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Silver & Gold

Wrestler Aleksanyan Grabs Gold For Armenia



Artur Aleksanyan after the match that gave him a gold medal

RIO DE JANEIRO – Armenia had a very good week in Rio, winning a gold and two silver medals. Wrestler Artur Aleksanyan, who competed in the Greco-Roman 98-kilogram category, defeated his Cuban opponent, Yasmany Daniel Lugo

Cabrera, to win gold, on August 16. To get to that match, he had defeated Turkish wrestler Cenk Ildem. With tears streaming down his face, he accepted the medal. Greco-Roman wrestler Mihran Harutyunyan was bested by Davor Stefanek of Serbia the same day to win silver. To get to that match, he had defeated Rasul Chunayev of Azerbaijan in the men's

66-kilogram semifinal. Armenian weightlifter Simon Martirosyan had won a silver medal on August 15, thrilling Armenians around the world. Coming in first was Ruslan Nurudinov for Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan's Alexandr Zaichikov won bronze. see OLYMPICS, page 2

Demq: Laugh and the World Laughs with You

By **Aram Arkun**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

LOS ANGELES – Armenians have many tragic episodes in their history. Much of their music seems sad, and for many, black seems to be the color of choice. Are Armenians melancholy by nature? The writers and actors of the Demq group in California are doing their best to disprove this. In the past few years they have presented at least one stage show annually. It is different in scale from most other Armenian comedic shows, as usually at least 2,000 people assemble in a big auditorium. This fall they are preparing to present a new show, Cirque Demq Soleil, while, quite recently, some of their sketches have gone viral on social media (e.g. www.facebook.com/demqshow). see COMEDY, page 16



German Govt. Sees Erdogan Support for Islamist Militants

Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN – Rumors, reports and allegations pertaining to covert support for terrorists by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government have circulated since the first armed Syrian groups convened in Turkey, in the early stages of the Syrian crisis.

In late 2015, the Saudi connection was exposed in the German press; it was not only the Wahhabite ideology but also direct military support that came to light. In the December 12, 2015 issue of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* ("Friends of ISIS - First in Riyadh, Now in Ankara?"), I reported on this coverage and suggested that the case of Turkey should also be put under the magnifying glass. In recent weeks, the issue has crept into the newspapers in background features and commentaries. Now, according to a press report by the German television channel ARD in its online edition, it appears that the German government has officially expressed the view that active cooperation with such organizations in the Middle East has been part of a conscious policy on the part of Ankara.

The news was released on radio and online publications on August 16, and cited the Berlin office of ARD-Informationen, the first national television station, as its source. ARD reported on a written reply by the federal government to a parliamentary question posed by the opposition Left (Linke) Party, a reply that was classified as confidential and not intended for publication. "The numerous solidarity events and support activities for the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and armed Islamist opposition in Syria on the part of the governing party AKP and President Erdogan underline their ideological affinity to the Muslim Brothers," according to the document quoted by ARD. As it notes, this would be the first time that the German see MILITANTS, page 4

Tribute: At Centennial of Hrachya Setrakian Birth, A Look Back on a Remarkable Life

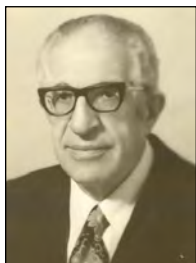
By **Hagop Vartivarian**

"The youth are the firmest foundation stone of our national reconstruction and ascent." – Hrachya Setrakian

ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, N.J. – Hrachya Setrakian (1916-1991) was one of the compassionate youth of the post-Genocide era who experienced the deportations and knew the pain of living in a foreign environment. These youth had to adjust to local conditions quickly, while preserving the

Armenian heritage they brought with them despite the difficulties involved in providing a good upbringing. They lived with the ambiguity of keeping a second homeland in their hearts.

One of the fundamental obligations of Setrakian's generation was to prudently and quietly establish see TRIBUTE, page 9



Maitre Hrachya Setrakian

NEWS IN BRIEF

Armenian Prosecutors Seek Life Sentence For Russian Soldier

GUMRI, Armenia (RFE/RL) – An Armenian prosecutor has demanded a life sentence for a Russian soldier charged with killing a family of seven.

The prosecutor here urged on August 12 that Valery Permyakov be given life for last year's killing.

Permyakov has pleaded guilty.

On January 12, 2015, six members of the Avetisian family were found dead in their house, including a 2-year-old girl. All the victims were shot or stabbed to death.

A 6-month-old boy who was seriously wounded died a week later.

Permyakov was later detained near the Armenian-Turkish border.

The case led to mass protests in Gumri and Yerevan against Russia's military presence in the country and calls for the trial to be heard by Armenian judges instead of Russian military judges.

In August 2015, a Russian court found Permyakov guilty of desertion and other charges. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison. He was then handed over to Armenia for trial on murder charges.

Russia maintains a garrison of around 3,000 soldiers at the 102nd Military Base in Gumri.

Armenia Improves Position in UN's Global Innovation Index

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.net) – Armenia has climbed one spot in the Global Innovation Index to rank 60th among 128 countries against the 61st spot last year, with Switzerland, Sweden and Great Britain ranking highest on the list. The Global Innovation Index is an annual ranking of countries by their capacity for, and success in, innovation. Armenia is the only economy in the region which outperforms relative to its GDP.

Mentioned among Armenia's strengths are ease of starting a business (5th spot overall), innovation efficiency ratio which is designed to assess the effectiveness of innovation systems and policies (15th), females employed with advanced degrees (24.7 percent, 5th spot overall) and other indicators.

On the other hand, lack of high- and medium-high-tech manufacturers, low number of graduates in science and engineering, expenditure on education are listed among the country's weaknesses.

Turkey ranks 42nd, Georgia 64th, Azerbaijan 85th, Iran -78th, while Russia comes in 43rd.

China has broken into the world's top 25 innovative economies for the first time this year, said the annual report by the UN's World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), INSEAD Business School and Cornell University. Other emerging economies are climbing the list, like India, which soared to 66th place from 81st a year earlier.

INSIDE

Looking to The Sun

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Karabagh Leader Backs 'Reasonable' Compromise

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) – Bako Sahakian, the president of Nagorno-Karabagh, believes it will take a “reasonable, fair and adequate” compromise to settle the long-running Armenian-Azerbaijani dispute over the status of the region.

“We are prepared for [mutual] concessions if they do not disturb our country’s security, if they are not creating opportunities for our adversary to launch new attacks against us,” Sahakian said in an interview with the online newspaper of the French Parliament.

According to the Karabagh leader, it was the “Armenophobic ideology” of the government in Baku that had paved the way for the outbreak of fresh hostilities and new loss of life in Nagorno-Karabagh earlier this year. More than 100 Karabagh Armenian soldiers, combatants as well as civilians were killed in four-day clashes in early April in which Azerbaijan also admitted dozens of casualties.

Loss of life at the heavily militarized line of contact between the conflicting sides occurred albeit at a much smaller scale before and after the brief war.

“A new round of talks aimed at solving the Karabagh problem will open if Azerbaijan honors the 1994 ceasefire agreement, if Karabagh rejoins the negotiations and the psychological barriers caused by Azerbaijan’s revanchist policy are overcome,” he stressed. “Azerbaijan should be able to give up its chauvinistic policy towards the Armenians of Karabagh and its futile gamble and commit itself to respecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of other peoples.”

Annual Conference of World Tourism to Be Held in Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The annual conference of the affiliated members of the World Tourism Organization will be held in Armenia from October 1 to 4. The head of the Department of Tourism Development Policy of the Ministry of Economy of Armenia Mekhak Apresyan announced this in a press conference at Armenpress’s media hall. He informed that the participants of the conference have already expressed the wish to attend the seventh annual Areni wine festival that will be held on October 2 in Rind village and on October 3 in Areni village.

“We had just initiated the festivals in 2009. We aimed to make those festivals traditional, annual and, most vitally, attractive for both the domestic and foreign markets. Now the tour agencies include the festivals in their packages,” Apresyan said.

Armenian Consul General Meets Chairman Of Government of Ajaria

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenia’s Consul General to Batumi Yeghishe Sargsyan met Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Ajaria Zurab Pataradze on August 10, according to the press service of the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Pataradze congratulated Yeghishe Sargsyan on his new post and expressed the hope that during his tenure Sargsyan will contribute to deepening the traditional warm relations between the two republics. Pataradze outlined the prospects of bilateral cooperation in several directions within the framework of the implementation of his government’s priorities, including in the tourism and agricultural sectors.

Expressing gratitude for the reception, he congratulated Pataradze on his new post.

In the context of decentralized cooperation, the sides stressed the necessity of further expansion of projects conducted within the framework of the cooperation agreement signed between Armenia’s Lori province and Ajaria, as well as the cooperation between the cities Vanadzor-Batumi, Alaverdi-Kobuleti and Spitak-Khelvachauri. The sides underscored the important role of the Adjarian Armenian community during the talk.

Harutunyan and Karapetyan Win Silver



Wrestler Mihran Harutyunyan won silver.



Weightlifter Andranik Karapetyan won silver.

OLYMPICS, from page 1

The most disappointing event at the Olympics was the horrific injury which befell Andranik Karapetyan. On Wednesday, Armenian weightlifter Andranik Karapetyan suffered a gruesome elbow injury, ending his chances for



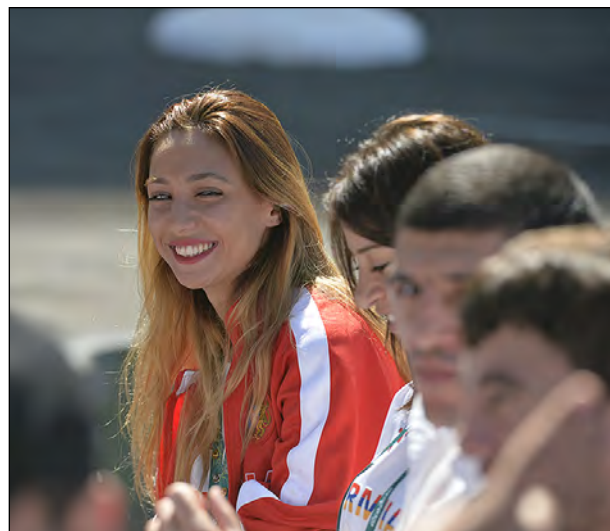
an Olympic medal in the 77kg weight class.

The Armenian Olympic committee had some good news about the injury over the weekend.

According to the country’s Olympic committee, Karapetyan suffered an elbow dislocation on the attempted 195-kilogram clean and jerk.

Armenian President Visits Athletes

RIO DE JANEIRO – President Serzh Sargsyan, who is in the Federal Republic of Brazil on a working visit, accompanied by the Chairman of the National Olympic Committee Gagik Tsarukian on August 13 at the Olympic village of Rio de Janeiro met with the athletes representing Armenia at the 31st Olympic Games.



Armenian athletes gathered in Rio to meet with the president.

The President of Armenia expressed confidence that the Armenian sportsmen will have achievements and reminded that these achievements make our nation more recognizable. Sargsyan stressed that the Armenian sportsmen will compete with other national teams which represent bigger nations and in their own countries have thousands of athletes thus, considering this fact, achievements of the Armenian sportsmen become more valuable.

“Your fans are plenty but your first fans, your supporters are the citizens of Armenia, your coaches, and the Olympic Committee. You know better than me that there is no need to worry. Sport is always about success and failures; the important thing is that you are able to fully show your potential. Recently, the number of prizes has grown. I would like to repeat that the most important thing for you is to fully demonstrate your potential,” said President Serzh Sargsyan at the meeting.

Feast of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God Celebrated in the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin

ECHMIADZIN, Armenia (Echmiadzin Information Services) – On August 14, the Armenian Apostolic Church solemnly celebrated the Feast of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God. On this joyful occasion, Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the Mother Cathedral of Holy Echmiadzin. The celebrant was Bishop Vardan Navasardyan, Director of the Christian Education Center of the Mother See.

He said: “Today, the Armenian Apostolic Church celebrates the commemoration of an event that occurred centuries ago, the assumption of the Holy Virgin Mary, the Holy Mother of Our Lord and one of the greatest patron saints of the Universal Church. Over the centuries the Armenian Church has always reflected the image of the Holy Mother of God as a supreme and perfect example of humankind, motherhood, and obedience to God’s word. Many written works, and spiritual songs, hymns and prayers are dedicated to the Holy Mother of God. The Armenian people have always reflected on her character and dignity.

In her childhood she was presented to the Temple for service, nourished and grew up there with the hope of a spiritual cognitive life; and when she was 16, because of



Some of the grapes that were blessed

her dignity and purity, she was visited by the angel of God. In the Annunciation passage the Evangelist tells as how a dialogue takes place between the Archangel and the Holy Virgin. We know that the messenger of God had brought good tidings for her as she would give birth to the Savior of mankind, Our Lord Jesus Christ. At the conclusion of their dialogue, the Holy Virgin, who was humble, submissive, meek,

pure and holy in his image, makes an important remark, saying ‘I am the Lord’s servant and will be.’

Following Divine Liturgy, under the aegis of Archbishop Voskan Galpakyants, a service of Blessing of the Grapes was offered at the Open Altar of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

At the end of the service, blessed grapes were distributed to faithful people.



ARMENIA

Disabled Armenian Stuck at Home for 10 Years after Neighbors Block Access

YEREVAN (*Guardian*) – From her window 61-year-old Radif Shamoyan can just about see the benches under the mulberry tree outside, where locals gather every evening to talk about the day's events. The last time Shamoyan was able to join in the conversation was nearly 10 years ago. Since then, she has been a virtual prisoner in her home.

Shamoyan has been unable to walk since an accident when she was 19, but says she would be able to get around in her wheelchair perfectly well – if only she could get it out of the flat.

The problem is that her neighbors have built a storage room near the entrance to the building, blocking the space where Shamoyan had hoped to install a ramp for her chair.

She tried to take her neighbors to court to force them to remove the store room, but the case failed because she was unable to afford a lawyer. The court ruled that she had not provided sufficient evidence to support her case.

"I have to ask someone to do all the shopping for me," she said. "It is not easy to ask people every time. [But] I could do everything for myself, if I could just leave home."

Shamoyan tried to appeal against the court's decision, but the case was dismissed because it had not been lodged by a licensed advocate.

"When I received the response I felt bad, lost hope totally," she said. "I wish the judges would put themselves in my place, just for a moment."

Shamoyan's particular problem may be unique, but the Armenian government's failure to provide adequate facilities is a frustration she shares with almost 200,000 people with disabilities in the country.

According to a recent survey by the advocacy group Agat, 8 percent of Armenian women with

disabilities are not able to leave their homes more than a few times a year.

A UNICEF report in 2012 found that up to 200 girls with disabilities have never left home, or only go out when visiting the doctor.

In 2010 Armenia ratified the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, yet activists say the government has failed to implement its recommendations.

"The authorities of Armenia don't think that the provision of facilities is their responsibility," said Zaruhi Batoyan, the president of Armenia's National Disability Advocacy Coalition. "They say they cannot afford it because of financial problems, but they always find resources for buying new government cars or upgrading officials' offices."

Despite this lack of care from authorities, Shamoyan has not given up. When her appeal was refused she applied to the European Court of Human Rights to have her neighbour's store room declared illegal.

Last year the court ruled that her right to a fair trial had been violated, but Armenians authorities have yet to respond. The local municipality said it had no knowledge of the ECHR's ruling and refused to comment on the case.

In the meantime Shamoyan's health has deteriorated, but she says she will keep on fighting. She believes that a new government is needed to improve facilities for people with disabilities, and is determined to vote during next year's election.

As is customary in Armenia, where there is no postal voting, she will have to rely on political parties to take her to the polling station. "If they know where I am, they will come, carry me and take me in order to get a vote," she said.



The Little Free Library in Yerevan

Inspirations from Birthright Armenia: Alumni 'Next Step' Grant Brings Literacy Movement to Armenia

YEREVAN – The very first Little Free Library (LFL) was recently officially christened during a launch celebration in its prime downtown Yerevan location at 80 Aram Street. The handsomely hand constructed and painted little library marks the first of 15 libraries that will be installed in Yerevan and expanding to all corners of Armenia.

Laurie Alvandian and Nina Romá Agvanian, two Birthright Armenia alums currently living in Yerevan, initiated bringing this global movement to Armenia by accessing the "Next Step" Alumni Fund made available to all alumni in need of seed money to start their own projects. Little Free Libraries, a non-profit organization that has supported the creation of 40,000 Libraries worldwide, aims to promote literacy and the love of reading by building free book exchanges via miniature libraries worldwide. As the libraries are free and open to everyone to utilize, its successful operation is based on a "take a book, leave a book" system, and thus additionally inspires a sense of shared community. In this way, the LFLs are self-recycling, as they replenish themselves through the community.

"We want people to start reading more, to get involved in community projects such as this one, and to have free access to information. This library belongs to the community, and we hope that the community takes care of it, keeps filling it with books, especially Armenian language books, and really values what it represents," said Alvandian.

Agvanian adds, "We hope that the presence of Little Free Libraries throughout the country inspires others to build their own or to begin their own independent community projects, so this project evolves on its own, past the scope of this specific grant, and pays it forward for more impactful projects of its kind".

Another Armenian Policeman Shot By Opposition Gunmen

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Another Armenian police officer shot by opposition gunmen died on August 13 after succumbing to wounds sustained in last month's armed attack on a police station in Yerevan where he served.

The death of Senior Warrant Officer Gagik Mkrtchian raised to three the number of police officers killed during the Armenian authorities' two-week standoff with armed members of a radical opposition movement demanding President Serzh Sargsyan's resignation.

All 31 members of the armed group laid down their arms by July 31. Security forces did not kill any of them.

The gunmen shot five policemen and took several others hostage when they attacked and seized a police compound in Yerevan's southern Erebuni district early on July 17. One of the officers, Colonel Artur Vanoyan, died on the spot.

Mkrtchian, 45, was wounded in the chest and abdomen. He underwent four surgeries but never regained consciousness.

The third police casualty, Yury Tepanosian, was killed on July 30, the day before the 20 remaining gunmen holed up in the Erebuni compound surrendered to law-enforcement authorities. The police said the 30-year-old

father of three was shot by one of the gunmen as he sat in a police car parked about 400 meters from the besieged compound.

Varuzhan Avetisian, the gunmen's leader, insisted that Tepanosian was not gunned down by his armed group. Avetisian claimed that the officer's car was not visible from the compound.

The police responded by releasing photographs meant to prove that the gunmen were able to see and shoot at Tepanosian's car. They also circulated a short video purportedly showing a man with a sniper rifle taking a position on the roof of a police building inside the compound.

