five out of every 10,000 babies.

“AS A MOTHER, I GAVE BIRTH TO MY SON,
BUT THE DOCTORS AT THE NORTH SHORE-LIJ
HEALTH SYSTEM GAVE HIM A LIFE”

–Jasmin Khazarian

Vincent Parnell, MD, surgeon-in-chief at Cohen Children’s Medical Center, performed surgery to correct that condition.

Due to his heart condition, Hovhannisyan later developed a seizure disorder as a result of an infection that developed in his brain. When he was 16, Russian Gift of Life stepped in again and had him brought back to the children’s hospital. His cardiac situation was stable, but the anti-seizure medications were not doing the job. Doctors decided he would eventually need brain surgery to remove the lesions causing the seizures.

Through it all, Hovhannisyan refused to give in to his disorder. He taught himself how to play the piano, learned English, mastered computers and graduated from Yerevan State University. As his proud mother said during the press conference, “My son never believed he was sick.”

On May 8, Hovhannisyan returned to the US and was admitted to NSUH. Three weeks later he underwent a 10-hour diagnostic epilepsy surgery with Ashesh Mehta, MD North Shore-LIJ Health System’s director of epilepsy surgery, to pinpoint where the seizures began and what areas were affected.

“During the first surgery, 210 electrodes were implanted by opening Gagik’s skull to determine the exact location of the seizures,” Dr. Mehta said. “After monitoring his brain activity for several days, we performed a second surgery that lasted seven hours. In this procedure, the seizure-producing areas of the brain were removed. Through all of this, great care had to be taken to avoid harm to the brain areas that control movement, vision, memory, language and feeling.”

Hovhannisyan was discharged on June 14. To date, he is seizure-free with no impairment to his speech, language or memory skills.

“As a mother, I gave birth to my son, but the doctors at the North Shore-LIJ Health System gave him a life,” said Khazarian, who surprised Parnell during the press conference when she presented him with a hand drawing he had done 23 years ago to explain Hovhannisyan’s heart condition.

Armenian Educators and Officials from Perkins School Exchange Visits

WATERTOWN (*Watertown Tab*) – Schools around the world may be out for the summer, but educators and government officials have been hard at work strengthening relationships that will unlock the potential of children who are blind or deaf and blind in Armenia. In Watertown, as well as in Yerevan, representatives of Perkins International have been working together with the Armenian government and educational institutions to improve opportunities for the children they serve.

On June 28, participants celebrated the completion of a specialized program at the State Pedagogical University in Yerevan. The series of four intensive seminars over a two-year period was arranged by Perkins International in conjunction with the university, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Kharberd Specialized Children’s Home and the “For You” charitable organization. Professionals and university students from Gumri Children’s Home, Mary Izmiryan Children’s Home, Special School #14, local inclusive schools and Kharberd Special Children’s Home enhanced their skills as teachers of children who are visually impaired with additional disabilities.

Indicating the value placed on the collaboration, the celebration was attended by United States Ambassador to Armenia John Heffern, joined by Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Artem Asatryan and other Ministry officials, in addition to Armenia State Pedagogical University Vice-rector Ara Yeremyan, Dr. Haratun Balasanyan from Kharberd Specialized Children’s Home and other dignitaries. Dennis Lolli of Perkins International traveled from Watertown to Yerevan to attend the event.

The university program not only deepens expertise, but also expands the numbers of children who can be educated to reach their fullest potential. Of an estimated 8,000 children with disabilities in Armenia, approximately 1,700 are blind with additional disabilities. In 2011, programs served no more than 75 of these children. To reach more children in need, Perkins garnered private support and partnered with the Armenian Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and local social homes. By the end of 2013, Perkins partners in Armenia expect to impact more than 400 children and to double the activities involving families.

Furthering the power of collaboration, Balasanyan accompanied Lala Ghazaryan, head of the Department of Family and Children’s Issues, and Senior Specialist Karine Khacatryan from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, on a trip to observe classes and teaching methods, interact with students and share ideas with educators at Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown in early July. Numerous professionals from Armenia had already spent time honing their skills at Perkins since 2005.

At a July 10 reception welcoming members of the local Armenian-American community, Ghazaryan told the gathering, “The government in Armenia is doing whatever is possible for children in special education.” She acknowledged the contributions of the Armenian diaspora. “Our successes would be difficult to achieve without friends like you. There is lots left to do,” she said, “Together, we can do it.”

Perkins President Steven Rothstein also spoke of the power of partnership, “Here at Perkins, or in Yerevan, we have one goal. With incredible partners like you, we can train teachers, build capacity, provide the tools and the equipment needed to empower teachers and parents to release the genius that exists in every child.”



COMMUNITY NEWS

Balakian to Teach Course on Aftermath of Armenian Genocide and Holocaust

By Taleen Babayan

NEW YORK – Award-winning author and professor Peter Balakian will teach a course titled “The Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust: Memory and Representation,” this fall at Columbia University.

Balakian, who has been appointed the Nikit and Eleanora Ordjanian Visiting Professor in the Department of Middle East, South Asian and African Studies of the university, is approaching the issue of genocide studies in a unique way, giving students the opportunity to gain insight to some of the broader dimensions of genocide and its aftermath.

“The lessons of the Armenian Genocide were not lost on the Nazis,” said Balakian, who is the Donald M. and Constance H. Rebar Professor of the Humanities, professor of English and director of creative writing at Colgate University. “The history of

Jews in Europe and the history of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire offer striking parallels and this makes for some exciting comparative work.”

The course focuses on the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide, which resulted in the massacre of 1.5 million Armenians during the first world war under the Young Turk regime in the Ottoman Empire, and the Holocaust, which culminated in the extermination of 6 million Jews by the Nazi party during World War II. Students will explore the impact of genocide on the self and the imagination’s representations through primary texts, which include literature, film, visual art, memoirs and video testimony.

“Studying survivor experience, allows us to see what the long-term impact of genocide can be on the human self and the imagination,” said Balakian, who has been studying and writing about genocide for more than four decades. “How do survivors make meaning after catastrophic experience? How does the event live on in the traumatized

self? How do literature and art allow us to see the resilience of human beings in the wake of crushing experience?”

The interdisciplinary nature of the course, which has been approved to satisfy Columbia University’s Global Core requirement, makes the class more accessible and appealing to students of all fields of study. The class is open to undergraduate and graduate students who will have the option to take on projects and assignments in relation to their specific majors.

“This course offers a kind of knowledge that allows students to see how societies can do awful things but it also allows students to see conversely the importance of democracy, tolerance and multi-cultural society,” said Balakian. “It’s a course that will take students into the most pressing ethical and moral issues of life on the planet.”

Balakian, whose research on the Armenian Genocide evolved from his work as a poet and a literary scholar, laid the groundwork for writing about the transmission of trauma across generations in literary studies.

“I began to see in the mid 1970s that the literary landscape was changing and that the impact of historical trauma on the imagination was opening into a new area,” said Balakian.

A *New York Times* bestselling author, Balakian’s memoir *Black Dog of Fate* is the best-selling work of literary non-fiction about the Armenian Genocide. The author of nine books, Balakian lectures worldwide and has been the recipient of many literary prizes including the PEN/Albrand Prize for Memoir, the Raphael Lemkin Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship and a National Endowment of the Arts Fellowship, as well as the recent Spendlove Prize for Social Justice.

The Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust: Memory and Representation, a seminar-style course (G4326, Call #86035) will be taught on Thursdays 2:10 to 4 p.m. and is open to auditors as well as matriculating students. Classes begin September 5. Registration may be done online at www.ce.columbia.edu/auditing.

Ara Sarafian to Speak on the Armenians of Bitlis

FRESNO – Historian Ara Sarafian of the London Gomidas Institute will present an illustrated lecture “A Hundred Years Ago: The Armenians of Bitlis” at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 5, in the Industrial Technology Building, Room 101, at the South-East corner of Barstow and Campus Drive, on the Fresno State campus.

The lecture is co-sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program, the Armenian Students Organization of Fresno State and the Leon S. Peters Foundation.

Bitlis was one of the great centers of Armenian civilization, with a unique identity of its own. Armenians lived in this mountainous region, in towns and villages with schools, churches, and monasteries. Today, very little

remains of the Armenian past. Most of it was destroyed in the Armenian Genocide and the anti-Armenian policies of the Turkish republic.

In this talk, “The Armenians of Bitlis,” Sarafian will present both a historical and a contemporary view of the Armenian presence in Bitlis before 1915. His power-point presentation will draw on a critical set of Ottoman, Armenian and Russian sources from 1880 to 1915, as well as his latest trip to the region.

“The Armenians of Bitlis” is part of a broader bridge-building project which the Gomidas Institute launched in Bitlis this year. The project has already benefited from the support of many Kurds and Turks and will lead to a public exhibition in Bitlis next year.

The lecture will end with the release of

Thomas Mugerditchian’s *The Diyarbekir Massacres and Kurdish Atrocities*, (Gomidas Institute, 2013).

Sarafian is an archival historian specializing in late Ottoman history. He is the director of the Gomidas Institute, which is a leading research and publication center related to mod-

ern Armenian history.

The lecture is free and open to the public. Parking will be available in Lots Q, K and L the night of the lecture. Use parking code 273401 to receive a free parking pass. For more information on the lecture, contact the Armenian Studies Program.

Former Aide to West Publishing Executive Indicted

By Dan Browning

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. (*Star Tribune*) – A former aide to retired West Publishing Co. executive Gerard Cafesjian has been indicted by a federal grand jury on charges that he embezzled millions of dollars from his former employer for more than a decade and did not report the money on his income tax returns.

The indictment, which was handed up Monday and unsealed earlier this month, charged John Waters Jr., of Eden Prairie, with four counts of mail fraud, 16 counts of wire fraud, three counts of income tax evasion and three counts of filing false tax returns.

Waters, 56, started working for Cafesjian in sales and marketing at West Publishing in 1994. In a 2012 lawsuit, Waters said Cafesjian reaped about \$300 million on the sale of West Publishing in 1996 when it was acquired by Thomson Corp., now Thomson Reuters. Waters left with Cafesjian to manage his considerable investments and philanthropic activities.

Cafesjian, who now divides his time between Roseville and Naples, Fla., is a patron of the arts and Armenian causes and the primary benefactor of the historic State Fair carousel that bears his name in St. Paul’s Como Park.

Waters’ suit alleged that Cafesjian stiffed him on \$5 million in deferred compensation.

Cafesjian denied that and countersued, alleging that Waters embezzled about \$5 million from him.

The indictment, which largely mirrors Cafesjian’s allegations, says Waters had signatory authority over a number of Cafesjian’s accounts. It says that from 1999 into 2012, Waters transferred millions of dollars from those accounts to other accounts that he controlled, including one in the name of a deceased foreign exchange student. Waters dummied up Cafesjian’s books and records and tried to keep others from reviewing them, the indictment says.

Prosecutors say that after Waters quit working for Cafesjian full time in 2009, he tried to keep his former boss from reporting the dispute to authorities and warned that harmful information would come out if he did.

In his lawsuit, Waters suggested that he believed he could expose embarrassing secrets about Cafesjian’s private life, family and financial practices.

Cafesjian countered that he had done nothing wrong and accused Waters of trying to “extort his way out of this by threatening scandalous revelations.”

Cafesjian’s attorney in the civil case is Andrew Luger, who has been recommended by US Senators Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken to replace B. Todd Jones, the outgoing US attorney in Minnesota. Luger declined to comment on the indictment.

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MEDAL, from page 4

Karapetyan also expressed his appreciation to several diplomatic dignitaries at the luncheon: Robert Avetisyan, Nagorno-Karabagh’s representative to the US; Karen Israyelyan, first secretary at the Armenian Embassy and Col. Mesrop Nazaryan, defense attaché at the embassy.

