

Deputy Prime Minister, Parliament Speaker, Ambassador to US Address Boston Armenians

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN – On July 19, Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan and Speaker of the Armenian Parliament Ararat Mirzoyan, accompanied by Armenian Ambassador to the US Varuzhan Nersesyan, appeared at a public event held at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACEC) in Watertown. Dr. Ara Nazarian served as master of ceremonies. This event was part of the visit of the high-level Armenian state officials to several cities in the United States (see accompanying articles).

Dr. George Bashirians, president of the ACEC, spoke words of welcome, and was followed by Amb. Nersesyan, who explained that Mirzoyan came from participating in Washington at the House Democracy Partnership Forum. This was the first time Armenia was invited to participate in this important conference, and met with Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Majority Leader of the Senate Mitch McConnell. Simultaneously, Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan was in Washington

ARAM ARKUN PHOTO



Deputy Prime Minister Avinyan Focuses on the Economy

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Tigran Avinyan visited New York and Boston in mid-July. The main goal of the trip was to participate in a United Nations high level political forum on sustainable development, but he also held many meetings with official colleagues at the UN as well as members of the Armenian communities of both cities.

see AVINYAN, page 14



ARAM ARKUN PHOTO

From left, Amb. Varuzhan Nersesyan, Speaker Ararat Mirzoyan, Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan (Aram Arkun Photo)

to participate in meetings of foreign ministers organized by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on religious freedom. Meanwhile Avinyan participated in a UN conference and held various meetings. Nersesyan concluded that Armenia's relations with the US this year have reached a

new level of strategic dialogue, and that these meetings are one indication of this.

Mirzoyan, speaking in Armenian, exclaimed that just a few minutes ago he and the other politicians visited the *Hairenik* archives and the documents about the first Armenian republic and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation reminded him, a historian by training, of the lessons of the past. More immediately, he said, for 20 years, he and his colleagues were striving to create a truly democratic Armenia and last year finally through a mass movement a peaceful change of regime presented the opportunity to achieve this. Among the first concrete achievements of the new regime were increases in the wages of soldiers and teachers, and pensions of retirees. Some pensions were previously lower than the minimum sum necessary not to starve. While he could not tell what will happen in the future, he said two things were certain. First, the political team in power today does all in its power to have a good Armenia. Secondly, possibility and hope exist now in Armenia.

Avinyan then spoke in English, declaring that after independence from the Soviet Union, Armenia mostly failed in building its new institutions, as the democratic framework was absent. In December 2018, Armenia became a democratic state, he stressed, after fair and democratic elections. Despite all the tensions of the revolution and several elections, the economy closed with 5.2 percent GDP growth, which he said was unprecedented. This year, Armenia with a 7.1 percent GDP growth is the champion of Europe. Probably, Avinyan see VISIT, page 2

Parliament Speaker Tours US, Touts Contacts With US Officials

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Ararat Mirzoyan, the speaker of the National Assembly and its leader, recently concluded a tour of the US with Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan.

On Saturday, July 20, during his stay in Boston, Mirzoyan sat down for a press conference with staff of Armenian newspapers in the Boston area, the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, *Hairenik* see MIRZOYAN, page 15

ARAM ARKUN PHOTO



Famous International Lawyer Benjamin Ferencz Joins Aurora Prize

NEW YORK – The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative announced this week that Benjamin Ferencz, noted peace and human rights activist, has joined the Selection Committee of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity as its honorary co-chair. The well-known Romanian-born American lawyer, who has been promoting the establishment of an international rule of law for many years, will be a global ambassador of the Aurora Prize.

"We are delighted to welcome Benjamin Ferencz, whose persistent efforts to secure justice for the victims of crimes against humanity have made our world a better place. During his career he has defended human decency and our common humanity against persecution and genocide. We are happy to have him join the Aurora Prize Selection Committee as its honorary co-chair," said Vartan Gregorian, Aurora Humanitarian Initiative co-founder and president of Carnegie Corporation of New York.

see AURORA, page 20



NEWS IN BRIEF

Sanders Says He Will Acknowledge Armenian Genocide

LOS ANGELES (Armenpress) – US presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders said he is ready to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

During a round-table discussion with ethnic media on July 26 in Los Angeles, the US presidential candidate vowed to address it as such during the annual presidential address on April 24, unlike previous Presidents who have failed to uphold their promise, Massis Post reported.

Asked "will you stand up to the Turkish government and officially use the word genocide," the Senator said: "Yes, I think the debate [on the Genocide] is now over."

Bernie Sanders is currently a co-sponsor of the Armenian Genocide Resolution S.Res.150, spearheaded by Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Ted Cruz (R-TX).

Armenian Soldier Killed Near Border With Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – An Armenian soldier was killed near the border with Azerbaijan on July 28, a Defense Ministry spokesman announced.

According to Artsrun Hovannisian, Arman Bulghadaryan, a 24-year-old soldier serving in the Armenian armed forces under a contract, was hit on Sunday by a bullet from the Azerbaijani side at the northeastern section of the highly militarized border.

No further details have been provided.

Earlier, on Saturday, the Armenian military reported another incident at the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in which an Armenian contract soldier was wounded.

In a statement released then Armenia's Defense Ministry accused Azerbaijan of seeking to escalate the border situation.

"Another provocative action by the Azerbaijani side once again proves that the enemy continues to brazenly violate the ceasefire regime and consistently escalate the situation on the border. It is Azerbaijan that bears full responsibility for the escalation of the situation," it said.

Armenian Youth Killed In Aleppo

ALEPPO, Syria (Armenpress) – A 17-year old Armenian youth, Shant Keoshkerian, was shot dead in Aleppo on July 29, the Arevelk website reported, citing its own sources.

Keoshkerian was shot on Martin Street. The Police was able to apprehend the suspect. The motives of the murder are under investigation.

On July 17, an Armenian woman, Syuzan Der Karkur, was stoned to death in Syria's Idlib province.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

300 Special Needs Students to Transfer to Mainstream Schools

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The City Hall of Yerevan is transferring nearly 300 students from three special schools under its jurisdiction to public ones.

Yerevan City Hall Director of Public Education Department Anna Stepanyan sat at a press conference on July 30 that the special schools will soon be re-organized into support centers.

“We still have a lot to do, but I can already confidently say that Yerevan is ready to completely transfer to inclusive education,” she said. “Inclusive education has been carried out for many years in 54 of Yerevan’s 155 schools. Today, these schools already have much experience. We began the process from last year when the government passed the decision”.

According to the City Hall official, this year they are focused on training the teachers, as well as support from parents.

She said training courses have been organized in 65 schools in Yerevan sponsored by the Bridge of Hope organization. Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Arayik Harutyunyan had earlier announced that the city of Yerevan and the provinces of Shirak and Aragatsotn will shift to universal inclusive education starting from September 2019.

Row Between Armenia, NKR Leaders ‘Settled’

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The leaders of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh have normalized their relations following a recent public spat, a senior official in Yerevan insisted on Friday, July 26.

“The relationship between Yerevan and Stepanakert is in a very good state at the moment,” said Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia’s Security Council. “There were some problems but those problems are now a thing of the past.”

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan charged in May that unnamed “forces representing the former corrupt system” are intent on provoking a war with Azerbaijan, losing “some territories” and blaming that defeat on Armenia’s current government. He effectively pointed the finger at Karabakh’s leadership.

In early June, Pashinyan accused the authorities in Stepanakert of spreading false claims about significant territorial concessions to Azerbaijan planned by his government. Bako Sahakyan, the Karabakh president, was quick to deny that.

The secretary of Sahakyan’s national security council, Vitaly Balasanian, was relieved of his duties a few days later. Balasanian had publicly scoffed at Pashinyan’s confidence-building understandings reached with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev late last year.

Government Evacuates Tourists From in Egypt

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia’s government hired a passenger jet on Friday, July 26, to evacuate more than 100 Armenian tourists stranded at an Egyptian Red Sea resort because a Yerevan-based travel agency had not bought them return tickets.

The tourists were due to return from the Hurghada resort on Wednesday. However, their flight organized by the A & R Tour agency was cancelled.

According to the Armenian Embassy in Egypt, A & R Tour failed to make a payment to a Greek airline which was due to fly out the passengers. Flights from Yerevan to another popular Egyptian resort, Sharm el-Sheikh, arranged by the same agency, were also cancelled this week.

The government paid the Greek airline Ogrange2Fly 47 million drams (about \$100,000) to bring the 130 or so stranded holidaymakers back. They arrived home on Friday evening.

A second Hurghada-Yerevan flight will be carried out on Monday. According to a spokesman for Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan it will bring home more than 100 other A & R Tour customers, whose holidays end next week.

The Armenian police said, meanwhile, that they have launched a preliminary investigation.

Deputy Prime Minister Avinyan Speaks at Armenian Business Network Cambridge Event

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Tigran Avinyan appeared at an evening event in Cambridge’s Sheraton Commander Hotel hosted by the Armenian Business Network (ABN) on July 18 to briefly speak and answer questions from the community.

The event was sponsored by Michael Guleserian and the Sheraton Commander Hotel, which hosted him and all visiting officials from Armenia. Avinyan and Speaker of the Armenian Parliament Ararat Mirzoyan, accompanied by Armenian Ambassador to the US Varuzhan Nersesyan, had a public event on July 19 (see accompanying article).

The visit of the officials, including various advisors, was coordinated locally by a committee composed of Anthony Barsamian, Dr. Ara Nazarian and Arman Manoukian. James Kalustian, president of the Armenian Heritage Foundation, organized a visit to Armenian Heritage Park, while Nubar Afeyan arranged for visits to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a meeting with MIT economist Daron Acemoglu. The officials also visited Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge and St. Stephen’s Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown.

Barsamian made introductory remarks at the ABN event. Carolyn Atinikian welcomed Avinyan on behalf of the Armenian business community, while Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, who helped with the logistics of the visit of the Armenian delegation, briefly praised the new Armenian government and the organizers of the event.

Avinyan spoke in fluent English about the changes in the Armenian government over the last year. He said that the popular movement developed in the background of years of negative developments. When Avinyan returned from his studies in London in 2014 and met Nikol Pashinyan, he said they had a short discussion about what to do, and Avinyan told Pashinyan that even if they did nothing, the existing system in Armenia was a “big dinosaur” and his-



Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan, with Jack Antounian seated

tory taught that dinosaurs would die eventually. So the movement of the Velvet Revolution only helped to speed its demise.

In 2018, despite the movements in the street, preventing work and school, and repeated elections, that would seem to indicate economic instability, Avinyan said the gross domestic product of Armenia grew at a rate of 5.2 percent. In the first quarter of 2019, Armenia had a 7.1 percent rate of growth, which is the highest rate of GDP growth in Europe.

In 2019, Avinyan continued, the government collected 150 million dollars more in taxes than expected. Its approach is an inclusive growth mode, which includes infrastructure and human capital. Consequently, this money was spent on growth, including on education. He said in practically every sector new initiatives are flourishing. Engineering labs, he said, already exist in 30 percent of Armenian schools already, and by next year they will be in all schools in the country. This year, health care was also expanded by the government to include all children from birth to 18 years old.

The annual GDP of Armenia is 12 billion dollars. Avinyan said that probably a group of the richest Armenians in the diaspora would have the same amount of resources. He said “We need a deep change in the way we think about our state [and] treat our state. All the

Armenians in the world should feel that the Armenian state, the Republic of Armenia, is a part of them, and they are a part of that country. Because the Armenian state, the Republic of Armenia should be the center for all Armenians.” The government, he said, is ready to implement all the drastic and painful reforms that need to be done to make Armenia a strong and resilient country which will be a center for all Armenians.

Avinyan then took questions from the audience, with the assistance of Jack Antounian of the ABN. The questions were wide-ranging in nature, including agricultural reforms, education, barriers to female investors, the effect of Syrian Armenian refugees, and supporting the high-tech sector. Some concerned personal problems or proposals for business in Armenia.

At the end, instead of a question, Afeyan, in the audience, made an appeal for full participation of diasporan Armenians in Armenia, confirming that corruption has been largely rooted out with the Velvet Revolution. All the



From left, Jack Antounian, Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan, Anthony Barsamian

other issues in Armenia are not excuses, he said, since Armenia will not fix itself before the diaspora engages. He pointed out that the degree of access to the new government was very high—after all, the audience right there was interacting with a deputy prime minister, something which few people can usually do in other countries.

Deputy Prime Minister, Parliament Speaker, Ambassador to US Address Boston Armenians

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said, by the end of the year Armenia will have double digit growth.

However, Avinyan said, the government of Armenia has other goals besides GDP. The most important is the well being of the citizens of the country. The most vulnerable groups are at the focus of the government’s attention. He said, “We have raised the salaries of the teachers, we have raised the salaries of the military.” Pensions will be raised next year. This approach of the government is called the inclusive growth mode, with a lot of input in human capital and infrastructure. Additional tax money obtained this year is mainly being spent on education, health care and infrastructure. In 284 schools we will be installing engineering labs this year. Next year they will be in all schools in Armenia. The best resource we have is human capital and that is why we place a lot of emphasis on its development.

“I have a feeling that we need a new restart...I think we need a completely

new attitude towards each other,” Avinyan said concerning the relations between the diaspora and Armenia. He said, “My dream is to have an Armenian state that is so strong that it can support each and every Armenian in the world.” The only way we can achieve that is through collective effort. We need to understand how to institutionalize that collective effort.

During an extensive question and answer period, all sorts of topics were raised, including mining, transitional justice (Mirzoyan said it has not finished), relations with the US and Russia (one does not preclude the other, said Mirzoyan), high tech industry, economic progress, investing in human capital, and the algae in Lake Sevan (increasing the water level and waste management will help, said Avinyan).

The question of accumulating garbage in Yerevan was raised, and Avinyan linked this to the issue of corruption. During the prior regime, all major businesses related somehow to the public sector, like garbage collec-

tion, needed to have high level officials involved, he said. Garbage collection was outsourced by the municipality of Yerevan to a private company, and one of its owners, a high-level politician, took his portion of investment in the company, the large garbage trucks, and sold them after the revolution. This left the private company at half capacity and there was no alternative to it. Instead, Avinyan said, the municipality is buying new trucks to organize garbage collection in places where there are issues, and in several months, he said he believes the issue will be closed.

Perhaps the most unexpected question was by a local Armenian who produces cannabis products. He asked whether Armenian would consider legalizing farming cannabis like its neighbor Georgia, as it is said to be quite profitable, and Avinyan responded that Armenia was looking into this.

Afterwards many audience members took “selfies” and further chatted with the visiting officials during a reception.



ARMENIA

First-Ever International Forestry Summit Heading to Yerevan

YEREVAN —Armenia Tree Project (ATP) and the American University of Armenia (AUA) Acopian Center for the Environment recently announced plans for an upcoming conference which will bring global leaders in forest conservation and restoration to Yerevan, Armenia this October.

Forest Summit: Global Action and Armenia will be held from October 20-23 at the American University of Armenia and will feature three days of discussion and collaborative dialogue on the conservation and reforestation efforts much needed in countries across the world.

The inaugural conference will showcase successful conservation and reforestation projects and their respective champions, bringing together the world's best minds to collaborate on effective practices and industry innovations that help save trees and forests around the globe.

ATP has helped protect Armenia's environment, empower its citizens, and invigorate local economies since its



A forest in Lori (Jason Sohigian photo)

establishment in 1994. Since the group's inception, more than 5.7 million trees have been planted across the country and hundreds of jobs have been created through tree-related programing.

"While we are very proud of our work in Armenia over the past 25 years, we recognize that our next 25 years are equally important," says Jeanmarie Papelian, ATP's executive director. "This summit with reforestation leaders from around the world will provide us the platform to share our best practices, learn from other nations, and continue to make the planet a more verdant place."