The gunmen urged Armenians to join their rebellion immediately after capturing the police facility. They demanded that Sargsyan free the jailed leader of their Founding Parliament movement, Zhirayr Sefilian, and step down.

The attack came almost one month after Sefilian was arrested for allegedly acquiring large quantities of weapons to stage an anti-government revolt. The Lebanese-born oppositionist and his nationalist associates strongly denied the accusations.

Earlier law-enforcement authorities signaled their intention to implicate Sefilian in the Erebuni attack as well.

Policemen Suspended Over Yerevan Protests

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Five Armenian police officers were suspended on August 5 for using excessive force against participants of opposition demonstrations held late last month in support of gunmen that seized a police station in Yerevan.

The chief of the Armenian police, Vladimir Gasparian, also took disciplinary action against 14 other officers, saying that they failed to prevent violent attacks on protesters and journalists during one of those rallies.

The reprimanded officers include Ashot Karapetian, the chief of Yerevan's police department, as well as the commander and two deputy commanders of a police regiment that was seized by the anti-government gunmen on July 17. The regiment is tasked with crowd control and street patrols.

Scores of people took to the streets to voice support for the gunmen's demands that included President Serzh Sargsyan's resignation. Late on July 29, more than a thousand of them unexpectedly marched to Yerevan's Sari Tagh neigh-

borhood close to the besieged police compound in the city's Erebuni district. Firing stun grenades and tear gas, riot police dispersed the crowd after organizers of the protest ignored their demands to leave the "dangerous" area and go back to the city center. At least 60 people were injured and hospitalized as a result.

Armenia's leading opposition parties as well as local and international human rights group strongly condemned that they consider the use of excessive force. The police responded by launching an "internal inquiry" into the violence. A police statement released on August 5 said that Armenia's Special Investigative Service (SIS), a law-enforcement body subordinate to prosecutors, will now decide whether the five suspended officers should face prosecution.

One of them, Colonel Lernik Yerosian, is the brother of General Levon Yerosian, the controversial commander of Armenian interior troops who played a key role in the Sari Tagh crackdown. The four others have lower ranks.

Opposition Party to Skip Local Elections Over Arrests Of Members

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A parliamentary opposition party has decided not to field its candidates in upcoming local elections in Armenia because of the arrests and prosecution of its three leading members that it claims are ungrounded.

Deputy head of the Zharangutyun (Heritage) party Armen Martirosian, the party's press secretary David Sanasarian and civic society relations officer Hovsep Khurshudian along with another opposition activist, Andrias Ghukasian, were remanded in prison earlier this month after being arrested on charges of organizing mass dis-

turbances during public protests on July 29.

The three men participated in a rally in support of a group of gunmen loyal to a fringe opposition movement who had seized a police station in Yerevan and were making political demands to the country's authorities last month. The rally took a violent turn as riot police and plainclothes men charged at protesters and journalists, using stun grenades, flash bangs, sound bombs and other nonlethal devices to disperse the demonstration in a narrow street of a Yerevan neighborhood overlooking the standoff area.

Nearly 70 people, including some journalists,

were hurt in the clashes that prosecutors say were provoked by demonstrators. Martirosian, who conducted negotiations with senior police officers shortly before the dispersal, as well as the other oppositionists deny the charges largely based on testimonies of police officers.

Martirosian's lawyer Givi Hovhannisian, said on August 3 that in deciding on the arrest of his client the court had refused to consider as evidence the video recordings showing the opposition politician calling on the demonstrators to avoid clashes with police.

In a statement released on August 16,

Zharangutyun said that given the fact that the three leading members of the party are imprisoned on "fabricated charges," it had decided not to take part in elections to local government bodies that are due to be held in all provinces of Armenia (except for capital Yerevan) in September and October.

The upcoming local elections will also include municipal votes in Gumri and Vanadzor, which, in accordance with the new electoral code, will for the first time elect mayors indirectly, based on the outcomes of elections to municipal assemblies conducted under party lists.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Spanish City Recognizes Armenian Genocide

MADRID, Spain (Public Radio of Armenia) – The Spanish city of Benalmadena has officially recognized and condemned the Armenian Genocide.

The City Council unanimously voted in favor of the institutional statement.

More than 20 Spanish cities have already recognized the Armenian Genocide.

Armenian Businessman Killed in Russia

NOVOROSSIYSK, Russia (Nrnews) – A 55-year-old man was found dead on August 15 in Novorossiysk, Russia.

“The man’s body was found on Gladkov Street,” said Natalia Smaytskaya, assistant to head of the Investigation Department of Krasnodar Krai (region). “The victim’s identity has been determined; he is an entrepreneur.”

A criminal case was filed on charges of murder, and illegal import of weapons and an investigation is in progress. According to unofficial information, the victim was a Diasporan Armenian.

Iran Provides Infrastructure to Russia To Fight in Syria

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, has confirmed that Iran has let Russia use its infrastructure to fight against terrorism in Syria, TASS reported citing IRNA. Iran and Russia pursue strategic cooperation in the fight against terrorism in Syria and share their facilities and capacities to this end, according to Shamkhani. He was speaking in the wake of reports that Russian military aircraft had used the Iranian air base at Hamadan to organize strikes against the Islamic State.

RFE/RL Journalist Ismayilova’s Suspended Custody Term Shortened

BAKU (RFE/RL) – Azerbaijan has shortened a suspended sentence that was handed down to RFE/RL journalist Khadija Ismayilova.

In Baku on August 8, the Court for Serious Crimes in Baku ordered Ismayilova’s 3 1/2-year suspended term to be shortened to 2 years and 3 months.

No reason was given for the decision.

Ismayilova was detained in December 2014 and sentenced to 7 1/2 years in prison in September 2015 after the Court for Serious Crimes in Baku found her guilty of tax evasion, misappropriation of property, abuse of position, and illegal entrepreneurship.

She was released from custody in May after the country’s Supreme Court reversed her convictions on charges of misappropriation of property and abuse of position, but upheld her convictions for illegal entrepreneurship and tax evasion. The court then reduced her sentence to a suspended term of 3 1/2 years.

The case against Ismayilova had been widely seen as retaliation for her award-winning investigative reporting linking the family of President Ilham Aliyev to corruption.

Iran to Triple Gas Exports to Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – After discussions with Armenian Energy and Natural Resources Minister L. Yolyan in Tehran, Minister of Petroleum of Iran Bijan Zangeneh announced that Iran will triple the volumes of exported gas to Armenia, Iranian state media reported. According to the Iranian Minister, the main topic of discussion with Minister Yolyan was the issue of transit for Iranian gas through Armenia. The Armenian side has proposed to create a new organization for the export of Iranian gas to Georgia, IRNA reported.

Pro-Kremlin Daily: Armenia to Get Same Weapons From Russia as Azerbaijan

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) – Russia is going to supply Armenia with the same types of weapons that it has delivered to Azerbaijan, a report in the Russian Izvestiya daily said on Tuesday, August 16.

The pro-Kremlin periodical said the supply of arms and military equipment to Armenia within the framework of a \$200 million loan has already started.

Official Moscow and Yerevan do not yet give details of the dates and types of the armaments being reportedly shipped to Armenia.

The Armenian government moved to speed up the implementation of the loan agreement signed last summer after the April clashes in Nagorno-Karabakh where Azerbaijan used some of the deadliest weapons that it purchased from Russia in recent years.

Overall, Russian supplies of weapons to Azerbaijan since 2010 have totaled \$4 billion. Russia’s Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin announced more military contracts to be signed with Baku in the coming months during the April 8 visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Azerbaijani capital.

Speaking at a joint news conference with his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan following their talks in Moscow on August 10, Putin dismissed a widely held belief in Armenia that Russia has only increased the risk of another Karabagh war with its large-scale arms sales to Baku. He implied that oil-rich Azerbaijan would have been able to purchase offensive weapons from other nations had Russia refused to sign defense contracts with it.

Putin also argued that Russia has long been providing substantial military aid to Armenia, its main regional ally. Moscow “always fulfills its obligations” to Yerevan relating to defense, he stressed.

An Izvestiya writer suggests that apart from the supply of military equipment, Russia is also going to train Armenian military specialists who will later operate the equipment. This information was confirmed to the Russian paper by the press secretary of the Armenian Ministry of Defense, Artsrun Hovannisian.

German Govt. Sees Erdogan Support for Islamist Militants

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government has officially acknowledged a direct link between Erdogan and such organizations.

According to ARD, the Turkish government deliberately intensified these relations over time. In the leaked document one reads: “As a result of the progressively Islamized domestic and foreign policy that Turkey has followed especially since 2011, it has developed into the central action platform for Islamist groups of the Near and Middle East region.” Again according to ARD, this government view rested on an evaluation of the German Intelligence Agency (Bundesnachrichtendienst-BND). The Interior Ministry, according to ARD, did not coordinate the reply with the Foreign Ministry, and it was not intended to be made public. It does stand however as an official government position.

As of this writing reactions from Ankara have not yet appeared. But one should prepare for fireworks.

(Note: Translations from German are those of the author.)

Experts believe that the matter primarily concerns heavy systems that will substantially increase the capabilities of the Armenian armed forces. At the same time, according to an Izvestiya source “privy to the situation,” while arms deliveries to Armenia have already begun, the complete list of weapons and military equipment to be purchased by the Armenian side is yet to be finalized between Yerevan and Moscow.

Armenian Defense Ministry spokesman Hovannisian has refused to name exactly which systems are going to be supplied to Armenia and in what time frame, but the Russian newspaper suggests that Armenia has intended to buy Smerch multiple rocket launchers and related ammunition, Igla-S portable anti-aircraft missile systems, Avtobaza-M ground-based electronic intelligence complexes, TOS-1A heavy flamethrower

systems with auxiliary vehicles, 9M113M guided missiles, RPG-26 grenade launchers, Dragunov sniper rifles, Tigr armored vehicles and means of communication.

Expert on military affairs Andrey Frolov, who is the chief editor of the Russian Arms Export magazine, told Izvestiya that Russia is supplying Armenia with about the same set of weapons that was previously purchased by Azerbaijan. “These supplies will undoubtedly improve the military balance for Yerevan, but Baku will still retain certain superiority,” Frolov said.

“There is too much of a difference in the sizes of the military budgets of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Here it is difficult to speak of parity. It is possible only not to bring the gap to the critical level through targeted investments,” the Russian military expert added.

Armenian, Russian Militaries to Sign Agreement on Combined Forces

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) – Military authorities in Yerevan and Moscow plan to sign an agreement on the establishment of a combined group of forces, Russia’s Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov announced in the Armenian capital on Tuesday following a meeting between the two countries’ defense chiefs.

Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu arrived in Yerevan to attend a regular meeting of the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization’s defense chiefs on August 16 after paying a two-day visit to Azerbaijan where he reportedly discussed issues of military and military-technical cooperation with Baku as well as the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

In Yerevan Shoigu also reportedly discussed issues of military and military-technical cooperation with Armenia as well as “current issues of global and regional security.”

According to the press service of the Armenian Ministry of Defense, “the two ministers stressed the high level of interaction of their agencies and determined further ways of cooperation.”

The sides also reportedly dwelled on the “large-scale humanitarian operation of the Armed Forces of Russia in Syria.”

“Armenian Defense Minister Seyran Ohanian expressed support and solidarity with the humanitarian efforts of the Russian Federation on providing aid to the Syrian people,” the report said.

“As a result of the meeting the defense ministers signed an agreement between the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia and the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation on cooperation in the field of identification and evaluation of radiation, chemical and biological conditions in the interest of the Combined Group of Troops (Forces) of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia and the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.”

Later Russia’s Tass news agency quoted Antonov as saying that preparations for the signing of the agreement on the establishment of the combined group of forces was in its final stages. He said that “the implementation of the agreement will make it possible to clearly regulate joint activities in this sphere and provide the group with necessary information in time.”

The senior Russian defense official

did not present other details.

In particular, it remains unclear whether a new group will be created and, if so, then what will happen to the existing group of Armenian-Russian forces, or whether simply the legal aspects of the operations of the existing group and command mechanisms will be made more specific under the terms of the new agreement. An Armenian Defense Ministry spokesperson promised to RFE/RL’s Armenian Service (Azatutyun.am) to answer these questions later on.

According to the information provided by Armenia’s Ministry of Defense, still in September 2000 in Sochi an agreement was signed between Armenia and Russia on the joint use of forces, on the basis of which the combined group of troops (forces) was established. According to the document, the group’s goal is to solve common defense tasks of Armenia and Russia under a joint command. The group consists of units of the armed forces of Armenia and Russia, is located in Armenia and is commanded by the representative of the Armenian Armed Forces, Major-General Andranik Makarian, who was appointed to the position under President Serzh Sargsyan’s decree last month.

NKR Foreign Minister Receives Personal Representative of OSCE Chairperson-in-Office

STEPANAKERT (Armenpress) – On August 15, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nagorno Karabakh Karen Mirzoyan received the personal representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Chairman-in-Office, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, the foreign ministry announced.

During the meeting, the sides exchanged views on the situation in the line of contact between the armed forces of Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan, as well as the monitoring conducted by the Office of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office.

The two emphasized the need for the maintenance of stability and the cease-fire regime on the line of contact.



INTERNATIONAL

President Sargsyan Meets with Acting President of Brazil Michel Temer

BRASILIA – President Serzh Sargsyan, who is in the Federal Republic of Brazil on a working visit, on August 12 arrived at the capital Brasilia. After the official welcoming ceremony, he met with the Acting President of Brazil Michel Temer.

At the beginning of the meeting, Sargsyan thanked the hosts for the warm welcome and congratulated Temer on hosting the Olympic Games in Brazil. He expressed gratitude on behalf of the Armenian athletes for all necessary conditions created in Rio de Janeiro and the cordial attitude. According to the president, the Olympic Games, in addition to being a great sports celebration, also send a message of peace to the entire world.

Sargsyan also spoke about the significance of a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict and underscored that Armenia attaches great importance to Brazil's balanced and unbiased position.

At the meeting, the leaders of the two countries exchanged views on cooperation between Armenia and Brazil in different areas, possibilities of further strengthening and deepening of the bilateral relations. The President of Armenia noted with satisfaction that Armenia and Brazil enjoy strong friendly relations based on respect and mutual trust. Serzh Sargsyan stressed the importance of developing versatile relations with the one of the economic and political heavy-weights of the world – Brazil, and expressed hope that his current visit will become an impetus for the strengthening of the bilateral relations and will outline new areas of cooperation.

From the viewpoint of developing the bilateral ties, Sargsyan stressed the import of the



During the meeting in Brasilia, translating for President Sargsyan was Monica Nalbandian Marcarian of San Paolo, a member of ADL of Brazil.

high-level reciprocal visits, as well as regular consultations and contacts in bilateral, as well

as multilateral formats, and in the framework of international organizations. He hailed last

year's recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Senate of Brazil.

Cumhuriyet Editor Dunder Resigns in Wake of Coup

ISTANBUL (BBC) – A Turkish journalist who faces jail for revealing state secrets has resigned as editor of the opposition *Cumhuriyet* newspaper.

Can Dunder said trusting the judiciary after July's failed coup would be "like putting one's head under a guillotine."

The government has cracked down on the media following the coup attempt.

In May, Dunder was sentenced to five years in prison, but was freed pending an appeal. He is thought to have left the country.

He and a colleague were convicted over reports they published that Turkish intelligence operatives were smuggling arms to Syrian rebels.

In the failed coup on 15 July, rebel soldiers tried to oust President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Since then, more than 23,000 people accused of backing it have been detained or arrested and 82,000 state employees have been dismissed or suspended.

The authorities have also closed some media outlets, placed some journalists in detention and banned others from travelling abroad.

As the crackdown continued on August 16, two colonels were detained for questioning by police and three Istanbul courthouses were raided. Arrest warrants were issued for 173 judicial staff.

Two hundred and forty people died resisting the takeover, standing against fighter jets and tanks.

Dunder, who is thought to be in Germany, has written in *Cumhuriyet* that he will not surrender to the judiciary until the state of emergency is lifted.

"From now on, what we face would not be the court but the government. No higher court would object to the lawlessness being carried out," Dunder wrote.

Although he has stood down as editor-in-chief, he will continue to write columns for the paper.

At their trial, Dunder and his colleague Erdem Gul were acquitted of the more serious charge of espionage, but found guilty of revealing state secrets.

The case against them has been widely criticized by international observers, including Amnesty International.

Both were senior *Cumhuriyet* editors when it reported on a shipment of arms that was intercepted at the Turkish border with Syria.

It alleged the weapons being sent to rebels fighting the government of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad.

The Turkish government insisted the lorries were taking aid to Syria's Turkmen minority, a Turkic-speaking ethnic group.



Can Dunder

Russia, Azerbaijan Discuss Military Cooperation

BAKU (RFE/RL) – Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu discussed military cooperation with Azerbaijan as well as issues pertaining to the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict settlement during his visit to Baku on August 14-15, according to Russian and Azerbaijani media.

The defense ministries of Russia and Azerbaijan have a few issues to discuss in regards to military and military-technical cooperation, RIA Novosti quoted Shoygu as saying on Sunday during his meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

"During our today's and tomorrow's activities we will be taking into account everything you have agreed upon with the president of Russia in terms of military and military-technical cooperation," the top Russian military official added.

On August 16, Shoygu also met with Azerbaijani Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov and, according to media reports, Russian-Azerbaijani cooperation in the military sphere and ways of settling the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh were the main subject of the talks.

This was the second meeting of the two defense chiefs since August 12, when Hasanov unexpectedly made a trip to Moscow. No specific agreements were announced after the April 12 talks between Shoygu and Hasanov.

Armenia has been concerned over growing

military ties between Moscow, which is its top political and military ally, and Baku. Many in Armenia blame Russia for at least having contributed to the deadly escalation of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh in April by supplying up to 4 billion dollars' worth of arms, including some modern offensive weapons, to Azerbaijan since 2011.

At a joint press conference with his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan in St. Petersburg on August 10, Russian President Vladimir Putin effectively defended those arms supplies, saying that an oil-rich country like Azerbaijan could have purchased similar types of weapons elsewhere on the world market.

At the same time, Putin stressed that Russia has long been providing substantial military aid to Armenia and "has always fulfilled its obligations" to Yerevan relating to the defense sphere.

Putin's remarks came two days after he discussed with President Aliyev in Baku ways to make headway in negotiations on the Karabagh conflict settlement in which Russia, along with the United States and France, acts as a top negotiator.

During the visit of the Putin-led delegation to Baku for a trilateral summit with the leaders of Azerbaijan and Iran on August 8, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin reiterated Moscow's interest in continued supplies of arms to Azerbaijan.