Jirair Nishanian’s nephew, Vazrik Nishanian, served as the master of ceremonies for the occasion. The afternoon also featured a performance by the Chamasian Sisters Trio. A traditional madagh meal was donated by the Yepremian family and the luncheon was sponsored by the Ghazarian family.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Holy Trinity Church Holds Trinity Family Festival, Opens Church Schools

By Seta A. Buchter

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston is preparing for its annual Trinity Family Festival, which will be held on Sunday, September 15, beginning at noon, on the grounds of the church, at 145 Brattle St.

Co-chairing this year's Festival Committee are David Dorian and Jack Ekchian, who invite everyone to come ready for a day of fun and fel-

lowship. camaraderie that day offers as we reconnect with family and friends after the summer hiatus," said Dorian.

Traditional Armenian food will be available throughout the afternoon as well as take-out meals, beverages, Armenian coffee and a variety of pastries and desserts. Children's and Family Games will begin at 1:30 p.m., and include relay races, face painting and watermelon-eating contest. The younger generation will be able to enjoy the Moonwalk for Kids from noon to 5 p.m. The Greg Krikorian Ensemble featuring Greg Krikorian, oud and vocals; Leon Janikian,

Tournament!

The Ancient Tradition of the Blessing of the Madagh will take place at 4 p.m., followed by the Raffle drawing for cash prizes. This year's raffle prizes include \$1,000 cash, first prize; \$300, second prize; and \$200, third prize. Tickets can be obtained by calling the Holy Trinity Church office, emailing office@htaac.org, or buying on the day of the Festival.

The morning will begin with the Divine Liturgy at 10 a.m., celebrated by Fr. Vasken A. Kouzouian, pastor of Holy Trinity Armenian Church. On this morning, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the last major Feast Day (*Daghavar*) of the Armenian Church year, will be commemorated. Following the Divine Liturgy, the Antasdan Service (Blessing of the Four Corners) and Basil (Rahan) Blessing will take place. According to the canons of the Armenian Church, no Requiem Service (*Hokehankisd*) will be held.

Holy Trinity Church's Armenian and Sunday Schools will kick-off the 2013-2014 year on the morning of Sunday, September 15, with registration for both schools at 10 a.m., in the Peter Adamian Hall of the church complex.

Sunday School classes, which will start on

September 15, meet weekly from 10:30 a.m. to noon, in the Peter Adamian Hall. The Sunday School program, which ranges in grades from Pre-School through 12, is open to all children and youth, ages 3 to 17. To be eligible for Sunday School, a child must be 3 years of age by September 1, 2013, and toilet-trained. Parents must register their child(ren) as a parental signature is required. For information regarding the Sunday School program, contact Seta A. Buchter, Sunday School Superintendent, at seta@htaac.org, or call the Church office.

The Armenian School program is for children ages 5 through 17, and meets weekly on Sunday mornings from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., for students registered in the Sunday School, and from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m., for students registered in the Armenian School only. Classes are taught in Eastern Armenian in three grade levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced. Armenian School classes will begin on Sunday, September 22. For further information about the Armenian School program, contact Naira Balagyozyan, Armenian School Administrator, at nairab3@gmail.com, or call the Church office.

For further information, email office@htaac.org.



Expert hands guarantee good food at the Trinity Family Festival.

lowship. "Our Trinity Family Festival is always a great afternoon as parishioners and friends come together to kick off the fall season with delicious food, great music, and especially the

clarinet, George Righellis, guitar and vocals; Charles Dermenjian, dumbeg; and Steve Surabian, tambourine, will perform. And don't forget to bring your tavloo board for the Tavloo

Shant Mardirossian to Speak at St. James Men's Club

WATERTOWN — On Monday September 9, Shant Mardirossian, the chairman of the Near East Foundation (NEF), will be the speaker at the dinner meeting of the St. James Armenian Church Men's Club. The topic will be Near East Foundation, which was founded in 1915.



Shant Mardirossian

NEF is affiliated with Syracuse University, where its headquarters are located, and operates in seven countries, which include Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, the West Bank, Sudan, Mali and Armenia. Mardirossian most recently led NEF's effort to establish micro-economic development projects in rural Armenian villages. In his professional life, Mardirossian is a partner and the chief operating officer at Kohlberg & Company, LLC, a leading US middle-market private equity firm.

He is a graduate of the Lubin School of Business at Pace University and holds a bachelor's in public accounting and an MBA with dual concentration in investment management and strategic management.

The social hour starts with Mezza at 6:15 p.m. following by a complete losh kebab and kheyra dinner at 7 p.m., \$12 per person. The dinner meeting will be at the St. James Armenian Church Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, Keljik Hall, 465 Mount Auburn St., Watertown.

Ladies are welcome.

OBITUARY

Grace Emily (Cook) Torosian

BELMONT, Mass. — Grace Emily (Cook) Torosian of Belmont, formerly of Wrentham, died on August 21, after a long illness.

She leaves her husband, Kaspar Torosian, sons Gregory, Markar and Haig; siblings Cynthia Charpentier and her husband Paul, Diane Johnson and her husband Steve and Warren Cook and his wife Marilyn; father-in-law and mother-in-law Himayak and Lucy Torosian and sister-in-law of Susan Torosian.

She was the daughter of the late Howard and

Albina Cook.

Funeral services were at Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Cambridge, on Saturday, August 24. Interment was at Highland Meadow Cemetery, Belmont.

Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral home.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Holy Trinity Armenian Church or St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School, Watertown.

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Donation

In memory of Arsen Demirdjian, Antoine and Rose Bazarbashian and Papken and Anahid Megerian of Philadelphia, Penn., donate \$50 each to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

Arthur Maranian of Belmont, Mass., donated \$150 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, in memory of the late Rev. Ghevont Samoorian.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Bone Marrow Registry Flag Planted atop Mount Ararat

LOS ANGELES – August 1 became an unforgettable day for the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) as a team of mountain climbers, including ABMDR donors, took the organization's flag to the summit of Mount Ararat, in a gesture of pan-national support for the registry's life-saving mission.

The 11-member Ararat Dream Team scaled Mount Ararat as part of a journey through Georgia and Western Armenia. Headed by Harut Der-Tavitian, the team included three ABMDR donors: Hratch Lukassain, Ashot Manukian and Hayk Manukian.

On its way to Mount Ararat, the Ararat Dream Team passed through Javakhk, Georgia, and visited

Tmbka Fortress, where it attended the Vahan Teryan Day celebration, hosted by the Vahan Teryan Museum. The team also visited the ruins of Ani.

Following the arduous climb up Mount Ararat, team members held the ABMDR flag high as the jubilant moment was captured on film.



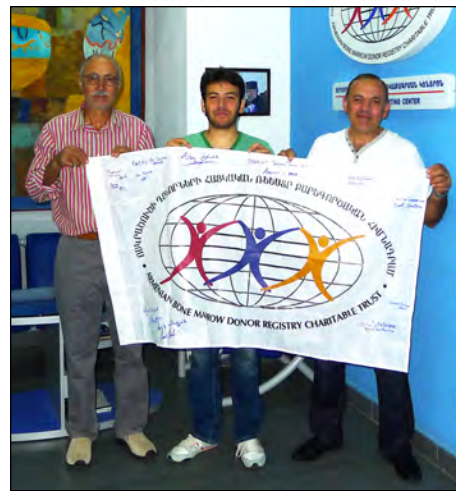
The ABMDR flag being waved on the summit of Mount Ararat.

The Ararat Dream Team also traveled to Lake Van and held a celebration on Akhtamar Island.

Subsequently the ABMDR flag, which was signed by the team members, was brought by the ABMDR donors to the registry's Stem Cell Harvesting Center in Yerevan, where the lab staff congratulated the donors for having completed their remarkable journey.

"We were so very moved by the enthusiasm of the Ararat Dream Team and especially the participating ABMDR donors, who had the ABMDR flag, which we consider a wonderful symbol of pan-Armenian altruism and collabora-

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARMENIAN BONE MARROW DONOR REGISTRY.



The ABMDR donors at the registry's Stem Cell Harvesting Center in Yerevan, are, from left, Hratch Lukassain, Hayk Manukian, and Ashot Manukian holding the ABMDR flag, which was signed by members of the Ararat Dream Team.

tion, wave on the summit of Mount Ararat," said Dr. Sevak Avagyan, executive director of ABMDR.

About the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry: Established in 1999, ABMDR, a non-profit organization, helps Armenians worldwide survive life-threatening blood-related illnesses by recruiting and matching donors to those requiring bone marrow stem cell transplants. To date, the registry has recruited over 25,000 donors in 18 countries across four continents, identified 2,135 patients, and facilitated 16 bone marrow transplants.

Dr. Ara Jeknavorian Receives ASTM International Award

W. CONSHOHOCKEN, Penn. – ASTM International Committee C09 on Concrete and Concrete Aggregates presented the Award of Merit to Ara A. Jeknavorian, PhD, a research fellow at W.R. Grace & Co., Cambridge, Mass. The award and its accompanying title of fellow is ASTM's highest organizational recognition for individual contributions to standards activities.

Committee C09 honored Jeknavorian for his dedicated service and outstanding contributions to standards for traditional and newly developed concrete admixtures and supplementary cementitious materials. He currently serves as a member at large on the C09 executive subcommittee and is a past chairman of Subcommittee C09.23 on Chemical Admixtures. A member of ASTM International since 1984, Jeknavorian was awarded honorary C09 membership status in 2004 and received an Award of Appreciation in 2011.

Jeknavorian's research focuses on the use of analytical chemistry to characterize material in support of product development and troubleshooting product performance issues, and the development of chemical admixtures for concrete mixtures. He has been with WR Grace since 1979 and has authored more than 40 publications and holds 18 patents related to chemical admixtures.

Outside ASTM International, Jeknavorian is a member of the American Chemical Society and the American Concrete Institute. He holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the former Lowell Technological Institute, Lowell, Mass., and earned his master's and doctorate in analytical chemistry from the University of Massachusetts, Lowell.



Dr. Ara Jeknavorian



The ABMDR donors with the staff of the registry's Stem Cell Harvesting Center in Yerevan

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America Celebrates 30th Anniversary

GLENDALE – This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESAs), and their annual banquet will commemorate this occasion. The banquet will be held on Saturday, October 5, at the Armenian Society of Los Angeles, 117 South Louise St. The reception is at 7 p.m., followed by dinner at 8 p.m. The evening's program will include awards, entertainment and dancing.

"Anniversaries provide a time of celebration and reflection of the important moments in a life," stated AESA President Mardy Kazarians, PhD, "and the life of an organization is no exception. For the AESA, there is much history to celebrate, but there is also much more to do to ensure a bright future. This will be an exceptional evening where we will celebrate our organization's 30 years of service by honoring our past presidents for their vision, leadership, and dedication to this organization, as well as to the Armenian community. And for the first time, we will recognize one of our own with our first AESA Service Award," added Kazarians.

The AESA was founded in 1983 in Glendale as a non-partisan and non-sectarian philanthropic organization focused primarily on addressing the professional, technical, and scientific needs of fellow Armenian engineers, scientists, industrialists, and architects throughout the world. The by-laws were established in 1984 and the first council was elected in 1985. The organization was registered in California and DC as a non-profit organization in 1986, and in Armenia as an NGO in 1999. The AESA has several sections in the United States, including New York/New Jersey, New England, Michigan, and Metropolitan Washington DC. Since its inception 30 years ago, the AESA has organized two World Armenian Scientific

Congresses. The First World Congress was held in the United States, and the Second World Congress (jointly organized with the Ararat Academy of Sciences of France) was held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris in 1993.