The October conference will provide a first-hand look at the success of reforestation accomplished to date, and the work that lies ahead in Armenia and in other countries

around the world. While success stories like the one in Armenia are gradually becoming more universal, efforts must be sustained to combat deforestation that continues to plague so many areas globally. The conference will offer sight-seeing tours to Dilijan National Forest and ATP's Mirak Family Reforestation Nursery in Margahovit Village, where attendees can observe reforestation work in action.

"There have been many conservation and restoration initiatives in Armenia and the wider region for decades, and this Summit will enable us to review this experience, learn from mistakes and successes,

and plan for the future," says Alen Amirkhanian, director of the AUA Acopian Center for the Environment. "The AUA Acopian Center has been on the forefront of organizing such policy discussions and debates. The Summit is an example of our deep commitment to open and multi-stakeholder deliberations on critical environmental issues."

Further details on speakers and programming will be announced in the weeks ahead. In addition to hosting the conference in October, ATP will celebrate the planting of its six millionth tree in Armenia this fall. For more information about Forest Summit: Global Action and Armenia, American University of Armenia, or Armenia Tree Project, visit <http://forestsummit.am>.

Pashinyan Concludes Tour of Vietnam, Singapore

YEREVAN (Armenpress, ARKA) — Early in July, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan traveled to Vietnam and Singapore.

Pashinyan on July 6 met with Vietnam's National Assembly Speaker Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, after meeting with the country's premier, Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

"We are closely following the ongoing developments in Armenia and congratulate you on the achievements you have made in terms of enhancing Armenia's position in the international arena. I am aware that yesterday you had effective and open discussions with our country's Prime Minister," Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan said, noting that the National Assembly of Vietnam would contribute to the development of bilateral ties.

Thankful for the warm welcome, Pashinyan noted that he had had fruitful talks with his Vietnamese counterpart, at which specific agreements were reached.

"A wide range of issues will be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the intergovernmental commission due to be held this fall in Yerevan. Decisions will be passed on visa facilitation, tourism development, double taxation,

etc. We have agreed to hold a business forum on the sidelines of the sitting in order to promote the development and expansion of trade and economic ties," Pashinyan said.

After the protocol photo session, negotiations were held in narrow and extended formats.

The prime minister of Vietnam personally welcomed Pashinyan's delegation.

Following the talks, the governments of Armenia and Vietnam signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of education and science.

Pashinyan then traveled to Singapore, where he met with President Halimah Yacob.

Yacob noted that the small Armenian community of Singapore enjoys a good reputation and is fully integrated into the local society. The President of Singapore stressed that as a result, they have the St. Gregory the Illuminator Church and Armenia Street in the center of Singapore.

"Your visit is very important in the context of strengthening friendly relations between our countries, as well as the development of economic ties," Yakob said.

Nikol Pashinyan pointed out that the Armenian government is keen to deepen the ongoing cooperation with Singapore, and went on to note that the two peoples are bound by strong ties of friendship. As an example, the Prime Minister cited Ashkhen Hovakimyan, who created the Wanda Miss Joachim orchid variety, which became the national flower and a

state symbol of Singapore. The President of Singapore expressed support for the two governments' efforts, aimed at the furtherance of bilateral relations. The parties noted the importance of cooperation in the frame of international organizations and touched upon problems of regional significance.

Definitive Answers Sought To Identify Purpose of Armenian Stonehenge

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Bnorrn Historic-Cultural NGO and the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography (National Academy of Sciences) are teaming up to jointly study the mysterious Carahunge, the prehistoric archaeological site near the town of Sisian in the Syunik Province of Armenia. The two organizations signed an agreement to that end on July 30.

The two institutions have long had differences regarding the structure, and now they are joining forces to find out what Carahunge, also known as Zorats Karer, was: an ancient astronomical observatory or a settlement which has a mausoleum status.

Carahunge is often internationally referred to as the Armenian Stonehenge. The construction date of the structure is unknown — presumably sometime between the Middle Bronze Age and Iron Age, between 2000 and 1200 BC.

Bnorrn Member of the Board Arevik Sargsyan said they believe Carahunge was an ancient astronomical observatory.

"We think Carahunge, where more than 200 stones are located, with 80 having holes in them, is an ancient astronomical observatory, which was studied by Paris Herouni, with other experts having made similar opinions before that," she said, referring to the late physicist's views who dated the megalithic structure to 5500 BC and argued that some of the stones mirror the brightest star of the Cygnus constellation, Deneb.

"According to another opinion, Carahunge isn't an astronomical observatory. It is simply an ancient site, a settlement, which has a status of a mausoleum," she said.

Director of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography Pavel Avetisyan and archaeological expedition team leader Ashot Piliposyan said not a single astronomical tool has been discovered during excavations at the site, and moreover, some of the stones also have holes in the lower parts, which aren't directed at the stars.

Piliposyan emphasized the uniqueness of the monument in the entire Transcaucasia.

"It requires studies in all aspects. We discussed many issues during the signing of the agreement, we even considered that maybe in the future it will be possible to build a museum near the monument to display all materials regarding the ancient site," Piliposyan said.

Both parties have agreed to suspend excavations at Carahunge until a joint seminar of experts takes place to develop a plan and conduct research.

Armenian Judges Asked to Analyze European Court Rulings

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia's Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) sent letters to all court chairmen on July 30, asking them to submit an analysis of the rulings against Armenia issued by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

The move comes days after the Strasbourg-based body ordered Armenia to pay as much as 1.6 million Euros (\$1.8 million) in compensation to an Armenian man whose house and land had been expropriated during a controversial redevelopment of downtown Yerevan in the early 2000s.

"We need to understand what systemic gaps we have," SJC member Hayk Hovannisyan said.

"Basically, [in ECHR rulings] we deal with either a violation of the right to a fair trial or a violation of the right to property," said Hovannisyan, adding that most ECHR rulings against Armenia concern the protection of these two fundamental rights in cases like con-

troversial redevelopment projects in Yerevan or controversial mine development projects in the regions.

Before ordering the massive compensation to the Armenian citizen, in 2016 the ECHR ruled that Armenian courts and other entities violated articles of the European Convention on Human Rights guaranteeing the right to a fair hearing and protection of property. Besides, it was stressed that the then chairman of the Court of Cassation Arman Mkrtumyan did not show an objective position.

Mkrtumyan, who was appointed chairman of the Court of Cassation by the decree of Armenia's third President Serzh Sarkisian in 2008, resigned in July 2018 two months after the change of government in Armenia. Despite the opinion expressed by the Strasbourg-based court, the SJC today has no jurisdiction to raise the issue of Mkrtumyan's lack of impartiality.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Armenia to Take Part in Caspian Economic Forum

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenia's governmental delegation will take part in the First Caspian Economic Forum in Turkmenistan on August 10-14.

The delegation will be headed by deputy prime minister Mher Grigoryan.

The Armenian delegation will include deputy minister of territorial administration and infrastructures Hakob Vardanyan, deputy minister of high technological industry Gegham Vardanyan, deputy minister of economy Avag Avanesyan and chairwoman of the Civil Aviation Committee Tatevik Revazyan.

Putin Restores Visa-Free Regime with Turkey

MOSCOW (Panorama.am) – The Kremlin announced new measures on Thursday, July 25, making it easy for many Turkish citizens to visit Russia, Anadolu Agency reported.

Under a decree signed by President Vladimir Putin, Turkish holders of special and service passports paying short-term visits to Russia will no longer need to obtain visas.

Putin also ordered the Foreign Ministry to send a notification to Turkish officials about this partial restoration of visa-free travel.

The measure is valid on a reciprocal basis, the decree added, and goes into effect as of its publication.

Russia had suspended the visa-free regime in late 2015, amid tensions over the downing of a Russian jet along the Turkish-Syrian border.

Armenian Combat Engineers Clear Mines In Syria

YEREVAN (Tass) – Armenian army engineers making part of Yerevan's humanitarian mission to Syria removed mines on a territory of about 8,534 square meters on June 8-July 22, the Expert Mine-Clearing Center reported on Monday, July 22.

"From June 8 to July 22, the Armenian demining experts cleared 8,534 square meters of mines. Over this period, the mission's doctors rendered medical assistance to 597 nationals of that country," the Center issued a statement.

On February 8 this year, a group of specialists from Armenia's Defense Ministry arrived in Syria on a humanitarian mission. The group includes mine-clearing and security specialists and medical staff. Russia rendered assistance in their delivery to Syria.

Simferopol Airport Hosts Aivazovsky Exhibition

SIMFEROPOL, Crimea (Panorama.am) – An exhibition marking the 202nd birthday anniversary of Russian-Armenian seascape artist Hovhannes (Ivan) Aivazovsky has opened at the Simferopol International Airport in the Crimea.

The exhibition, titled "Aivazovsky and Traditions of Seascape Painting," features reproductions of eight paintings by the world-famous artist, as well as painting reproductions of his students and followers, TASS reported, citing the airport's press service.

The airport was renamed for Hovhannes Aivazovsky in May this year to honor the great artist.

Aivazovsky was born in 1817 to an Armenian family in the city of Theodosia in the Crimea (Russian Empire). His father was a modest Armenian trader, while his mother was a traditional homemaker.

Aivazovsky traveled to Europe and lived briefly in Italy in the early 1840s. He then returned to Russia and was appointed the main painter of the Russian Navy. He had close ties with the military and political elite of the Russian Empire. He was sponsored by the state and was well-regarded during his lifetime. The saying "worthy of Aivazovsky's brush," popularized by Anton Chekhov, was used in Russia for "describing something ineffably lovely."

Yerevan Music Students Win in Rimini

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

RIMINI, Italy – Everyone was amazed at the excellence displayed by the young musicians from Armenia. They participated in the International Artistic Days Italia, a festival and contest held in Rimini from June 24-27. The youngsters from Yerevan won several prizes in the competition, four first prizes and seven second prizes, to be precise. The children and youth are all students at the Aleksey Hekimyan Music School in Yerevan, and flew to Venice on June 21, then continued by bus to the magnificent renaissance city, Florence, accompanied by teachers, including Lusine



Garnik Hayrapetyan won second prize



Georgi Kantanidis won second prize

Arakelyan. In Rimini it was music, music, music, and in addition to the festival, they also performed in a concert in San Giovanni Valdarno, organized by the municipality.

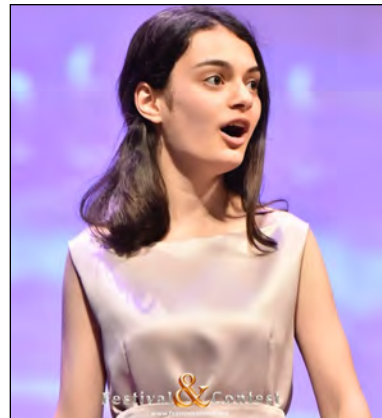
Arakelyan beamed with pride that all the students from her school won prizes, and said they had earned the admiration of their audiences for their skill and joy in music. The concert audience was excited about the performance level of the youngsters and marveled at the correct pronunciation in their



Yeva Antonyan and Adelina Mikayelyan won second prize

Italian language selections. Teacher and opera singer Lusine Arakelyan also performed a short song at the conclusion of the program, "Il Bacio" (The Kiss) by Luigi Arditi. All were rewarded with warm and prolonged ovations.

The International Artistic Days are sponsored by several Italian agencies, like the municipalities, regional and provincial governments, the Italy-Russia Friendship Association, diplomatic representatives of Russia, Kazakhstan, San Marino, and of course the Italian Ministry of Culture. The events take place in these and other countries, and bring together young musical talents from all over the world.



Kristina Zakaryan won second prize



Luiza Arakelyan won second prize



Anna Nazaryan won second prize

OSCE Rep Calls on Turkish Authorities to Identify all Involved with Dink Murder

VIENNA – The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, welcomed on July 19 the court decision in Turkey handing down prison sentences to seven people over the murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink.

Hrant Dink, the founder and editor-in-chief of the Armenian-Turkish language weekly Agos, was shot dead in front of his office in Istanbul on 19 January 2007. Twelve years after his murder, a Turkish court announced verdicts against nine defendants, whose case files were previously separated to prevent a possible violation of the statute of limitations.

"The court decision convicting seven people in relation to the murder

of the prominent Turkish-Armenian journalist, Hrant Dink, is a positive step forward, but more needs to be done. I remain hopeful that all others involved in this murder will face justice," Désir said.

The court ruled that the murder was an 'organized crime', and sentenced Erhan Tuncel to 99 years and six months in prison for his connection to Dink's murder and being a member of an armed group. Yasin Hayal, who was previously sentenced to life for instigating the murder, received seven years and six months in prison for forming and leading an armed group. The assassin, Ogün Samast, who was previously sentenced to 22 years and ten months, received another two years and six months in prison for membership of an armed group.

Ersin Yolcu and Ahmet Iskender each received jail terms of just under two years for their role in the murder, while Tuncay Uzundal and Zeynel Abidin Yavuz were sentenced to more than ten years in prison. Two defendants were acquitted.

"After twelve years, Hrant's family, friends and fellow journalists deserve to know the full truth behind this heinous killing. It is therefore of utmost importance that the Turkish authorities identify and bring the masterminds of Dink's murder to justice," Désir said.

The Representative will continue to monitor developments as the trials of further suspects continue.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media observes media developments in all 57 OSCE participating States.



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Community News

Jewelry Company Alex And Ani Sues Bank Of America For \$1.1 Billion In Gender Discrimination Lawsuit

By Will Yakowicz

NEW YORK (Forbes) – Alex and Ani, the Rhode Island-based charm bracelet company founded by multimillionaire Carolyn Rafaelian, alleges in a lawsuit that Bank of America, one of its lenders, is violating federal law by engaging in gender discrimination against the women-led company.

The lawsuit, filed in the Southern District of New York on Thursday, July 25, seeks \$1.1 billion in damages and claims that Bank of America's "gender bias and greed" poses an "existential threat" to Alex and Ani's business.

According to the lawsuit, Bank of America falsely declared in December 2018 that Alex and Ani defaulted on its \$170 million loan, which it took out to buy a factory, and then cut off its access to a \$50 million revolving line of credit. Alex and Ani did default a few times, but Bank of America waived the default and amended their agreement, the company says. (A lender and borrower can come to an agreement to avoid a default.)

"For more than six months now, Bank of America has been both driving Alex and Ani towards bankruptcy and milking it for literally tens of millions of dollars in fees," the lawsuit reads. "The endgame is clear: Bank of America wants the women out of power at Alex and Ani. It wants to bring back the good old days, when a male Alex and Ani CFO let Bank of America charge whatever it wanted for BofA's putative 'services.'"

Bill Halldin, a spokesperson for Bank of America, denies the gender discrimination allegations. He says that BoA served as administrative agent on the company's credit facility for a group of seven banks, which have taken the appropriate steps to enforce the terms of that agreement.

Alex and Ani alleges in the complaint that after cutting off its revolving line of credit, Bank of America started charging the company for an unused revolver fee every month, increased the interest rates on all the loans, and required the company to hire and pay for a chief restructuring officer, who is male. This cost Alex and Ani over \$1.1 billion in expenses, lost revenues and lost market value, the company claims.

The suit also puts forth an additional theory for its financial troubles that feels like it was cooked up by a conspiracy theorist: Warren Buffett, whose Berkshire Hathaway is the largest shareholder in Bank of America, allegedly invested, the complaint says, in a Chinese jewelry company that makes Alex and Ani knockoffs. Warren Buffett could not be reached for comment at press time.

Rafaelian, who is 52, started spiritual bracelet company Alex and Ani from her father's jewelry see LAWSUIT, page 7



Carolyn Rafaelian



Ani Minasyan - Ester Ajemian student

Fund for Armenian Relief Scholarship in Armenia Creates Lifeline to the Future

YEREVAN – Education has been called the bedrock for a country's future. For Benjamin Franklin, it was "an investment in knowledge that pays the best interest."