Turkey's Ally Azerbaijan Probes Gulen Supporters

BAKU (AFP) – Turkey's ex-Soviet ally Azerbaijan on Monday said it has launched a criminal investigation into the supporters of US-based Turkish preacher Fethullah Gulen, whom Ankara blames for last month's abortive coup.

"In order to prevent illegal actions on the territory of Azerbaijan by the supporters of the terrorist organisation of Fethullah Gulen, the prosecutor general has launched a criminal case," spokesman Eldar Sultanov told AFP.

He said investigators have begun "actions" on the case, without elaborating. It is unclear how many people might be prosecuted in the case.

Gulen is accused of ordering the July 15 coup

during which a group within the military tried to remove President Recep Tayyip Erdogan from power, a claim he strongly denies.

Azerbaijan last month shut down a private television channel over plans to broadcast an interview with Gulen, "in order to avoid provocations aimed at damaging the strategic partnership between Turkey and Azerbaijan."

Gulen's Hizmet movement has affiliated schools around the world, including in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan, normally funded by wealthy Turkish businessmen.

They insist it is an informal grouping promoting moderate Islam and development, but their critics see them as a shadowy organization with an unaccountable influence in Turkey.

Community News

Boston Taxi Tycoon Charged With Federal Crimes

By Jonathan Saltzman, Milton J. Valencia and Travis Andersen

BOSTON (*Boston Globe*) – Edward J. Tutunjian, the king of Boston's struggling taxi industry, has agreed to pay more than \$2 million in fines and may face prison time after he was charged on August 9 with federal tax and fraud offenses, three years after IRS agents raided his headquarters near Fenway Park.

Tutunjian, who has owned Boston Cab for more than four decades, was charged in US District Court in Boston with payroll tax evasion, employing illegal immigrants, and failing to pay overtime wages.

His company, EJT Management Inc., which bears his initials and through which he operates Boston Cab, was also charged with defrauding the Department of Housing and Urban Development by enabling EJT employees to obtain federal housing subsidies they were not entitled to.

Tutunjian and EJT have signed plea agreements in which they pledge to make full restitution, totaling more than \$2.3 million, federal authorities said. Prosecutors said they will seek a prison term of at least two years, followed by 12 months of supervised release for Tutunjian, who is expected to be summoned to court at a later date.

One of his lawyers, Andrew Good, said in a statement that the 66-year-old Belmont tycoon "accepts full responsibility for his unlawful practices."



Edward J. Tutunjian

"These practices ceased almost three years ago," he said. "All of the unpaid taxes and overtime wages will be paid with interest and penalties."

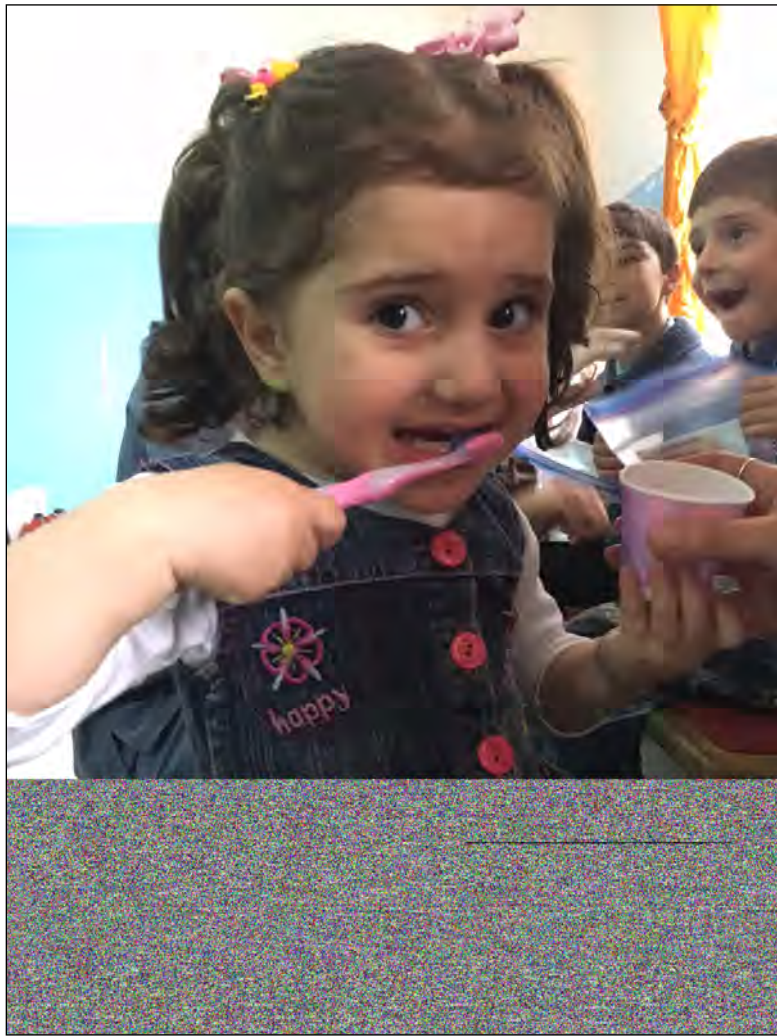
Two months before IRS agents with guns drawn executed a search warrant at Tutunjian's headquarters in May 2013, he was the focus of a *Boston Globe* Spotlight Team series that found widespread exploitation in the industry. At the time, Tutunjian owned 372 taxi medallions, or about one in five of all medallions in the city, and ran a business empire worth about a quarter-billion dollars.

At Tutunjian's garage on Kilmarnock Street, employees were startled to hear about the charges. Cabbie Johnny Celestin, 45, said, "He got charged?" His eyes widening, he added "Wow. . . I can't believe it."

He said Tutunjian is more pleasant to deal with than some of the managers. "Eddie's a nice guy," he said. "But some of the other guys, they give you the key [to drive] but they're not the nicest people."

Celestin said he believes Tutunjian will avoid prison, despite the prosecutors' expected recommendation. "He's got money, I don't think he'll go to jail," he said.

Donna Blythe-Shaw, who recently retired as a representative of the Boston Taxi Drivers see TAXI, page 7



A young girl gets a fluoride treatment.

AMAA Medical Mission Expands to a 3rd Location This Year

PARAMUS, N.J. – This year Dr. Al and Sue Phillips were part of an enormous Medical Mission Team to Armenia with 45 individuals from the US and Canada and nine Armenian translators. This was the largest team to date.

The fledgling Evangelical Church congregation of Sisian had been praying that the medical team would come to their city. At the same time, three new physicians contacted the group and said they were interested in joining the team.

By Dr. Al and Sue Phillips

This year's team included nine physicians, two dentists, a chiropractor, a pharmacist, three nurses and a willing group of ancillary workers eager to serve the Armenian people.

The week began by the group setting up a complete ambulatory clinic within the Evangelical Church in Vanadzor. The clinic provided a laboratory and see MISSION, page 7



Dr. Al and Sue Phillips with a patient in Armenia

Knights and Daughters Of Vartan Hold Clothing Drive for Armenian Lighthouse Foundation

NEW YORK – At the end of April 2014, the Mid-Atlantic Lodges of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan joined together to begin a clothing drive with the purpose of sending a 20-foot container of gently used clothing to the Armenian Lighthouse Charitable Foundation (ALCF) in Armenia. The founders of ALCF, Zuhra and Seta Ghazarian, after receiving the container of clothes, will then distribute the clothing to villagers in Armenia and Artsakh.

ALCF is well known in Armenia. They are primarily a women's domestic abuse shelter where they provide medical, educational, career, and psychological support to abused women and their children. They also run a kindergarten, feed the elderly, provide Bible study, and clothing to villagers. About two to three times a week ALCF will get a call from a village mayor. The mayor will provide a list of the names and make-up of 100 of the poorest families in the village who need help. ALCF will provide a bag with one item for each adult, two items and shoes for each child, and cooking oil or sugar. The bags are labeled for each family. The mayor then sends a truck and the ALCF staff distributes the items to each family. A member of each family, with passport in hand, inspects the items and signs for them. This documentation is subsequently audited by the government to ensure that the donated goods are actually being distributed for free. The public is encouraged to navigate their website (www.armenianlighthouse.com) and sign up for the monthly newsletter. ALCF was one of the two designated charities for the Daughters of Vartan this past year.

Special thanks go to Tigran Sahakyan of Brooklyn without whose moral, material, and financial support this shipment would not have been possible. It was truly a great undertaking. We must also thank Tigran's office staff as well for helping us box the clothes and for being patient. After several months of collecting new and gently used clothing (donated by all of the Armenian community) 365 boxes, valued at more than \$40,000, were loaded and shipped on July 15. We expect the container to arrive in Yerevan in four to six weeks.

Knights of Vartan, Worcester Chapter Celebrate Centennial

WORCESTER – The Knights Of Vartan is a national fraternal organization with 25 local lodges in the United States. The Brotherhood is dedicated to the preservation of the Republic of Armenia and the perpetuation of the cultural and historical traditions of the Armenian people by promoting various social, charitable, and educational functions.

This year both the national Knights Of Vartan organization and the local Worcester Chapter, Arshavir Lodge No. 2, are celebrating their 100th Anniversaries, the former having been organized on May 29, 1916 in Philadelphia and the latter on August 28, 1916.

To commemorate these milestones, Arshavir Lodge is sponsoring an exhibit at the Worcester Public Library for the month of September 2016 tracing the history of their origins and a pictorial overview of major events with photographs and documents. Ten display cases on the Main Floor of the Library will feature the exhibit. In addition, the Opening Ceremony in the Saxe Room on Wednesday, September 7 at 6:00PM features a City Proclamation from Mayor Joseph Petty, a performance by the Greater Worcester Armenian Chorale (including two selections about the Knights Of Vartan), and the showing of "Artsakh: Another Armenian Eden," a film about an ancient Armenian land also known as Nagorno-Karabagh. A reception with refreshments follows the program.

The exhibit and Opening Ceremony are free and open to the public.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Vardanants Day Lecture at US Library of Congress Marks 25th Anniversary of Armenian Republic

WASHINGTON Christina Maranci will deliver the 20th Vardanants Day Armenian Lecture at noon on Wednesday, Sept. 21 in the Northeast Pavilion of the Library's Thomas Jefferson Building, located at 10 First Street S.E., Washington, D.C. Titled "A World Monument: Zvart'nots', Armenia, and the Wars of the Seventh Century," Maranci's lecture will focus on the iconic church of Zvartnots. Though it lies in ruins, the church has long been of interest to those who study the Armenian and Byzantine architecture of the era.

Maranci is the Arthur H. Dadian and Ara T. Oztemel Associate Professor of Armenian Art at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. In her recently published book, "Vigilant

Powers: Three Churches of Early Medieval Armenia," Maranci set the construction of Zvartnots and the churches of Mren and Ptghni within the context of the first Arab invasions into Armenia and the resulting cultural and political changes of the time.

This year's Vardanants Day Lecture – the 20th in the series – will celebrate the 25th anniversary of Armenia's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union on September 21, 1991, and the birth of the Republic of Armenia. The lecture is also dedicated to Marjorie Dadian, who made a generous gift to the Library of Congress in 1991 in her husband Arthur's name for the conservation and expansion of the Library's Armenian col-

lections. This led to the growth of that collection, the appointment of the Library's first Armenian specialist and programs such as the Vardanants Lecture series.

The Vardanants Day lecture series is sponsored by the Near East Section of the African and Middle Eastern Division. It is named after the Armenian holiday that commemorates the battle of Avarayr (451 A.D.), which was waged by the Armenian General Vardan Mamikonian and his compatriots against invading Persian troops who were attempting to reimpose Zoroastrianism on the Christian state. As a religious holiday, it celebrates the Armenians' triumph over forces of assimilation.

Boston Taxi Tycoon Charged With Federal Crimes

TAXI, from page 6

Association, said the charges show corruption in the industry has thrived under a series of mayoral administrations.

"The city needs to stop turning a blind eye to the taxi industry and create a civilian commission to regulate the industry and clean it up," she said.

The office of Mayor Martin J. Walsh could not be reached for comment Tuesday night.

A native of Jordan who immigrated to

Watertown as a teenager, Tutunjian became perhaps Boston's most invisible tycoon. His medallions – which rose steadily in value until competition from ride-hailing companies Uber and Lyft undercut the taxi business – bankrolled ventures ranging from Back Bay apartment buildings to vineyards in Chile.

But the charging document released Tuesday alleged Tutunjian did much of his business dishonestly, and in cash.

With about 6,000 licensed cabbies in Boston,

Tutunjian and other medallion owners long enjoyed a buyer's market of potential drivers willing to pay them roughly \$100 a day to operate cabs. The drivers keep the money they earn after paying that fee to fleet owners.

Although the state's highest court ruled last year that the drivers are independent contractors, Tutunjian and EJT directly employed mechanics, dispatchers, office workers and others. Prosecutors alleged that a number of these workers were illegal immigrants not allowed to work in the United States.

Tutunjian concealed the size of the company payrolls from the Internal Revenue Service, thus hiding the amount of federal employment taxes he and EJT were supposed to pay, prosecutors alleged. He did this by paying in cash and keeping the payments off the books.

Tutunjian also allegedly did not pay the required overtime rate to employees who worked more than 40 hours a week, though some worked as much as 60 hours. He concealed this by making employees punch in 40 or fewer hours on an electronic time clock, and then paid those workers in cash for their overtime at the regular rate rather than at time-and-a-half.

Prosecutors also alleged that a number of

EJT employees were living in federally subsidized housing in Cambridge and elsewhere, some of which had waiting lists. The amount of the subsidy and eligibility to live in the units depended on tenants' incomes.

From January 2009 to May 2013, EJT allegedly helped certain employees get housing benefits they were not entitled to by providing information that did not accurately reflect the wages paid to them in cash.

Andrew Hebert, a manager at USA Taxi in Dorchester and onetime editor of the defunct taxi industry publication Rear View Mirror, said Tutunjian represented the old guard. "I'm sorry to hear that he's going to jail," Hebert said. "It sounds like he made some big mistakes, but he's not a bad man."

In a related case, EJT dispatcher Girma Tilahun, 60, and his wife, Wudnesh Wolde, 53, of Cambridge, agreed to plead guilty to immigration fraud and paid \$234,987 in unpaid federal income taxes and \$62,340 to HUD, federal authorities said.

Another former EJT employee, Tutunjian's nephew, Raffi Chapien, 44, of Waltham, has agreed to plead guilty to failing to pay income taxes from 2010 to 2014, serve six months in prison, and pay \$72,335 in unpaid taxes.

Help us to relocate Syrian Armenian families to Armenia from the conflict zone.

Donate Now — Save a Life

"Save a Life" is humanitarian campaign, aimed at providing support to Syrian Armenian refugees, who escaped the war in Aleppo and moved to Lebanon, to obtain one-way ticket to travel to Armenia. Since the launch of the "Save a Life" campaign, the Aleppo Compatriotic Charitable Organization (ACCO) has successfully relocated more than 221 Syrian refugees from Lebanon to Yerevan.



Currently, there are more than 550 requests registered at Aleppo CCO. People are in despair and are seeking ways to flee for a safer life in Armenia.

The cost of saving one Armenian life is \$500, which includes:

- Ground transportation from Aleppo to Beirut;
- Exit visa to leave Syria and enter Lebanon;
- Transportation from the Lebanese border to Beirut International Airport;
- Flight from Beirut to Yerevan;

ACCO calls on the Armenian community and to join its life-saving mission by donating to the 'Save a Life' initiative to help remove Syrian-Armenians to safety in the motherland.

Detailed information on people and families relocated to Armenia will be provided to each contributor and sponsor. Aleppo CCO is ready to answer to all the questions regarding the campaign.

Donations by wire transfers:

Beneficiary's Bank: Converse Bank CJSC
SWIFT: COVBAM22

Beneficiary: Aleppo Compatriotic Charitable NGO
Beneficiary's account No: 1930048910350101

Donations by mail:

Aleppo Compatriotic Charitable NGO
PO Box 155
Belford, NJ 07718

For inquiries please call Ani Bakhian
(+374) 77-260-715

AMAA Medical Mission Expands To a 3rd Location This Year

MISSION, from page 6

diagnostic testing with an ultrasound and EKG. Other services included a reading glasses station and medical education by our nurses. The dentists educated the youth on dental hygiene and treated them with fluoride. After a two-day stay in Vanadzor, we divided the team into two groups with half going to Stepanavan and the other half to Sisian.

The overall success of the mission can be measured in many ways. First, we saw and treated more than 1,400 patients in four days at the clinic. Second, more than 400 children received

fluoride dental treatments from our dentists. Third, the group provided free medications, some that would last them for a year of treatment.

We are thankful to those who were praying for us and the Medical Mission Team. This year was especially difficult with many personal trials that Sue and I endured just prior to leaving. Your generous donations to the AMAA earmarked for the medical mission go directly to the Armenian people and are only used for medications and supplies. Visit amaa.org for more information.



The Medical Mission Team



OBITUARY

Tribute:

Haig Karakashian

A Testimony of Faith and Love

By Nancy Kalajian, JoAnn Janjigian and Lisa Stepanian Ortiz

WALTHAM, Mass. — Disabled but never limited, Haig Karakashian lived a good life, one filled with the joy of others, hope for tomorrow, and faith in God. Much of his joy came from church fellowship and the company of friends and relatives who knew him as Haigie. He took such interest in the lives of others asking, “When is our next Sunday School reunion? How’s New York, Lisa? Did you go to Times Square for New Year’s?” or commenting, “I miss my friends at the Armenian Nursing Home.”

From one encounter to the next, Haig remembered you, your family, and your hometown, was humble with an engaging manner and sense of humor. Haigie’s death on June 21, 2016 was a deep loss to the community.

Many former Sunday School students from St. James Armenian Church in Watertown shared warm memories of their classmate. “Haigie was an active member of our Sunday School and always encouraged us to have a reunion. He loved Chinese food. We took him out to lunch at a Chinese restaurant for one reunion,” said Stefanie Madanian. “I remember Haigie visiting with his grandparents across the street from where I grew up on Dartmouth Street in Watertown. My mom quite often made Chinese food for Haigie and until his passing, he referred to her as Mary Hung Dung.”

Eddie Kalajian recalled Haigie’s warm personality and fantastic memory. “Whenever I saw him, he’d go through a litany of incidents that happened, people we knew. We’d always laugh about it. His enjoyment of life was deep. Long ago, we’d see him in Manomet. Our cottage was at the Idelwild Hotel and we’d see him there. He never forgot people and enjoyed talking about them all the time.” Lena, Eddie’s wife, adds, “He had a good heart with will power. He focused on the positive.”