The AESA has also organized several symposia, including one on "Economic Restructuring of Armenia," which was held in Los Angeles in 1991. This specific symposium attracted more than 200 professionals from the US, Armenia, Canada, UK, France, and Australia. Among the attendees was a 16-member delegation from Armenia, with members from academia and officials of the newly-formed government of Armenia. In addition, the AESA has conducted and facilitated various technical projects in Armenia and in the Armenian diaspora. It has organized numerous workshops and lectures on energy, the environment, transportation, and information processing in Armenia.

Currently, the AESA organizes technical workshops and lectures. It plans and organizes a Science Olympiad program for junior- and senior-high school students, as it has done the past 12 years. This year the AESA begins a new project titled "Green Armenia," which will explore practical and sound solutions to environmental problems in Armenia. In addition, AESA is initiating two new activities – student mentoring and scholarship programs – at the college level. A Robotics Program for junior- and senior-high school students is also being evaluated. "We want AESA to play an important role in the community by providing a forum for young Armenian engineers and scientists to meet and collaborate with their peers," concluded Kazarians.

For banquet tickets, or to learn more, visit AESA's website at <http://aesas.org>.

Fresno Commemorates 98th Anniversary of Musa Dagh Battle

FRESNO – The heroic struggle and victory of the Forty Days of Musa Dagh will be celebrated in Central California on Labor Day Weekend.

The 98th anniversary commemoration of the historic battle and rescue takes place Saturday, August 31, and Sunday, September 1, at the Fresno County Peace Officers Association Training Grounds, 7633 North Weber Ave., next to Camp Pashayan. The commemorative events are open to the public.

In the early decades of the 20th Century, authorities of the Ottoman Empire attempted to force Armenian villagers in the region of Cilicia to change their ways and religious faith. The villagers refused to give in to these demands and climbed a stately peak called Mousa Ler, meaning "Moses Mountain." The villagers resisted the armed soldiers of the Ottoman Empire for 40 days and were res-

cued by the French Allied warship Guichen in the nearby Mediterranean Sea.

The Allied sailors evacuated more than 4,000 villagers to Port Said, Egypt. Two decades later, many of the survivors immigrated to Lebanon and founded the town of Anjar. Austrian author Franz Viktor Werfel immortalized the historical event in his 1933 novel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*.

The commemoration begins at 7 p.m. with traditional Davoul Zoorna and contemporary Armenian music, dancing, food and the preparation of *herissa*, a lamb and whole wheat stew, first prepared by the defenders of Mousa Ler. The weekend will continue at 10:30 a.m. on September 1, with celebration of the Divine Liturgy, Hoki Hankist and blessing of Herissa.

For more information and to make donations, email Hyemynameis@gmail.com or Hagop.Ohanessian@holyltrinityfresno.org.



Hayk Gyokchyan

Gyokchyan Named Third Team All-American Complete Team

LANCASTER, Penn. – Hayk Gyokchyan was named to the 2013 National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) Division III All-America Third Team announced today. The team is selected and voted on by member coaches of the National Association of Basketball Coaches. The honor marks the 25th time and fourth straight year a member of F&M's basketball team has received All-America recognition.

The honor is the first All-America recognition for Gyokchyan and the fifth postseason honor this year. He was named to the NABC Middle Atlantic All-Region First Team, D3hoops.com Middle Atlantic Region Second Team, Centennial Conference (CC) Player of the Year and earned a spot on the All-CC First Team.

Gyokchyan (Beirut, Lebanon/The Lawrenceville School) ranked in the top-10 in multiple statistical categories in the conference. He was fourth in both rebounds per game (7.5) and three-point percentage (38.9), sixth with 15.9 points per game and seventh with a one block per game average. Gyokchyan scored in double-figures in 19 contests, including eight 20-plus point performances and had six double-doubles this season.

Earlier in the season he became the 33rd player to reach 1,000 points in program history. He finished his career ranked fourth in blocks (133), sixth in games played (116) and seventh with 712 rebounds.

Gyokchyan headlined a senior class that put together one of the best four-year spans in the history of the program. During their time at F&M, the Diplomats won four regular season titles, three conference titles, went to three NCAA Tournaments and made it to the Elite Eight twice. The group had 20 plus win seasons all four years and finished with a 97-21 overall record, 60-12 CC record and went 62-7 at the Mays Center with a 14-4 postseason mark.

F&M finished the season with a 20-7 mark, won its fifth-straight regular season title and advanced to the its fifth-straight conference championship game.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Historian Hovannisian Speaks in Australia, Canada

LOS ANGELES – Prof. Richard Hovannisian has continued to bring Armenian history and awareness of the Armenian Genocide to audiences worldwide. From August 5 through 7, he participated in an international conference at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia on “Aftermath: Sites and Sources of Memory.” The Dr. Jan Randa Conference in Holocaust and Genocide Studies was sponsored by the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation and drew scholars from Australia, East Asia, the Middle East, the Europe and both North and South America. Hovannisian’s presentation on the Armenian post-Genocide experience and the role of Armenian oral history in reconstructing the historical event was the sole paper on the Armenian Genocide, embellished by brief film clips of survivors from Banderma, Smyrna, Aintab, Kharpert and Sepastia.

The presentation roused intense discussion about survivor testimony and comparisons of Armenian oral histories with those of survivors of subsequent genocides ranging from the Holocaust, to Cambodia, Indonesia and East Timor and Rwanda.

While in Australia, Hovannisian was invited by the joint Armenian Genocide 100th anniversary committees of both Melbourne and Sydney to open a series of planned events with a discussion and visual presentation on historic Western Armenia. The presentations were embellished with video segments prepared by his daughter, Ani Hovannisian Kevorkian, of interaction with the last remaining Armenians in Dikranagerd/Diyarbakir and the Armenian-speaking Hamshen people in the mountains near the Black Sea in easternmost Turkey. The capacity audiences in both cities showed particular appreciation for these real-life scenes filmed as recently as June.

From Australia, Hovannisian traveled directly to Toronto to participate in the two-week Genocide and Human Rights University Program at the University of Toronto, sponsored by the Zoryan Institute. The enrolled

students and teachers were of Armenian, Turkish, Kurdish, Pakistani, Nigerian, Argentine, Mexican, American and Canadian backgrounds. During his first day at the institute on August 9, Hovannisian presented an overarching analysis of the Armenian

es beginning with absolute denial to the more effective approaches of explaining or rationalizing the event and relativizing the calamity by asserting that all peoples suffered from the same conditions that may have caused some suffering and loss of life to the alleged victim

August 11, in a program dedicated to the late Prof. Marjorie Housepian Dobkin, whose pioneering work, based in large measure on first-hand interviews and oral histories, led to the publication of the acclaimed book, *The Smyrna Affair*, reissued as *Smyrna 1922*:



Hamshen tea growers, June 2013 (Courtesy of Roupen Berberian)

Genocide from its historical antecedents to the genocidal process itself and the aftermath. On the second day, he focused on denial of genocide, its reasons and motivations, strategies and tactics, and various phas-

group. Under the sponsorship of the Zoryan Institute and 10 community organizations, Hovannisian spoke at the Armenian Community Centre of Toronto on Sunday,

The Destruction of a City. During his talk, Hovannisian also reflected on the importance of the Armenian community of Smyrna/Izmir prior to the great fire that destroyed the thriving city in September 1922.

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Arts & Living

50-year Retrospective by Tom Vartabedian on Sept. 15 at ALMA

WATERTOWN – Tom Vartabedian, award-winning writer and photographer, will present a program titled, “A 50-year Retrospective into Journalism,” at the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) on Sunday, September 15, at 7 p.m.

The event is co-sponsored by Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc.

Vartabedian will talk about his 50-year career with the *Haverhill Gazette* and his work as a correspondent for the Armenian press since the early 1960s. His column in the *Armenian Weekly*, titled “Poor Tom’s Almanac,” is the oldest-running columns in the Armenian press. He is also a regular contributor to other publications, including the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, the *Armenian Reporter*, *USA Armenian Life* and *Asbarez*. He will reminisce about some of his favorite stories – both nostalgic and entertaining. An exhibit of his favorite photojournalism prints over the past five decades will be on display. A reception will follow.

Vartabedian was born, raised and educated in Somerville, studying journalism at Boston University. As a writer-photog-



Journalist Tom Vartabedian

rapher for the *Haverhill Gazette*, he has garnered more than 50 awards from United Press International, Associated Press and New England Press Association before retiring in 2006.

In 2002, Vartabedian was presented the Master Reporter Award by the New England Society of Newspaper Editors. He also received the Distinguished Citizen Award from the Boy Scouts of America; the Armenian Prelacy’s Eagle Award for community service; American Cancer’s Sword of Hope Award; ASA Sarafian Award for good citizenship; four Massachusetts Golden Press Awards from the American Legion Auxiliary for stories in the best interests of youth; Eunice Shriver Foundation award for annual coverage of Massachusetts Special Olympics Games and New England Photographer of the Year three times.

Vartabedian has taught at Armenian School for 30 years at St. Gregory Church in North Andover and remains a strong advocate for Armenian Genocide education in our public schools where he gives frequent presentations dedicated to his mom Jennie, the last Genocide survivor in Haverhill. He is on the Board of Directors of Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc.

He lives in Haverhill with his wife of 48 years, Nancy, a retired schoolteacher. The couple has three children and six grandchildren.

The event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will follow the program.



Bulgarian singer and MAP student Eliz Gagosian (right) performs alongside renowned mezzo-soprano Anna Mayilyan (center) and Armine Khachatryan, a member of her a capella trio, at MAP’s final gala concert this summer.

AGBU’s Musical Armenia Program Launches Young Artists’ Careers

NEW YORK – In just one year, the AGBU Musical Armenia Program (MAP), which was launched last summer to connect talented young artists with their cultural heritage, has given participants even more: career opportunities.

With MAP’s support, Shaghig Amy Kazandjian, a recent college graduate from Canada and a French horn player, has landed a spot in the Yerevan State Opera and Ballet orchestra. The contract will keep Kazandjian in Yerevan through the upcoming fall season, where she is building on the weeks of intensive training that all MAP participants enjoyed.

Kazandjian, who joined the Yerevan State Opera and Ballet in two summer concerts, wasn’t the only MAP student to take the public stage in Armenia during the program, which ran from July 15 to August 4.

Percussionist and composer Andrea Godoshian, who hails from Michigan, played alongside celebrated jazz musician Armen “Chico” Tutunjian and his band in a live show and each of MAP’s seven participants have their sights set on performing in the 2014 Renaissance International Music Festival in Gumri after receiving a personal invitation from the festival’s director, pianist Karine Avdalyan.

Avdalyan was one of the many renowned artists whom the students met as they practiced playing the French horn, harp, percussions, viola, violin and singing and composing. Several performers taught back-to-back MAP seminars, including mezzo-soprano Anna Mayilyan and music historians Gagik Ginosyan, Mher Navoyan, Araxy Saryan and Arthur Shakhnazaryan. Each offered instrumental and vocal lessons in addition to lectures, which spanned genres and years, such as those on 19th-century Armenian classical music, Armenian jazz and folk music, medieval spiritual music and 18th century Armenian minstrel music. For the MAP artists, who call Bulgaria, Canada and the United States home, it was an experience they could only find in Armenia.

When the MAP participants weren’t training with professionals, they were collaborating with some of Armenia’s youngest artists. On a special trip to the Talin Music School with members of the global group El Sistema Armenia, they joined students in an interactive class focused on Komitas’ work. The MAP students themselves were following in the footsteps of the legendary musician, who travelled across the country gathering and recording different songs, and before leaving they gave a joint concert with the school’s youth. AGBU Performing Arts Department Artistic Director Hayk Arsenyan commented on the significance

of the visit, stating, “During the time we spent at the Talin school, we got to the heart of the MAP mission: to bring Armenians from around the world closer to the country’s culture and arts. Watching the students collaborate, it became clear we accomplished that goal. They were inspired by everything they learned from the children of Talin and are sure to take the experience with them when they return home and move forward in their careers.”