And for Nelson Mandela, he wrote that it has been "the most powerful weapon which one can use to change the world."

The wisdom of these legendary leaders has been incorporated in the scholarship programs of the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) since the late 1990's.

By Florence Avakian

It is one of ten different scholarship programs managed by FAR.

"We give opportunities to pursue a dream of higher education to more than 460 young people annually. No

one comes closer to this record of giving this kind of opportunity than the Fund for Armenian Relief," declared Margarit Piliposyan, FAR Armenia Programs Director.

Generous philanthropists have donated up to \$400,000 a year. Ninety percent of the scholarships have been given to students from families living below to, or close to the poverty level.

The goal has always been to provide education to the talented youth of Armenia to live a dignified life, and to influence them to live and contribute in their homeland.

During each year, 50 to 75 students are selected after a very tough selection process, following a widespread advertisement in Armenia's media, said Mane Khachatryan, the scholarship program's Education and Science Program Coordinator.

Heading the FAR Scholarship Program is the tireless and dedicated Eduard Karapetyan, FAR Armenia Deputy Director who arrives daily at the FAR Armenia office in the early morning, and doesn't leave until late at night.

Applicants go through a vigorous selection process which includes an admission exam for the selected outstanding short student list, the required economic standing credits of the see FAR, page 8



Mary Mkrtchyan - Berberian student

LA Community Members Meet with LA Supervisor Kathryn Barger

By Kevork Keushkerian

PASADENA – An Armenian community round table meeting was organized by the Western District Committee of the Armenian General Benevolent Union to introduce Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger. It was held on Friday, July 19, at the AGBU center in Pasadena.

Barger serves the residents of Los Angeles County's 5th Supervisorial District, the county's largest (2 million), spanning 2800 square miles, which includes 22 cities and 70 unincorporated communities in the San Gabriel, San Fernando, Crescenta, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Vallies. Cities with an abundant Armenian population like Pasadena, Glendale, and Burbank are in the 5th District.

Present at the meeting were Father Armenag Bedrossian from the Armenian Catholic Eparchy, Western District Director of the Armenian Assembly of America Mihran Toumajan, Roy Boulghourjian from the Pasadena Unified School District Board of Education, Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Armenui Amy Ashvanyan, Kevork Keushkerian from the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Harout Markarian from the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, Asbed Tatoulin from St. Gregory Armenian Church in Pasadena and many others.

AGBU Wester District Committee Chairlady Talin Yacoubian welcomed the guests and briefly dwelled upon the history of AGBU, the world's largest Armenian non-profit organization, which promotes education, cultural, and sports activities to preserve the identity of our youth in the vast Diaspora. She then invited moderator Steve Samuelian to introduce Barger.

Samuelian said that Barger has been working with the former Supervisor Mike Antonovich for the last 28 years, until she was elected to replace him, when he decided to retire. She had started in that office as an intern and gradually rose to the rank of Supervisor, two and a half years ago. He then asked the Supervisor to present her achievements so far and lay out her plans.

Barger noted that not only the Board of Supervisors commemorate the Armenian Genocide every year, but they also allocate a whole month every year to celebrate the contributions of Armenian in the community. She then mentioned that she was instrumental in the decision of the Board to donate one million dollars to the Armenian Museum in Glendale. She further said that she has a good working relationship with State Sen. Anthony Portantino, who also managed to contribute a sizeable amount of money from the State of California to the Armenian Museum in Glendale.

Talking about her plans for the future, she said that her priority was to work hard to alleviate the homeless problem in the county of Los Angeles. She wants to work with the members of the Los Angeles City Council to find solutions to the drug addiction problem that is spread throughout the city and the county. Her other immediate concern is the mentally illness crisis and, to that end, she wants to add more beds in the hospitals to take care of the mentally ill. She is committed to measure H, which will be on the ballot next year. This will provide the necessary funding for seven years to help the homeless and the mentally ill people.

Barger emphasized the notion that elected officials should not be concerned about politics and reelection, rather to help people in their districts. In that effort, she said that she wants see BARGER, page 7



COMMUNITY NEWS

Major International Conference on Armenian Diaspora Will Mark the Society for Armenian Studies 45th Anniversary

LOS ANGELES — Scholars from Italy, Mexico, France, Armenia, England, Portugal, Holland, Germany, and the United States will gather on October 12-13 at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) to participate in a major conference, “Diaspora and ‘Stateless Power’: Social Discipline and Identity Formation across the Armenian Diaspora during the Long Twentieth Century,” marking the 45th anniversary of the founding of the Society for Armenian Studies. The two-day conference also honors, the preeminent scholar of Diaspora Studies in general and the Armenian Diaspora in particular.

The conference is free and open to the public and will take place in Rolfe Hall, Room 1200 on the UCLA campus.

The conference is co-sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Richard Hovannisian Endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History (UCLA), the Narekatsi Chair in Armenian Studies (UCLA), the Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair (University of California, Irvine), the Institute of Armenian Studies (University of Southern California), the Armenian Studies Program (California State University, Fresno), the Armenian Studies Program (California State University, Northridge) and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

The themes covered during the conference include Armenian Immigrants in the Transnational Context, Social Memory and Cultural Production in the Armenian Diaspora; Institutions, Governmentality and the Shaping of Armenian Diasporic Diversities; Armenian Communities in the Middle East, and (Soviet) Armenian-Diasporic Relations. A special panel is dedicated to the Armenian Diaspora Survey Project organized by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Tölölyan will deliver the keynote speech titled “From the Study of Diasporas to Diaspora Studies.”

Tölölyan is one of the founders of the field of diaspora studies and the founding editor of the prestigious journal *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, a Zoryan Institute publication. Initially published by Oxford University Press, *Diaspora* is currently published by the University of Toronto Press. Tölölyan established the basis of Armenian Diaspora Studies

and played a leading role in examining the Armenian Diaspora from a theoretical perspective.

The SAS 45th Anniversary Banquet, sponsored by the Organization of Istanbul Armenians, will be held on Saturday, October 12, at the Organization of Istanbul Armenians Banquet Hall located at 19726 Sherman Way in Winnetka. During the Banquet the Society for Armenian Studies will honor its past presidents: Nina Garsoïan, Avedis K. Sanjian, Richard G. Hovannisian, Robert Thomson, Ronald G. Suny, Kevork Bardakjian, Dickran Kouymjian, Robert Hewsen, Dennis Papazian, Joseph Kechichian and Barlow Der Mugrdechian.

“We are looking forward to this major event,” commented Prof. Bedross Der Matossian, president of the Society for Armenian Studies and associate professor of history at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. “The conference will be an outstanding event bringing together scholars from around the world to discuss the latest approaches to the field of Armenian Diaspora Studies founded by Khachig Tölölyan. I hope that the community will attend this outstanding event and understand why Armenian Diaspora Studies is a crucial field that needs to be supported.”

“This will be a unique occasion to honor and thank the past presidents of the SAS who worked relentlessly in the past four decades with limited resources to keep the flame of Armenian Studies alive,” added Der Matossian. “The torch has passed today to the third and fourth generation of young scholars who continue in the path of their predecessors.”

The SAS was established in 1974 by a group of scholars including Richard Hovannisian, Robert Thomson, Nina Garsoïan, Dickran Kouymjian and Avedis Sanjian. The SAS is an international body, composed of scholars and students, whose aims are to promote the study of Armenian culture and society, including history, language, literature, and social, political, and economic questions; to facilitate the exchange of scholarly information pertaining to Armenian studies around the world; and to sponsor panels and conferences on Armenian studies.

For the complete conference program go to the SAS website at: SAS Diaspora Conference Program

LA Armenians Meet with Kathryn Barger

BARGER, from page 6

to implement an Italian village model, where people take care of people. This is especially true in the homeless population, where people feel neglected by the general public. She also wants to improve the foster home system.

She is looking forward to taking over

Saturday, July 27, with her Chief Deputy, Anna Mouradian.

Answering a question about the number of homeless in her district, she said that there were 56,000 homeless people in the County of Los Angeles, 6 percent of whom are in her District 5. This amounts to 3,360.



Kathryn Barger, sixth from left, sits with members of the Armenian community.

the chair of the Board of Supervisors in December, when she will be able to set the agenda of the Board and tilt its direction towards solving problems pertaining to items of her priority. Another item on her agenda that she is looking forward to is her upcoming trip to Armenia, on

At the end of the question and answer session, Mihran Toumajan presented Barger a book by Dr. Hagop Martin Deranian, entitled *President Calvin Coolidge and the Armenian Rug*. A reception followed a group picture taken for the archives.

Jewelry Company Alex And Ani Sues Bank Of America For \$1.1 Billion In Gender Discrimination Lawsuit

LAWSUIT, from page 6

factory — where her father made American flag pins and costume jewelry — in Providence, RI, in 2004.

The jewelry firm, which is named after Rafaelian's two older daughters, employs 1,500 people and distributes through 100 of its own brick-and-mortar stores, plus department stores like Neiman Marcus and Nordstrom. The company, which has been struggling in recent years, has been more focused on online sales lately. Still Forbes estimates that sales dropped from \$550 million in 2017 to \$500 million in 2018. For calendar year 2019, revenues are expected to drop to \$420 million, the company says. Rafaelian's net worth has tumbled as well; Forbes pegged her fortune at \$1 billion a year ago. Now we estimate it to be \$450 million or less than half of that, based on trailing sales. Her net worth will likely fall further as sales continue to decline.

The lawsuit claims that the relationship between Alex and Ani and Bank of America was “comfortable” between January 2016 and December 2017, which is when the company's CFO was a man. Under the male CFO, who lasted only a year, Bank of America “raided” Alex and Ani by charging bloated fees and “nonsensical” consulting arrangements and gave extensions on its credit lines, the lawsuit says. In December 2017, Andrea Ruda, a 26-year-old woman became CFO and started cutting costs and renegotiating contracts to help save Alex and Ani money. That's when the relationship turned “vindictive, obstinate and petty,” the company claims.

In December 2018, Bank of America, which serves as the administrative agent for the group of seven banks that provides loans to Ani and Alex, sent the company a letter to inform it that it defaulted on its loan. By January 2019, Bank of America sent another letter outlining how it was hiking interest rates, ceasing its revolver credit line, and requiring that Alex and Ani hire outside consultants to help restructure the company.

During a meeting March 2019 between Bank of America's team, which was composed of all men, and Alex and Ani's leadership team, all women, the bankers allegedly smirked while

Ruda, who has turned 28, explained how she had experience as a CFO. According to Ruda, the bankers interrupted her: “Maybe that's true, but if you were getting surgery, would you rather have the doctor that's done the surgery a few times, or has done it for years?”

Ruda also says that the restructuring consultant treated her like a secretary and asked her to do administrative tasks, including printing documents and booking car rides.

“It was shocking, given my role,” Ruda told Forbes.

Bank of America and Alex and Ani have had a long relationship. In 2014, Rafaelian was featured in a Bank of America ad as part of the bank's campaign to supporting women-owned companies.

But the bank has a history of legal entanglements having to do with gender. Bank of America has settled a swath of employment-related gender bias and discrimination lawsuits over the years, with settlement fees totaling more than \$210 million.

The complaint filed by Alex and Ani alleges that Bank of America has “two time-tested” values: “greed and sexism.”

After Bank of America terminated the company's revolving line of credit in January, Alex and Ani was unable to purchase seasonal inventory, which greatly reduced its revenues so far this year and the company couldn't pay its existing vendor bills, according to the complaint. The company says that not having the revolving line of credit had a negative sales impact of \$80 million and the company's valuation dropped by nine figures.

Bank of America spokesperson Hallidin said in a statement: “As the complaint itself notes, the company has faced serious financial challenges for nearly two years,” Hallidin said. “The banks have worked closely with the company during this time. Bank of America's demonstrated record of support for diverse businesses is well-noted and widely recognized.”

Alex and Ani's lawyer, Harmeet Dhillon, disagrees, claiming the company's executives were treated differently because they are women. “This is the type of thing [that] women in every industry in America have experienced and it's 2019 and it's beyond time for this to be done and in the past,” says Dhillon.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Fund for Armenian Relief Scholarship in Armenia Creates Lifeline to the Future

FAR, from page 6

family, and an interview. In just one of the multiple FAR's Scholarship Programs, ten out of the final 25 candidates on the short list are selected for each scholarship. This whole process lasts two months.

After each six-month semester, the Selection Committee comprised of FAR members and one or two alumni from previous years, evaluates the results for both undergraduate and graduate students.

Seventy five percent of these scholarship recipients have found jobs in Armenia. In the Information Technology field, 100 percent of the FAR's Gyumri IT Center students have found positions. In the course of their studies and upon graduation, FAR scholars must engage in volunteer work in Armenia for the rest of their lives.

Mostly, students pursuing majors in international relations, political science, finance, management, economics, linguistics, journalism, law, engineering, public service and information technology are recipients of FAR scholarships. They study at various State Universities of Armenia, like the Yerevan State University, the Yerevan State Institute of Economics, the Yerevan State Engineering Institute, National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia, etc..

This summer, this writer visited the FAR headquarters in Yerevan, and spoke with four worthy recipients of different scholarship projects offered by FAR.

The first of these noteworthy programs has been the Matevosian Scholarship Program named after the long-time FAR benefactor Anoush Matevosian which covers tuition costs on a need-basis throughout the four-year undergraduate curriculum for outstanding students admitted to a university.

Twenty-year old Julieta Hovhannisyan, a current Anush Matevosian scholarship student at the Armenian State University of Economics, is in her third year studying accounting and auditing. She has always "loved dealing with num-



Julieta Hovhannisyan - Anoush Matevosian student

bers".

Like her parents and grandparents, she was born in Armenia. Following her graduation, she wishes to climb the accountant job ladder, eventually working either in "banks, large companies or big factories."

"Thanks to the Matevosian scholarship, I got financial support (starting from her second student year), which would have caused many difficulties for my parents to afford. The program also afforded me to find new friends," she said. "Together with them, I am engaged in different volunteer activities".

Another Matevosian Scholarship recipient and alumna, 27 year old Anush Mkhitarian who was born in Yerevan, and was motivated by her family to study mathematics, related her experience at Yerevan State University where she studied Mathematical Methods of Economics.

"During my two years of studying, 50 percent of my tuition was covered by the Anoush Matevosian scholarship." Achieving excellent grades, she continued studying without fees, but she still received FAR grants for the next two years. The scholarship enabled her to complete her master's program. Concurrent with her studies, she worked at the analytic center "Amberd"



Anush Mkhitarian - Anoush Matevosian student

as a math modeler and researcher.

She now works as an Administrative Assistant in Yerevan's FAR office. In the future, she hopes to find a position in an international organization.

Besides the Matevosian Scholarship, the lists of grants include Ester Ajemian Scholarship Program, Armine and Garabed Zambak Scholarship Program, Jerar Matevosian Scholarship Program,

Gulamerian Scholarship and Vocational Training Program, Antranig Berberian Scholarship Program, Edna Galo, Scholarship Program, Avedis and Arsho Baghsarian Scholarship Program, Niksarli Scholarship, Halajian Scholarship, and many more.

Ani Minasyan, graduated from Yerevan State University in journalism. In 2016, the 24-year old started her Master's degree financed by the Esther Ajemian Scholarship Program.

"Within the FAR framework, I have participated in several social programs, including the Vanadzor old age home, and participating in apricot harvesting in Yervandashat," she said.

Currently, she works at the Public Radio of Armenia news department. Her special interests include new technologies, social and cultural events. "Since working in this field since I was 18, I conducted interviews for the Youth Foundation of Armenia relating to youth and student life. Later, I worked for the TV project, "Unknown Yerevan" as a scriptwriter."

She prefers radio to TV because it "conveys what you want, what you see and feel since you have only one means on the radio - sound.

In September, she will start teaching Radio journalism to second year students at Yerevan State University. She hopes to improve her professional skills abroad, and be an international journalist for a period of time, but that does not mean "migrating from Armenia."