Fred Johnston, Haigie’s godson, recalls, “I remember sitting on the front porch of their Belmont Street home. The women were in the kitchen and the men on the porch. Haigie had this incredible memory. We’d ride the street cars together and he’d later always ask me about that.”

Cornelia Cassidy Koutoujian recalled that Haigie always connected to her Irish heritage. “He called me Aunty Connie. He always wanted Irish bread. He would point out his ring with a

green stone.”

Haigie was always proud of the accomplishments of his cousin, Sheriff Peter Koutoujian.

During the past four years, Haigie lived at a residence in Waltham and developed a special bond with his caretakers and fellow residents. Philip Millner, director of Metro Residential Services, shared his admiration for Haigie and his strong advocacy skills. “He was on the self advocacy committee (MRS Speaks Out) and was active and outspoken. He’d follow up. He cared about everyone. He grabs and holds your heart and doesn’t let go,” said Millner during a warm celebration of Haigie’s life that was held at his residence after the wake and funeral.

Proud of his family’s Armenian origins, Marash in particular, Haigie held sacred many special family heirlooms including a Kevork Samuelian family tree tracing the family’s roots to Marseille in the 1800’s. Indeed, during the Waltham gathering, many cousins and friends looked with great interest at these remembrances, which Haigie lovingly kept in perfect condition. Haigie was a true Marashtzi; raised by beloved parents, Hovsep and Lucy Karakashian. He and his brother, Armen, enjoyed a caring home, in which there were many Armenian delicacies of his mom, particularly his favorite, khurabia. Haigie always relished news of the local Marashtzi community, as a way of keeping connected.

Reflecting on his sharp memory, local priests recall the days when Haigie lived at the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Plain and actively participated in many special liturgical events. Whenever they would meet, Haigie made a strong impression on Fr. Arsen Barsamian, pastor at St. James Armenian Church in Watertown. During the Blessing of the Water, Haigie was the Godfather of the Cross year after year. “He knew about so many things. We were astonished by his interests and mental acuity,” said Father Antranig Baljian of St. Stephen’s Armenian Church in Watertown who participated at Haigie’s funeral at St. James Armenian Church with Fr. Arsen Barsamian and Fr. Arakel Aljalian, his spiritual brothers.

A true believer, Haigie worshiped at St. James Armenian Church and loved the Armenian community there. Fr. Arakel admired Haigie’s faith. “He was willing to attend church services as



Haig Karakashian, right, with Dick Janjigian

often as he could, with all his difficulties. He wanted to have a blessing from the clergy.” He participated in many field trips to church events, eager to see his many friends.

JoAnn and Dick Janjigian and their family included Haig in many of their holiday celebrations, especially Thanksgiving dinners. “Whenever we had him for Thanksgiving, he would always ask if he could come for Christmas. He was always thinking ahead,” said Dick. At the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Haig and JoAnn would play dominos, at which he was very skilled.

Haig’s life was lived with joy and love for others, a heart without pretense or envy. No one speaks of his limitations or sufferings because he never mentioned them. His faith, gratitude and contentment leave an important legacy to all the communities that he touched. With a wave of his hand, Haigie would call friends over, share a kiss or handshake, leaving enduring memories.

His friends, Bob and Lisa Stepanian Ortiz from New York City, remembered Haigie in this Memorial to Haigie Karakashian (read during his funeral service):

“We were sad to hear of Haigie’s passing but more than that, we are so grateful to have had such meaningful visits with him. When infirmity befell him in March, we prayed for him and spoke

to him about the Lord. It was clear that Haigie had a living faith. We hadn’t realized before that, in his broken body, was a vibrant love for God.

Bob and I had so much pleasure in subsequent visits, which included his longtime friend Adrienne. With time of prayer, worship songs, and encouragement from God’s Word we truly had ‘church’ going on! And believe me, they know the words to the sharagans and prayers...and they know when you mess up!

Our last visit earlier this month was very special. After a time of singing and praying, I felt encouraged to read from Matthew 25, about the 10 maidens awaiting the arrival of the Bridegroom (Jesus). Yes, the Lord is coming back, are we prepared? Are we ready to meet Him when we leave this world? We talked about heaven, salvation, and the promise of a receiving a new body for eternity. Another resident, wheelchair bound, inched his way in to join us. It was such a blessed time, we really sensed the Lord’s presence.

Haigie’s love for God was evident and a true testimony of living faith. In spite of long suffering, he was ready to worship and expressed his love for Jesus Christ. Haigie was a true believer whose faith greatly encourages us.

It will be a joy to worship the Lord with Haigie one day in God’s Kingdom.”

Antranig Basmadjian

WESTFIELD, N.J. - Antranig Basmadjian, born in Jerusalem, Israel, in 1942, died on August 8 at the age of 73.

Basmadjian moved to New Jersey with his wife Naz and son Krikor to work for the Armenian General Benevolent Union. He was a kind and generous man, always helping friends and acquaintances in countless ways. In his spare time, Antranig loved to read and listen to classical music.

In addition to his wife, Naz, Basmadjian leaves his son, Krikor Basmadjian, Armen Basmadjian and his wife Lauren; grandchildren Dahlia, Scarlett, and Sonia, as well as sisters Lucine Bedrossian and Vartouhi Basmadjian. He was preceded in death by his parents, Mariam and Krikor Basmadjian and brothers, Garabed Basmadjian and Armenag Basmadjian.

He had joined the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) in Jerusalem.

He was an Armenagan-Hovsepian Chapter member of the ADL in New Jersey, and for a period of time served as a member of the ADL District Committee of the Eastern United States and Canada.

The funeral took place on August 12 at Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church of Ridgfield with interment at Fairview Cemetery in Westfield.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

At Centennial of Hrachya Setrakian Birth, A Look Back on a Remarkable Life

TRIBUTE, from page 1

the foundations of Armenian national life in exile by assuring the necessary conditions for earning a living, maintaining schools, churches, and other institutions despite straitened financial circumstances. Tireless leadership was needed in the camps of the refugees and the orphanages of the Middle East.

The present Lebanese-Armenian community took root in the 1920s, though a very small and prosperous community did exist prior to the Genocide. The only Armenian institutions which initially existed were St. Nshan Monastery, under the aegis of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and the monastery of the Armenian Catholics in Zmmar. The first chapter of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party was established in Lebanon in 1923, thanks to Nerses Shirinian and a few others through great sacrifice.

Hrachya Setrakian's Youth

Hrachya Setrakian was born in Yozgat in 1916. His father was Khosrov Effendi Setrakian. As a result of the deportations, he ended up in the Beirut Armenian-populated neighborhood of la Quarantaine, popularly known as Karantina, where his father worked as a tax collector. He received his education at St. Krikor the Illuminator Academy of the Jesuit fathers in Eshrefiye, and then continued to Saint Joseph University's law department, run again by Jesuits, and graduated in 1940 to become a lawyer.

While still at the university, he became a member of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)'s Armenian Youth Association (AYA). He soon became a member of the executive of its Antranig Chapter in the Nahr neighborhood. This became the start of his lifelong interest in Armenian youth movements.

The AGBU created the AYA in 1931 under the patronage of the Catholicosate of Cilicia for the large numbers of youth needing education and aid. They previously were cared for by the Near East Relief. The ADL played an important role in both the AGBU and AYA.

Mihran Damadian, Hmayeag Kranian and Dr.

Hagop Topjian were among the initiators of the AYA. Damadian was the chairman of the AGBU's Beirut chapter, which was founded in 1925. The Beirut chapter primarily was involved in supporting the Sisvan Orphanage, workshop and shelter, which were brought to Beirut in 1922 with 439 orphans.

Setrakian remained an active member of the AYA's Administrative Body, and beginning in 1947 served a member and then vice chairman of the central executive. During these twenty-five years of office, he often served as the president of the AYA Representative Assemblies of Syria and Lebanon and the consultative assemblies of the local Administrative Bodies. It was in this period that the AGBU-AYA Alex Manoogian Youth Center was constructed in the heart of Beirut.

He was the chief founder of the AYA Armenian University Students Union in 1940. He developed its bylaws and served as its chairman until 1943. Many of the students in Lebanon's two universities, American and French, were part of this group. The leadership of Professor Parounag Tovmasian led many to join the ADL, including Hrachya Setrakian.

Setrakian placed great importance on the scout movement as part of the AYA. He also became one of the founders of Lebanon's Scouts Du Liban, and in 1939 was appointed as the leader of Lebanon's Armenian scout federation.

Service through the AGBU

In 1943 he became a member of the AGBU. For many years he served as secretary for the AGBU Regional Committee of Lebanon, until 1988. He was an important link in the good relations between the ADL and the AGBU. During the sad days of the Lebanese Civil War, he was able to use his connections with the state to keep AGBU schools, clubs and buildings safe in both the west and the east of Beirut. He always carefully made sure the AGBU bylaws were followed, and took on the task of reforming the internal bylaws.

During the first visit of AGBU President Alex Manoogian to Lebanon, Setrakian organized the



Maitre Hrachya Setrakian, right, with Nazar Nazarian

program, including visits to state and Armenian notables. Setrakian received a certificate of AGBU veteran in 1964.

Participation in the Repatriation Movement

In 1946, Setrakian as a representative of the ADL became the First Secretary of Lebanon's Central Committee of Repatriation, and the next year vice president of this committee during a period when the president, Devedjian, had already repatriated. Repatriation from 1946 to 1948 helped save Armenia's status as a republic in the Soviet Union by bolstering its population, which has been depleted as a result of the sacrifices of World War II.

Around 100,000 Armenians emigrated from the Middle East and Greece to Soviet Armenia. Setrakian played a major role in solving the legal matters, helping arrange state documents, and keeping in close touch with the representative of Soviet Armenia, Asdvadzadurian, as well as other Soviet embassy officials. His labors lasted three years.

Part of Lebanon's Armenian Diocesan Life

Setrakian became a member of the Armenian National Council in 1946 and served as president of the meetings of Syria and Lebanon's Armenian National Councils. For a period of time, he was also a member of the National Provincial and Civil Councils of the Lebanese Armenian Diocese.

The Cold war between the West and the Soviet Union exacerbated a crisis in the Armenian Church, especially after the death of Catholicos Karekin I Hovsepian of Cilicia. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, siding with the West in the Cold War, took advantage of the opportunity to gain control of the Cilician See and helped placed Zareh I Payaslian as catholicos. This led to the exclusion of ADL, AGBU and Hnchagian Party members from positions of diocesan leadership in Lebanon, including Hrachya Setrakian.

Leading the ADL

Barely 20, Setrakian joined the ADL. He served many years, until 1970, as chairman of the ADL's District Committee of Lebanon. In 1946, the ADL Eighth General Convention took place in Cairo but continued in Paris. It was decided in 1947 that the ADL Central Committee be moved from Cairo to Beirut. Setrakian at that time was part of the party's supreme body, chaired by Professor Tovmasian, and participated in the highest level meetings.

Setrakian was the ADL candidate in the 1951 Lebanese state parliamentary elections but the intervention of the executive of the state due to Cold War politics did not permit him to win. Setrakian became a frequent contributor on Armenian political and social issues to the ADL Beirut daily newspaper Zartonk, and the ADL press in general, as well as the AGBU magazine Khosnag.

Setrakian was able to keep good relations not only with the wealthy donor class and high officials, but also with simple workers and the middle class. He had the same close and respectful relations with the ADL intellectuals from Dort Yol at the Vahan Tekeyan School, the fighters of the ADL Yegarian Chapter, the members of the

ADL Zartonk Chapter of Beirut, and the students at the Portukalian university chapter. It was enough for a party member to call him "Maitre" even without a name to be understood.

After Professor Tovmasian's resignation, Setrakian became the chairman of the ADL Central Committee in 1982, when he was elected by the ADL 16th General Convention in Larnaca, Cyprus. The ADL's headquarters were moved to Montreal from 1985 to 1991, and Dr. Arshavir Gundjian served as co-chairman. Setrakian resigned in 1991 from party duties due to health reasons and returned to Beirut with his wife Marlen. Setrakian had married relatively late in life.

Setrakian lived through the difficult days of the Lebanese Civil War, providing leadership to the Armenian community. He also lived through the internal crisis of the ADL, which erupted in 1995 after the 19th General Representative Assembly in Larnaca, but continued to provide an example of respect for rules and law to the new leadership. The internal struggle continued until the 2001 22nd General Convention in Athens. The representatives of the two sides reached an agreement in Paris.

In 1996, the ADL 20th Extraordinary Convention in Bikfaya, Lebanon, elected Setrakian as honorary chairman of the ADL.

The long Lebanese Civil War led him to despair, and so he temporarily moved to Montreal, where his brother Hmayeag's family lived.

Founder of the Tekeyan Cultural Association

In 1947 Setrakian became one of the founders of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA), and its first chairman. After this, for more than 30 years, that post was occupied by Professor Tovmasian, while Setrakian became secretary of the Founders' Body. The TCA remains as one of the two major cultural organizations of the Armenian diaspora.

Setrakian was a leader in the founding of the Vahan Tekeyan School in Beirut in 1951, and was registered with the state as its proprietor. Aside from providing education, this school became a shelter for the surrounding Armenians during the days of Lebanese internal fighting, and a center for Armenian defense fighters.

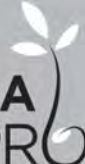
Death and Funeral

His health began to fade, and on January 16, 1997 he passed away in Beirut. ADL Central Committee Chairman Hagop Kassardjian, who represented the ADL as a deputy in the Lebanese Parliament, organized his funeral at the state level. Many high level officials, deputies, religious leaders, representatives of Armenian organizations, and ADL members were present. AGBU Central Board secretary Berge Setrakian was also present.

Hrachya had no children, and he considered his nephew Berge as his true heir. His Armenian ideological direction and dedication were inculcated in his nephew, who became the president of the AGBU.

TCA and AYA together celebrated Hrachya Setrakian's golden anniversary on December 11, 1994 in Beirut. The Honorary Anniversary Committee, headed by Alex Manoogian, was the patron of the event.

(Translated from Armenian.)



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Sarah Halejian Signs with Swiss Pro Basketball Team

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (*Yale Bulldogs*) – On December 30, 2014, former Yale women's basketball captain Sarah Halejian, Class of 2015, suffered what appeared to be a career-ending injury when she tore her left ACL. But just 18 months later, in June of this year, the revitalized guard signed on to play professionally in Switzerland with the BC Winterthur women's basketball team.

Halejian's year-long contract with Winterthur, which is located just north of Zürich, figures to boost a squad that finished 3-18 last season and seventh out of eight teams in the women's division of the country's premier national basketball league. For Halejian, this new chapter comes after one year in Scotland, where she played for the University of Edinburgh as part of a program that offered her a scholarship to complete a masters of science in sports policy, management and international development while playing for the team.

"After my injury, I did not want to end on a negative note," Halejian said. "Since I had the goal of playing professionally, I used that as my motivation to rehab and get back in shape again."

Former Yale women's basketball coach Chris Gobrecht said that Halejian's move to study and play at Edinburgh made sense, as it allowed her to return to peak form after the injury. She added that Halejian's passion for the game made it clear that playing professionally was in her future.

Yale assistant coach Melissa D'Amico said she served as a "mentor" to Halejian throughout the process of signing with a professional team. Though D'Amico did not recruit or coach

Halejian during her time at Yale, D'Amico played professional basketball abroad herself for five years, and had connections with multiple agents.

"I gave [Halejian] 10 to 15 agents, and it's a process to pick an agent, much like it is picking a school," D'Amico said. "She's very talented and I was sure she was going to get picked up."

Halejian's successful season in Edinburgh, combined with her impressive resume at Yale, made her attractive to international agents and teams. At Yale, she was Ivy League Rookie of the Year and then twice named to the All-Ivy First Team before her injury. She averaged 13.8, 15.5 and 15 points per game as a freshman, sophomore and junior, respectively, and averaged 14.9 points during her abbreviated senior campaign.

Her former Bulldog teammates overwhelmingly noted that they were proud of Halejian, and they commended her role as a leader on the team during her college career.

"Playing with Sarah was one of the biggest blessings I've had as a person and a basketball player," former teammate and guard Nyasha Sarju (Class of 2016) said. "All in all, it was a joy to share the court with her for three seasons and it will be a joy to continue to watch such an amazing and passionate basketball player and person continue to play this wonderful game."

And guard Tamara Simpson '18, who defined Halejian an "inspiration" to her, said the former captain is one of the "hardest workers [she knows]."

At Edinburgh, Halejian helped lift the team to a championship season, earning the league, cup



Sarah Halejian

First 'Diocesan Donor Day' to Be Held at St. Vartan Cathedral

NEW YORK – The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) will host its first "Donor Recognition Day" for all of its supporters on Thursday, September 15, on the plaza of St. Vartan Cathedral.

Guests will be able to tour the Diocesan Center and adjacent St. Vartan Cathedral, as well as meet Diocesan Primate Archbishop Khajag Barsamian.

Clergy, Diocesan Council members, staff, and ACYOA members will also be on hand, so that attendees can engage with representatives of the Eastern Diocese.

"Our Diocese was created out of the faith and generosity of past contributors, and it continues to exist because of our current generation of donors," said Taleen Babayan, who leads the Diocesan Development department.

"We want our donors to feel connected to our Diocese and have a chance to meet its leaders and representatives, as well as the up-and-coming generation."

The Eastern Diocese bridges parish communities from New England to Florida – from the Eastern seaboard through the Midwest and Great Plains to the Rocky Mountains – through the religious and educational programming it provides for the faithful.

"Donor Recognition Day" will show appreciation to the people who believe in and support the mission of the Eastern Diocese year after year.

"Without them our good work could not continue," said Babayan. "We look forward to welcoming our donors to the Diocesan Center and strengthening our relationships so they can see the fruits of their generosity."

"Donor Recognition Day" will take place on September 15 at 6 p.m. on Kamborian Plaza of St. Vartan Cathedral, 630 Second Ave. A special soloist performance by the Shushi Dance Ensemble of St. Vartan Cathedral will take place. Wine and appetizers will be served. Admission is complimentary. For questions or information, email taleenb@armeniandiocese.org.



and playoff titles in the Scotland Senior Women's National League.

In the playoff final against the City of Edinburgh Kool Kats, Halejian notched a double-double, scoring 20 points and snatching 11 rebounds en route to MVP honors. A month later, Halejian was again named MVP in a tournament between Scottish university students and Irish university students.

"I am really excited for my contract and this new opportunity," All of the coaches, players, and management I have talked to from Winterthur have been nothing but professional, welcoming, and excited to have me on board!"