Celebrated violinist Bagrat Vardanyan provides one-on-one instruction to MAP participant Alec Ohanian.

see MUSICAL, page 11

Live Musical Tradition Continues at ‘Return to Asbury’ Kef Weekend

By Taleen Babayan

ASBURY PARK, N.J. – While decades have passed since the original Asbury Park *kef* events, which were geared towards the Armenian community in the 1950s and 1960s, one important element of that generation has withstood the test of time: the performance of traditional live Armenian music.

For the second year in a row, a new generation of diasporan-born Armenian musicians entertained a sold-out crowd with their traditional Armenian instruments and renditions of popular songs at the “Return to Asbury Kef Weekend,” which took place August 2-4 at the Ocean Berkeley Waterfront Hotel.

The weekend gave Armenians of that historic era in Armenian-American history the opportunity to reminisce about the old days and the new generation a glimpse of a special time among Armenians who would summer at Asbury Park and attend Armenian *kef* events. Live Armenian instruments, singers and musicians were around the whole weekend, from an impromptu “jam session” by the hotel’s pool – where all attendants had a chance to step in and grab a mic, thump on a *dumbeg* or play the violin – and the main event of the weekend, the *barahantes* (*kef* dance).

Headlining the musical portion of the weekend were members of the Michael Gostanian Ensemble and the Aravod and Artsakh bands. Although they are all US-born, they have learned to play traditional Armenian instruments and sing Armenian songs, ensuring that a part of Armenian culture does not get lost in the shuffle of assimilation.

The interest, will, dedication and inspiration the musicians were exposed to in their youth certainly helped them forge not only an interest in the music, but to learn the instruments and songs as well. The original *kef* musicians such as Mal Barsamian, Onnik Dinkjian, John Berberian, Richard Hagopian and Richie Berberian, served as an impetus for the younger generation to pursue this genre of music.

Anthony Deese, a member of the Artsakh Band, who plays the guitar, piano and keyboard, studied Armenian music during his teen years by listening to recordings of Mal Barsamian and the Vosbikian Band in particular.

“The Armenian community has a strong affection for its music and, as such, the music has a rich history,” said Deese, a Philadelphia native.

Armen Sevag, who played the violin as a guest with the Michael Gostanian Ensemble, was taught music by his late grandmother, Helen Sevag, who herself performed the violin for 85 years. His music education continued when he joined the Aravod Ensemble in 1997 and explored other instruments such as the oud and kanun. His experiences at Camp Haiastan and Camp Vartan and his exposure to music there also stemmed his interest and opened him up to Armenian music, which “speaks to our soul as Armenians and is a symbol of our survival and triumph,” said Sevag.

Gostanian’s exposure to Armenian music also started at a young age while in Armenian school and church. A music session with a good session with a good

see KEF, page 11



ARTS & LIVING

AGBU's Musical Armenia Program Launches Young Artists' Careers

MUSICAL, from page 9

If the trip to Talin introduced the MAP group to Armenia's future generation of artists, museums tours helped them better understand the country's musical history. MAP brought the students to the house-museums of cultural icons Aram Khachaturian, Sergei Paradjanov, Alexander Spendiarian and Hovhannes Tumanyan for an intimate look at their lives and work. At Yerevan's Charentz Museum of Literature and Art, where PAD Director Arsenyan led a lecture on Armenian composers of the Ottoman Empire, they also

had the opportunity to see firsthand the manuscripts and instruments owned by Armenia's earliest musicians, including Sayat Nova and Jivani. MAP participant Stephan Atamian of New York commented, "I realized throughout the summer that some of the only documentation we have of our musical heritage is archived in Armenia's wonderful museums. At the same time, I realized that it is up to us Armenian artists to bring those pieces to life as only music can."

At the final MAP gala concert on Sunday, August 4, in the salon of Khachaturian's house-

museum, the participants gave new life to pieces that dated from as early as the fourth century. They also showcased their own work. Before an audience of tourists and fellow musicians, the entire MAP ensemble, together with their instructors, performed an original piece composed by student Andrea Godoshian especially for the event. It was one of the highlights of an evening that was made complete when student and vocalist Eliz Gagosian joined Mayilyan's a cappella trio.

The final gala concert marked the end of a summer of learning and creating. But for the

students, it was only the beginning. As Shaghig Kazandjian shared, "Through MAP, I was able to discover Armenia and embrace my culture, history and identity in ways I never could have imagined. I learned so much about my musical heritage and I can't wait to continue to immerse myself in Armenian music in the months to come. I'm so excited to join the orchestra of the Yerevan State Opera and Ballet, a once in a lifetime opportunity that I know I will look back on years from now as one of the highlights of my career-thanks to AGBU."

Live Musical Tradition Continues at 'Return To Asbury' Kef Weekend

KEF, from page 10

friend of his, however, made him decide to take his interest in Armenian music a step further.

"It started out as just something fun for us to do on our own, but word got out and along came our first gig," said vocalist Gostanian, who also plays the *kanoun* and bass guitar. "Seeing all the people get enjoyment out of our music sealed the deal."

Growing up as a part of the East Coast Kef Music scene, Antranig Kzirian took a special interest in the *oud*, which he found to be "mystical and intriguing." Although he also played the guitar, he decided to focus more specifically on the *oud* during his college years.

"Everyone talked about the oud players and their respective techniques and styles and this really resonated with me as a youth," said Kzirian.

As a member of the Aravod Band, "the soul and depth" of Armenian music has always inspired him.

The youngest member playing at "Return to Asbury" was Brian Ansbikian, who played the oud with the Michael Gostanian Ensemble. Ansbikian, who comes from a lineage of oud players — his grandfather and father were talented musicians — says that Armenian folk music is part of his DNA.

"My great-grandfather, born in Kayseri, was a percussionist and vocalist who performed with

the legendary Udi Hrant Kenkulian, Marko Melkon and Madlen Araradian," said Ansbikian. "He made a point of encouraging my father to begin playing and the tradition continued with me. When I think about it, I realize how fortunate I was to grow up listening to 78rpm records of my own great grandfather singing and playing *dumbeg*."

He further learned the craft by studying with renowned *oudist* John Berberian.

The opportunity for an event like this to showcase live Armenian music and the talent behind the performances, came to fruition through Robin Barone's leadership, who after spending time abroad in Armenian communities, realized live Armenian music was a key missing ingredient.

"I quickly learned that I was spoiled to be raised in Philadelphia and surrounded by friends who were third-generation musicians," said Barone. "Every party that I could recall had live music."

To that end, she decided to resurrect the Asbury Armenian *kef* event and make it accessible to the new generation of Armenians, who could hear traditional Armenian music performed in front of them.

"Armenian music is the heart and soul of any community event in my opinion," said Barone. "It is my favorite part of our culture and an aspect many people take for granted. Most



Members of the Michael Gostanian Ensemble entertaining the crowd with traditional Armenian *kef* music.

often, when you hear an Armenian song, doesn't your heart fill with joy and your body want to start dancing?"

She reached out to the musicians who were her childhood friends and invited them to perform at the event.

"Like myself, their families had a connection to the Armenian social life in Asbury decades ago," said Barone. "They immediately understood what I wanted to recreate and supported me whole heartedly. Without their contributions and commitment, this event would not be possible."

Events such as the "Return to Asbury" weekend do more than create a weekend of Armenian camaraderie, music and dance. The organization of an event like this makes sure that Armenian music is being preserved and carried forward.

"Armenian folk music is like the Armenian language, they go hand in hand," said Ansbikian. "Our ancestors fought and died to preserve it, and I believe we have an obligation to ensure it remains intact for future generations."

One way to secure that this music will not be lost is for young Armenians to start playing instruments and contribute to their culture in a more musical and artistic way.

"Without new musicians to draw inspiration from previous artists and make it into something new, we will be left listening to the same songs, same arrangements, and same albums," said Deese.

"Beyond the cultural preservation element is the joy of the family atmosphere in creating music together with good friends," said Sevag. "These songs are anchors and roots to our happiest moments growing up and it is a privilege to infuse new life into a culture that would otherwise be forgotten."

The attendees of Return to Asbury and the musicians alike had an enjoyable time throughout the weekend and believe it to be an important event for the Armenian community.

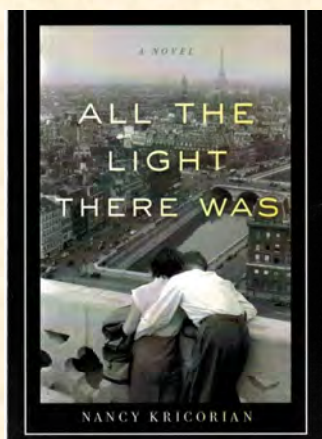
"Events like the Asbury *kef* represent both nostalgia for the past and move us into the future as new generations can be inspired by live music and musicians. Without live musicians to watch and be inspired by, as I was in my youth, the future of Armenian music is in jeopardy," said Sevag, who also noted it was admirable and appropriate for the proceeds to benefit three local Armenian camps, which is where he was first exposed to Armenian music.

"The type of music we play is like history set to music," said Gostanian. "It's a representation of our people, and I think everybody feels a draw to their own history. Every time we play a song, we get to relive a little bit of that history, and at the same time we get to pass it on to someone else."

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ARTS & LIVING

Author Vahan Zanoian Shines Spotlight on Sex Trafficking in Armenia

By Lucine Kasbarian

YEREVAN – Human trafficking represents an estimated \$32 billion per year in international trade. In 2008, the United Nations estimated that nearly 2.5 million people from more than 125 different countries were being trafficked into some 135 countries around the world.

According to the International Organization for Migration, sex trafficking means coercing a migrant into a sexual act as a condition of allowing or arranging the migration. Sex trafficking uses physical or sexual coercion, deception, abuse of power and bondage incurred through forced debt. Trafficked women and children, for instance, are often promised work in the domestic or service industry but, instead, are sometimes taken to brothels where they are forced into prostitution, and their passports and other identification papers are confiscated. They may be beaten or locked up and promised their freedom only after earning – through prostitution – their purchase price and their travel and visa costs.

Vulnerable populations in former Soviet states, such as Armenia, are particularly susceptible to this global phenomenon. Since Armenia's independence, thousands of Armenian women and girls have been taken – to Russia, Turkey, and some Arab states of the Persian Gulf – to be initiated into prostitution.

A 2003-2004 investigation by Edik Baghdasaryan and Ara Manoogian, journalists for <http://www.HETQ.am> and <http://www.TheTruthMustBeTold.com>, concluded that approximately 2,000 Armenian women were involved in the sex trade in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman. Their findings were documented in the film "Desert Nights," as well as a book by the same name.

Earlier this year, Armenian-American author Vahan Zanoian released *A Place Far Away* (Create Space Books, \$16.95), a crime novel about sex trafficking in Armenia. While the storyline reads like a sordid suspense saga, the situations are largely based on actual events, the result of on-the-ground research by the author.

In Zanoian's engrossing tale, the action shifts between the trafficked Lara Galian and Swiss-Armenian investigative journalist Edik Laurian's attempts to uncover what happened to her and her relatives.

Sixteen year-old Lara lives with her family in the poor village of Saralanj, located somewhere in Armenia. Unaware of her striking good looks, Lara becomes the unsuspecting target of a local crime boss, Sergei Ayvazian, who wishes to exploit her beauty. After Lara's skeptical father Samvel rejects Ayvazian's offer to manage a lucrative modeling career for Lara, Samvel is found dead in a ravine. Grieving, sick and penniless, Lara's mother reluctantly agrees to Ayvazian's proposal, and allows Lara to travel abroad. Once in Ayvazian's custody, Lara is beaten, raped and discovers the true nature of the work that awaits her. Shuttled from Moscow to Dubai, Lara is eventually sold, in a one-year contract, to a local sheik. While Lara unwillingly goes along with her handlers, she nevertheless tries to maintain her sanity and plot an escape. At the same time, journalist Edik Laurian discovers and investigates Lara's case in Armenia. As the action unfolds, Edik, Lara, her family and a cast of dubious characters struggle to dictate Lara's destiny, in the lead-up to the thrilling finale.