Eighteen-year-old Mary Mkrtchyan, an

Antranig Berberian Scholarship recipient is in her first year studying Informatics and Applied Mathematics at Yerevan State University.

Originally gravitating towards the humanities, law and international relations, she became attracted to the technologies when she started attending the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies.

"In the 21st century, the tech sphere is becoming more and more important. Specialists in this sphere are in high demand." But it was not the high demand, or high salary that attracted her.

For her, "because of the conflict with Azerbaijan, the Armenian soldiers who defend our state borders, will probably need assistance from experts who are specialized in unmanned aerial vehicles. Also, technology provides very crucial and needed information." Her future includes working either in the TUMO Creative Technologies Centre or PicsArt Armenian organization.

"Without this scholarship, I would not be able to study and have the profession of my dreams. Besides the financial support, it has given me an opportunity to do good deeds," she revealed.

In the future, she may want to be acquainted with new methods of teaching abroad, "but not for more than a year. I love Armenia, its unique nature, culture craft, food, and especially its courage in struggle. I am so proud to be an Armenian!"



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OBITUARY

Actor David Hedison Appeared in Two James Bond Films

LOS ANGELES (BBC) – David Hedison, the actor best known for playing Felix Leiter opposite two James Bonds, died on July 18 at the age of 92.

He first played 007's CIA ally in 1973's "Live and Let Die," the late Sir Roger Moore's first Bond film.

He returned to the role 16 years later to appear alongside Timothy Dalton in 1989's "License to Kill."

He was also turned into an insect in the 1958 film "The Fly" and starred in 1960s submarine TV series "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea."

Seven years after "Live and Let Die," he appeared with Moore again in the 1980 oil rig drama "North Sea Hijack." The friends were reunited once more in 2007 when Hedison delivered a speech at the unveiling of Moore's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

When Hedison returned to the world of James Bond for "License To Kill," his character survived being fed to a shark by a drug lord who also murdered his new bride.

His many other credits included "The Colbys," "The Love Boat," "The Fall Guy" and "Dynasty."

Hedison was sanguine about his career, admitting that most films he had appeared in were "pictures you never want to see again."

When the series ended, Hedison moved to London. "I liked London very much," he later said. "I just wanted to go and spend a couple years there ... It's two years I'm not sorry for. The problem was, when I came back to the US, it was more difficult getting work then."

Hedison guest starred on "Journey to the Unknown," "Love, American Style," "ITV Sunday Night Theatre," "BBC's Play of the Month," "The F.B.I." and "The New Perry Mason." He could be seen in "Kemek" (1970), "A Kiss Is Just a Kiss" (1971), "Crime Club" (1973), "The Cat Creature" and "The Man in the Wood." He was most proud of doing an adaptation of "Summer and Smoke" with Lee Remick.

Hedison toured with Barbara Anderson and Anita Gillette in Neil Simon's "Chapter Two" in 1979 and 1980.[16]

Hedison appeared in the West Coast premiere of "Forty Deuce" in 1985.

"I think in this kind of film, it won't lead to other work unless you do something stand-out with a really wonderfully written scene," added Hedison. "Otherwise you're just doing a job, part of the ensemble. And in this case, I have lots of action scenes, but no one scene that is memorable ... Felix is a fairly one-dimensional character, you never get into any depth. You do what you can. There's not much to play. All you



David Hedison and Roger Moore in "Live and Let Die"

can do is perform it with a simple reality ... It was running around, bang bang, getting wet, screaming and yelling, and all kinds of fun, but not serious acting."

His parents were Albert David Hedison (Heditsian) Sr. and Rose Boghosian. He and his wife Bridget were married in London on June 29, 1968. Bridget Hedison died of breast cancer on February 22, 2016. They had two daughters, actress/director/photographer Alexandra Hedison and editor/producer Serena Hedison.

Alexandra Hedison has appeared in "L.A. Firefighters" and "The L Word." She is married to actress and director Jodie Foster.

He once remarked: "When I know they'll be on TV I have a dinner party and invite my friends over so they can't see them."

Hedison's death was announced by his daughters Alexandra and Serena, who paid tribute to his "warm and generous heart."

"Our dad brought joy and humor wherever he went and did so with great style," they said.

Jacob (Jack) Pilibosian

ARLINGTON, Mass. – Jacob (Jack) Pilibosian of Arlington died on July 22. He was the son of the late Simon and Haygouhi Pilibosian and brother of the late Harold Pilibosian and his wife Joanne. He was the husband of Audrey (Hamamjian) Pilibosian for 56 years.

He leaves his children Julie Ann Ballentine and her husband Scott of Exeter NH, and Jeffrey Pilibosian and his wife Heather of No. Hampton, NH; grandchildren Kaitlyn and Jacob Ballentine, and Jack and Ryan Pilibosian; brother- and sister-in-law Larry and Alice Pahigian of North Andover; nieces Beth Richards and husband Jack, Pam Pahigian, and nephew Cary Pahigian and wife Barbara and many grand-nephews and grandnieces.

Pilibosian was a graduate of Boston Technical High School 1952 and Northeastern University 1957. He retired in 2017 after 60 years in the life insurance industry.

He was an active member of the Armenian community. He was a former parish council member and diocesan delegate of St. James Armenian Church in Watertown. He sat on the Board of Directors of the Armenia Museum of America. He was a past president of the Council of Armenian Executives. He was also a member of the Masons and the Shriners.



Funeral Service were held at St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA on Thursday, July 25 and interment followed at Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Arlington.

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COMMUNITY NEWS



The Grand Convocation group photo

Knights and Daughters of Vartan Host 101st Grand Convocation

By David Medzorian

LAS VEGAS – The Knights of Vartan's 101st Grand Convocation and Daughters of Vartan's 79th Grand Convocation were celebrated with more than 230 members and their families, July 10-13th, at Harrah's Hotel and Resort.

This year's Grand Convocation was hosted by Fresno, California's Yeprad Lodge No. 9 and Alidz Chapter No. 8 with help from other California lodges as well as those from Chicago and Washington D.C. One purpose of the Grand Convocation was for delegates from each Lodge and Chapter to discuss and vote on proposals and measures that will affect the Knights and Daughters of Vartan in the coming year. Another was to install the new leaders of both organizations and pay tribute to the outgoing leadership. The Grand Convocation brought together Knights and Daughters of Vartan from across the country in a spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood.

That spirit began for many on Wednesday, July 10 when past and present leaders of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan met in a series of meetings to discuss topics to be addressed during the next 12 months. While meetings were getting underway, the registration desk was a flurry of activity as the staff led by then Past Commander Steve Adams and his wife Past Matron Salpy Adams, welcomed guests and handed them materials they would need for their meetings.

Thursday morning was a time for workshops for both Knights and Daughters. The Daughters of Vartan heard from Past Matron Dr. Lisa Vartanian from California, who interacted with her fellow Daughters in an inspirational discussion about sisterhood. The Knights of Vartan workshop featured Southeastern



The Narge-Shavarshan Lodge of Greater Detroit received a special award.

Grand District Representative Past Commander Jacob Bournazian, who provided real life examples on how members could become more active participants and better leaders in their respective lodges. During the afternoon, the men and woman came together for a presentation on the plans for the Armenian Genocide Museum to be constructed in Glendale. They

came together once again early that evening for a reception hosted by Grand Commander Dr. Gary Zamanigian and Grand Matron Diana Tookmanian.

Both groups got down to work on Friday, July 12, as their respective Business Sessions began at 9 a.m. Delegates representing the attending Lodges discussed and at times debated various proposals before voting on them. During the mid-day break, The Daughters of Vartan hosted a luncheon honoring Tookmanian which gave her the opportunity to thank her fellow Daughters for their dedication and support throughout her two-year term. Luncheon organizers also prepared some fun for their guests in the form of a room sized version of Monopoly which they cleverly named DOVOPOLY.

The Knights and Daughters of Vartan appropriated financial support for certain key initiatives: the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia, the Armenian Charitable Lighthouse Foundation, Scholarships for Armenian American Students, and Scholarships for Students in Armenia attending the American

University of Armenia, the Yerevan State University and the National Polytechnic University of Armenia. In addition, funds were allocated to remove the last of the land mines in Artsakh by 2020. The following projects will continue to be funded: Partnership with CASP (Children of Armenia Sponsorship Program) to benefit needy children in Tavush region; the Armenian Schools Support Project in Armenia in partnership with the World Bank; Grants from the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies; and the Annual Times Square Armenian Genocide Commemoration in New York.

The fun continued well into the night as the Richard Hagopian Band got everyone onto the dance floor during KEF Night Las Vegas. The dancing followed a delicious buffet meal and the gathering of all the attending Knights and Daughters for a Grand Convocation group photograph.

The last day of the Grand Convocation began with the final business sessions for both the Knights and Daughters. The first of the Installation Ceremonies was held, installing Alice Kalustian from Gayane Lodge in San Fernando Valley as the new Grand Matron of the Daughters of Vartan.

Grand Matron Alice was born in Boston, grew up in Pasadena and was married to Past Commander (PC) Martin Kalustian. They moved to the San Fernando Valley in 1963 where they were active at St. Peter church. She has served as Sunday school superintendent, on parish council, ACYO sponsor, Youth Activity Council, Diocesan delegate and is still active in the church choir. She has also served on the board of the Diocese Choir Association (AACCWD).



Registration for the Knights and Daughters



Person of the year Peter Abajian, at left

She has been a member of Gayane Lodge since 1972. She has held almost every lodge position several times and has served as matron three different years; also as ritual and by-law advisor. She was Grand Treasurer during Past Grand Matron (PGM) Asien Surmeian's term as Grand Matron and Grand District Representative during PGM Agnes Sahagian's term.



COMMUNITY NEWS

She volunteers as assistant treasurer and has served on the advisory board for House of Hope- Mer Hooys, a home for disadvantaged girls in Armenia since its inception in 2008.

Her installation was followed by that of the new Grand Council: Associate Matron (Past Matron) PM Lucille Farsakian; Chaplain Armine Liberatore; Secretary PM Nancy Hammoudian; Treasurer Norma Oganessian;



Grand Commander Steven Adams

California to the position of Grand Commander of the Knights of Vartan. Grand Commander Steven Adams was born and raised in Fresno, CA, attending local schools and graduating from California State University Fresno with Bachelor and Master's Degrees in Physics with a minor in Mathematics. He also earned his standard teaching credential and later his administrative services credential. Grand Commander Steven taught math, chemistry, and physics in local high schools and eventually going into administration. He retired from Clovis Unified School District in 2016 as their Administrator for Assessment and Accountability. He now serves as a consultant to school districts throughout California in the areas of spatial and data analysis. Grand Commander Steve grew up in the Armenian Church and began serving on the altar at St. Paul Armenian Church in 1971 and was ordained a Deacon in the church in 1980. He has served as a delegate to the Diocesan Assembly over 20 years during that same time, also serving as an officer of the Assembly for more than half of those years. Adams joined Yeprad Lodge #9 of the Knights of Vartan in 1980, served in

different positions up to a member of the Grand Council.

Adams said "The development of our spiritual, cultural and moral heritage must come from within us, there is no outside group who will preserve and grow what we have inherited. While we no longer face the imminent destruction of our people, the principles laid out by our Founding Fathers can and should still be our guiding light. We no longer face extermination, but the culture we have inherited needs to be preserved and now in the new light of independence, needs to flourish in the spirit of a new Armenia."

Members of new Grand Council were also installed. It has seven officers, including Grand Commander, and during 101st convocation the newly selected officers were: Grand Commander PC Steven Adams, Lieutenant Grand Commander PC Kevork Oflazian, Grand Chaplain PC Raffi Karayan, Grand Treasurer PC Garo Istanbulian, Grand Recorder PC Thomas L. Adams, Grand Master of Ceremonies PC Dennis Shamlian, and Grand Sentinel PC Ara Karkazian.



From left, Immediate Past Grand Commander Dr. Gary Zamanigian and "Senior Knight Recognition Award" recipient Past Commander Sam Sassounian



The Mamigonian Lodge of Brooklyn also received a special award.

The final event of the Convocation was the Grand Banquet on Saturday evening, emceed by Southeastern Grand District Representative Jacob Bournazian. Vocalist Narée Asherian led the audience in the singing of the American and Armenian National Anthems. Knight Rev. Yeghia Hairabedian from St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church in

also served as both director and deputy executive director of the Armenian Assembly of America. Grand Matron Alice Kalustian and Grand Commander Steve Adams wrapped up the evening's program by thanking the Knights and Daughters for their dedication and support and for making the trip to Las Vegas. They also looked ahead to a future where the Knights and



Daughters of Vartan Woman of the Year, Adrienne Krikorian, Esq. from California and Immediate Past Grand Matron Diana Tookmanian

Fowler, California gave the invocation. The Grand Convocation Committee was introduced by its General Chairman, Past Commander Mark Der Matoian of Yeprad Lodge No. 9.

Richard Hagopian again took out his oud and with some assistance from his son on the dumbeg, performed a handful of traditional Armenian melodies. Immediate Past Grand Matron Diana Tookmanian introduced the Daughters of Vartan Woman of the Year, the Hon. Adrienne Krikorian, Esq. from California. Judge Krikorian is a co-founder of House of Hope, which funds a residential educational program in Armenia for young girls from poor backgrounds. She also serves as Diocesan Council Chairman for the Western Diocese, the only female to ever hold that position.

Immediate Past Grand Commander Dr. Gary Zamanigian then introduced the Knights of Vartan Person of the Year, Peter Abajian of California. He is the executive director of the Paros Foundation, which raises money for humanitarian projects throughout Armenia. He

Daughters of Vartan would play an even greater role on behalf of Armenians both in the United States and in their homeland.

It was only proper that since this year's Grand Convocation was held in Las Vegas that



Kef dancing

an Armenian priest from the neighborhood would close the program. That priest was Very Rev. Sasoon Zumrookdian of St. Giragos Armenian Apostolic Church in Las Vegas. After the prayer, the pastor urged everyone to make sure to be in church the following morning.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Co-Founder of Armenian Taxi Company Talks Entrepreneurship with AGBU

By Nicholas Zoraian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WATERTOWN — Armenia General Benevolent Union (AGBU) summer interns in the Boston area had a chance not only to work in various offices and learn on the job, but to hear from other professionals about their own stories in the world of business.

One of those was the co-founder of GG Taxi, an app-based car service, similar to Uber and Lyft, which started in Armenia and now operates in Russia, Georgia and California.

Khachatur Grigorian gave advice about business and leadership, while speaking with pride about the evolution and future of GG. His June 24 presentation was part of a series of workshops for summer interns and other young members of the Armenian community.

“When you want to start something, everything begins from [your] dream. Following the dream is belief. After that,” Grigorian said, “comes hard work.” He added, “As a leader, you should have all of these things in your heart and mind.”

GG is a holding company that has embarked on many different projects. Since 2014, the company’s focus has been on its app-based taxi service. Grigorian co-founded GG Taxi in 2014 in Yerevan. According to Grigorian, in 2015, one year after its launch, GG was filling about 300 orders per day. He joked that GG’s drivers were earning more money than the company itself. He explained that the taxi service was struggling to the point where GG was investing



Khachatur Grigorian with AGBU Summer Interns in Boston on June 24

By 2016 the taxi service was filling 3,000 orders per day. Now, he proclaims proudly, “GG is filling more than 20,000 orders per day in all its locations, a 700-percent increase from 2016.”

Grigorian also admitted that the company is losing about 20,000 orders per day due to cancellations and other issues.

Grigorian proclaimed that “GG plans to solve all Armenian public transportation problems in the coming years.”

to all of the usual options you would find on the Uber app such as regular cars, luxury cars, and even exotic cars.