Halejian is Winterthur's third American addition after Heidi Anton, who played at the University of San Francisco and Hawaii Pacific University, and Nikki Dixon, who played at Clemson. All other Winterthur players are Swiss. Halejian will be on the younger end of the squad that includes players born between the years of 1970 to 1995.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

SADA: Building a \$65 Million Tech Company Thanks to Google

LOS ANGELES (*Business Insider*) – In 1987, a 32-year-old Annie Safoian moved to Los Angeles from Armenia with her husband, Hovig, and their 9-year-old son, Tony.

Today and she and her family run an LA tech company called SADA Systems, a thriving Google and Microsoft reseller expected to do \$65 million in revenue this year, she tells us.

And she has been fending off a constant stream of offers to acquire the company, for a healthy multiple over revenues. She wouldn't tell us how much money she's been offered, but given the market, offers have likely ranged from hundreds of millions of dollars to as high as half a billion, we understand.

But she likes her job and her company, worries a sale wouldn't be good for employees, and simply doesn't care that much about the loot.

"We have discussed selling within the family. Everybody wants to buy us. We are in our 60's, our son is 38 years old. He's the CEO, my husband is CTO. We've been all together here and working all these years," she says. "If we sell this company and get more money in our bank account, we would still have to do something.

My son is very young. We are still so passionate about this technology. It's never boring, but so exciting every single day. Why would I sell?"

Back in 1987, when the Safoians first moved to America, she couldn't have predicted her success. Her English was mediocre, she had no technical training and she wasn't exactly sure what she was going to do for a living. But she knew she loved her new home country and became a citizen right away.

She took some accounting classes, got a job as a payroll coordinator, which she disliked, yet might have toiled away at forever if the company hadn't laid her off. So she jumped into graphic design, something she loved, and learned how to build web pages. Her husband found work as a programmer.

Slowly, her hard-work ethic had her customers asking her to do more and more tech jobs. One of them asked her to modify their accounting software. She enlisted her husband's help for that and they founded a tech company, SADA Systems, which then went on to manage computers



Annie Safoian SADA Systems



and networks for small businesses, doing small custom apps for customers along the way.

'Hello, this is Google calling'

And then, out of the blue, Google called.

"The lucky year was 2007 when

Google came to us and needed some help for their Google Apps. We were one of their launch partners on Work," she says, referring to Google's plan to sell Google Apps to more businesses.

Google also wanted SADA to build a tool that would let its customers easily transfer their email and documents into the Google Apps cloud, she says. SADA agreed to work on that, for no compensation, in exchange for becoming a major, early partner authorized to sell Apps.

"We had never had done what they were asking us to do. But we told them we could do it, and worked day and night

and delivered it on time," Safoian remembers.

To this day, Safoian doesn't fully know how Google found SADA, except through word-of-mouth referrals when it was looking for a company to help it sell Apps for Work in LA.

Remember, in 2007, Microsoft's Office ruled, businesses distrusted putting their documents in the cloud, and Google had no experience selling its wares to businesses. It needed to start with smaller but established resellers that could help it get a foothold.

Enter Microsoft

Business took off for SADA after it began working with Google Apps. Microsoft took notice and convinced SADA to become a reseller for its cloud product, Office 365, too, which Safoian agreed to do. Both companies wanted SADA to help them steal customers away from each other, but she absolutely refused, she says.

Testimony in Armenian Collection Will Include Visual History Archive's First Funeral

LOS ANGELES – The integration of the final Armenian Genocide collection testimonies in the coming months will bring unique stories and testimony formats to the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive – including one that includes both a survivor's

Armenian Genocide. Through an agreement with Hagopian, his wife, the Armenian Film Foundation, and the Institute, these interviews and the b-roll footage associated with them have been integrated into the VHA and is the largest Armenian Genocide film collection in the world.

Abdulla Garabed was born in Zeitun (present-Süleymanlı, Turkey) sometime around 1908. In his interview he discusses the deportation that led him to the deserts of Der Zor and what happened to him subsequently. Garabed told Hagopian that he survived a cave fire in Al-Shaddadi, Syria that was intended to kill hundreds of Armenians. Two weeks after Garabed was interviewed, he passed away. Hagopian

received permission to shoot his funeral and drove back to his town of Al-Suwar in Syria. There's no testimony in this film, just footage and separate audio of the funeral ceremony and a short interview with one woman speaking mainly about Garabed.



The late J. Michael Hagopian

life and his death.

Abdulla Garabed was an Islamicized Armenian living in Syria when filmmaker J. Michael Hagopian paid him a visit to interview him in 1988 for one of the numerous documentaries Hagopian made on the



A still of the footage of Abdulla Garabed's funeral, shot by the late J. Michael Hagopian

When USC Shoah Foundation received the film, Karen Jungblut, the Institute's director of collections, and Manuk Avedikyan, the primary indexer for the Armenian Genocide collection, didn't know what to do with the segment.

The issue was further complicated by the fact that the funeral was attached to the wrong testimony of a woman with the same last name, Garabed, who was likely shot on the same day.

"Somehow, Abdulla's funeral was in Esther

Garabed's testimony, in the very beginning, and we realized they weren't married," Avedikyan said. "He wasn't her husband and she lived in Der Zor, not Suwar. We thought, 'OK, what do we do with this funeral footage in someone else's testimony?'"

Avedikyan and Jungblut decided to edit the funeral into Abdulla Garabed's testimony and include it at the end.

"It's the first time that there's someone's funeral ceremony after their testimony," in the Visual History Archive, Avedikyan said.

Arts & Living

Bohjalian's *Idyll Banter* Still Hits Home

By Tom Vartabedian

What becomes of old books written by well-known authors? They either disappear into a yard sale, found in a disposal section of an antique store if you're lucky, or put on a library shelf with other authors and sold for a buck?

That's where I found a copy of Chris Bohjalian's earlier work titled *Idyll Banter*, which was compiled in 2003 by Three Rivers Press, a division of Random House.

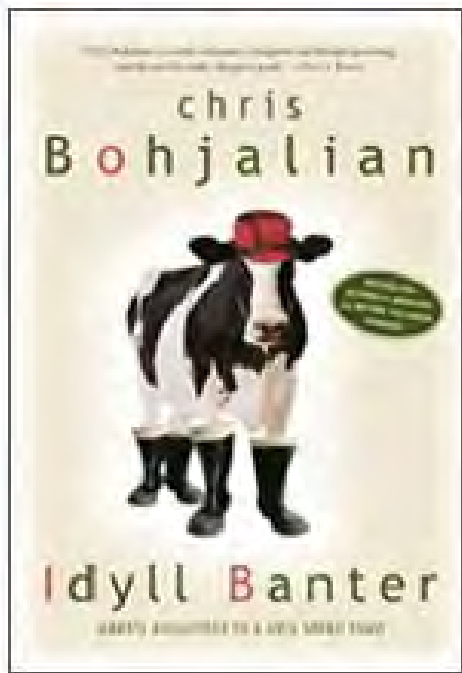
If the name didn't catch my eye, it was the photo of a Jersey cow wearing black boots with a red farmer's cap snug on its noggin'.

It was right there on a shelf with other great writers like Grisham, Baldacci, Hemingway and Michener – putting this Armenian-American novelist in fine company.

For \$5, you could have a lavish collection of good books to last you the summer through and well beyond.

I happened to e-mail Bohjalian about it and he appeared overwhelmed to see an older work still garnering attention. Better there than with hordes of other discards at the annual library sale or collecting dust inside the antique shop.

"One of my all-time favorites," he tells me. "Writing novels and getting them circulated is one thing. *Idyll Banter* holds a special place. It's



Why is the cow wearing boots and a red hat?

encouraging to still see readers gravitating toward them."

And rightfully so. It is a collection of his columns for the *Burlington (Vermont) Free Press* where he has remained a columnist since 1992. He dedicated the work to his family and friends in Lincoln, Vt., where he makes his home.

It's quite the treasure about weekly excursions surrounding a very small town, much like Garrison Keillor's "Prairie Home Companion" and "Lake Wobegon" series he's done for decades before his recent retirement. I was among his many admirers.

I had my eye on the book but before I could retrieve it, along came another bargain-hunter and quickly removed Bohjalian for a look-see. There she was thumbing through the work before replacing it with the Baldacci. Her loss, not mine.

I already had a copy of *Idyll Banter*. So why would I want to duplicate it? Well, the other one is a hardbound version and offered a picture of a typical farm scene. Good, but not a sacred cow.

I would gift it to someone, which is what I see BOHJALIAN, page 14



Hakob Hovhannisyian with a young woman and her painting

A Special Light Shines through Art

GUMRI, Armenia – When artist Hakob Hovhannisyian returned to Armenia in 2008, after having lived and worked for years in St. Petersburg, he started looking for a place near his native Gumri to set up his studio. Among the many locations he surveyed was Gusanagyugh, a small village about 20 kilometers outside Gumri. It was the particular quality of light that fascinated him; in the morning hours it had one color and mood, at noon, quite another, and as afternoon faded into evening, further nuances emerged and the properties of light underwent further mutations. Convinced that this was where he had to settle, he found a small house that served as both home and studio: a kitchenette, one sitting room with a bed, heated by a small wood-fired stove, and a second room, his atelier, full of paintings.



Hakob Hovhannisyian with some of the art created by the young children of the village

To paint outside in the magnificent natural surroundings, he would pack his painting materials into a cart, equipped with an umbrella (in case of rain) and a large case containing his paints and brushes. Hauling the cart by its long handle, Hovhannisyian would venture out into the vast countryside, select a landscape, place a canvas on his easel and begin to paint.

No sooner had he traced a few brush strokes than he noticed he was no longer alone. By ones and twos, then in swarms, children would approach and surround the painter, awestruck by what was the magic of creativity. With wide eyes and gaping mouths, they would stand or sit and stare, following every magic stroke of the brush with fascination. They considered him a miracle maker.

For the outdoor artist, who soon became known as the "hunter of the last light," it was obvious that the children should have the chance to paint themselves. Through discussion with the local village school authorities and an initiative called "Gallery 25," an art class came into being, and was officially opened on March 1, 2013. The secondary school, with eight grades, now also offers music and dance classes to the local children.

see ART, page 14

Dilijan Arts Observatory, First Project by Dilijan Art Initiative, Launched In Armenia

DILIJAN, Armenia – The IDEa (Initiatives for Development of Armenia) Foundation and the Dilijan Development Foundation (DDF) announce the launch of the Dilijan Arts Observatory, an experimental interdisciplinary think tank, which aims to develop new models for art practice and higher education in Dilijan. The first major international art event in Armenia organized by the Dilijan Art Initiative, the Observatory will bring together an international group of artists, cultural historians and environmental scientists to Armenia August 22 to September 11.

The Dilijan Art Initiative is a complex project that seeks to promote Dilijan and Armenian culture internationally, providing support for the presentation of work by artists from the Armenian diaspora in the world's leading exhibitions and major cultural events. The Dilijan Art Initiative supported Armenia/Hayoutioun; the National Pavilion of the Republic of Armenia at the 56th Venice Biennale, which was awarded the Golden Lion, the highest possible honour for a national pavilion, and the Armenian programme at the 14th Istanbul Biennial devoted to the research of Armenian history and trauma in contemporary Turkey.

The Dilijan Arts Observatory, which is a part of the Dilijan Art Initiative project, is supported by philanthropists Ruben Vardanyan and Veronika Zonabend, founders of the United World College Dilijan, RVVZ and IDEa charitable foundations, and co-founders of DDF, as well as another DDF co-founder, Gagik Adibekyan, who is also the founder of Adibekyan Family Foundation for Advancement.

The Dilijan Arts Observatory has been devised by international curator and anthropologist Clémentine Deliss, and will bring together a group of historians and practitioners to undertake fieldwork in the town – long a resort favoured not only by Armenians, but by artists such as Dmitri Shostakovich and Benjamin Britten – working closely with its citizens and identifying local wisdom or folkways.

Fieldwork activities will include investigating style, crafts, graphics, music, composition, and astronomy; Soviet architecture and design; culinary knowledge; archiving and transmitting 20th century memories; wilderness, botany and future products for survival. The Observatory will take place in Dilijan and neighbouring villages, adopting the former Soviet Impuls electronics factory in Dilijan as its headquarters. A classic example of Soviet industrial architecture, 4,000 employees once worked in Impuls under the order of the Soviet Defence Ministry, before it was privatized.

The Dilijan Arts Observatory Participants are: Dilijan Arts Observatory participants: Vahram Aghasyan (AM), Haig Aivazian (CA), Alen Amirkhanian (AM), Ruben Arevshatyan (AM), Vardan Azatyan (AM), Erik van Buuren (NL), Katerina Chuchalina (RU), Vardan Danielyan (AM), Mohamad Deeb (LB), Clémentine Deliss (GB), Silvina Der Meguerditchian (AM), Arpad Dobriban (DE), Andrew de Freitas (NZ), David Galstyan (AM), Vigen Galstyan (AM), Natasha Gasparian (LB), Raphaela Grolimund (CH), Angela Harutyunyan (AM), Krispin Heé (CH), Misha Hollenbach(AU), Marc Norbert Hörler (CH), Marianna Hovhannisyian (AM), Christoph Keller (DE), Aram Keryan (AM), Nairi Khatchadourian (AM), Antje Majewski (DE), Augustin Maurs (FR), Ioana Mitrea (RO), Maria Mkrtycheva (RU), Mathilde Rosier (CH), Marcello Spada (IT), Pascal Storz (CH), Shauna Toohey, Perks and Mini (AU), Joanna Sokolowska (PL), Hasmik Ter-Voskarian (AM), Vangjush Vellahu (AL), Jasmine Werner see DILIJAN, page 15



ARTS & LIVING

'always HOPE' Released in Memory of Pianist Martin Berkofsky

ARLINGTON, Mass. — The Armenian Cultural Foundation announces the release of a musical CD. Entitled "always HOPE" and recorded by pianist Martin Berkofsky (1943-2013), it includes works by Beethoven, Chopin, Schubert and Liszt.

This CD is the realization of the late Berkofsky's dream to help cancer patients, a wish expressed in mid-October 2013, when Berkofsky himself was battling advanced cancer. Proceeds from this album is being donated to cancer patients in hospitals throughout Massachusetts and other states in the nation and Europe. This recording, said Berkofsky "celebrates hope, universal hope. Hope which is that inextinguishable human spirit which see light without thought of darkness, success without hint of failure, healing as the summit which without question we shall scale."

Of Belarusian ancestry, Berkofsky, born in

Washington, DC, on April 8, 1943, was a child prodigy. He studied piano under Polish virtuoso Mieczyslaw Munz as well as Konrad Wolff, Walter Hautzig and Hans Kann in Vienna. The New York Times hailed Berkofsky's 1965 debut "the most assertive and compelling of all this reviewer had heard this season." His illustrious tenure, spanning 31 countries and on more than 150 radio and television broadcasts, includes recordings with Anton Dorati and the London Symphony Orchestra, the Berlin Symphony Orchestra; competitions awards, Fulbright grants, multiple international tours for the American State Department, summer at the Marlboro Music Festival, and many others.

His life-long mentorship with Armenian-American composer Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000) played a major role in his artistic legacy. Hovhaness entrusted Berkofsky with important premiers of his opuses. Hovhaness also pro-

duced and encouraged many new Berkofsky recordings, for example, with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, Moscow Globalis Symphony Orchestra and Long Island Chamber Ensemble.

In 1982, while on a concert tour in Reykjavik, Iceland, he suffered serious injuries in a motorcycle accident; his left arm was broken in eight places. Despite his doctors' prognosis that he would perhaps never play again, Berkofsky with sheer determination and resilience, recovered. Viewing his recovery as a second chance at life, he resolved that his "calling would be to give concerts only for free and to raise funds to benefit charitable activities. The list of events he dedicated to humanitarian causes is daunting and not well documented. To name a few to raise funds for the families of the victims of the Beslan school massacre in Russia; for the construction of a an art center in West Virginia; a

concert to raise funds for a public school teacher's heart transplant; for the family of a young Pakistani girl who needed expensive leukemia treatments; for the organization Assistance in Health Care, which helps cancer patients; and for Kitzeh and Orion, two orphaned children's communities in Russia.

On May 17, 2009 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Alan



The late pianist Martin Berkofsky

Gagik Aroutiunian Exhibit to Open at ALMA

WATERTOWN — On Sunday, September 11, the Armenian Museum of America (ALMA) will host the opening of a new exhibition: "The Crossroads: Art of Gagik Aroutiunian," at 2 p.m. in the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries on the third floor. The opening of this exhibi-

tion, which will feature artwork from three of Aroutiunian's series', will include a reception where light refreshments will be served. This event is free and open to the public.

Centering on artificially created environments, Aroutiunian's work focuses on heighten-

ing an image's sense of detachment from its setting. His sculptures hold a juxtaposition between this detachment and a representation of memory and its transience.

Aroutiunian states that the result of this juxtaposition is "a peculiar relationship between the figure and its environment, and the establishment of a new reality."

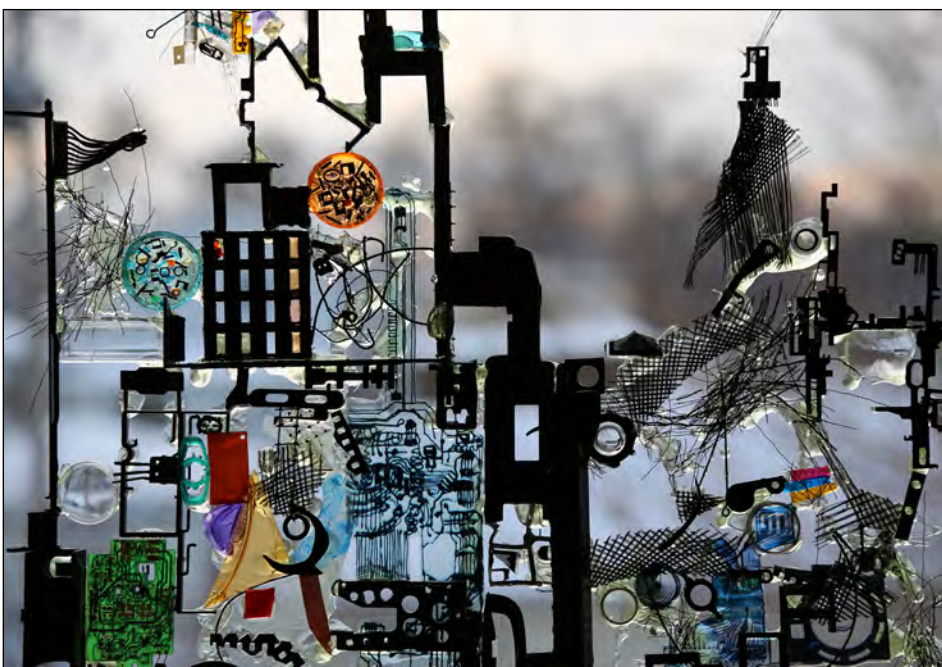
The works in this exhibit are from three series: "Artsakh," "House of Memories" and "Traveler on His Road."