The following interview with Vahan Zanoian took place in Yerevan on June 20:

Lucine Kasbarian: How did you decide to write this book?

Vahan Zanoian: I discovered the Armenian sex trafficking phenomenon by accident. While on a business trip to Dubai, I ran into a beautiful 17 year-old Armenian girl. The girl was talking with another woman, and I could tell the conversation was strained. It's a long tale, but it took six months to extract her story from her because the girl was very scared. I compensated her for her time so that her pimps would not get suspicious. Finally, she started to trust me and tell me what happened to her. I spent close to two years researching the issue. To be clear, Lara Galian is a composite sketch of four



Vahan Zanoian

Armenian girls I met in Dubai. All the names and locations in the book have been changed to protect the innocent.

LK: What has the reaction been to "A Place Far Away"?

VZ: The book has received very favorable responses and reviews from media and readers. I don't seek to make a profit from this initiative. My aim is to raise awareness, assist the victims and work on prevention.

All proceeds from the book go to the United Methodist Center on Relief (<http://www.UMCOR.org>), a nonprofit organization that helps integrate and rehabilitate freed victims of sex trafficking, and that has a significant presence in Armenia; and Orran (<http://www.ORRAN.am>), a charitable organization that provides a safe haven to the most vulnerable in Armenian society – such as homeless youth forced to live on the streets. They are the first to be picked off by traffickers.

Orran does preventive work, while UMCOR has shelters where they help rehabilitate rescued victims. Rescuing the victims can be especially challenging work since some pimps stage fake rescue attempts to fool the girls. The pimps then lock them up, beat them and thus deter them from considering genuine rescue attempts in the future. But there are not enough resources or money to do everything that needs to be done.

LK: In June, your book was translated into the Armenian language. Tell us about that.

VZ: To help launch this new edition in Armenia, I appeared on perhaps every major talk show on Armenian television. A reception was held at US Ambassador [John] Heffern's home in Yerevan, which was attended by around 100 people, including journalists and organizations engaged in the struggle against human trafficking.

Unfortunately, today's Armenia is divided into the filthy rich who don't read, and the penniless class who love to read but can't afford to buy books. Thus, nowadays, Armenia does not boast a widespread reading public as it once used to. That said, trafficking of Armenian women is a hot topic in certain circles right now. My book costs 3,000 drams [about \$7.50], which most native Armenians cannot afford. So I'm not sure how well the book is selling in Armenia, even though it did make it to the top of a bestseller list compiled by Armenpress.

LK: What did you want to accomplish by writing this book?

VZ: I wanted to use gripping suspense to expose one of the most significant issues of our time. I also wanted to help create awareness about the criminal class in Armenia. If we sugarcoat that aspect of life because of national pride, we are doing our country and people a great disservice. Aside from telling the main story, I also wanted to showcase the Armenian people, our history, our culture and our moral courage. For example, I wrote about the beauty of Armenia's landscape as a way to remind people of our nation's gifts, our undeniable assets and to inspire the people who, more than ever, need a moral uplift.

LK: What message would you like to send to

the young, poor or disadvantaged women of Armenia?

VZ: Don't fall for promises that sound too good to be true or appeal to your vanity. When you face poverty, there are other alternatives. A 16 year-old will trust her own circle of friends or relatives, many of whom might sell her off. This could include former childhood classmates who have fallen in with a bad crowd, brothers who have drug addictions to feed, or uncles who have gambling debts to pay. They don't think twice about bartering a friend or relative to feed their habits.

LK: Do some of the girls escape and return home? Why do some stay even after they have "paid their debts"?

VZ: For the vast majority of them, escape seems impossible. For many, there are moral issues that can't be overcome. How can a girl resume a respectable life in Armenia if she has been dishonored through prostitution? These thugs rule by fear. The traffickers, pimps and madams are all Armenian. They pay off the police, too.

LK: What do you say to those Armenians who don't want to call attention to this trend because of how shameful it is?

VZ: We can't say *amot eh* [it's shameful], get embarrassed and stay quiet. Our silence makes us participants in this crime. The best thing for traffickers is this kind of radio silence on their activities. By exposing them, we help the victims. If I had the means, I'd freely distribute the book to every Armenian over 18, both inside and outside Armenia. Speaking out could also make public officials more diligent. After the "Desert Nights" documentary surfaced, Armenian authorities began to take notice and action. Before this, the officials would consider the casualties to be complicit in the crimes rather than victims of crime.

LK: What would you like to see happen regarding human trafficking?

VZ: There are many great organizations that fight against the symptoms of trafficking. One is House of Hope (<http://mer-hoos.org/>). It provides teenage girls from state-run orphanages with a safe home, a family environment, and psychological support, as well as life and job-training skills. While such organizations do valuable work, they treat the symptoms affecting these girls but not the root causes, which are the pathetic economic and social conditions in Armenia.

Seventy years of Soviet rule, broken homes, fathers who have left their families to work abroad and did not come back – all these have contributed to the decay of our collective moral fiber. In 1915, Armenian women threw themselves into the Euphrates River to die rather than be raped by Turks. Now, underprivileged Armenian women and families are turning to prostitution as a survival option.

Some improvements are happening, and I'd like to see this continue. The police in Armenia are more cooperative on this issue. We need more people working with victims, prevention organizations, law enforcement, and victim rehabilitation and reintegration programs. There is a new flow of victims every day, so we must stop it at the source while taking care of the existing victims. But as I said earlier, the root cause is the horrible economic and social conditions in the country. Unless that problem is addressed, this phenomenon will only get worse.

LK: In writing this novel, you also managed to incorporate personal views and a Diasporan's desire to be understood by native Armenians. For example, the character of Edik writes verse as he marvels at the Armenian landscape. One reviewer said the descriptions were so compelling it could bolster tourism to Armenia. The same Edik ruminates about Armenian ancestral moral codes, saying, "The ultimate human dignity was living within one's means." Your family's repatriation experience is represented, too, as the Galianes were aghbars, a pejorative term for "brother" that was and still is assigned to some repatriates. Would you talk about this?

VZ: As you rightly say, the book is about more than the story of one victim of trafficking. In a novel like this, I felt obliged to also describe the country, both in its beauty, history, and in the goodness of the common man, as well as in its deep-rooted problems, such as the rule of the ruthless oligarchs, and the corruption, and

fear that they spread. The dynamic between the local Armenians and the Diaspora Armenians is part of the post-independence Armenian reality, and could not have been excluded from the narrative. The contrast between how Diasporan Armenians generally react to situations toward which local Armenians are largely indifferent has always intrigued me, and I wanted to incorporate that aspect in the novel.

LK: The character of Edik also talks about how in post-Soviet Armenia, authority figures could not be challenged without serious and often fatal consequences, and how the "Western, activist approach has no place in this psyche." Please talk about this concept.

VZ: One of the foundations of communist philosophy and the Soviet system that ruled Armenia was the alleged precedence of the public and collective good over individual rights. Individualism, which was the important driving force of Western civilizations and philosophy, had no place on the Soviet system. To this day I see this in Armenia when, for example, I was following peoples' attitude toward Raffi Hovannisian's way of presidential campaigning. Everyone knows the current leadership is bad, but no one believes it can be changed. Can you imagine that attitude in the U.S. or Western Europe? A handful of oligarchs, no matter how elaborate their system of patronage and bureaucratic loyalty, would not be able to rule a country when everyone knows and sees what they are doing. And yet, they get away with it in Armenia because people have been conditioned – under seventy years of Soviet rule – to accept authority, not to challenge. Only when that link in this vicious cycle is broken will Armenia start the process of healing.

LK: In the narrative, you present an act of retribution that comes about after authorities do nothing to apprehend and punish criminals. Do you think there is a place for vigilantism in today's Armenia?

VZ: Vigilantism is a dangerous thing to advocate, and that is not what I am advocating. It is dangerous simply because it can easily lead to new gangs, gang wars, and more destruction. So popular or widespread vigilantism is not the answer. But there have been critical moments in history when the situation gets so desperate that acts of "Divine Retribution" save the day. I think one celebrated case like that goes a long way in shaking things up and waking dulled consciences, not to mention giving people some hope.

LK: What's next?

VZ: I plan to return to Dubai to do additional research for a sequel book and follow up on the whereabouts of the unfortunate girls I'd met.

LK: How can readers help?

VZ: They can help raise public awareness by circulating the documentary film, "Desert Nights": <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL582F8F6B42B3277A>

They can circulate this interview. They can devise a way to send a copy of this book to every member of the U.S. Congress.

They can buy print or electronic copies of *A Place Far Away* for colleagues, friends and decision makers. <https://www.createspace.com/4061270>.

In September, I'll be touring the Eastern United States and Canada to promote the book. I will be delivering presentations at Sts. Vartanantz Church in Ridgefield, NJ on September 22 and the Armenian Diocese in New York City on September 26. Details are available on the book's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/APlaceFarAway>

LK: Why did you choose self-publishing?

VZ: I tried to go the established route, but found it to be one of the most exasperating experiences of my life. The prevailing practice in the industry is to require authors to submit a one-page pitch letter to agents for representation consideration. I resented trying to encapsulate the thrust of what became *A Place Far Away* into a one-page synopsis, but nevertheless approached a total of 22 agents – all to no avail. Since I didn't care about the perceived prestige that comes with being affiliated with a traditional publisher, I decided to produce the book on my own to maintain editorial control. I have no regrets.



ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

SEPTEMBER 4 — One Church, One Nation Book Presentation by photographer Hrair Hawk Khatcherian on his mission to photograph every Armenian church in the world; 7:30 p.m., at ALMA, 65 Main St., Watertown; free admission.

SEPTEMBER 8 — Greater Worcester Armenian Chorale 13th Anniversary Gala concert and dinner, 12:30 p.m., Cultural Center of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour, 34 Boynton Street, Worcester. Led by conductor Konstantin Petrossian, soloist Narine Ojakhyan, "Arevig" Armenian Children's Dance Group. Reservations call Elizabeth Orsi 508-865-9432. Tickets \$25.00, \$12.00 children; for program donations call Charles Der Kazarian 508-963-2076.

SEPTEMBER 8 — Annual Husenig Foundation PICNIC. at Husenig Grove, Simmons St., Rehoboth, featuring live music by Gary Kashmanian's New England All Star Band. Delicious Husenig-style shish kebab, losh kebab, khey-ma, chicken, pilaf. Also bake table and raffle. Starts at noon. For more information contact Marc Janigian, 401-942-3477.

SEPTEMBER 8 — Sayat Nova Dance Company performs at Peabody International Festival with favorite dances from their repertory; 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Members of the Dance Company manning dessert booth featuring homemade delicacies; Peabody Square on Lowell Street. For details, call Peabody Town Hall.

SEPTEMBER 8 — Picnic Festival, St. Gregory Armenian Church, 158 Main St., North Andover, 12:30-5:30 p.m., featuring Armenian music by Leon Janikian, Jason Naroian, Joe Kouyoumjian, John Arzigian, along with Siroun Dance Group; Armenian food and pastries. For more info, visit www.saintgregory.org.

SEPTEMBER 9 — St. James Men's Club Meeting hosts speaker Shant Mardirossian, chairman of the Near East Foundation, an international development organization; 6:15 p.m. (social hour) and 7 p.m. (dinner); losh kebab and khey-ma dinner, \$12. Ladies welcome; Charles Mosesian Cultural & Youth Center- Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown.

SEPTEMBER 10 — Staged reading of Joyce Van Dyke's "Deported/ A Dream Play," 7 p.m. at Clark University, Little Center, 950 Main Street, Worcester. The play tells the story of two friends, the playwright's grandmother and the mother of Dr. H. Martin Deranian during the Armenian Genocide; directed by Judy Braha, featuring a cast from the recent Boston production; Q&A to follow; free. For reservations, email charkarts@clarku.edu.