GG is currently operating in 15 different cities throughout Armenia, Georgia, and Russia and is in the process of expanding into the United States. Grigorian talked about his plan to launch GG taxi service in Glendale, Pasadena, North Hollywood, and Venice, all areas where there are dense populations of Armenians.

When asked about the challenges of trying to infiltrate a huge market like California, as Uber and Lyft dominate the transportation network industry, Grigorian confidently says GG’s “customer service will be the best in the area.” He added that he is certain that GG Taxi can outperform other big companies in the customer service department.

He claims that GG will be at an advantage because “the acquisition cost to get Armenian drivers in this area is much cheaper.” In other words, he is saying that GG won’t have to spend as much money on acquiring new drivers and getting people to recognize the brand as non-Armenian companies would. He will easily be able to hire the Armenians in the area as they will already know what the company is. From there, the brand will start to become more and more recognizable. He continues on to say that “the main problem for a company is if their brand isn’t known.”

Though he doesn’t plan on hiring only

Armenian drivers, the fact that there are so many Armenians in the area gives him a head start in brand recognition.

Similar to his business model, Grigorian, himself, has more than one base; he lives in Yerevan, Moscow, and Los Angeles. He is extremely involved in the development and expansion of the company, as he is constantly traveling to different GG office locations to make sure everything is running smoothly.

To learn more about GG visit their website at www.ggtaxi.com or their Facebook page GG.



Opening Ceremony of GG Moscow on March 4, 2018



GG’s Yerevan office in January, 2017

all of its money from other projects back into the GG taxi service because, he said, “we believed in our future.”

What makes GG Taxi unique is the types of transportation it offers. It has vans, moving trucks and vehicle transport trucks in addition

(Nicholas Zoraian is a summer intern at the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, through the AGBU.)

South Texas Teen to Participate in Pan Armenian Games

By Jake Kobersky

BOERNE, Texas (KSAT) — Basketball is Nate Bledsoe’s passion. “I want to go as far as I can take it,” the soon-to-be Boerne Champion sophomore said.

Next month, Bledsoe will literally travel halfway across the globe to play the sport he loves, lacing up for an American team at the seventh

annual Pan Armenian Games. Held once every four years in Armenia’s capital city of Yerevan, the games bring athletes from Armenia and of Armenian descent together for competition in over 17 different sports.

Bledsoe will be on a basketball team from Los Angeles. At 15, he’s the youngest on a roster full of players with collegiate and professional experience. Still, he’s undaunted.

“It’s going to be really exciting to play overseas and see the differences

between playing over here and over there,” Bledsoe said. “Also just meeting all kinds of new people from all over the world will be awesome.”

Playing at the international level is one thing, but doing it in the country of his ancestors is another. Bledsoe is Armenian on his mother Ripsime’s side. She was born in Armenia and hasn’t been back since she was an infant.

“We’re such a small group, but we’re resilient,” Bledsoe said. “The

Armenian Diaspora spread us around the world from the Armenian Genocide, so there are groups of Armenians all across the world. Whenever we can find each other, it’s really cool and we just kind of stick together.”

The 2019 Pan Armenian Games kick off August 5 with closing ceremonies taking place August 17.

Bledsoe’s appearance at the games will also benefit a great non-profit called Hoops for Hayastan.



Nate Bledsoe

Arts & Living

Peter Musurlian Speaks of Armenian Genocide After Winning a Third Los Angeles Area Emmy

LOS ANGELES – Independent journalist Peter Musurlian won his third Los Angeles Area Emmy on July 27, at the Academy of Television Arts and Science's Saban Media Center in North Hollywood.

The 52-minute documentary, "Holocaust Soliloquy," ran on Los Angeles PBS station KLCS in May 2018, winning the Emmy in the Independent Programming Category.

Earlier this year, Musurlian, who shot, wrote, and edited the entire film, won a First Place Los Angeles Press Club Award for Best Videography, beating out two entries from the powerhouse KCET team.

The documentary can be found on the website: www.peterfischl.com and a link to Musurlian's Emmy speech has been uploaded to YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WRYgRuKP9E>

Musurlian won his first Emmy in 2012, for a 30-minute (solo) documentary, "Burbank's African Sister City," which he shot, wrote, narrated, and edited. In 2016, Musurlian, and a team from The Burbank Channel, won Emmys for their various roles in the production of the Mayor's State-of-the-City video.

Musurlian, who was born in Wisconsin and raised in Torrance, received his bachelor's degree from the University of Southern California, and master's degrees from Baylor University, American University, and the University of Redlands. He has had 10 Emmy nominations since 2002 and has won 24



Peter Musurlian

Golden Mikes from the Radio & Television News Association of Southern California.

Growing up, Musurlian attended St. James Armenian Apostolic Church. In 1983, he interned at ABC News in Washington, DC, as part of the Armenian Assembly Intern Program. And, from 2006 to 2009, he sat on the Board of Directors of the Armenian National Committee, Western Region.

Among more than 20 Armenian-themed projects Musurlian has produced over the last 20 years are: "The Long Journey from the NFL to Armenia" (2006), "Historic Armenia" (2015) and "The 100-Year-Old Survivor" (2015), all of which ran on KLCS in Los Angeles.

Among certain members of the Armenian Community, Musurlian is perhaps best known for his hard-hitting coverage of Members of Congress Jean Schmidt of Ohio and Steve Cohen of Tennessee, as well as California Assemblyman Mike Gatto, who all, to varying degrees, exhibited hostility toward Armenians and/or Armenian issues.

A former congressional aide, Musurlian has worked at television stations in Montana, Texas, Burbank, and Washington, DC. He also served for eight months as a US Army broadcast journalist in Central Europe in the late 1990s, where he met his Hungarian wife, Szilvia.

He is editing his latest documentary, "Genocide March Revisited," while working and living in Northern Virginia with his wife and teenage daughter, June Petra, the 2017 Los Angeles County Spelling Bee champion.



Vahagn Arslanian and Michele Ekizian by Gorky's Aviation Murals at Newark Museum

'Gorky's Dream Garden' to Hold Preview on September 7 at Newark Museum of Art

NEW YORK – "Gorky's Dream Garden" will be performed at the Newark Museum of Art in a site-specific Love Songs Showscape chamber preview on Saturday, September 7 at 2 p.m. (with a pre-concert spectacle at 1:30 p.m.). The exclusive 80-minute show will take place at the museum's elegant Billy Johnson Theater and will be free with museum admission.

Created by award winning composer Michelle Ekizian, "Gorky's Dream Garden" comes to life with a cast of performers from Broadway, opera, film and dance.

The opera is based loosely on the story of the visionary artist Arshile Gorky, whose Newark Airport Murals are a part of the Newark Museum's collection.

Born Vostanig Adoian in Van, Turkey in 1904, the artist died in Connecticut in 1948. He was a child witness to the horrors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. He came to America in 1920, and fabricated the persona of Russian royalty, and as a nephew of Maxim Gorky. Concealing his Armenian identity and his inner laments and hopes from all, except his sister through letter correspondences, he captured a young society, Bostonian wife and a slice of the American Dream. He became a founding father of New York's dynamic abstract-expressionist art movement of the 1930s and 40s.

Despite loss and misfortune (fire, cancer, marital infidelity, car crash), and his untimely death at age 44, Gorky's groundbreaking abstract and figurative paintings transitioned darkness and pain into color and light. His art is an everlasting representation of the enigmatic complexities of the Genocide survivors.

In this first-ever concert-event of the new musical theater opera "Gorky's Dream Garden," virtuoso musicians, dancers and actors will be enhanced by visuals crafted especially for its performance site.

Gorky was assigned by the Federal Art Project to create his 1936-37 cycle of murals: Evolution of Forms Under Aerodynamic Limitations. Now, the cycle's only two surviving panels—excavated and restored in 1978 after being presumably lost during some 35-years covered under coats of paint at the Newark Airport—are in permanent display at the Newark Museum.

Gorky's murals are among the earliest abstract murals to be created in the United States. When the installation was previewed in 1937, the Newark Star-Ledger compared it to "a hangover after an Atlantic City convention."

Still standing tall today and rising above to greet the museum's guests with fantastic verve, Gorky's two Aviation Murals are ironically like the resilient survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

Ekizian, who composed the book, score and lyrics, creates hybrids of large-scale works crossing the boundaries of classical, rock, musical theater and opera.

Created in sections over a course of two-decades, "Gorky's Dream Garden" has been hailed as "a blaze of color...passion and spiritual force..." (San Francisco Chronicle on previewed excerpt).

She is a recipient of a Prix de Rome from the American Academy in Rome, Guggenheim Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts Grant and a Doctorate in Music Composition from Columbia University.

For the September 7 preview, Ekizian and her team have staged a portable production that will make full use of not only the post-modern architecture of the museum's Billy Johnson Theater designed by the late Michael Graves, but its gallery space by Gorky's murals.

see DREAM, page 16

AMAA to Celebrate Century of Founding at October 19 Boston Banquet

By Florence Avakian

PARAMUS, N.J. – "We've got to do something," they said, and they did, and continue to do so, declared Zaven Khanjian, executive director and CEO of the Armenian Missionary Association of America, (AMAA).

The "they" are the dedicated couple, John and Michèle Simourian, who with "commitment, goodwill and action" took devoted action and inspired the members of the AMAA to help the survivors of the 1988 earthquake in Armenia 30 years ago.

This couple has continued to dedicate their efforts for four decades to the values and work of the AMAA, an outstanding Christian non-sectarian organization.

2018 was also the 100th anniversary of the founding of the AMAA, a very symbolic date for this noteworthy organization that has been the "Good Samaritan" to many needy people - orphans, widows, the poverty-stricken sick and grieving around the world.

Their vital and dynamic work for more than 100 years will be celebrated in grand style at a banquet in Boston, MA, on Saturday evening, October 19. Co-Chairs of the banquet are John and Michèle Simourian.

In a brief telephone conversation, Michèle Simourian said, "Out of our great respect for its sterling reputation, and what it stands for during the past 100 years, it has been a privilege to be involved with the AMAA. Also our intense love for our Armenian ancestry has played a huge role in working for our people."

The AMAA Orphan and Child Care Program, "a birth-child of the earthquake," has continued to serve the impoverished children of Armenia and Artsakh," stated Khanjian.

Michèle Simourian, an AMAA Board member, and founding co-chair of the program, has "vigorously led and served it" for more than 25 years.

Last year the AMAA celebrated its Centennial in Armenia by inaugurating the new AMAA Community Center and Sanctuary in Gyumri which was the epicenter of the earthquake. "It celebrated the revival of Armenia's historical epicenter of cultural heritage and intellectual treasure," declared Khanjian.

The center "will bring joy, add a smile on the faces of its children, and bring honor to God," he added.

John Simourian, a long-time member of First Armenian Church of Belmont, and past trustee, will serve as Master of Ceremonies of the banquet. He revealed that he had become involved with the AMAA through association with his "wife's leadership."

This is "a wonderful and far-reaching organization, going strong for more than 100 years. It responds to the physical and spiritual needs of the helpless and the homeless," he commented.

He said he was "looking forward" to his role as banquet MC, working with the Banquet Committee members and developing an interesting program for the October 19 celebration."

Khanjian said, "Our task as the blessed recipients of those who walked before us is set, and we are ready to embrace the future. With added resources, expanded services and multiplied vigor, a brighter future is on the horizon of the mission of the AMAA."



John and Michele Simourian

Deputy Prime Minister Avinyan Focuses on the Economy

AVINYAN, from page 1

As deputy prime minister, Avinyan's fields of coordination include economy, nature protection, agriculture, energy infrastructures and natural resources, transport, communication and IT, nuclear security, statistics and urban development. He spoke about many of these topics at his Armenian community events and during an interview with the *Mirror-Spectator*.

ARAM ARKUN PHOTO



Background

Born in 1989, Avinyan received his bachelor's degree in 2009 from the Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) university from the Department of Applied Mathematics, and in 2011 received a master's degree in mathematical modeling from the same university. He went abroad afterward to London for a one-year program to obtain a master's degree in finance from the University of Queen Mary in 2014.

Aside from obtaining fundamental knowledge in finance which helps him even today in his work, he became familiar with many cultures and nationalities there for the first time. He exclaimed, "London is a city where during my first three days I heard more languages than during the rest of my life."

Avinyan worked at the business lending division of Armenian Development Bank after obtaining his bachelor's degree, and in 2010 founded an irrigation systems installation and landscape design company. In 2014-16 he was a consultant for digitization systems at Shirak Technologies and completed several digitization projects for Contour Global, while in 2014-18 he managed an Armenian software company called CyberVision.

He began to be active in civil movements in Armenia from 2008, when the presidential election led to mass protests. When he returned to Armenia from London in 2014, he enrolled in the Civil Contract civil movement. He met Nikol Pashinyan for the first time in this period. When the Civil Contract turned into a political party in 2015, Avinyan became one of its founders and a member of its executive. He began to participate more intensively in the political process and elections. An electoral victory in a village in Ararat Province in 2016 inspired them, and Avinyan became a member of the Yerevan Council of Elders (city council) from the Yelk Faction in 2017-18, but, he said, the leaders of the party realized that only revolution could achieve global change in Armenia.

Consequently, in 2018 they began the march from Gyumri to Yerevan which ended with the change in regime. The idea came from Mkhitar Hayrapetyan, but Avinyan was the leader of the organizing group. They planned what route to take and all the actions were carefully determined. Avinyan said that though they took the first step, it was the populace that was ready to act already. The fact that the goals of the Civil Contract party were based on the single idea of constructing a powerful and stable republic, and that their leaders were very pragmatic and realistic, measuring their strengths correctly, led to the success of their movement, Avinyan said.

On May 11, 2018 Avinyan was appointed as deputy prime minister. Today, while in office, he is still a member of the governing board of the

party and fully involved in its political activities.

Economy

Avinyan said that the privatization carried out under the government of Levon Ter Petrosian after the collapse of the Soviet-style economy was too rapid and led to the entire industrial complex being destroyed. He said, "It was not possible to do worse because the result was zero." There were a few positive advances in fields such as energy, which was restored, but if the advanced production capabilities of Soviet Armenia and the transmitted knowledge was modernized with slower steps and new markets found they might have been preserved.

During the following two presidencies of independent Armenia, there were some positive advances in certain fields though the overall legacy is not a positive one. As an example, Avinyan pointed to fairly intensive work in the last ten years on digitization of public services and making them easier of access (e.g. cadaster), but these are very small achievements, he said, compared to the negative effects of the lack of democratic elections and democracy in general.

Avinyan declared that the ideal economic model for Armenia would be the free market but life shows that comparatively poorer countries would incur greater losses than profits since they do not have sufficiently developed human capital and a knowledge economy with which to compete with developed countries.

He said that all "isms" or traditional ideological approaches to the economy today are combined. In other words, in the same economy there are some spheres in which the market must be freely allowed to take its course with no intervention, in the way the British political economist David Ricardo envisioned. On the other hand, there are spheres in which very strict arrangements must be made, with very severe interventions, which directly contradict the logic of a free market. Avinyan declared, "This mixed policy approach is what is effective today and this model is what we rely on."

Furthermore, to speed up Armenia's economic growth, Avinyan said, there are two strategies. The first is to look to your comparative advantage and strengthen or increase what you do well already. For Armenia, that would include agriculture, because of great weather, water and suitable soil. However, he said, "I don't know any country that has done well and become rich by promoting agriculture too much." In Armenia, agriculture composes around 15 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), which implies, he said, a not so developed infrastructure.

The second approach is emulation of successful industries in developed countries. GDP is produced, he said, mainly through industries. You must find the technology, bring it to Armenia and start production. Avinyan took as his model the so-called Asian tiger economies. He gave as one example high tech industry in Armenia, which has been growing for an average of 28 percent annually over the last 7 to 8 years. That of course also means Armenia now has the comparative advantage in this industry. Armenia, he said, must look at other niches or industries that could be emulated in countries like Singapore, Korea, the European Union and the US. For this reason, Armenia is negotiating with the US to increase its access to a lot of technological knowhow in the trade framework.