Armenian-born, Aroutiunian grew up in the former Soviet Republic and holds a Bachelor's Degree in painting from the University of Toronto, and an Master of Fine Arts in sculpture from Towson University. A naturalized Canadian citizen, he has lived and worked in Lithuania, Poland, Iceland and Canada.

For the last 20 years, Aroutiunian has resided in the United States and held solo exhibitions across New England, the United States and internationally, and his work can be found in many private and museum collections in England, Germany, Poland, Canada and the U.S.

Aroutiunian currently resides in Chicago and splits his time between making art and teaching it as an associate professor at DePaul University's Department of Art, Media and Design.

To learn more about Gagik Aroutiunian and his sculptures, visit www.gagikaroutiunian.com.



"House of Memories # 10" by Gagik Aroutiunian



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OF GREATER NEW YORK**

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Wine Tasting, Dinner and Music
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RSVP to Helen (347) 368-6993 by September 8th

\$100 per person



Hovhaness (March 8, 1911), Berkofsky in conjunction with the Alan Hovhaness Commemorative Committee, the Alan Hovhaness International Research Centre and the Cristofori Foundation under the auspices of Armenian Cultural Foundation, he played a major role in the dedication ceremonies of the Alan Hovhaness memorial in Arlington, Mass. Granted the honor of making the public unveiling speech in Arlington Center of the Alan Hovhaness plaque on the ground of the Jefferson Cutter House, Berkofsky, more importantly, was instrumental in the creation of the Alan Hovhaness Collection in the Armenian Cultural Foundation. Singlehandedly, he searched, visited various academic centers in the United States, collected recordings, documents, correspondences and papers on Hovhaness' illustrious legacy. This collection, one of the three major in the world, archived and catalogued by the ACF, is available for the researchers worldwide.

A year later, in 2010, learning of "Donatori di Musica" an Italian network of musicians, doctors and volunteers who organize concerts for hospitalized cancer patients, Berkofsky flew to Italy and gave concerts in hospitals in Carrara and Bolzano, while battling his own advanced cancer. On November 1, 2013, gravely ill, he flew to Italy and gave one final concert in the oncology ward of Brescia Hospital to bring his message of hope and light to all who suffer from the disease.

Berkofsky believed in the healing power of music. He said: "Music heals. It brings peace to the spirit, joy to the heart, comfort to the physical body, it unites mankind in brotherhood to strive for generous, unselfish, and high ideals to dedicate ourselves and our work to that which ennobles the human spirit, seeks to overcome and to resolve even the most difficult illness and strife, and holds high the ideals of a higher plane to which we pledge ourselves."

Berkofsky's CD is the second such project by ACF: the first was that of Reuben Gregorian issued on the occasion of his 90th birth anniversary (1999). "always HOPE", initiated by the Armenian Cultural Foundation, has been made possible with the kindness and generosity of a number of classical music enthusiasts, Jack and Marcia Johnston, Paul Vinger, Pasquale Tassone, Amaras Art Alliance, and Friends of Armenian Culture Society (FACS) as well as recording specialists, graphic and art designer who donated their skills and time toward the realization of this project.

For more information, contact ACF during office hours by calling (781)646-3090.

A Special Light Shines through Art

ART, from page 12

The classroom for art lessons on the first floor is spacious, its large windows let in a flood of light – in all its fascinating variations. Paintings fill the walls and easels, with subjects ranging from everyday events – mother ironing clothes or baking lavash, children playing soccer, girls playing with kittens – to reminders of

the political social reality – men in military uniform patrolling the border area, scenes with the Armenian flag flying – to illustrations of fairy tales or folklore events, like the fire dancing. Hovhannisyanyan never tells his pupils what to paint, or how to paint, but rather shows them the basics and urges them to paint what they have in mind, what they know from daily life or

what they can imagine. The school places great value on the education and maintenance of the child's individuality. Judging from the high quality and considerable quantity of works produced, the children have no lack of creative imagination.

These children also have the opportunity to create and expand their own world through visits to art galleries, museums and other cultural centers. They come into contact with the works of well known artists thanks to films and stories. Master classes are available, and the pupils have the chance to meet extraordinary personalities, also through excursions and hike in Gusanagyugh and other interesting locations.

Following the example of the man who inspired the children, the "Suns of Gusana" program enables them to paint outdoors as well. In the village itself there is a wealth of archeological remains which may provide inspiration. Based on the remains discovered there, it is thought that the village dates back to the first century, and a small castle shows that it was once a royal residence. Two castles originate in the Urartian period, one of them known as Akayablur. There are numerous ancient graves, traces of gigantic buildings, the Church of St. Astvatsatsin from the 11th century and other monuments.

The village takes its name from the bard Nakhshikar Sargis, who once resided there. In fact, the word "gusan" means bard or minstrel

in Armenian. (Minstrels in ancient and medieval times were musicians who composed and performed their own poems and songs, very similar to troubadours in the European tradition.) So it is appropriate that the children can also learn to perform music and to dance at the village school.

The promoters of the initiative, Gallery 25, are based in Gumri at the Berlin Hotel, which hosts art exhibitions. Their mission is to uphold the principles of artistic and intellectual freedom, through support for local and international artists and for cultural education. They stress that "Suns of Gusana" represents the brightest spot in the village. Though located in a tiny remote village, with a population of little over 1,000, the pupils are making themselves known well beyond the borders of Armenia, as their works have been exhibited not only locally but also in Japan, Austria and Germany. Gusanagyugh is not only tiny and remote, it is dirt poor. Like other localities in Shirak, it was devastated by the earthquake in 1988. Much has been rebuilt, but a certain sadness hangs in the air. This is due not only to the modest housing but also to the military presence at the nearby Turkish border. Truly, the art school project has brought many new suns into the sky, providing not only that very special kind of light, but also human warmth and the light of hope in a better future for Gusanagyugh's fascinated, diligent, talented children.



Hakob Hovhannisyanyan with a young artist

Bohjalian's *Idyll Banter* Still Hits Home

BOHJALIAN, from page 12

usually do with books I read. I'm not one attracted to those book bins by the side of the road. I would rather take it with me to the gym where I work out each morning and put it inside the men's locker room.

Sometimes they go, other times they do not. I will then offer the book to a hospital which I visit weekly for cancer treatments and pass it to the mobile library which visits patients in their infusion rooms. I've gotten books from there. Others I've offered.

Along with the accolades that have been passed Bohjalian's way from columnists including Dave Barry, the author makes his way to other subjects quicker than an intrusive squirrel that's gone berserk inside your kitchen while you're away.

Since then, there have been a dozen other books, including *The Sandcastle Girls*, which is currently being filmed into a movie.

Midwives, an Oprah Winfrey selection that grabbed top billing in the *New York Times*, was his breakthrough.

Being a columnist myself for 50 years, I would gravitate to *Idyll Banter* and see how another writer approaches life inside his community. I tend to be big on small-town libraries, finding them cordial, home-spun, and definitely a mainstay.

More people visit my local library than any other institution in town. In fact, it's part of a consortium with other libraries in the area. If they don't have a book or DVD you desire, they'll order it for you. Within days, it's yours to enjoy.

In his columns, one especially reached out to

me titled "Losing Your Library." Apparently, Bohjalian did some venting here about facing such a loss at his small Vermont village. It was



Chris Bohjalian

not due to funding cutbacks or anything of the sort but to a natural disaster.

This one happened to be a flood that rampaged and devastated the area, sending the library to its demise. How sad as roomfuls of books and CDs went floating along with other debris to a shallow grave. I cannot imagine my city without its library.

I wound up donating the book to the mobile at the cancer institute, thinking maybe it might wind up in the hands of another patient. I got my wish.

The following week when the mobile appeared, I checked the contents and Bohjalian's book was nowhere to be found. It's the stuff that would bring a smile to any author's face, even Baldacci.



Sumac Lamb Burgers with Easy Pita Salad

INGREDIENTS

1 pound ground lamb
2-3 cloves garlic, crushed
1 medium white onion, minced
2 tablespoons sumac (found in Middle Eastern markets)
2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley
2 tablespoons each tomato paste and fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon paprika
1 teaspoon each sea or kosher salt, ground cumin and ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon each black pepper and allspice
Greek yogurt or lebne, hummus, sliced red or white onions, chopped mint, parsley, and scallions as garnish
Pita bread, toasted hamburger buns, ciabatta bread or favorite rolls

PREPARATION

Combine the ground lamb with the remaining ingredients and spices and mix well. Form into four patties and broil or grill to taste. Assemble patties on bread and garnish with choice of Greek yogurt or lebne, hummus, sliced onions, and chopped mint, parsley and scallions. Serve with Easy Pita Salad on the side.

Serves 4.

Easy Pita Salad

2 medium cucumbers, peeled and diced
2 medium tomatoes, cut into chunks
1 medium green bell pepper, sliced
2-3 cups Romaine lettuce, torn into pieces
1/2 cup fresh mint, chopped
1 small bunch flat-leaf parsley, chopped
3-4 green onions, chopped
2-3 loaves toasted or plain pita bread, cut into bite-size pieces
Sea salt, black pepper, dried or fresh basil, garlic powder, and sumac to taste
Olive oil, juice of 2-3 large lemons

PREPARATION

Combine all ingredients in a large serving bowl. Season with salt, pepper, basil, garlic powder, and sumac, and toss with olive oil and lemon juice. Adjust seasonings and serve. (This salad may be made a day ahead of time and chilled, and the pita bread and dressing added before serving.)

Serves 4.

*Christine's recipes have been published in the Fresno Bee, Sunset and Cooking Light Magazines, and at <http://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/>

*For Christine's recipes that have been published in Sunset and Cooking Light Magazines, go to: <http://www.myrecipes.com/search/site/Datian>



Tom Tomasian's Carvings Are For the Birds

DENNISPORT, Mass. — They call Tom Tomasian “the Birdman of Cape Cod” and rightfully so. It is not that he has a passion for feeding these flighty creatures; he brings them to life through an uncanny dexterity that runs in his family.

So good is Tomasian that he is known on the international scene for his remarkable realism that fools even the birds should they meet.

And much of it is crafted from the dentistry tools he left behind with retirement. Some of his more intricate work consists of the Bobwhite Family, joined by a full-sized red-tail hawk, quails, woodcocks and owls.

By Tom Vartabedian

For the unknowing, the northern bobwhite, Virginia or bobwhite quail is a ground-dwelling bird native to the United States, Mexico and the Caribbean.

He will take on smaller specimens like chickadees, goldfinches, kingfishers and sandpipers, adding nuthatches, plovers, swans, Baltimore orioles and partridges to his repertoire.

All have a place in his Audubon family, regardless of species. It's not so much the wood-working that sets him apart from his peers as much as the artistic side.

“The most difficult part is the painting,” he admits. “Each bird is a separate challenge, along with the habitat.”

Tomasian will use brass, copper, plumber's putty, acrylic and soldering to create leaves, branches, water and woodland floors. Some of the artwork is done with an airbrush.

The prizes he has won rank secondary to the gifts bestowed and the passion of a hobbyist who seeks out new challenges in the study of ornithology. Charities are also a beneficiary of his work.

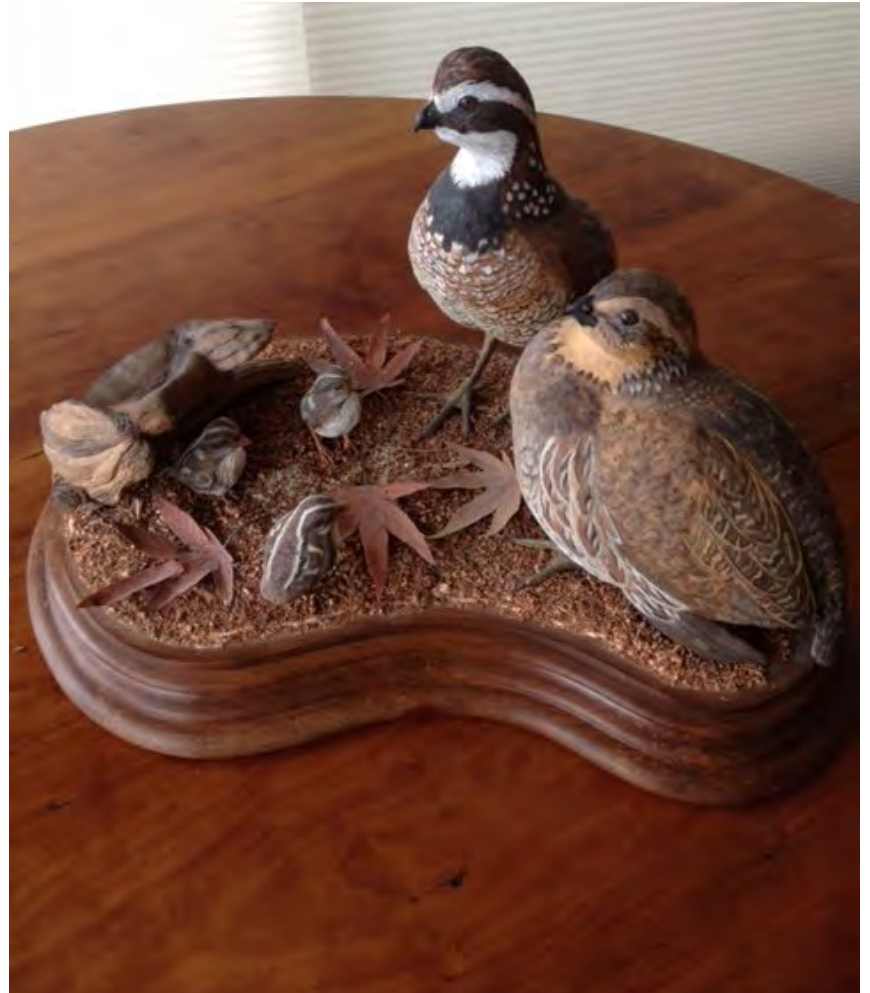
“I start carving by doing a prototype of each bird,” said Tomasian. “I would research pictures, anatomy, habitats and feather layouts. I would make a pattern and sometimes a mock-up in clay to understand the bird three-dimensionally.”

Tomasian got started in the 1980s, thanks to his father who carved and his mom who painted them. They started at the Dennis Senior Center and continued from there, passing the craft to their curious son.

Tom Tomasian read and studied other master carvers, joining classes that came along. It took him eight years just to get the basics down. From there came the more intricate strokes.

Tomasian uses either tupelo or basswood for his carvings. He uses a knife and power carver to remove wood. The process can be dusty and he suctions to control the debris.

“My pieces are very special to me,” he said. “I try to create a museum piece with each subject. Only recently have I considered selling my work. Ninety pieces are on display in my home and I enjoy sharing them with my friends.”



Wood sculptures of exotic birds seemingly come to life with the talents of carver Tom Tomasian.

Tomasian and his wife, Martha, are parents to three children, and have eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

After graduating from Tufts Dental School in 1965, he set up a practice on Cape Cod that extended 43 years in West Harwich. His brother, Ralph, joined him in 1969. They sold the practice a year ago.

Martha is also an artist and lends a hand when asked. Together, they will display their work in November at a 2-week show at the Cultural Center of Cape Cod in South Yarmouth. Tomasian also has another fall show planned at The Green Briar Nature Center in nearby Sandwich.

“Martha's paintings are abstracts that represent a reflection of her soul,” Tomasian pointed out. “The colors are magnificent. Her artwork decorates our home and makes it an inspiring place to live.”

Apart from his carving, Tomasian is an avid golfer and deals with investments. As for the future, health and family remains top priority. What's his next bird?

“I'm carving a snowy owl that has just finished eating a duck,” he reveals. “It's in flight with wings extended and measures up to becoming a complex piece.”

Dilijan Arts Observatory, First Project by Dilijan Art Initiative, Launched in Armenia



Maria Ensayan (1916-1998), Agronomist, Dilijan, Armenia (Photograph courtesy of Dilijan Centralised Library System)

DILIJAN, from page 12

(DE), Asya Yaghmurian (AM), Nork Zakarian (EG).

On September 10 and 11, a two-day public event will be held in Dilijan, presenting the results with a series of events, including an all-night symphony, culinary festivities, performances and exhibitions, as well as an international round-table debate on a future academy for art and life practices.

The outcome of the Dilijan Arts Observatory will feature in exhibitions at the leading national art museums in Europe: the National Gallery of Contemporary Art, the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, in November 2017, and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, in summer 2018.

Veronika Zonabend, Co-Founder, IDeA Foundation, said: “Dilijan Arts Observatory is another project of IDeA Foundation and Dilijan Development Foundation aimed at driving Dilijan's urban and cultural regeneration through education. Dilijan Arts Observatory will include workshops, lectures and interdisciplinary research projects in Dilijan. The Observatory will bring together individuals – each of whom is leading in their field – from a broad range of backgrounds, experiences and countries, to experience the cultural offer of Armenia. I look forward with anticipation to understanding and learning what will be uncovered by this important project.”

Deliss, Curator of the Dilijan Arts Observatory, noted: “I'm delighted to be part of this project. In 2009, when I first came to Armenia to meet artists and activists, I really valued their radical position. It's hugely significant for the Dilijan Arts Observatory, and for Armenia as an international platform, that so many of these leading artists and researchers are now travelling to take part in our project. I hope that our dialogue will produce new models and prototypes for the future.”

And finally, Gagik Adibekyan, founder of the Adibekyan Family Foundation for Advancement, said: “Two years ago Dilijan became Armenia's new educational centre whose importance has been recognised internationally. Thanks to the Dilijan Arts Observatory, this ancient and picturesque town will also become a centre of art and culture, as the project brings together artists, historians and researchers from 14 countries. We are glad that every step we take to develop Dilijan has to do with creating unique, socially significant projects that attract talented people from all over the world. That means that this town has a promising future.”



ARTS & LIVING

Demq: Laugh and the World Laughs with You

COMEDY, from page 1

According to one of the founders of Demq, Gor Kirakosian, he and a group of his friends began their collaboration in 1998 in Los Angeles. They were a group of Armenian guys just out of high school, 17 to 19 years old, and liked to joke around and do funny things. Most were born in Armenia but had moved to the US in the 1990s with their families.