SEPTEMBER 15 — Talk by Tom Vartabedian titled, "A 50-year Retrospective into Journalism;" 7 p.m., ALMA, 65 Main St., Watertown. Vartabedian, award-winning writer and photographer, will kick off the fall season at ALMA with a talk about his 50-year career with The Haverhill Gazette and his work as a correspondent with the Armenian Press since the early 1960s.

SEPTEMBER 15 — Trinity Family Festival, 12-5 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Delicious food, Armenian music, Children's games, Blessing of Madagh at 4 p.m., raffle drawing and more.

SEPTEMBER 16 — Armenian Church of Our Saviour hosts 20th Annual Golf Tournament at the Sterling Country Club, Sterling, 8:30 a.m. registration, 10 a.m. start; sponsorships and golf registrations still available; contact the church office at 508-756-2931.

SEPTEMBER 21 — Armenian Independent Broadcasting



On September 4, singer Emmy, one of Armenia's most popular singers and former Armenian representative at the Eurovision Song Contest, will perform at 7 p.m. at Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson St., Providence, RI. This marks her first-ever performance in New England. Tickets are \$20. A portion of the proceeds will be given to the Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee.

of Boston presents Avik Deirmenjian's newly published book of poems, *Khachardzan*, 5 p.m. MC Dr. Ara Ghazarian, book presentation by Khajag Mkrtichian, cultural program and reception to follow; free admission; Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington.

SEPTEMBER 22 — Norton Dodge Collection Exhibit Opening: Armenian Art from the Post-Soviet Period, including art by Vartan Gabrielian and Ashot Kazarian; 5 p.m., Guest Nancy Dodge; reception to follow; ALMA's second floor, 65 Main St., Watertown.

SEPTEMBER 28 — Smithsonian Magazine's Annual Museum Day: Free Admission to ALMA. Admission tickets available for download on the Museum Day Live! Website. One ticket admits one person, plus a guest; 65 Main St., Watertown.

SEPTEMBER 28 — Annual "Walk of Life" Walk-a-thon, New England Chapter of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR), in Watertown. To register or donate, visit <http://www.abmdr.am>.

OCTOBER 18 and 19 — St. James Annual Bazaar! Delicious shish, losh, khey-ma and more! Fabulous pastries, manti, kufta and toorshi! Children's activities, vendors galore, farmer's market - Fun! Friends! Family! 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.

OCTOBER 19 — Hye Kef 5 featuring Leon Janikian, Joe Kouyoumjian, Greg Takvorian, Ken Kalajian, Bob Raphaelian and Jay Baronian, Haverhill, MA, 7:30 p.m., Michael's Function Hall- 12 Alpha Street, Tickets: \$40.00 Each Students \$30, includes individually-served mezza platters. Proceeds to benefit all Armenian churches in Merrimack Valley and New Hampshire. Call either John Arzigian, 603-560-3826; Sandy Boroyan, 978-251-8687; Scott Sahagian, 617-699-3581, or Peter Gulezian, 978-375-1616. Organized by Armenian Friends' of America.

NOVEMBER 16 — Armenian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) celebrates 38th Annual Luncheon-Auction at the Burlington Marriott. Silent Auction and Bidding at 11 a.m.; Door Prizes for early bird bidding. \$60 per person; Visa and MasterCard accepted. For reservation information contact awwaauction@gmail.com.

OCTOBER 24 — K. George and Carolann S. Najarian, MD Lecture on Human Rights: In Our Midst: Slavery Unmasked; 7 p.m., Faneuil Hall, Boston, with keynote speaker Siddharth Kara, fellow at the Carr Center Program on Human Trafficking & Modern Slavery, Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Contact Barbara Tellalian for more info: 617-332-1880.

MICHIGAN

SEPTEMBER 6 — Detroit Chapter Tekeyan Cultural Association hosts Soiree Musicale, featuring violinist Henrik Karapetyan and pianist Ken Hakobyan, 7:30 p.m., at the Birmingham Unitarian Church, 38651 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. Program is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Garabed Belian; reception to follow, \$20 donation For reservations, call Diana Alexanian at 248-334-3636 or Karen Koundakjian at (248) 761-9844.

NEW JERSEY

SEPTEMBER 22 — The Armenian Relief Society of Eastern United States, Agnoui, Pergen, Shake and Spitak Chapters, presents Poet and author Vahan Zanoian, as he launches a tour of the US and Canada for his new book, *A Place Far Away*, 2 pm., Sts. Vartanatz Church, 461 Bergen Blvd., Ridgfield. Refreshments will be served.

NEW YORK

NOVEMBER 23-24 — TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group celebrates 15th Anniversary with production of Hagop Baronian's "The Perils of Politeness" (Kaghakavaroutyan Vnasneruh) directed by Gagik Karapetyan from Armenia; Dwight Englewood High School, 315 E. Palisade Ave., Englewood, NJ. Nov. 23, Saturday at 8 p.m. and Nov. 24, Sunday at 4 p.m. For tickets; \$50, \$35, \$25; call Marie Zokian (201)745-8850 or Missak Boghosian at (212)819-0097 or (347)365-6985.

SEPTEMBER 26 — Vahan Zanoian will speak and sign copies of his new book, A Place Far Away, his new novel on human trafficking in Armenia, 7 p.m., at the Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium, 630 Second Ave. Jointly sponsored by the Armenian Studies program of the Department of Youth and Education, the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) and the Fund for Armenian Relief. All Proceeds from the book are being donated to organizations devoted to protecting children.

RHODE ISLAND

SEPTEMBER 4 — Singer Emmy, one of Armenia's most popular singers, who previously represented Armenia at the Eurovision Song Contest, will perform at 7 p.m. at Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson St., Providence, her first-ever performance in New England. Tickets are \$20. A portion of the proceeds will be given to the Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee.

Ararat-Eskijian to Host Lecture on Seizure of Armenian Assets in Aintab

MISSION HILLS, Calif. — Umit Kurt, PhD candidate in the Department of History at Clark University in Worcester, Mass., will present a lecture titled "The Emergence of the New Wealthy Class Between 1915-1922: The Seizure of Armenian Property by Local Elites in Aintab," and the documentary, "My Father's Aintab," on Sunday, September 15, at 4 p.m. at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Hasmik Mgrdichian Gallery, 15105 Mission Hills Road. The lecture is sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). A reception will follow the lecture.

The processes of genocide and deportation directed at Aintab Armenians were in fact put into practice by local notables and provincial elites themselves, and these local actors actually prospered and became a new wealthy social class through the acquisition of Armenians' property and wealth. In this respect, Kurt argues that the Committee of Union and Progress' (CUP) genocide and deportation decree had a certain social background, effective power and control and support mechanism(s) at the local levels. Therefore, what took place at the local areas or periphery deserves to be examined.

By zooming in on Aintab, Kurt sheds light on the origins of the property and wealth of local and provincial elites/notables in Aintab and how massacred and deported Armenians' properties in Aintab changed hands. To date no comprehensive research has been done that examines in detail the expropriation of Ottoman Armenians in general and in Aintab in particular as a component of the genocide.

Kurt, a native of Aintab, holds a BS from Middle East Technical University in political science and public administration and a master's from Sabanci University in the department of European Studies. He is currently an instruc-

tor at Sabanci University. He is the author of numerous articles and several books, including most recently *Kanunlarin Ruhü: Emval-i Metruke Kanunlarinda Soykirimini Izlerini Aramak* (The Spirit of Laws: Seeking for the Traces of Armenian Genocide in the Laws of Abandoned Property, 2012), with Taner Akçam. His main area of interest is confiscation of the Armenian properties and the role of local elites/notables in Aintab during the Armenian Genocide.

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



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN Mirror- Spectator

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EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Gabriella Gage

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Marc Mgrditchian

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:

Edmond Azadian

CONTRIBUTORS:

Florence Avakian, Elizabeth Aprahamian, Daphne Abeel, Dr. Haroutiune Arzoumanian, Taleen Babayan, Prof. Vahakn N. Dadrian, Diana Der Hovanesian, Philip Ketchian, Kevork Keushkerian, Sonia Kailian-Placido, Harut Sassounian, Mary Terzian, Hagop Vartivarian, Naomi Zeytoonian

CORRESPONDENTS:

Armenia - Hagop Avedikian

Boston - Nancy Kalajian

Philadelphia - Lisa Manookian

Berlin - Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Contributing Photographers:

Jacob Demirdjian, Harry Koundakjian, Jirair Hovsepian

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FAX: 617-924-2887

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E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472-1509

COMMENTARY

The Arab Spring and the Armenian Winter

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The political turmoil artificially created in the Arab and Muslim world has come to be named euphemistically as the Arab Spring, as if promising a better future for the citizens of that region. Instead, political instability, economic collapse and bloodbaths have come to be associated with that spring.

As one observes carefully, that “spring” visits certain specific countries, while others are bypassed. And that selection is based on the political orientation of the target country.

The avowed promise of the “spring” is to bring democracy, human rights and freedom to the nations subjected to the breeze of that gentle season. For example, that “spring” never visits a country like Saudi Arabia – a most reactionary country where people’s limbs are chopped off based on antiquated medieval laws and women not only rank as second-class citizens but they are bought and sold much like cattle in marriage. In the same category are Kuwait and the Emirates where the majority of foreign workers are treated as slaves, while the ruling class enjoys obscene opulence.

These are the darling allies of the US and enjoy the political epithet of “moderate,” truth notwithstanding. But the main reason that the breeze of that “spring” does not blow in their direction is because they are never perceived as a threat to our strategic ally, Israel. Thus, the rest of the Arab and Muslim countries are entitled to benefit from that “spring.”

The Middle East correspondent of London’s *Independent*, Robert Fiske, has pointed out the irony of the Arab Spring, where a medieval despotic kingdom like Saudi Arabia is engaged in an open war to bring democracy to Syria, the only Muslim-majority country where political Islam has no place, or at least did not until hired mercenaries were sent to destabilize that strong, progressive, and yes, authoritarian country. Saddam Hussein of Iraq was the first victim of that policy concocted elsewhere in the West and exported to the most stable countries.

This “democratization” campaign begins with the docile media, ridiculed by Mr. Fiske as the tentacles of their respective governments, be it the demonization of the targeted government or a particular ruler until the saturation point where poison and lies have convinced the public that that particular demon deserves to be overthrown.

And then the international law becomes a caricature to justify the lawless actions of the powerful.

All informed and participating agencies had certified that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction, yet the Bush-Cheney administration had decided to topple Saddam Hussein and make the first Arab country to serve as a political and military base for Israel Iraq (namely, in its current semi-autonomous Kurdish region). After one million casualties in Iraq, and 4,500 deaths in the US army and 50,000-60,000 permanently injured veterans to burden the US economy, the carnage is still continuing with the same intensity in Iraq and the US economy still struggles to recover from \$3-trillion war damage. No one is questioning what happened to the “democracy” promised in Iraq. Only Saddam Hussein was sent to the gallows and the perpetrators of the war are still enjoying life in their bunkers and the Halliburtons of the world are reaping the booties of the war.

Syria is next on the chopping block. No one had raised a voice to bring change in Syria – contrary to media fabrications. But the change was introduced in Syria at the butt of guns by mercenaries who have wreaked havoc. Despite coordinated aggression by Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, at the behest of the US president, Assad is still in power. The last chance to destroy that country hinges on the Tomahawk cruise missiles of the US Navy, amassing at this time in the eastern Mediterranean.

Another country to “benefit” from the Arab Spring is Egypt, where a transformation is in the offing as the military tries to tame the violent Muslim Brotherhood.

All these countries had served as a haven to the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Armenian refugees flourished in these countries without discrimination and built affluent communities.