Avinyan said that in general the government advocated the second approach, but in certain fields still followed the first, as a single approach cannot be applied throughout the economy. He added that the approach to agriculture would be changed through the application of new technologies. The government no longer just provides assistance for maintaining agriculture, which is ineffective, but instead subsidizes capital investments in fields like drip irrigation, intensive gardening and smart farms.

He noted that tourism was an important sector of the economy that grows practically on its own if the infrastructure is renovated. A general strategy is being developed for this sector, which last year had 16-17 percent growth and this year possibly more. However, Avinyan stressed again that "We need to focus on industry...industry should be the main basis for the economy of Armenia."

When asked about the role of labor unions in Armenia, Avinyan replied that they are not well

established there but they have received a new impetus in certain spheres after the Velvet Revolution of 2018. He said: "I cannot insist they are working as serious defenders of workers rights, but this is something that the government is encouraging."

Issues

Environmental concerns have been raised for many years about mining in Armenia, and in particular in Amulsar, as well as issues of corruption. All mines in Armenia belong to the state which leased them out to investors under the prior governments. Avinyan said that in order to find out the truth about the situation, a new investigation was initiated by the current government with international specialists. He said that experts who were previously sent by environmentalist groups stated that the mining was risky but could not provide certainty about the risks.

Avinyan said, "It was very normal, very natural, that the environmental movements fought against mines. It is very understandable since the history of mining in Armenia has a scandalous history, so that created a situation in which confidence is lacking." He continued, "I think involving independent experts was an important process also for us. To receive answers to these questions was very important."

He said the motives of the environmentalists was understandable, "but I think the government must work to keep a certain balance...one-sided approaches cannot be a guidepost for the government because in our country in all cases the supremacy of the law must be applied independently of everything."

The final decision regarding Amulsar will be made after the results of the expert international assessment will be ready. Avinyan also noted that there will be fundamental reforms made to mining laws, including some limitations, along with privileges to those companies ready for production.

Mining is one of those economic areas, Avinyan said, in which the state must carry out some interventionist policies. Aside from environmental issues, there is the question of creating added value in the country. That would mean that raw materials not be exported but refined or worked on in Armenia. Avinyan said the appropriate conditions for this must be established.

Nuclear energy is another issue which raises environmental and safety concerns. Avinyan said that the government understands that the Medzamor 400 megawatt nuclear station is in a seismically dangerous zone but has taken all possible protective measures. He declared, "We are persuaded that atomic energy producing stations must form an indivisible part of our energy system." After ending the use of Medzamor a new nuclear plant must be brought on line.

However, he said that energy diversification policies were being followed, including solar, wind and water based. A few weeks ago an agreement was made with a company in the United Arab Emirates to invest jointly with an Armenian state fund in a 500megawatt renewable energy field. Solar energy can produce eventually up to 20-25 percent of energy needs and by 2036 at least 4,000-megawatt solar energy stations are planned, which will allow export of electricity.

Hydroelectrical plants are being modernized and thermal energy stations with high efficiency are being built with Italian firms. There are even some explorations continuing for gas and oil deposits.

Eliminating Poverty and Improving Quality Of Life

"The fundamental goal of the revolution," Avinyan said, "is the formation of a human-centered and citizen-centered society. This is a longer-lasting process which we are working towards."

The new government has taken some short-term measures. It raised the minimum for pensions and benefits. It raised the level of the value of the basket of minimum consumption to 25,500 dram, which, Avinyan said, is still a very low sum. Nonetheless, those who received pensions below this level now will receive this amount. There are also some modest raises being made to teachers starting in September and soldiers' salaries.

The creation of the new pension system, with

those born in 1976 and after paying from their salaries and the state supplementing that amount, dates from 2014, and Avinyan called it "a great achievement for the Armenian state." The amounts of contributions may still be subject to discussion but this is a technical point, he said.

Another field important for the well-being of citizens for which the government is planning reform is the healthcare system. The Soviet on-demand system to a certain extent still operates, and the ministry of health has done well in renovating their old programs in the current framework, but Avinyan said the system will be changed to a health insurance system. Some pilot programs have already been carried out.

At this point, the only question that remains is of choosing a model. The German or Israeli models have greater state involvement and the US is more private based. During the next 4-5 years it will become clearer which type of model is appropriate for Armenia, taking into consideration its population and size.

However, "If we talk about the battle against poverty in general," Avinyan said, "it is only possible through the development of the economy." Unemployment must be reduced, and possibilities of education and the possibility of self-realization provided. To help achieve these goals, the cabinet developed a program called Work Armenia, which was launched in mid May this year.

It is composed of three principles. Development of human capital is the first. This will provide workers to sectors of the economy that need them, and will require fundamental educational changes. Women also must be brought into active sectors of the economy. Second is stimulation of employment in Armenia through concrete methods, and third is fundamental institutional reforms.

"If we are very frank with each other," Avinyan related, "we can say the educational system is very inefficient." There are schools with 22 teachers for only 5 children. Despite some changes in several universities, or TUMO's extracurricular programs, he said, "what we have now is still the heritage of the Soviet Union." In the following years, teachers must be educated better and efficiency improved. The salaries of teachers, which are really low, he admitted, are going to be raised starting in September.

As far as private schools are concerned, though there are positive developments and examples, Avinyan said that the Armenian constitution provides the right of citizens to education, and must be secured through public schools.

On the university level, a major issue pointed out by Avinyan is that there are too many graduates in liberal arts such as philosophy or history. A large portion of the unemployed today have such degrees, whereas there is a need for workers trained in other fields like electricians or IT. The universities ideally should therefore change their focus and decrease the numbers of liberal arts field graduates.

The money for the various aforementioned state programs and increases in salaries is available because of unexpected tax revenues in the budget. This is, Avinyan said, a result of a successful fight against corruption, which will hopefully continue to bring in new revenue. He said, "There is a huge grey economy in Armenia and we still have a lot of places to disturb them [tax evaders] and bring them to the new culture of paying taxes."

Faith in the Future

At the July 19 public event in Boston, Avinyan was asked by an audience member when would the economy improve so that people would not have to emigrate. He said that this requires changes that take longer than political ones, which can shift on a dime. Armenia has to deal with 20.6 percent unemployment, over half of its women being inactive, and many people being forced to leave Armenia for seasonal work. However, significantly, he said that he believed that it is possible to change conditions in the Armenian economy within five years so that people will no longer emigrate. He concluded by declaring that the most important thing that has happened after the revolution is that the people have begun to believe in the future of Armenia.



ARTS & LIVING

Parliament Speaker Tours US, Touts Contacts With US Officials

MIRZOYAN, from page 1

and the *Armenian Weekly*, at the Sheraton Commander Hotel.

During a lengthy talk, Mirzoyan, 40, spoke about his background, his goals for Armenia as well as the results of the tour of the US.

His affinity with the US goes back a long way. He is a historian whose doctorate was on the official recognition of the Armenian Genocide in the US from 1915 to 2003. He also worked for a time at the Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial, under the leadership of Lavrenti Barseghyan. His master's degree focused on the defense of Van and Vaspurakan.

The transition from academic to member of government was fairly smooth.

While he was finishing his doctorate at Yerevan State University, he was active in student politics and in 2004, was one of the organizers of large-scale anti-government protests.

"After that, I was active in various movement and the transition was very smooth. There was no large solution because the solutions were very complex, all focused on the government," he said.

The protests were regarding the rules in the government for drafting those finishing university who wanted to continue their education.

Clearly, he had one foot in the past while one foot firmly in current politics.

"In 2013 it was clear to me that if you want something to be done, you have to do it yourself, meaning you have to participate in those movements," Mirzoyan said.

He connected with current Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in 2013 and eventually the two founded the political movement that toppled the government.

He was a co-founder with Pashinyan of the Civil Contract Party which was part of the Yelk (Way Out) Alliance in Parliament.

With his early introduction to and admiration for Pashinyan, it was easy to find a way into the government.

"I knew of Nikol Pashinyan's writing and of his arrest and imprisonment, since 2008, but we were introduced in 2013," he explained.

Mirzoyan responded to a question regarding criticism of the visit to the US from some outlets

in Armenia. He replied that some of the critics were unfamiliar with the various bodies in the US and perhaps did not realize the import of the meetings.

He said during the visit, they were able to meet with Sen. Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Rep. Nancy Pelosi and many other leaders in the US.

In addition to various leaders, they met with House Democracy Partnership members, a bipartisan group of US Representatives that works directly with partner countries around the world to support the development of effective, independent, and responsive legislative institutions. They had invited Armenian representatives for the first time. They also met with members of the Atlantic Council, a conservative think tank, and members of the Armenian-American community. In addition, he and Avinyan met with representatives of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems and United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

"If you don't think they are important, then what is?" he asked rhetorically.

"We need dynamic ties and constant contact between the US Armenian community and Armenian government representatives," he added.

Iran, Turkey and International Relations

The topic turned to Iran, its antagonistic relations with the US and its close ties to Armenia.

Iran is the only neighbor of Armenia which has exports to and imports from Armenia. Two other neighbors are Turkey and Azerbaijan, both of which have blockaded the country. The third, Georgia, is not officially closed but from time to time, they create problems for Armenian goods entering the country.

When asked if the US officials with whom he was meeting pressured Mirzoyan to distance his country from Iran, he replied that no pressure was exerted on him.

"We have had close relations with Iran for centuries. This is nothing new. If we only look at the economic factors, the Armenian economy has suffered much from blockades," he said. "If we speak about gas, we need to understand how important

the diversification of energy is."

"We get gas from Russia and Iran, and we can't allow ourselves the luxury of not buying gas from Iran. We don't pay for our gas from them but give them electricity in return," he said.

He added that he explained the country's position to the Atlantic Council and told other officials at smaller meetings what the position of Armenia and that they seemed to understand it.

"I am optimistic," he said.

"The world is not black and white. Everything in politics and the world are tied together with many small strings," he replied, when asked about the increasingly cozy relationship between Russia and Turkey.

"We have peace, economic, etc. ties with Russia," he said. "And maybe that might open some doors to Turkey for us, since they are blockading us."

Armenia has frequently stated that it is ready to start relations with Turkey without preconditions.

Armenia, for its part, is now getting closer to China also. "I think all countries have something to give each other, regardless of size. Everyone is looking for collaborators around the world. Not only Russia, but Europe, United States..."

He added that Armenia is trying to expand its foreign policy focus in Asia and Africa.

"It is possible to create ties with all other countries," he added.

In addition, he noted that his government is making overtures to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, neither of which has ties with Armenia. Though neither has yet borne fruit, he said he is optimistic.

Artsakh Relations

Since the Velvet Revolution in May 2018 which brought Pashinyan to power, there has been an underlying tension with the government of Artsakh. Two former presidents of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan, hail from Artsakh and were noted fighters in that country's war against Azerbaijan.

Mirzoyan downplayed disagreements between the two republics.

The republics and the people are headed in different directions, Mirzoyan said.

Certain movements started in Artsakh after the Velvet Revolution, but he said that the Armenian government was cautious not to encourage any change in the government there, since they deal with ongoing attacks from Azerbaijan and need to be ready.

"We have great relations with the Artsakh leadership. I relish the chance to go there as often as I can," he said. "I look at friendly relations with respect," he said, noting that Artsakh President Bako Sahakyan is a good friend of former Armenian president Robert Kocharyan and former Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan.

"The people of Artsakh have to decide for themselves what direction they want to go," he said.

In a separate issue facing Artsakh, he denied that there were more attacks by Azerbaijan on Artsakh.

Mirzoyan said that he did not agree that there is an increase in firing from Azerbaijan.

"In the past year, the number has gone down sharply, as have the number of dead and wounded," he said. "Even one is too many as we don't want any victims."

He said this is not enough and there is ongoing effort by the Armenian government to reach a permanent end to the war.

Azeri Efforts

A question was asked about the disappearing twinned towns in France and Artsakh, which President Macron now seeks to end.

(The French Administrative Court annulled the declaration on friendship between the French city of Arnouville and the Shekher community of Artsakh in June. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Artsakh expressed its concern that it may become a wrong political signal for Azerbaijan.)

"Azeri efforts in all fields internationally to bad mouth the Armenian government or country is not new. They need to understand that such efforts will not bear fruit and realize that they need to talk with the Armenian government to benefit them," he said.

"Yes, they can inflict small wounds," he said, but nothing major.

The sister cities in France, he said, were revoked by the courts by all the officials continue to keep warm relations, he explained.

"In terms of strategy, they rarely bear fruit. Yes through dirty efforts, they can have small success but they are not winning the war," he said.

Domestic Policies

Mirzoyan said that the government is focusing on adding to the number of female parliamentarians. Currently, there is a one-fourth quota, which the elections have met.

"We would like more women to participate," he said.

He also addressed the youth of many in power, including himself, and Avinyan, who is 30.

"It was the young people who were fighting for years. It was the youth, next to others, who fought. So why shouldn't they participate? With no offense to the older generation, they are able to be free of the Soviet mentality and offer fresh thoughts. A new generation in politics is a good thing. The rules of the game are different now."

He then was asked about the courts, which the government seems to target, especially after the release on bail of former president Robert Kocharyan by a judge.

"The courts still play by the old rules. We were not talking about all the judges. There were always just judges that had clear consciences. But many were part of the old regime and they had various motives. They need to go," he said.

He said the government would like to offer early retirement to make room for new judges.

"Political and party decisions were made when that branch is supposed to be independent. We want to take back the ill-gotten gains. Those need to be returned to the people," he said.

And finally, he was asked about the continued cases of domestic violence there.

"We recognize domestic violence. There are classes for the police and for them to approach the victims. In Armenia, from time to time, family violence takes place. We can't stick our heads in the sand and say it does not happen in Armenia. It happens there and sadly everywhere," he said.

He added that in 2017 a law was adopted to recognize the plight of many spouses in domestic situations.

Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Patligan (Eggplant Moussaka)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium eggplant
- 1 lb. ground lamb or beef
- 1 medium green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- Pinch of sweet basil (rahan)
- 1 medium can diced tomatoes
- 1 small can tomato sauce
- 2 large cloves garlic, chopped
- Shortening
- Salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

Peel and slice eggplant in ¼-inch slices and sprinkle generously with salt. Let stand 15 minutes.

Wash the salt off the eggplant with water. Squeeze lightly and dry. Set aside.

Lightly brown meat in a tablespoon of shortening. Add the bell pepper, onion, basil, tomatoes and tomato sauce, garlic, and salt and pepper, and stir. Cook for 5-10 minutes, tossing. Arrange eggplant in a prepared baking dish alternating with meat mixture, and top with meat mixture.

Bake in a 350-degree oven for 35-45 minutes, or until bubbly and golden, and eggplant is tender.

Serves 6.



ARTS & LIVING

‘Gorky’s Dream Garden’ to Hold Preview on September 7 at Newark Museum of Art

DREAM, from page 13

Conceived as a spectacle of sight and sound, the presentation includes a pre-concert dance ritual, tableaux vivants, a procession of light and a pop-up “wishing-tree” installation conjuring East/West – ancient/modern, immigration, otherness, innovation, resilience and endurance.

The internationally represented visual artist Vahagn Arslanian has created the show’s panoply of indigenous birds harkening from Gorky’s lost Armenian lands for the production’s projections and its pop-up interactive “wishing tree.” His collaboration with Julian Schnabel, “The Ones You Didn’t Write – The Maybach Car,” was displayed on the Grand Canal during the Venice Biennale.

Deaf from birth, Arslanian is fascinated by aviation, birds, candle flames and the chaotic beauty of shattered glass. Through these miracles symbolizing some of life’s essential promises of hope, Arslanian, like the artist Gorky in his overcoming the immediate trauma of the Genocide, found in his art both a route for his imaginative vision and a means of exploring the equilibrium between destruction and creation.