They had an opportunity to participate in the Ashoun Voski (Golden Autumn) concert, which had many different singers and performers. They did some small gigs here and there, and then, in 2001, they prepared a television program called the "Demq Show" for New Year's. It was a success, and aired primarily on California Armenian cable stations for three years. They did one episode of this comedy sketch show every two months. It got very popular and they began work at many Armenian concerts.

Kirakosian remarked, "It is a funny thing that not too many people know us. As we got older, we were not doing much on the Internet. Just now, we put a few sketches we thought were funny there, and we got a huge response. We were not expecting this. Our Uber video received over 600,000 views only in the first few days."

In the Uber video, the actors contrast the American driver with the Armenian one, with hilarious results.

Over the years, the group of friends changed. Some wanted to do other things and left, while new ones took their place. Kirakosian said, "When we were young, we used to get together a lot. We would meet four or five nights a week to write and do shows, but now everybody has work, family and kids. So we meet two or three times a week to write. Because we are friends,



Demq in action

Artak Gasparyan, Armen Darbinyan, Arman "Antic" Margaryan, Martin Kestenian, Hakop Petrosyan and Karpis Kasabyan. Gor's father Karo Kirakosian is producer, while Vache Ter-Yeghishyan is musical director.

As Armenians who came from the Republic of Armenia, they perform in Eastern Armenian, but because they grew up in the Armenian community they speak more as Glendale Armenians do, and slip in English words here and there. People who live in the US would understand some of the references better than those in Yerevan.

They have friends who are Persian Armenian, Lebanese Armenian and practically all other types of Armenians, so they have sketches in which they play each of these different types. They have collaborated with other Armenian comedians, like Vahik Pirhamzei ("Rafayel Keri") or the Vitamin Club, in past shows.

Though many of the Demq actors work in different fields to make a living, Kirakosian went to film school and is able to specialize in writing and directing comedy movies. Most of his films concern Armenians. He is best known for "Lost and Found in Armenia" (2012), "Big Story in a Small City" (2006), "The Knight's Move" (2013) and "Bilet na

Vegas" (2013). Some of the Demq members have been in his movies.

Kirakosian said, "The sad thing is Armenian films do not have enough of an audience to make big budget movies financially feasible." Therefore, most Armenian movies are made



Gor Kirakosian

we also see each other all the time socially, but Mondays and Wednesdays are the days we meet to write."

The process, he said, is the same: "We get together and talk about things. All of us are very creative, so everybody sits down, gets a topic, and tries to write something on it. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't but it is a lot of fun."

After a series of stage shows between 2003 and 2009, the group took a break for some four years. Kirakosian was busy working on movies and many of the other members were doing their own work too. They restarted in 2013 and now are working on a new show for the fall. This necessitates intensive preparation, so the group meets almost every night.

The current members of the troupe are Gor Kirakosian, David Tovmasyan, Levon Ter-Petrosian (not the ex-president of Armenia),



Left, David Tovmasyan, with Gor Kirakosian

with small budgets. For this reason, Kirakosian and other Armenians who want to do larger scale projects have to look outside the Armenian realm eventually.

Another problem is that Armenians seem to prefer to watch only a limited number of genres. Kirakosian said, "There is no Armenian horror movie. They do not take this seriously. And Armenians do not have superheroes." Similarly, Armenian language television is very limited, often with poor acting, lighting and editing. He said that this was wrong because it wastes an opportunity to educate teenagers and others who watch these shows.

However, he said, "I am not giving up, because it is what I love to do. My work and hobby are mixed together." Among his plans are creating a movie based on fairy tales for Armenian children. This has never been attempted, even in Soviet times. He is also working on a movie script with the group.

When asked what Armenian humor is, Kirakosian replied, "I think Armenians have a very good sense of humor. It is very strong. I have seen the humor of different types of cultures, but Armenian humor is unique. ...When we get together, everyone is always happy. Everybody tells a funny joke. I don't see that always with Americans in general. Even when there is a funeral, and most Armenians arrive very sad, the men go outside, start to smoke, and someone tells a joke. Armenians can take even horrible stories and make jokes or humor out of them so that it is not just sadness."

Kirakosian concluded that Armenians both know how to party and how to think seriously. He said, "I don't think we have a middle ground though. We are always at extremes."

Demq's next show, Cirque Demq Soleil, will be on September 18 at 7:30 pm at Pasadena City College. For tickets visit ticketmicket.com.

Armenian Church Altar Curtains and Palampores of the Armenian Merchants

MISSION HILLS, Calif. — The Ararat-Eskijian Museum, in joint cooperation with the Armenian Rug Society, will present an illustrative discourse "Armenian church Altar Curtains and Palampores of the Armenian merchants" on Saturday, August 20, at 5 p.m. at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum/Sheen Chapel 15105 Mission Hills Road.

A palampore is a type of hand-painted bed cover that was made in India for the export market during the 18th century and very early 19th century, according to Wikipedia.

From India and beyond, early Armenian hand painted religious textiles and Palampores tell the stories of Armenian princes, merchants, traders and a general his-

tory of the Armenian community in India during 17 to 18th centuries. Hand painted and block printed textiles that survived are testaments of the community according to renowned textile expert Berdj Achdjian of Gallery Berdj Achdjian, Paris, France.

The event is free and open to the public. It will be in English and reception to follow.



ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

CONNECTICUT

AUGUST 21 — Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection will hold its annual Armenian Festival. Sunday. 12 noon to 6 p.m. (rain or shine) on the grounds of the church at 1910 Stanley Street, New Britain. Admission is free. The festival will feature lamb Shish Kebab and rice pilaf, Kheyma, Losh Kebab and many other delicacies and pastries. The afternoon features dancing and live music also. The Harry Bedrossian Ensemble featuring Harry Bedrossian on vocals and oud, Mike Kassabian on clarinet and Kenny Kalajian on guitar, Gary Hovhannessian on dumbeg, will play Armenian, Greek and other Middle Eastern music. For directions or information, email garyhov@aol.com or call Gary at 860-690-5959

MASSACHUSETTS

AUGUST 28 — Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Picnic to be held at American Legion Farm, 1314 Main St., Haverhill MA (take Rte. 495 to Exit 51 B onto Rte. 125 N), 12 noon to 5 pm. Music by the Jason Naroian Ensemble. Menu includes Shish, Losh, & Chicken Kebab Dinners, Kheyma, Pastries, & Beverages. Raffles for Cash Prizes & Gift Certificates. Air Conditioned Hall. Bring your lawn chairs. For more info visit www.hyepointearmenianchurch.org or call (978) 372-9227

SEPTEMBER 10 — Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston 30th anniversary gala.

SEPTEMBER 11 — Trinity Family Festival, Sunday, 12-5 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Delicious Armenian food with take-out available. Armenian music for your listening and dancing pleasure featuring the Greg Krikorian Ensemble with Greg Krikorian, oud and vocals; George Righellis, guitar and vocals; Bob Raphalian, violin; Charlie Dermenjian, dumbeg; and Steve Surabian, tambourine. Fun activities for children. Blessing of the Madagh at 4 p.m.; raffle drawing and more. For further information, log onto <http://www.htaac.org/calendar/event/303/>, contact the Holy Trinity Church office, 617.354.0632, or email office@htaac.org.

SEPTEMBER 11 — Picnic Festival sponsored by St. Gregory Armenian Church of Merrimack Valley, noon-5:30 p.m., 158 Main St., North Andover; music by Leon Janikian, John Berberian, Jason Naroian and John Arzigian; celebrating Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross; shish, losh, chicken kebab, vegetarian dinners, take outs; family games and activities. For further information, visit www.saintgregory.org or by call (978) 685-5038.

SEPTEMBER 11 — Armenian Church of the Holy Translators Annual Picnic, to be held at Fatima Shrine (Route 126, Holliston, MA), Noon – 5 P.M. Traditional Armenian food menu includes Shish, Losh; Chicken Kebabs, dinners, beverages and pastries. Entertainment includes live Armenian music, dancing and children's activities. Hall is available on picnic grounds for unwanted weather conditions. Picnic tables available. Bring own chair. For further information, contact the church office: 508-875-0868.

SEPTEMBER 11 — Exhibition Opening & Reception, "Crossroads: Art of Gagik Aroutiunian" at 2 p.m., in the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries. The opening of this exhibition, which will feature artwork from three of Aroutiunian's series, will include a reception where light refreshments will be served. This event is free and open to the public.

SEPTEMBER 14 — "Learn About Addiction: Save A Life," A Forum for the Community – Free and Open to the Public. Co-Sponsored by St. James Armenian Church and the Watertown Task Force on Substance Use Disorder Wednesday, 7-9 p.m., St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information, info@stthagop.com

SEPTEMBER 18 — Armenian Independence Day Celebration, Dinner and Program. Guest Speaker: Dr. Anna Ohanyan, Professor of Political Science and International Relations and Chair of the Department of Political Science and International Studies at Stonehill College. Topic: "The Republic of Armenia, Twenty-five Years of Independence: Challenges and Opportunities for the Future." Jaffarian Hall, 158 Main St., No. Andover,



Sunday Afternoon at the Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston, for Families and Friends, on September 18, 2 to 4 p.m. All are invited.

12:30 p.m. Adults - \$20 and Students - \$5. For further information and reservations, contact Armen Jeknavorian, 978-256-2538, armenj@comcast.net. Sponsored by the Lowell Aharonian Gomideh of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

SEPTEMBER 18 — Sunday Afternoon at the Park for Families and Friends, Celebrating Traditions through Music and Dance, 2-4 p.m. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. Enjoy The Leon Janikian Ensemble. Dance Instruction with Apo Ashjian, Founder, Sayat Nova Dance Company, Hoodsies. "Find Someone Game" for a chance to win six tickets to a Boston Duck Tour and much more. All are invited.

SEPTEMBER 23 — St. James Hye Café, Friday, Join us for delicious food and fellowship! Kebab, Falafel, Imam Bayeldi, and more. Doors open at 6:15pm. For more information visit www.stjameswatertown.org. St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown.

SEPTEMBER 26 — Walking the Labyrinth: Reducing and Managing Stress, 5:30 p.m., Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. Followed by Networking Reception at Hollister Staffing, 75 State Street. Featured program during HUBweek. Advance Reservations required. RSVP at HUBweek.org

SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 2 — The 25th Anniversary Celebration, "Inspiring Our Future, Honoring Our Past," Armenian International Women's Association. Charles Hotel, Cambridge. September 29 – Welcome Wine Reception, September 30 & October 1, 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. Conference Sessions, September 30 – 7 p.m., Mix & Mingle Reception, Regatta Bar, October 1 – 6 p.m., Cocktails; 7:30 p.m., Gala Anniversary Dinner. October 2, 9 a.m., Leadership Breakfast. For information & registration, contact 617-926-0171; AIWA25@aiwainternational.org; or visit www.aiwainternational.org

SEPTEMBER — Throughout the month, the Knights of Vartan Worcester Chapter, Arshavir Lodge, No. 2, are celebrating their 100th Anniversaries, the former having been organized on May 29, 1916 in Philadelphia PA and the latter on August 28, 1916. To commemorate these milestones, Arshavir Lodge is sponsoring an exhibit at the Worcester Public Library tracing the history of their origins and a pictorial overview of major events with photographs and documents. The Opening Ceremony in the Saxe Room on Wednesday, September 7 at 6 p.m. features a City Proclamation from Mayor Joseph Petty, a performance by the Greater Worcester Armenian Chorale (including two selections about the Knights Of Vartan), and the showing of "Artsakh: Another Armenian Eden," a film about an ancient Armenian land also known as Nagorno-Karabagh. A reception with refreshments follows the program. The exhibit and Opening Ceremony are free and open to the public. For additional information call 508-963-2076.

OCTOBER 1 — 35th Anniversary of Armenian Independent Broadcasting of Boston. Celebration at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACED), 47 Nichols Ave., Watertown. Details to follow.

OCTOBER 6 — New Citizens Welcome Reception following the naturalization ceremony at Faneuil Hall. 12:30 p.m., Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. Featured program during ArtWeek Boston.

OCTOBER 14-15 — St. James 69th Annual Bazaar - Delicious Armenian Food and Pastries. Silent Auction, Attic Treasures, Booths and Vendors. Raffles,

Children's Activities, and more. Details to follow. St. James Armenian Church – 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information contact 617.923.8860 or info@stthagop.com or visit www.stjameswatertown.org.

OCTOBER 15 — Banquet to mark the 100th Anniversary Celebration of Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church of Lowell-Chelmsford, Massachusetts with Archbishop Khajag Barsamian presiding. Kazanjian Memorial Ballroom, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. Details to follow.

OCTOBER 16 — SAVE THE DATE. Dawn MacKeen, author of noted memoir *The 100 Year Walk: An Armenian Odyssey*, will speak at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, after Sunday Badarak. Organized by the Tekeyan Cultural Association and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. Further details to come.

OCTOBER 22 — Armenian Friends of America presents Hye Kef 5, a 5-hour dance, 7 p.m. to midnight with buffet; Andover Windham, 123 Old River Road, featuring musicians Onnik and Ara Dinkjian, Johnny Berberian, Mal Barsamian, Jason Naroian and Paul Mooradian, with proceeds benefiting area churches. Advance tickets before Sept. 1 @ \$55, call either John Arzigian, (603) 560-3826; Sharke Der Apkarian, (978) 808-0598; Lucy Sirmaian, (978) 683-9121, or Peter Gulezian, (978) 375-1616.

OCTOBER 23 — Save the Date. YerazArt will celebrate its 10th anniversary. Concert followed by reception, Cambridge.

OCTOBER 23 — Opening reception marking joint photograph exhibit titled: "East Meets West," compiled by Tom Vartabedian and Sona (Dulgarian) Gevorkian, featuring eclectic pictures of Armenia and Artsakh, 2-5 pm, at Armenian Museum of America (AMA), 65 Main St., Watertown, MA, co-sponsored by Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives; exhibit will be displayed during the entire months of October and November.

NOVEMBER 3 — K. George and Carolann S. Najarian, MD, Lecture on Human Rights at Faneuil Hall, 7:30 p.m. Doors open at 6:45 pm Justice & Equality: Inspiring Activism" Speaker: Harry Belafonte, Activist and Entertainer. Mr. Belafonte will be introduced by Roger H. Brown, President, Berklee College of Music Reception follows at Bostonian Hotel. All are invited; Free and open to the public. An endowed public program of Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway.

NOVEMBER 15 — Thank You Reception for All Supporters of Armenian Heritage Park. Armenian Cultural and Educational Center. Watertown. 7:30 p.m. During the evening, supporters will receive the Armenian Heritage Park Commemorative Book, which will acknowledge all supporters in the category of giving that combines all their contributions since the campaign's inception. Deadline for first time supporters and for supporters to increase their contribution is September 22. Contributors are tax-deductible as allowed by law. All supporters are invited.

NOVEMBER 19 — Armenian Women's Welfare Association's 40th Annual Luncheon/Auction. The Oakley Country Club, 410 Belmont Street, Watertown, MA. Details to follow.

DECEMBER 2 and DECEMBER 3 — Trinity Christmas Bazaar, Friday, 12 noon-9 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Save the date; details to follow.

DECEMBER 11 — Christmas Holiday Concert — Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra, Sunday, 7 p.m., Church Sanctuary, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Details to follow.

DECEMBER 18 — Candlelit Labyrinth Peace Walk. Coming Together on Common Ground in Peace and Harmony. 5:00-6:30 p.m., Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. All are invited. Details forthcoming.

RHODE ISLAND

OCTOBER 22 — Saints Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church Cultural Committee Presents a special "Tribute to Armenia," with guest speaker Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Armenia's Ambassador to the United Nations; and "Our Favorite Armenian Songs" featuring renowned vocal group, "The Bostonians" (Premier Performance in Rhode Island), Saturday, 7 p.m. Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson St., Providence.

COMMENTARY

Karabagh in a Whirlwind

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The collapse of the Soviet Union left behind many unresolved territorial issues which have come to be categorized as “frozen conflicts.” Nagorno Karabagh was one such “frozen conflict,” which today has been defrosted, thawed and even become one of the very hot spots of the region.

Karabagh is now caught in a whirlwind generated by the recent power reconfigurations in the Caucasus region.

An axis is being formed, bringing together Russia, Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan. Armenia is left out to nobody’s chagrin, but the Karabagh conflict remains one of the stumbling blocks towards the full coagulation of the new alliance.

Since the signing of the cease-fire regime in 1994 between Armenia and Azerbaijan, brokered by the Kremlin, the Karabagh issue has been a permanent feature on the agenda of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). For a period of time, Karabagh was party to the negotiations, but upon Azerbaijan’s objections, it was removed from the negotiation table and Yerevan did not make an issue out of it in order not to jeopardize the ongoing talks. However, at this time, negotiations have intensified between Russia, Turkey, Iran and Azerbaijan, and even Armenia itself has been marginalized.

After his recent meeting with President Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a blunt statement to the Turkish Aksam newspaper, saying: “There is progress in the resolution of Karabagh conflict. ... To begin with if the five regions occupied by Armenian forces are liberated, then we can talk about the process of regulating the region. ... The entire world is aware that Azerbaijani territories have been occupied by Armenia. ... If all the parties accept this fact, then why not put an end to the occupation?”

Adding insult to injury, Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has said that the Karabagh conflict will be tackled between Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russia, which can satisfy all parties. The foreign minister deliberately left out Armenia and Karabagh to insinuate that whatever resolution arises from the collaboration of this grouping must be accepted by the latter.

Ordinarily, these pronouncements could be taken at face value, were it not for other factors that have come to give credence to these statements. The fact that in President Serzh Sargsyan’s speech there is assurance that there will not be “unilateral concessions” in the settlement of the Karabagh negotiations leaves open the possibility that something is in the works to force the surrender of some territories. Sargsyan’s statement is exacerbated by President Putin’s statement, after President Ilham Aliyev alluded to ceding five regions by Armenian forces, in response to a reporter’s question: “I do not interpret statements from my colleagues.”

Therefore, the question remains unanswered and open to interpretation and speculation.

One of the triggers of the recent unrest in Armenia was the rumor that the government had already agreed to return the territories. Those who are against that concession argue that Azerbaijan is bent on waging a war at any stage. Should that war come after ceding the territories and expanding the borders with Azerbaijan and rendering Karabagh more vulnerable, we would prefer war now while we have the upper hand.

Incidentally, the unrest is caused not only with the developments in the Karabagh conflict, but because of other factors as well, chief among them being the complete loss of the credibility of the government.

There are a number of legitimate factors that led to the revolt. No one questions the patriotism of the members of Sasna Tsrer, who took up arms and occupied the police station at Erebuni in July. But outside forces, which have brought about “color revolutions” in other regions, bank exactly on these legitimate causes to promote their selfish agendas. Whipping up anti-Russian sentiments and calling to join NATO (of all people by opposition figure filmmaker Dikran Xmalian) point to the signature of the merchants of the color revolutions behind some of the unrest.