Saddam Hussein protected the Iraqi-Armenian community. The churches, the schools, cultural and youth centers thrived through the government’s generosity. Making such public statements is anathema to the engineers of war but they are only the truth. Today, those churches, schools and businesses are the target of the vandals who were supposed to bring democracy to Iraq.

As of this writing, the remnants of Aleppo’s affluent Armenian community are under the protection of Assad’s government, who had treated the Armenians as creative and privileged citizens of Syria. Should that government fall, Armenians would be the first target of the Jihadists who have put Aleppo under siege.

Glenn Beck – otherwise the most unsavory of political commentators – circulated recently a graphic video and stated, “We are supporting cannibals.” At this moment those cannibals are at the doorsteps of each Armenian still stranded in Aleppo.

The Syrian War has already spilled over into Lebanon where another affluent and well-established Armenian community is affected.

Egypt was one of the safest countries in the Middle East, ironically, safer than even the US. Not any more. Blood is flowing in the streets and burglaries, kidnappings and rapes have destroyed the fabric of society. Many Coptic churches have been burnt down. The attempt to burn St. Gregory Armenian Church, on one of the main thoroughfares in Cairo, was not successful, but that does not give comfort to the Armenian community, as the Christians have become the unwanted minorities in the country, targeted by the very same seekers of “democracy” that the West supports. Many of those freedom seekers, after the dust settles, show themselves to be intransigent and hard-core fundamentalist Muslims that turn on their Western sponsors.

The Arab Spring has only brought mayhem to the countries it has visited thus far. There are no organized Armenian communities in Libya and Tunisia, but those countries also have been destabilized, threatened with violence and fragmented.

With the fall of the “Evil Empire,” the balance of the world power was destroyed and the Western countries have a free hand to “tame” the rest of the small nations by promising democracy and offering bloodbaths.

Thus far, the “Arab Spring” has turned into the Arab nightmare. In the process, Armenian communities are destroyed. A century after the Genocide displaced Armenians once again are forced to join the ranks of the world refugees, abandoning their ancestral homes and churches, as well as prosperous businesses and affluent cultural life. The Arab Spring has created an Armenian winter.

Location-Specific Ethics in Armenia and the US

By Mihran Aroian

You just entered a coffee shop where the smell of freshly baked muffins is wafting from the oven. You step up to the counter and order a large to-go cup of freshly brewed coffee along with a banana-nut muffin. You give the young clerk \$10 and are rewarded with a steaming hot cup of coffee and a freshly baked muffin. As you walk out the door, you count your change and notice that the clerk gave you change for a \$20 bill. What would you do?

You have three choices: go back to the clerk and return the money, leave the store and commit to yourself to pay back the money next time you return, or enjoy the coffee, muffin, and the extra \$10!

Having done this little experiment for many years with thousands of college students in Texas, the results in the US are 60 percent keep the free money, 15 percent promise to return the money next time they visit the

store, and 25 percent return the excess money to the clerk.

I have done this same experiment in Armenia with four classes for a total of approximately 100 students and the results are as follows. Two students keep the free money and 98 students return the money. That is pretty amazing when you stop to think about it. In Armenia, where the per capita income is far below the US, people are willing to act more ethically. Now, we don’t know what actually happens – but nor do we know in the US! In the US, when you ask the students why they would keep the extra money, the answer is typically that the clerk made the error and why should the customer be held responsible? In Armenia, the students immediately recognize that the clerk will be held responsible for the monetary error and the likelihood is high that the clerk will lose his job or, at the very least, have to make up the difference. In the US, there are a few students who recognize this same negative outcome for the clerk.

On a very different subject, the likelihood of

overt cheating (as defined by my most higher educational institutes in the US) is also very different when compared to Armenia. I asked students in Armenia if their friend was unable to come to class to take an exam, would they step in and take the exam for the absent student? Although I have not asked this question in the US, I am confident enough to know that 100 percent of the students would say that this was both unethical and against the policies of their university.

In Armenia, approximately 25 percent of the students said that they would take the exam for their friend. In their mind, it had nothing to do with cheating – since they did not personally benefit. They were simply helping a friend who was unable to attend class. What was even more surprising was that only a few of the students recognized that they had signed a code of conduct that prohibited this course of action. How could so few students recognize this behavior as unethical? How could they not know that they had signed a

see ETHICS, page 16



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Why the Reelection of Aliyev Is In Armenia's Best Interest

While visiting a youth camp on August 18, President Serge Sargsian was asked several questions on domestic and foreign issues. One particular question attracted the most attention due to the president's unexpected answer.

When asked which candidate's election in Azerbaijan's upcoming presidential race is in Armenia's best interest, Sargsian surprised everyone by endorsing the reelection of incumbent President Ilham Aliyev.

Normally, when politicians are asked for their preferred candidate in a foreign election, they refrain from expressing an opinion or simply state that it's the choice of that country's voters. In this case, Sargsian did not shy away from expressing his clear preference and provided the following explanation as to why Aliyev's reelection in October for a third term is in Armenia's interest:

"For Armenia, and not only for Armenia, neighbors that are on the democratic path of development are more beneficial. Hence, the conclusion that as a neighbor, and particularly as a negotiating partner, a democratic Azerbaijan

is definitely more beneficial to us. But, if we set aside this consideration, the answer to the question is: the victory of incumbent President Ilham Aliyev would be most beneficial for us. We have gone through a long, albeit difficult, negotiating process and the path for a resolution is practically outlined, at least through public acceptance of the principles proposed by the co-chairs of the Minsk Group. We have been actively negotiating for the last four years. Certainly, I wouldn't say that the negotiating process is very active right now; nevertheless, we have made some progress, and if, after the election, Ilham Aliyev could muster the will and rise above his impetuous Armenophobia, I think this is the most acceptable and beneficial option for us."

Sargsian's statement was promptly criticized both at home and, not surprisingly, in Azerbaijan. Opposition leaders in Yerevan were appalled that Armenia's president would favor the reelection of Aliyev who has repeatedly threatened to attack Karabagh (Artsakh). They wondered how the authoritarian and warmongering president of Azerbaijan could be beneficial to Armenia. Azeri leaders were also unhappy with Sargsian's endorsement. Novruz Mammadov, Senior Advisor to Aliyev on Foreign Affairs, harshly condemned Armenia's president for claiming that Aliyev's reelection would be in Armenia's best interest. In addition, Mammadov criticized Azerbaijan's opposition parties for exploiting Sargsian's endorsement in their "dirty campaign" against Aliyev. Mammadov concluded by boasting that Azerbaijan's president does not need Sargsian's support, because Aliyev enjoys the backing of such prominent world leaders as US President Barack Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

While Sargsian conditioned his support for Aliyev on the merits of continued progress in the Artsakh negotiations, one can think of additional reasons why Aliyev's reelection is in Armenia's best interest:

- Aliyev is a vulnerable leader who is universally condemned for being autocratic, corrupt and a major violator of human rights.
- Aliyev has wasted huge amounts of his country's oil wealth in enriching himself, his family and cronies.
- He has spent billions of dollars buying weapons that have not helped him recover a single inch of Artsakh territory.
- The reelection of an inept Aliyev is a liability for Azerbaijan and an asset for Armenia. If he loses the presidency, his replacement could be a more effective leader who can pose a clear danger to the security of Armenia and Artsakh.
- Sargsian's endorsement of Aliyev diminishes his credibility in the eyes of the Azeri people who would wonder why the leader of Armenia, demonized as the enemy of Azerbaijan, is supporting their president. Indeed, conspiracy theorists must be having a field day in Azerbaijan. Since Aliyev's reelection to a third term is a foregone conclusion due to the country's traditionally fraudulent electoral system, Sargsian's preference for Aliyev may not lead to his defeat, but would certainly cast a cloud of suspicion on his already tarnished reputation.

Finally, in international relations, it is important to have a predictable counterpart, whether friend or foe. Aliyev's behavior toward Armenia and Artsakh has been thus far quite predictable. Giorgi Lomsadze, writing in EurasiaNet.org, has accurately depicted Sargsian's endorsement of Aliyev as: "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't."

Anarchy in the Hierarchy

EDITORIAL, from page 1

As we approach the threshold of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, unity becomes even more valuable, yet what we observe is further fragmentation and a foolhardy approach toward any authority, dignity and sanctity.

A Dangerous Precedent

The floodgate of the Internet has been thrown wide open and the dirty laundry is abundantly displayed, under the guise of a democratic right to express ideas.

We do not intend to dignify unsigned comments, hurled insults and unsavory remarks by mentioning them here. But one brazen act should worry all Armenians, because this time around, it comes from a quarter that is one of the pillars of the Armenian Church, the Jerusalem Patriarchate.

The Armenian Church has held our people together over many centuries. Since the loss of the homeland, the church has served as a spiritual raft to keep our people afloat over turbulent waters. The hierarchy of the church is the structure of the Armenian soul. Over the centuries, that hierarchy has survived many challenges. Church leaders have had their differences and conflicts. After all, they are human, but they have demonstrated the wisdom and foresight to rise above personality differences and adversities in order to preserve the integrity of that hierarchy for posterity. Once it is shattered, Armenians will be reduced to disparate groups of nomads in this era of globalization.

Today, unity of the church is fractured and all good-will endeavors toward this end have thus far failed to heal the division.

The church rests on four main pillars: The Catholicosates at Echmiadzin and Cilicia and the Patriarchates in Jerusalem and Istanbul.

The Turkish government will never allow any patriarch on the throne of Istanbul who is willing to contribute to the unity and strengthening of the Armenian Church. Instead, the clergy allowed to ascend that throne have to serve as a political tool in the hands of the Turkish government. That development became codified during the reign of Patriarch Mesrob Moutafian, who literally and tragically has succumbed to that pressure, becoming incapacitated.

His Holiness Aram I of Antelias, a courageous vanguard of the Armenian Cause and patron of the Western Armenian language and literature, though still a hostage to the political powers

behind his throne, has only taken minor steps thus far towards unity, despite the demise of the Cold War two decades ago. The conclave of high-ranking clergy planned for September 21-28, to be held in Echmiadzin, offered some hope to create coordination and cooperation between Echmiadzin and Antelias, which would transcend all the structures and hierarchy of the Armenian Church. As of this writing, those hopes are dashed because the Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Nourhan Manoukian, has decided to boycott the gathering, for an unrelated reason.

His Beatitude was elected earlier this year. There were some reservations about his candidacy and he won with a slim majority. At least, that was a message that he did not enjoy the full support of the Brotherhood of St. James; instead, he was elected to rule a house divided. That should have guided him to put his house in order and prove to the Brotherhood that he deserved their trust and could move the 14-century-old institution forward.

Messing with the authorities Is a Dangerous Game

But, unfortunately, he began his reign on the wrong foot, with a politically-incorrect remark about Israeli authorities, who control the destiny of the Patriarchate. Answering a question from a reporter, he dismissed the importance of Israeli government's recognition of the Armenian Genocide. "It is not the end of the world if they don't recognize it," he is reported to have said. And this, at the moment when the Patriarchate was waiting for the approval of his ascension to the Jerusalem throne by the Israeli government.

The law requires that the election of the Jerusalem patriarch be approved by the king of Jordan, the president of the Palestinian Authority and the government of Israel. The Israeli government was the last entity to approve his candidacy, certainly grudgingly, because of their reservations about him.

The Holy Places in Jerusalem rest in one of the most sensitive spots in the world. Every action of the Israeli government is carefully calculated. The reputation and the status of the Patriarchate are at stake when any thoughtless step is taken at the Patriarchate.

All Armenians worry – rightfully – about the patriarch himself and the patriarchate as a whole. They must genuinely support the patriarch to be able to navigate successfully through

the minefield which Jerusalem has come to be.