In keeping with Ekizian’s layering of real, unreal and surreal through her opulent music score and fast paced time traveling story line, the Dream Garden’s visuals are multifaceted. Throughout, panoramic backdrops guided by Arslanian’s birds in flight offer vistas to fragmented and montaged abstraction and nature captured respectively by Corbett McCarthy and Armenia’s foremost photo-journalist of its

evocative landscapes, Hrair Hawk Khatcherian. McCarthy, a Spring Lake, New Jersey art collector and gallery owner, has recently acquired a collection of lost works pointing to Gorky’s early and private art suggestive of his exile flight to America and assimilation that is now under critical examination among the art world. For the opera’s turning point scene, a riveting Dream Dance will be accompanied with the screening of the composer’s private music video educating on the Armenian Genocide featuring the voice of the late Woodstock/“Freedom” legend, Richie Havens in the opera’s role of its enigmatic Black Monk. Here, Ekizian’s setting for the singer’s raspy wail in her orchestration of a sublime ancient Armenian spiritual hymn is set against devastating flames and brutal historic photos of the Genocide’s death marches into the desert as a timeless and worldly plea to rise above.

Brent Barrett, the venerable Broadway leading man, performs the role of Gorky. The actor and bari-tenor is the winner of the Los Angeles Music Critics Award, and a frequent star in international and Broadway productions of “Phantom of the Opera,” “Chicago” and “Kiss Me Kate” as well as in musicals and in concerts with theaters, symphony orchestras, opera houses, and concert halls around the world. He is the lead of the popular “Broadway Tenors.”

Joining Barrett, the line-up of performers

includes Hasmik Mekenejian, the Yerevan born contralto and principal soloist of the St. Vartan’s Armenian Cathedral Choir in New York City as Gorky’s martyred mother, Shushan. Soprano Karen Lubeck as Gorky’s American ingenue wife, Agnes, attracts attention as a promising artist with a beautiful voice, intelligent musicianship, and thoughtful interpretation and made her Carnegie Hall debut sharing the stage with trumpeter Arturo Sandoval.

Actors performing in quick-cutting voice overs as the show’s “Art Whisperers” in tandem with Ekizian’s luscious score will include Adela Maria Bolet, also doubling as the artist’s eccentric sister, Vartoosh). The Cuban-born actor of film, TV and theatre and winner of the Best Actress Latin America Theater Festival and Revelacion ACE Entertainment Critics Association Awards. Bolet will be joined by John Sannuto, New York theater veteran singer, dancer, director, and choreographer and Professor of Theatre and the Chair of the Performing Arts Department at Long Island University’s Brooklyn Campus.

The Art of Motion Dance Theatre, directed by dancer/choreographer Lynn Needle, will cover the show’s extensive dance sections portraying the physical and mental “fantasy of flight” evoked by Gorky’s Aviation. Needle, a disciple of the legendary American choreographer

Alwin Nikolais, performed last winter to critical acclaim the dance of “The Exiled Heart” from the Gorky Opera on the celebrated Appel Room stage at Jazz at Lincoln Center before the Association of Performing Arts Professionals (APAP) through the JKA Booking Dance Festival.

With her dance captain, Janette Dishuk, Needle and Dishuk – both on the dance faculty of Bergen Community College – will be joined by a trio of cutting-edge male dancers who are as well, equally at home in classical ballet, modern dance, hip-hop and Broadway. Needle’s and Dishuk’s portrayal of female icons representing “Mother Armenia” and “Holy Breath” of Ekizian’s script will be joined by the men performing the opera’s intriguing Chekavian “Black Monk” (Michael Crawford), “The Artist as a Young Man” (Marcos Valasquez) and a cross-over, transgender “World” deity (M.A. Taylor).

The Palisades Virtuosi will function as the Dream Garden Lite Orchestra of piano, alto flute and clarinet. A mainstay on New Jersey’s cultural landscape and beyond, the ensemble featuring pianist Ron Levy, flutist Margaret Swinchoski and clarinetist Don Morkrynski has been hailed by Fanfare Magazine: “In terms of intonation, articulation, and musical insight, Palisades Virtuosi represent the best of our current world-class standards.”



Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.

Dr. Nubar Berberian Annual Awards

Dr. Nubar Berberian, intellectual, journalist, activist and editor of many ADL daily newspapers for more than 50 years passed away at the age of 94 in November 23, 2016. In his Will, Dr. Berberian directed his Trust Fund managers to appropriate awards every year to college students of Armenian descent worldwide who major in either International Law or Political Science.

ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Eligible recipients are college students of Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science.
- 2) Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program in a fully accredited college or university in the world.
- 3) Applicant must provide all of the information requested on the application form.
- 4) Applicant must submit a copy of his or her most recent college transcript.
- 5) Applicant is to include a small head and shoulders self-portrait.
- 6) Application could be received by requesting from Tcadirector@Aol.com.
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: Tcadirector@Aol.com. The Paper submissions will be accepted by the deadline at:

**Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.
Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund
755 Mt. Auburn Street
Watertown, MA 02472
USA**

but electronic application is preferred.

- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is **September 15, 2019**.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in **October, 2019** based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winner or winners will receive their awards in **November, 2019**
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

Watertown, MA, July 15, 2019



Arman Hambarzumyan with sculpture

Armenian Artists Show Works in Belgrade

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BELGRADE – The site was the National Gallery in Belgrade, Serbia and the exhibit featured young talents from many countries.

“Art without Borders” was the title of the show that opened on June 25, with works by artists from Georgia, Serbia, Rumania, Armenia and Saudi Arabia. Arman Hambarzumyan, a young sculptor from Yerevan was there, with Guy Ghayanchyan, Aram Engibaryan, Hakob Vardanyan, Silvia Simonyan and Narek Aleqkyan. Also on display were works by four Armenians who were unable to be present personally: Romeo Melikyan, Zhora Gasparyan, Sarin Voskryan and Hayk Ghayaryan.

Dragan Georgevich, a private gallery owner and art patron, organized the exhibition, which was well attended and drew media attention.



ARTS & LIVING

C A L E N D A R

ARIZONA

NOVEMBER 2-3 — ARMENIAFest at St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church. Weekend food and cultural festival featuring traditional Armenian foods, beverages, exhibits, music and dance performances. 8849 E. Cholla St., Scottsdale.

NOVEMBER 16 — SOAR (Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief) Annual Golf Tournament. Saturday 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Stonecreek Golf Club, 4435 E. Paradise Village Pkwy, Phoenix. This is a fundraising event for Armenian orphans. For more information, contact Dr. Alan Haroian, 603-540-1961.

MASSACHUSETTS

AUGUST 4 and 11 — Sunday classes, 2-4 p.m., Learn Traditional Marash Embroidery Technique! Armenian Museum of America, Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Join Textile Curator Susan Lind-Sinanian at the Armenian Museum for a hands-on workshop (2 classes) to learn the unique tradition of Marash Embroidery. Marash Kordz (handwork of Marash) was a form of embroidery popular among the Armenians of Marash. Created by weaving a surface pattern through a lattice framework of two rows, it was originally used for decorating various household textiles, usually furnishings. Don't miss out on this rare opportunity to learn this traditional technique and see beautiful examples in the Museum's collection! All materials will be provided. Limit 12 students per class. Cost: \$60. Become a member to receive a 20% discount! \$48 members. Register online or call Education Coordinator, Garin Habeshian at 617.926.2562 Ext. 103 today!

AUGUST 6 — Book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian editor of her father's memoir Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier In the Ottoman Turkish Army, 7 p.m. Falmouth Public Library, Herman Foundation Meeting Room, 300 Main Street, Falmouth. Book sale/signing following the presentation. For information: Sue Henken (508) 457-2555 ext. 7 or www.falmouthpubliclibrary.org

AUGUST 11 — Annual Picnic, 12 — 5 p.m., Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. Music and dancing to the Jason Naroian Ensemble. Shish, Chicken, and Losh Kebabs. Armenian Pastries. Children's Activities. In the event of rain, picnic will be in the Kazanjian Memorial Ballroom.

AUGUST 14 — Tea and Tranquility. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Wednesday from 4:30-6 p.m. Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Enjoy refreshing Ice Teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports and dessert. Introduction to walking the labyrinth, mindful and meditative walking at 4:45pm. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

AUGUST 14-23 — Wednesday and Fridays Summer Studio Art Classes for kids, Session 2. Armenian Museum of America, Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Artists are explore the amazing objects in the galleries and create art from this inspiration. Ages 6-10: 11 am to 1 pm; Ages 11-14: 3 pm to 5 pm; Session 2 Dates: August 14-23, Wednesdays and Fridays. Cost per student: \$120. Members (family or higher) \$96! Individual drop-in classes can be purchased for \$35. Members \$28. A 10% discount will be offered for each additional sibling in the same course and/or class. For individual classes and siblings, please call Education Coordinator, Garin Habeshian at 617-926-2562, ext. 103.

AUGUST 22 — Under the August Moon. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Thursday from 7:30— 9 p.m. Delightful evening for supporters, partners & friends featuring fabulous signature dishes, hosted by anoush'ella and the Berklee Jazz Trio. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

AUGUST 25 — Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Picnic. 12 to 5 p.m., Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Picnic to be held at our new Family Life & Cultural Center, 1280 Boston Road (RTE. 125) Haverhill MA Music by the fabulous Jason Naroian Ensemble. Menu includes Lamb Shish, Losh, & Chicken Kebab Dinners, Kheyma, Pastries, & Beverages. Air Conditioned Hall. Bring your lawn chairs for sitting outside. For more info visit www.hypointearmenianchurch.org or call (978) 372-9227. Take Rte. 495 N to exit 48, bear right at the end of the ramp and follow the signs. Additional parking at Osgood Landing with free shuttle bus to the picnic grounds.

SEPTEMBER 15 — Trinity Annual Picnic, 12 -5 p.m.,



The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will hold its grand opening and gala on November 1 and 2. The gala will be held at the Royal Sonesta Hotel, Cambridge, with reception starting at 6 pm and dinner and program at 7 p.m. Honoree Dr. Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York for whom the new building is named, will be present.

Church Grounds and Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA. Food, fun and fellowship for all. Join us for an afternoon of delicious Armenian food, Armenian music, children's activities, raffle drawing, and more. Blessing of the Madagh at 4 p.m. For further information, call the Church Office, 617.354.0632, or email office@htaac.org.

SEPTEMBER 16 — Registration is now open for the 2019-2020 sessions of the Abaka Dance Academy, 101 Bigelow Ave., Watertown, MA. Principal/director Apo Ashjian. Classes begin September 16 for grades Nursery II - Grade 10 students. Check the schedule and enroll today at www.abakadanceacademy.com. For more info, email abakadanceacademy@gmail.com or call 617-283-2010.

SEPTEMBER 18 — Celebrating Contributions of Our Nation's Immigrants – Gala Benefit for the Endowed Fund for Care of Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway Honoring Dr. Noubar Afeyan, Leader & Philanthropist Recognizing Organizations Serving Immigrants & Refugees InterContinental Hotel Boston. Advance Reservations only. For information, hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

SEPTEMBER 22 — Sunday Afternoon for Families and Friends. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. 2-4 pm. Wonderful afternoon with The Hye Guys Ensemble featuring Ron Sahatjian and Joe Kouyoumjian. Hoodies, Face Painting and more RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

OCTOBER 19 — The Vosebikians are coming to the Merrimack Valley. The Armenian Friends of America proudly present their Annual HYE KEF 5 Dance, featuring The Vosebikians. The DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Andover, MA. Tickets Purchased before 9/13/19 will include the Great Venue, Outstanding Buffet, The Vosebikian Band and 5 Free Raffle Tickets Adults \$75.00 & Students 21 & under \$65 Specially priced AFA Rooms available through 9/17/19. For Tickets and more information, Contact: Lu Sirmaian 978-683-9121 or Sharke' Der Apkarian at 978-808-0598 Visit www.Armenia-FriendsofAmerica.org

OCTOBER 20 — Annual Banquet of Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, Celebrating the 58th Anniversary of the Consecration of Holy Trinity and honoring Bruce Newell as the "Parishioner of the Year," 12:30 p.m., Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Save the date; details to follow.

NOVEMBER 1,2 — NAASR Grand Opening and Gala. Friday, November 1 — Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting, NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, at NAASR's new world headquarters, 395 Concord Avenue, Belmont,

MA. Saturday, November 2 — NAASR 65th Anniversary Gala, at the Royal Sonesta Hotel, Cambridge. 6 pm Reception, 7 pm Dinner and Program. Honoree Dr. Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York; Master of Ceremonies David Ignatius, columnist for the *Washington Post* and novelist; Featuring renowned soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian, accompanied by the Borromeo String Quartet, performing a program of songs by Komitas. Further details to follow.

NOVEMBER 16 — St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School 35th Anniversary Celebration. 6:30 PM Cocktail Reception, 7:30 PM Dinner and Program. The Westin Waltham - Boston, MA \$150 per person.

DECEMBER 6 and 7 — Friday and Saturday, Trinity Christmas Bazaar, Friday, 12 noon-9 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. For further information, contact the Church Office, 617.354.0632.

DECEMBER 15 — Christmas Holiday Concert — Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra, 3:00 p.m., Church Sanctuary, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA. Save the date; details to follow. For further information, call the Church Office, 617.354.0632, or email office@htaac.org.

MICHIGAN

NOVEMBER 16 — The Knights of Vartan, Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge #6 and the Daughters of Vartan, Zabelle Otyag #12 will celebrate their respective 100th and 70th organization anniversaries. Featuring: Kevork Artinian and his All Star Band at St. Mary's Cultural Hall, 18100 Merriman Rd, Livonia. This is a fundraiser Dinner/Kef Dance to celebrate Knights and Daughters as well as a chance for future members to observe how our community puts our heritage on display. All proceeds to fund renovation of school gymnasium, Knights of Vartan #106, Elementary School, Yerevan, Armenia. For Reservations Contact: Laura Lucassian, (248) 376-3794, Cost \$75 per person, \$40 after 9:30 pm

NEW JERSEY

OCTOBER 25 — Banquet Honoring Dr. Taner Akcam Abajian Hall St. Leon complex Fair Lawn, NJ Sponsored by Knights & Daughters of Vartan- Under the Auspices of His Grace Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate. For Reservations please call Sona Manuelian 551-427-8763. \$125 p.p. early reservations recommended.

RHODE ISLAND

OCTOBER 20 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church, Providence Presents Meet With The Doctors - Questions & Answers. We invite everyone to avail themselves of this opportunity and "Meet with our Armenian Doctors" Dr. Herman Ayyvazyan Internal Medicine. Topic: New Trends in Primary Care Medicine. Ara Boghigian, Moderator. Sunday, 12:30 p.m., Hanoian Hall, 70 Jefferson St., Providence.

SEPTEMBER 20 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church, Providence will host a book presentation, "The World of Konstantin Petrossian" (English and Armenian), Published by Institute of Arts National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, and Composers Union of Armenia. Friday at 7 p.m., Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson street, Providence. Details to follow.

SEPTEMBER 22 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church, Providence Presents Meet With The Doctors - Questions & Answers. We invite everyone to avail themselves of this opportunity and "Meet with our Armenian Doctors" Dr. Martin Papazian, ear, nose and throat specialist. Steven Zarogian, Moderator. Sunday, 12:30 p.m., Hanoian Hall, 70 Jefferson St., Providence.

WASHINGTON, DC

SEPTEMBER 16-17 — Armenian Assembly of America's National Advocacy Conference and Gala will take place in Washington, D.C. for two days, which will include the Conference, Gala honoring Armenian American Congresswoman Jackie Speier, Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill, and a Congressional Reception celebrating U.S.-Armenia relations. Special room rates available at The Wharf InterContinental Hotel. Visit www.aimhye.com for tickets, sponsorships, special hotel room rates, and more information.