Armenians are faced with the unpleasant choice of land or peace. But does that formula resolve the problem forever when Aliyev keeps spreading the falsehood that present-day Armenia itself is considered historic Azeri land and when in the 21st century Turkey’s Deputy Prime Minister Bilal Yildirim maintains that the deportation (or Genocide) of the Armenians was justified in 1915 and if necessary, should be repeated?

If the plan of land for peace is executed, which party can guarantee Armenia’s security?

Let’s look at some historic precedents. To end the atrocities in Sudan, the country of South Sudan was created, but the war continues, this time by the respective factions backing the president and the vice president. Similarly, Serbia was amputated to create Kosovo, which until today, is under NATO tutelage. The moment NATO leaves, the war will resume.

In all probability, Moscow will be delighted to introduce its peacekeeping forces in the region. But Armenians have the historic parallel of Cilicia, where they returned after fighting a victorious war. The French colonizers, who had promised a homeland under their protection, disarmed the Armenians and betrayed them, joining the Kemalists instead.

Therefore, unless Armenia develops sustainable military power to defend itself, it cannot delegate the security and the lives of its citizens to any strategic ally.

Thus far, OSCE has been the main forum dealing with the Karabagh conflict. With two of its members, namely Russia and Turkey, drifting apart, the issue has been transferred to a different arena and that shift is reflected in the arrogant pronouncements of the leaders in Turkey and Azerbaijan. No concrete facts have come out of the recent negotiations. Positions and policies on the Karabagh conflict are being discussed based on scant leaks to the media.

Azerbaijan has never conceded that Karabagh may become independent after ceding all seven regions in question. It has not even accepted the notion of a referendum in the immediate future. All that Baku has promised is a “high level of autonomy

within the borders of Azerbaijan,” and this is only a vague promise, which has met with intransigence on the Armenian side.

After much anticipation and speculation, finally a former Kremlin insider, Andranik Mihranian, let the cat out of the bag in an interview on August 14 with www.tert.am.

He said: “I believed that even a child in Armenia could understand that territories had to be exchanged for the approval of independent status for Nagorno Karabagh by the government of

Azerbaijan, with the international community – OSCE Minsk Group and others – to be guarantors.”

Mr. Mihranian believes that even an interim status would be “a brilliant fantastic victory for Nagorno Karabagh” because “it would allow Nagorno Karabagh to stop being a part of Azerbaijan within international law.”

Azerbaijan maintains that Karabagh is the integral part of its territory. But Karabagh, as an autonomous oblast, was brought under Baku’s jurisdiction during the Soviet era. Karabagh respected the validity of Soviet constitution and to cede from the Union and from Azerbaijan, the nation held a referendum. Additionally the Republic of Azerbaijan considers Soviet rule as illegal occupation of its territory. Therefore, if Soviet jurisdiction was illegal, how can the Soviet annexation of Karabagh to Azerbaijan be valid? But Turkey and Azerbaijan are using the Islamic card to pass four resolutions at the UN against Armenia to be able to cite that the “international community” endorses Baku’s claim.

“No Armenian leader,” continues Mihranian, “especially Serzh Sargsyan, who has from the outset been involved in the struggle for Artsakh’s independence, will return an inch of land for just no reason, without guarantees for Nagorno Karabagh’s independence and security.”

Had Mihranian’s statements not been corroborated by other sources, it may have been considered a lone voice in the wilderness. Now, we see another voice seconding his claims. That source is another Kremlin player, political analyst Oleg



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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Russia & Turkey Isolate Armenia, While Protesters Want New Government

This column attempts to explain the reasons for the sudden rapprochement between Russia and Turkey, which also welcome Azerbaijan, and tangentially Iran, into their fold, while a major confrontation was taking place in Yerevan between an armed opposition group and the police.

By setting aside their feud over the downing of a Russian military jet by Turkey near the Syrian border last year, Moscow and Ankara have now formed a “marriage of convenience” stemming from their perceived mutual national interests. This pragmatic decision by the Presidents of Russia and Turkey is intended to maximize their economic benefits and coordinate their foreign policies, enabling them to better withstand pressures from the West.

Russia has been suffering from a faltering economy, mostly due to Western sanctions after its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. Turkey, on the other hand, despite its membership in both NATO and the European Council, has been shunned from joining the European Union and accused of supporting ISIS in Syria. Moreover, Turkish President Erdogan is outraged that many European countries have been highly critical of his harsh measures against political opponents after the July 15 coup attempt. Erdogan is also unhappy that the United States has not extradited to Turkey the Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom he accuses of masterminding the attempted military coup.

Rejecting the “undue Western interference” in their domestic and foreign affairs, Russia and Turkey have decided to lay the foundation for a new alliance that will bring them out of their isolation from the West. To pursue that end, Russian President Putin met with Azerbaijan’s President Aliyev and Iran’s President Rouhani in Baku on August 8, and Turkish President Erdogan in St. Petersburg

on August 9. These four countries signed a series of important economic agreements and discussed significant political issues impacting the region, including the Artsakh (Karabagh) conflict. The next day, Putin met with Armenian President Sargsyan in Moscow to brief him on the results of his earlier meetings.

While Russia’s rapprochement with Armenia’s arch enemies, Azerbaijan and Turkey, could lead to heavy pressures on President Sargsyan to make territorial concessions on Artsakh, it could also lessen the possibility of unilateral military action by Azerbaijan against Artsakh, without Pres. Putin’s consent. No one should be surprised if this new realignment between Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey would also revive the defunct Armenia-Turkey protocols of 2009, resulting in the opening of their mutual border in conjunction with a “conciliatory step” on Artsakh by Armenia.

Today’s wily Turkish leaders are following the footsteps of their Ottoman predecessors who skillfully pitted one major European power against the others for decades, and then switched sides when it suited them. Incredibly, Erdogan is cozying up to Russia while remaining a NATO member, thus benefitting from both parties. The United States and other NATO members should not fall for this Turkish trickery. They should warn Erdogan in no uncertain terms to choose either NATO or Russia! Should the Turkish President continue to side with Russia, he could be left with an empty bag when his alliance with the Kremlin collapses!

As dark clouds gather over Armenia and Artsakh, Armenians have been busy settling internal disputes. The July 17 takeover of a police station in Yerevan by a group of 31 armed men who are veterans of the Artsakh War created considerable concern among Armenians nationwide and worldwide. The group, nicknamed Sasna Dsrer, (Daredevils of Sassoun), demanded President Sargsyan’s resignation, release of political prisoners, formation of an interim government, and new elections.

After a two-week standoff – three policemen were killed, several of the armed men were wounded, and scores of demonstrators were injured or detained, including journalists – the remaining members of Sasna Dsrer surrendered. Hundreds, sometimes thousands, of protesters held public rallies night after night to express their support for the demands of the veterans’ group.

The true roots of this tragic confrontation go back to the early days of Armenia’s independence. There has been a pent up anger and frustration among large circles of the population for the past quarter century during which over a million

Armenians left the country to secure basic necessities for their families. Those remaining behind suffered many deprivations and inequalities, including corruption, fraudulent elections, unfair judiciary, uncaring bureaucrats, and monopolistic oligarchs!

As a result, most Armenian citizens have lost their trust in government. Although an armed attack on a police station is not an acceptable form of dissent, when people are in a desperate situation for a long period of time and see no other alternative to resolve their grievances, they are forced to resort to extreme measures.

While such internal dissension could jeopardize Armenia’s and Artsakh’s security, the protesters are adamant that having unresponsive leaders poses a greater risk. Ironically, all those protesting the possibility of turning over to Azerbaijan the buffer zone around Artsakh have helped strengthen Pres. Sargsyan’s position in making the point to Putin that the Armenian people vehemently oppose any territorial concessions on Artsakh.

If government officials wish to prevent the repeat of further domestic unrest, they must take all necessary measures to show that they truly care about the welfare of the Armenian people. To this end, Pres. Sargsyan recently promised to make drastic changes, including the formation of a “unity government.” Understandably, many citizens are skeptical since they have heard similar unfulfilled past promises.

In 2017, a new Parliament is scheduled to be elected, and a new President to be selected by Parliament members in 2018. Unless the next elections are fair and represent the various segments of the population, there may be more serious disturbances. The burden for freer elections falls not only on government officials, but also on voters who sell their votes!

A democratically-elected government is the only way to gain the people’s trust not only to govern them fairly, but also to properly manage the country’s foreign relations, including the negotiations on Artsakh. Currently, there is a considerable distrust that what is being negotiated behind closed doors in Moscow or elsewhere stems from the interests of the Armenian nation.

To get out of this newly-imposed precarious geo-strategic isolation, the authorities in Armenia and Artsakh have to emulate the long-standing Turkish tactic of “divide and conquer,” looking for opportunities to pit Russia against Turkey and Azerbaijan, thus undermining the possible consensus of Azerbaijan, Iran, Russia and Turkey on the Artsakh conflict!

Silence and Hypocrisy: Killers of Hope

An urgent call for our Diaspora to demand democracy and human rights in Armenia.

While many foreign and outside entities had appealed for a non-extreme response to the extreme actions taken by an armed group at the Yerevan police station, the Diaspora largely remained silent.

By contrast, the rulers in Armenia have engaged in wholesale mass arrests and detention of anyone they suspect as the opposition, including peaceful protestors exercising their constitutional right to assemble, whether to appeal for moderation or express their grievances against government policies and practices.

The Armenian Diaspora at large has not adequately spoken out against these government actions. At this point, it is difficult to fathom the motivations for such silence.

Could it be the belief that we, in the Diaspora, have no business interfering in internal affairs of a foreign country – except when it comes to the Karabagh question and Armenia-Turkey relations? Or is it the notion that it’s the Armenian government’s job to serve the needs of its people – except when it comes to the sick, the needy, the poor, the military, elderly, public schools and children?

Only the ruling elite seem to have their needs addressed while living lavish lives supported by ill-begotten funds sheltered in the names of family members and off-shore shell companies.

Recently the Catholicos of All Armenians himself thought it appropriate to condemn the violent acts of these “Daredevils”, but he has not condemned the injustices perpetrated by the ruling party against the flock – such as systemic election fraud and gross human rights violations, including unleashing the over-aggressive police and infamously brutal thug brigades.

Many community leaders in the Diaspora have acknowledged, behind closed doors, that it’s no secret to them that

Armenia is severely corrupt, but they could not speak truth to power because it might have compromised the good work they were doing to instill “hope for a better future” among the people – except when that hope was for a clean government that evens the economic playing field, allows for free and fair elections, and insists on an independent judiciary and Rule of Law. Perhaps they considered those minor issues compared with poverty and hunger. Yet we all have witnessed on many occasions that the people were not protesting against poverty and hunger but demanding democracy and human rights.

So while we were patting ourselves on the back for working to instill hope, our silence and hypocrisy were killing that hope, rendering much of our time, money and efforts in Armenia futile and ineffective—posh hotels, fancy restaurants and high tech “showcase” schools notwithstanding.

Most of us thought time was the cure for Armenia’s ills and that somehow, magically, the leaders would come to their senses and live up to the promise of the new Armenia. Yet two decades is long enough to prove that corruption only breeds corruption, leading to a failed state and cynical society that has nothing left to lose. As John F. Kennedy wisely admonished, “Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.”

Armenian Bar Association

Justice Armenia

Professor Simon Payaslian

Anny Bakalian, Ph.D.

Vahe Berberian (USA)

Ara Dinkjian (USA)

Armenian Renaissance-Los Angeles Chapter

Armenian Renaissance-

New York Chapter

Vahe Tachjian (Germany)

Vicken Cheterian (Switzerland)

Nora Armani

Vicken Tarpinian (France)

Garo Ghazarian, Esq.

If we are truly honest, it may already be too late to overcome the high stakes and perilous road ahead. Yet, if ever the Diaspora had an opportunity to show its true mettle, the hour has come.

All who recognize this crisis point, should urge our community representatives and organizations, charitable, religious and political, to publicly decry those responsible for the rampant abuses of human rights and dignity and support those that seek electoral reform and an accounting of unlawful police tactics. The former would include the public inspection of voter lists, and a meaningful investigation of violations committed during last December’s constitutional referendum and those who have to date blocked such an effort.

We should no longer consider the alternative an option – that is, trying to preserve a fabricated and false sense of law and order that cripples Armenia’s ability to meet challenges at home and at the border while inciting civil violence.

Taking a clear stand on the side of human rights and justice won’t instantly solve the deeply entrenched problems that plague the country. But it’s a first step in a new direction, that, if made courageously, wholeheartedly, unequivocally and boldly, will instill hope among the people as never before.

Maro Matosian

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Berc Araz (USA)

Rafi Hovsepian

Mario Yazidjian (USA)

Harout Chatmajian (USA)

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Philippe (Raffi) Kalfayan (France)

Armen Donelian (USA)

Zareh Ouzounian (Canada)

Armenian Renaissance- Toronto Chapter

Armenian Medical International Committee

Ara N. Araz (USA)



Turkey, Europe's Little Problem

By Burak Bekdil

Europe is giving signals, albeit slowly, that it may be waking up from the “Turkey-the-bridge” dream. Germany’s Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmaier said that his country’s relations with Turkey have grown so bad the two countries have virtually “no basis” for talks.

“Italy should be attending to the mafia, not my son,” said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Typically, he does not understand the existence of independent judiciary in a European country. He thinks, as in an Arab sheikdom, prosecutors are liable to drop charges on orders from the prime minister.

“We know that the democratic standards are clearly not sufficient to justify [Turkey’s] accession [to the European Union],” – Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern.

Nations do not have the luxury, as people often do, of choosing their neighbors. Turkey, under the 14-year rule of Recep Tayyip

Erdogan’s Islamist governments, and neighboring both Europe and the Middle East, was once praised as a “bridge” between Western and Islamic civilizations. Its accession into the European Union (EU) was encouraged by most EU and American leaders. Nearly three decades after its official bid to join the European club, Turkey is not yet European but has become one of Europe’s problems.

Europe’s “Turkish problem” is not only about the fact that in a fortnight a bomb attack wrecked a terminal of the country’s biggest airport and a coup attempt killed nearly 250 people; nor is it about who rules the country. It is about the undeniable democratic deficit both in governance and popular culture.

In only the past couple of weeks, Turkey was in the headlines with jaw-dropping news. In Istanbul, a secretary at a daily newspaper was attacked by a group of people who accused her of “wearing revealing clothes and supporting the July 15 failed coup.” She was six months pregnant.

Also in Istanbul, a Syrian gay refugee was murdered: he had been beheaded and mutilated. One social worker helping LGBT groups

said: “Police are doing nothing because he is Syrian and because he is gay.”

Turkey is dangerous not only for gays and refugees. A French tourist was left bloodied and beaten by Turkish nationalists after he refused to hold a Turkish flag. Grisly footage shows the gang, encouraged by Erdogan to patrol the streets on “democracy watch,” telling the man “You will be punched if you don’t hold the flag.” The tourist is alone and does not appear to speak Turkish.

Meanwhile Europe is giving signals, albeit slowly, that it may be waking up from the “Turkey-the-bridge” dream. Germany’s Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmaier said that his country’s relations with Turkey have grown so bad the two countries have virtually “no basis” for talks. He said that Germany has serious concerns about mass arrests carried out by Turkish officials. According to Steinmaier, Turkey and Germany are like “emissaries from two different planets.” Steinmaier is right. He is also not the only European statesman who sees Turkey as alien.

Erdogan recently threatened Italy that its bilateral relations with Turkey could deteriorate

if Italian prosecutors investigating Erdogan’s son, Bilal, for money laundering, proceeded with their probe. “Italy should be attending to the mafia, not my son,” Erdogan said. Typically, he does not understand the existence of independent judiciary in a European country. He thinks, as in an Arab sheikdom, prosecutors are liable to drop charges on orders from the prime minister.

Italy’s prime minister, Matteo Renzi, answered Erdogan in language Erdogan will probably will not understand: “Italy has an independent legal system and judges answer to the Italian constitution and not the Turkish president.”

In unusual European realism, Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern said that he would start a discussion among European heads of government to end EU membership talks with Turkey. He rightly called the accession talks “diplomatic fiction.” Kern said: “We know that the democratic standards are clearly not sufficient to justify [Turkey’s] accession.”

Even Turkish Cypriots on the divided island fear that Erdogan’s Islamization campaign may target their tiny statelet. On August 3, about 1,500 people from 80 groups spanning the political spectrum took to the streets in Nicosia to protest against “Turkey’s attempt to mold their secular culture into one that’s more in tune with Islamic norms.”

All of that inevitably makes Turkey an alien candidate waiting at Europe’s gates to join the club. According to a European survey, Turkey is the least-wanted potential EU member – even less wanted than Russia. Opposition to Turkish membership ranges from 54% (Norway) to 81% (Germany).

Celal Yaliniz, a little-known Turkish philosopher, likened Turks in the 1950s to “members of a ship’s crew who are running toward the west as their ship travelled east.” The Turks were not alone. Erdogan’s “liberal” Western supporters have been no different.

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Karabagh in a Whirlwind

WHIRLWIND, from page 18

Matveychenko, who has published an article titled “It Is Already Time to Heal the wounds.” It is believed that the article is a trial balloon being floated to test the reactions in Armenia, Karabagh and Azerbaijan about a new package of proposals by the OSCE leadership.

Under five headings, the writer details the scenario of the exchange of territories against Karabagh’s independence and the right to join Armenia.

As they say, the devil is in the details; the writer proposes a corridor in the Meghri region, which encroaches on Armenia’s sovereignty. The narrow corridor, only 150 meters wide, will allow Azerbaijan to communicate with Nakhichevan, incidentally another Armenian oblast given to Azerbaijan by the Soviet overlords. It is kind of a Paul Goble Proposal 2, to which former President Levon Ter-Petrosian had answered that when peace is established, Azerbaijani trucks, trains and planes will cross Armenia’s territory without a special agreement compromising its sovereignty.

There are also other details, which if enforced, may meet the rejection of both parties. The package in its major outlines may indicate a movement in the positive direction. But word about Karabagh independence must be uttered by the Azerbaijani side.

The question is whether recent uproar in Armenia strengthened or weakened the president’s hand at the negotiation table. This writer believed that it could weaken it, but it seems that the popular resolve has resonated beyond Armenia’s borders, warning all interested parties that Armenia is against the wall and cannot be pushed any further.

At this time, Karabagh is in the whirlwind of negotiations. Once the whirlwind subsides, we will find out if Karabagh will become independent, semi-independent or still besieged.