After carelessly snubbing the Israeli authorities, His Beatitude has directed his ire this time at the Supreme Spiritual Head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, with arguments which hold no rhyme nor reason.

Any patriarch, upon his election, traditionally makes a pilgrimage to Holy Echmiadzin, to renew his vows at the throne of St. Gregory the Illuminator. Instead, His Beatitude traveled to Antelias which demonstrably issued a news release that he was at the Cilician See on personal business. His ill-conceived missive followed a statement by the Dashnag party of France attacking the Catholicos under the pretense of defending Archbishop Norvan Zakarian. The connection and the conclusion do not need any interpretation.

His actions rightfully fueled suspicions that he was being groomed by the powers behind the Cilician See to reinforce the divisive policies of the Antelias See, paving the way to institutionalize the division within the Armenian Church.

After all, since the Cold-War era, the political party behind the See of Antelias has advocated that Holy Echmiadzin limit its jurisdiction over the Dioceses in Armenia and the former Soviet Union and allow Antelias to control the diaspora. This politically-motivated theory was promoted first by Simon Vratsian, the last prime minister of the First Republic and continues to be upheld by his followers, since Antelias refuses the unification of the church in the diaspora.

Despite all the dangers of being labeled as communists – during a dangerous period – the majority of the church continued their loyalty to the traditional spiritual house of Echmiadzin.

Fears of the Brotherhood Materialized

In a very disrespectful letter dated August 3, 2013, His Beatitude has taken on the Catholicos of All Armenians. The letter was circulated for three days on the Internet before reaching the addressee, making plainly obvious that the subject matter of the letter was only an excuse to air his personal grudges against the Pontiff. The words and adjectives, carelessly chosen, betray a dangerous stance for a clergyman. Accusations laid against Karekin II by other irresponsible parties are irrelevant at this time.

The letter is full of contradictions. He is supposedly defending Archbishop Norvan

Zakarian, Primate of France, who had resigned from his position and whose resignation was approved by the "disreputable" Supreme Spiritual Council on July 31.

The letter begins with the statement: "I incidentally received the communiqué of the Supreme Spiritual Council." Whereas the two patriarchs are officially co-chairs of the Council. To begin with, he has failed to attend the council's session which was the proper venue for the patriarch to be informed and to express his views on those important issues. But, instead, he blames his failures on others.

And then, he goes on to sermonize his superior with the following presumptuous statement: "Your Holiness, allow me to tell you in a brotherly fashion that threats do not become the clergy."

It looks like he himself needs most of the advice he has been dispensing freely to his superior, since at the end of his letter, he directs the following threat to Echmiadzin: "I have decided not to participate in the bishop's convocation to be held on September 21-28" at Echmiadzin. He further aggravates the situation by concluding his letter with the following missive: "Although Archbishop Aris Shirvanian [of Jerusalem] will be attending, he does not represent the Patriarchate of Jerusalem."

Members of the Brotherhood are entitled to ask whether this rash decision was taken at an official meeting at the Governing Council (Dnoren Joghov) or it was the patriarch's arbitrary decision.

Reading through the letter one is convinced that Archbishop Norvan Zakarian's resignation is the least of his worries. Instead, he has another ax to grind. He refers to a letter which has no relevance to the archbishop's resignation, and yet which has touched him deeply. He remembers His Holiness Karekin II's letter to the late patriarch, Archbishop Torkom Manogian, advising him to appoint a coadjutor patriarch in view of the latter's incapacitating ailments.

Any member of our church, and especially the Supreme Spiritual Head of the church, would rightfully worry about an incapacitated member of the clergy bearing an awesome responsibility in the most dangerous region of the world.

But it seems that Archbishop Nourhan Manoukian has perceived that suggestion as a ploy to bypass his candidacy in a succession process.

If, indeed, that was the intention of His Holiness in hindsight, Archbishop Nourhan Manoukian has vindicated His Holiness, through his disrespectful outburst and dangerous political missteps.



Location-Specific Ethics in Armenia and the US

ETHICS, from page 14

commitment not to engage in such unethical academic behavior? Why would they be willing to take such a risk?

It comes down to wanting to help someone that they have a relationship with that simply needs some help.

There are examples of where Armenian students and American students were equally as convinced of unethical behavior and there were also examples of where Armenian students were equally as confused about unethical behavior. For example, when provided with the text in the next paragraph, both Armenian and American students were virtually identical in

their response.

You figure out a way to use a complex financial transaction to make your results look much better in the short run, even though you know there is no underlying change in your company's performance. In fact, you know that in the future there will be significant consequences for shareholders and other stakeholders. But, in the short run, you'll make a lot of money by doing this.

Virtually 100 percent of all students, Armenian and American, recognize this as unethical behavior. However, there are scenarios where students from both countries are just as unsure as to what constitutes unethical

behavior. For the most part, when actions and consequences are black and white and clearly cause someone harm, Armenian students are more astute as to the ethical nature of the situation. But when it is not clear who is being harmed or what damage is being caused to a third-party, Armenian students are more likely to engage in such behavior.

Ethical behavior in Armenia has a very different meaning than in America. In Armenia, if you need or want a higher course grade, simply pay-off the professor. In America, it is unheard of! The thought that grades can be purchased is simply not a part of the American culture. It may happen, but not on a wholesale level.

In Armenia, low-level governmental employees earn significantly less than the national average. This includes policemen. If you want to put food on the table, you have to supplement your income, which can lead to many unethical acts. Corruption in Armenia may include the wealthy oligarch families that are overtly corrupt but it includes even the most common of citizens – people trying to feed their families and wanting to provide the very basics to survive and live. We may look at Armenia and wonder how corruption becomes a part of society yet when the average citizen has nothing to live on, corruption becomes a way to simply survive in a society where real jobs are scarce and survival is on a day-to-day basis.

When you travel to the smaller towns in Armenia you learn that the only way to survive is to leave Armenia to look for work. Many of the men travel to Russia to find work for six months in order to send money home. They return to be with their families but what kind of a life is it to have to leave in order to find work only to return to be dismayed by the lack of job prospects?

Teaching business ethics to students in Armenia was a privilege but when you put it into perspective, trying to teach ethical decision-making in a society that is simply trying to survive is challenging. When you see your next-door neighbor surviving because they know how the system works makes it hard to convince someone that they should play by the rules.

When it comes down to taking care of yourself, your loved ones, and your friends, business ethics can be a foreign concept. If you cannot eat, why should you worry about making the right ethical choice?

What does Armenia need in order to solve so many of her problems? Jobs, jobs and more jobs. I want our future business leaders in Armenia to be ethical but I also know that they need jobs. Without the very basic necessities in life like food, water, shelter and clothing how can we expect Armenian's to work towards a higher level business thinking?

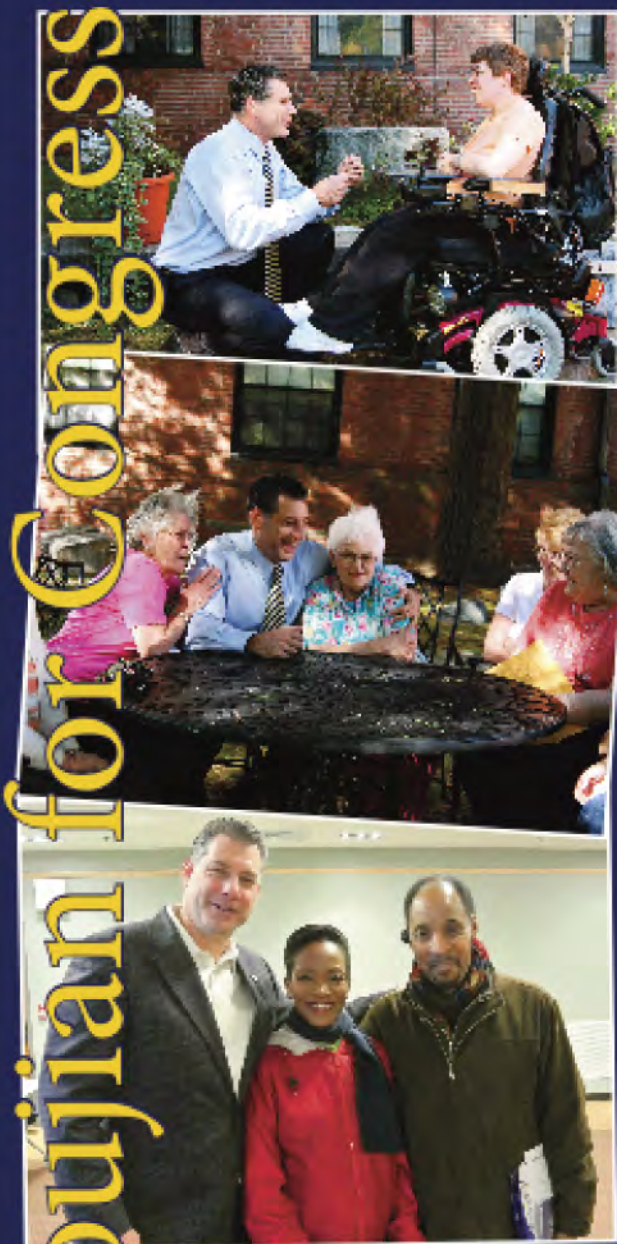
As Armenians in the diaspora, if we want to help solve so many of the problems that are faced in Armenia, we need to help them find jobs. They already have too many taxi drivers earning \$1.50 per trip and paying \$5 per gallon of gas. What they need are some real jobs in manufacturing and export. Armenia needs to generate some hard currency that can help grow the economy. Did you know that the GDP of Armenia is only \$10 billion? Vermont has the lowest GDP in the US yet it has 25 percent of the Armenian population and three-times the GDP of Armenia.

In the not too distant future, a new web site will be opening that aims to help bring jobs to Armenia. This web site will allow some of the best and brightest entrepreneurs in Armenia tap into the vast Armenian diaspora network to find connections that are necessary to bring their products to world markets. For example, a small high tech company in Gumri, the second largest city in Armenia, has developed some of the latest and greatest earthquake detection technology and aside from selling a few units to the Armenian government, they do not have the connections or resources to bring this technology to the world. As it turns out, there are three major companies in the world that manufacture and distribute this type of technology and are located in the US, UK and Japan. What are the chances that an Armenian works at one of these three companies? Could they help this small company in Gumri to make introductions to either license, sell or market their technology outside of Armenia? The chances are probably pretty high. When we can bring the power of the diaspora network to help Armenian business, we not only provide for opportunities of growth, jobs and prosperity – but we also provide hope and a future for our homeland.

(Mihran Aroian is an instructor at the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin and the McCoy College of Business at Texas State University. For the past two summers, he has been a lecturer at the American University of Armenia in Yerevan.)

K PETER KOUTOUJIAN

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Koutoujian for Congress

My family's story, like so many others in Massachusetts and across the nation, reflects the promise of the American Dream.

My parents always believed in the honor and importance of public service. My mom dedicated her life to teaching and my dad was the City Clerk in Waltham for 30 years.

They instilled in me a desire to help people and to try to make a difference in their lives.

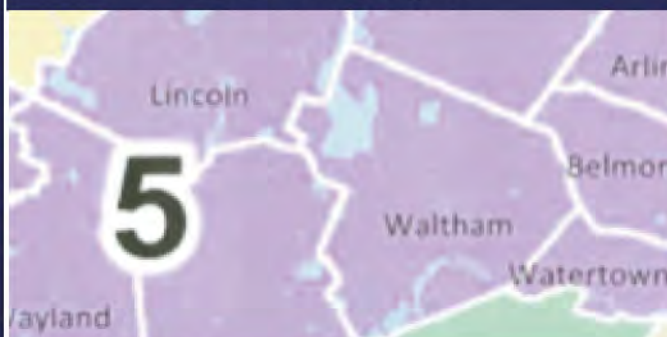
They taught me that when you listen to people, empower people, and help them take action – you can change lives for the better.



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