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Challenges to Armenia's Judicial Reforms

By Edmond Y. Azadian

One of the major factors which precipitated the Velvet Revolution in Armenia was the deep-rooted lawlessness which benefitted the oligarchic system.

People were sick and tired of the uneven application of the law, which often resulted in the loss of investment opportunities.

No investor, even with the best intentions, can have confidence in a country where his or her interests are not protected by the law.

Injustices forced many citizens to leave the country even when they had the work and income to support their families.

The Velvet Revolution came to reverse this state of affairs. Nikol Pashinyan won a tremendous mandate by the voters to bring about reforms and to place society on a course toward true democracy.

Although there is a long way to go, the rewards have already started to emerge. Donald Tusk, the head of the European Council, during his recent visit to Armenia, praised the strides of the country toward establishing democratic norms and assured the prime minister that the "EU welcomes the focus on creating independent, efficient and accountable judicial system. A solid judiciary is an essential element of a mature democracy and for economic and social development. Also, here the EU will continue to support with expertise and mobilize further resources."

In addition, Federica Mogherini, vice president of the European Commission and its foreign affairs leader, has pledged \$28 million in additional aid in the current year to build up infrastructures in Armenia.

Therefore, judicial reforms not only will enhance living conditions for the citizens but they will also attract resources from Europe.

The executive and legislative branches of the government have undergone dramatic changes, but efforts to reform the judi-

by the previous parliament is no longer legal, then that shakes the foundations of the legality of the prime minister himself, who was elected by that same body.

Pashinyan has his work cut out for him; he had assured the people that the Velvet Revolution would not lead to vendettas and today he has a hard time keeping his promises because the hatred and rage among the public are so intense against the representatives of the old regime.

At this point, no one is thinking about a truth and reconciliation commission to reduce polarization in the country. South Africa was able to spare further bloodshed and dissension through that action.

If you listen to Pashinyan's partisans, there is no chance for a compromise. The only solution they see is the resignation of Mr. Tovmasyan.

In a statement to the Azatutyun channel, the prime minister declared that the members of the Supreme Court "have acceded to their current positions through legal manipulations. The Armenia of 2019 deserves a Constitutional Court consistent with the pre-requisites of 2019. This issue is a political one and has to be resolved. I am referring to the seven members of the Constitutional Court, including its president, Hrayr Tovmasyan."

Answering the prime minister, a former member of the Supreme Court, Kim Balayan, said, "Mr. Pashinyan is not a lawyer and therefore he cannot use legal reasoning. He is a politician and has been making political statements. Before making political statements, we have to take care of the legal aspects of the issue, I think that we are at a dead end."

While the public is raging, Mr. Tovmasyan has taken further initiatives to complicate the situation and to extend the crisis to the European judicial institutions. He has referred the case of former President Robert Kocharyan to the European Court of Human Rights and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, seeking their legal verdict.

Mr. Kocharyan has been accused of "overthrowing the constitutional order" under Armenia's criminal code.

There is no question that Armenia direly needs judicial reforms. But after the takeover of the executive and legislative branches of government by Pashinyan's Social Contract party, fears have been arising that the control of the third branch of the government, namely the judiciary, may pave the way toward authoritarian rule. Some actions by the government further exacerbate those fears, such as the arrest warrant issued for a judge recently. Indeed, the Supreme Judicial Council of Armenia, satisfying a motion filed by the Prosecutor General's office, has opened a criminal case against

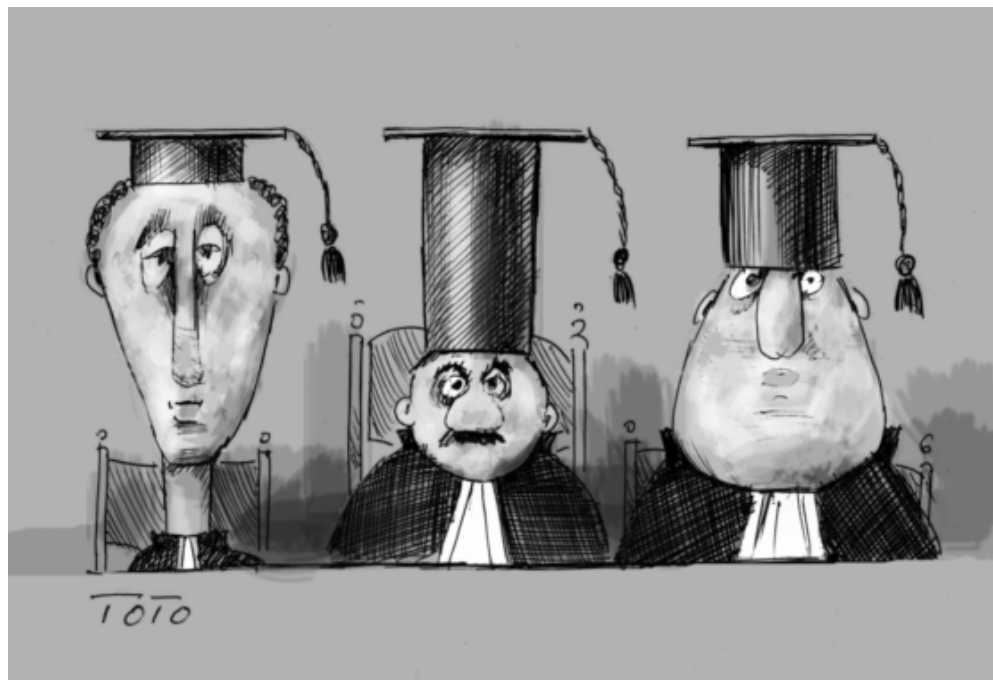
David Grigoryan, a judge at Yerevan's First Instance Court, who had released Kocharyan from pre-trial detention.

Despite the fact that Pashinyan still enjoys unprecedented popularity, seven political parties have taken the risk of airing their fears in a joint statement, which begins: "It is an absolute necessity to preserve the independence and freedom of legislative, executive and judicial branches to forestall the concentration of power in the hands of one party. That is a prelude toward authoritarian rule. Pressure exerted by political authorities on the courts and judges is inadmissible."

The statement must have jolted the ruling party, which has resorted to massive retaliation, through friendly media outlets. All the commentators reading from the same text are insisting that the parties are insignificant groups.

The public may ask why then such an overwhelming reaction was offered if those parties and their statements are so insignificant. After all, the Velvet Revolution took place to protect the rights of every citizen and political group to speak out without fear of reprisal.

Armenia needs and deserves judicial reform, which is one of the fundamental prerequisites of a democracy. But in today's polarized atmosphere, it may take longer to carry out those reforms which could be brought in a deliberate atmosphere where fear and political animosity have dissipated or toned down.



cial system has been hampered by the remnants of the former regime.

Prime Minister Pashinyan believed that he could break the stalemate through methods which he employed to come to power, namely mob action. Therefore, he ordered his supporters to block the entrances to the courts and to keep the judges from exercising their duties. But, he soon realized that resorting to such mob mentality was not a cure all and therefore stopped.

Today, there is a stand-off with the Constitutional Court, particularly with its president, Hrayr Tovmasyan.

In western democracies, when there is a change in an administration, that does not necessarily mean that the top judges in the land have to step down before the end of their terms. For example, in the US Supreme Court, the justices are appointed for life.

The Pashinyan administration has no legal means of unseating Tovmasyan and therefore it has resorted to the tactic of political pressure. Pashinyan's government and loyal press have been arguing that there is a constitutional crisis in the country and it has to be resolved through political action. Mr. Tovmasyan insists there is no such crisis.

The pro-government news outlets have been mobilized to convince the public that Hrayr Tovmasyan is a left-over relic from the previous regime and he has to go. They forward the argument that Tovmasyan was elected by the previous parliament, a double-edged sword that cuts both ways; if Tovmasyan's election

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EDITOR
Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR
Marc Mgrditchian

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:
Edmond Y. Azadian

CONTRIBUTORS:

Florence Avakian, Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian, Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, Philip Ketchian, Kevork Keushkerian, Harut Sassounian, Hagop Vartivarian, Naomi Zeytoonian

CORRESPONDENTS:

Armenia - Hagop Avedikian
Boston - Nancy Kalajian
Los Angeles - Taleen Babayan
Berlin - Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Contributing Photographers:
Jirair Hovsepiyan

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Baikar Association, Inc.

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

US Places Sanctions on Turkish Firm For its Corrupt Trade with Venezuela

In addition to US and European Union punitive actions against Turkey for various violations, the US Treasury Department imposed sanctions last week against a Turkish company “involved in a global corruption and money-laundering network directed by Venezuelan strongman Nicolas Maduro,” according to Aykan Erdemir, a former member of the Turkish parliament and senior fellow at the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

This corrupt relationship is the result of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s support for Maduro’s regime which could lead to more US sanctions against Turkish firms and officials.

Erdemir wrote that US Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control “designated Istanbul-based Mulberry Proje Yatirim for facilitating payments made as part of a ‘corruption network for the sale of [Venezuelan] gold in Turkey.’ Mulberry’s owner is an associate of Colombian national Alex Nain Saab Moran, who has laundered hundreds of millions of dollars for Maduro since 2009 by exploiting Venezuela’s food subsidy program, Local Committees for Supply and Production, or CLAP. Treasury also accused Mulberry of purchasing food in Turkey on behalf of Venezuelan clients and marking up prices

before selling it back to Venezuela. The [US Treasury] department condemned Saab and his associates for ‘profiting from starvation.’”

The State Department’s Special Representative for Venezuela Elliott Abrams stated last week, “Venezuela has to go to places willing to trade gold illegally – that’s Turkey and Iran.”

Earlier this year, Marshall Billingslea, US Treasury’s assistant secretary for terrorist financing, warned, “We are looking at the nature of Turkish-Venezuelan commercial activity, and if we assess a violation of our sanctions, we will obviously take action.” His warning came “shortly after a visit to Turkey by Tarek El-Aissami, Venezuela’s minister of industries and national production, who is known for his links to Iran and Hezbollah.” The US Treasury sanctioned El-Aissami in 2017 “for playing a significant role in international narcotics trafficking.”

Erdemir further reported that “Mulberry is just the tip of the Maduro regime’s illicit network in Turkey. Since 2017, with Erdogan’s encouragement, Venezuelan government associates have established numerous front and shell companies in Turkey.” According to Bloomberg, in January 2018, shortly after Venezuela’s President visited Turkey, an Istanbul-based mysterious Turkish firm [Sardes] sprang into action by importing \$41 million of gold from Venezuela. The following month, Sardes imported another \$100 million of Venezuelan gold. “By November, when President Donald Trump signed an executive order authorizing sanctions on Venezuelan gold – after sending an envoy to warn Turkey off the trade, Sardes had shuttled \$900 million of the precious metal out of the country. Not bad for a company with just \$1 million in capital, according to regulatory filings in Istanbul.”

Bloomberg added, “It’s not the first time that Turkey has positioned itself as a work-around for countries facing US sanctions, potentially undermining Washington’s efforts to isolate governments it considers hostile or corrupt. Ankara has often tested the boundaries of US tolerance, and the

alliance between the key NATO members is now essentially broken, according to two senior US officials.”

Erdemir indicated that US Treasury’s sanction against the Turkish firm is just the first step. “The Venezuelan government’s gold mining company, Minerven, established a joint gold venture called Mibiturven with the obscure Turkish company Marilyns Proje Yatirim, which shares an address with Mulberry. Similarly, Grupo Iveex Insaat, a tiny Turkish company tied to Maduro that has capital of just \$1,775 and no refineries, was responsible for eight percent of Venezuela’s oil exports in April 2019.”

Erdemir concluded: “Under Erdogan’s rule, Turkey has become a permissive jurisdiction for illicit finance and sanctions evasion. The Turkish president’s solidarity with sanctioned countries such as Venezuela and Iran is part of his overall pivot toward authoritarian and kleptocratic regimes and his challenge to the US-led liberal international order. Unless Washington goes after the remaining elements of the Maduro regime’s network in Turkey, Erdogan will see this inaction as a license for further transgressions involving not only Venezuela but other rogue regimes, as well.”

One has to wonder how is it that the US Treasury Department placed sanctions against a Turkish firm given the reluctance of President Trump to take any action against Turkey.

Could it be that President Trump was unaware of the Treasury’s anti-Turkish sanctions, being too busy with sending tweets against his political opponents and making racist comments about Black Members of Congress?

In a meeting with Republican US Senators last week, President Trump asked for more time before implementing Congressionally-mandated sanctions against Turkey for purchasing Russian S-400 missiles.

Any inaction by President Trump on legally-mandated sanctions on Turkey would serve to encourage President Erdogan to further undermine US and NATO interests. Congress should take decisive steps to force President Trump to implement severe sanctions against Turkey.

Velvety Artistic Representation at Venice Biennale

In May 2019, the Republic of Armenia presented “Revolutionary Sensorium” at what is perhaps the most prestigious international art exhibition of our era – La Biennale di Venezia. The Armenian Pavilion was inspired by the 2018 Velvet Revolution, a historical event that quickly became the subject of global media coverage and analyses, with particular attention attributed to its non-violent nature: not a single bullet was ever fired.

What lessons did we learn from the revolution, exactly?

First, it underscored the invaluable role of youth in leading resistance. The protests were almost childlike in nature. Following Serzh

By Tina Chakarian

Sargsyan’s official resignation, a group of teenagers brought back snow from the country’s mountainous terrain to Republic Square, only

to start a snowball fight in front of parliament. Hundreds of young men and women held signs denouncing Sargsyan, comparing him to Cheburashka – a Soviet cartoon character. The use of drones and modern technologies in the revolution were indicative of a movement led by a new generation of Armenians, tired of outdated politics and Soviet-era politicians.

Second, women were at the forefront of the groups involved in the formation of organized, anti-government protest. To quote an article in Open Caucasus Media “on top of consistently being involved in the grassroots-organizing of social movements, they [women] also make up the majority of Armenia’s journalists.” It is women who form the majority of Armenia’s NGOs and media, and who had been leading the resistance through their civil activism, decades before the revolution took place.

Last July, international art curator Ralph Rugoff announced the theme of the 2019 International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia. He named it “May You Live In Interesting Times,” an ode to the ancient Chinese curse. In December, the Economist named Armenia “Country of the Year.” The opening of La Biennale was to take place on May 9, 2019 – just two weeks following the one-year anniversary of the revolution. And so, we created Revolutionary Sensorium, a pavilion meant to recreate the events of April 2018 through video installations, artwork, and live performances.

Following my announcement regarding the theme of this year’s Armenian Pavilion, I was met with a recurring question which I had difficulty answering, “Can art really effectuate change?” Can Revolutionary Sensorium truly honor the decades of work on the part of activists, human rights defenders and journalists who have selflessly fought against the corruption and authoritarianism widespread in Armenia? After all, art cannot monitor free and fair

elections. It does not choose who governs and leads nor for how many terms. It will not implement transitional justice, nor will it hold trials to indict individuals responsible for widespread civil and political injustices.

What art can provide is a platform for dialogue. The rise of political art as genre and the incensing number of contemporary artists associating themselves as activists, means the historical distinctions between art and politics have begun to dissolve. National pavilions have a special role in the world of political art. They made their debut appearance at La Biennale di Venezia in 1907, and have since featured the greatest modern art hailing from every corner of the world. At La Biennale, there are no closed borders and territorial disputes. There is one exhibition, nearly one hundred participating countries, and an open space to communicate what message your country wants to send to the world, and to its people. Here, art is a space for full, uncensored discourse, accessible to all. It is a space where artists can make otherwise marginalized cultural narratives visible on a global scale. This is what Revolutionary Sensorium does so brilliantly.

Armenia is a country reborn. The next few years will be vital to its establishment as a democracy. Last December’s elections reflected poorly on that establishment, with few women elected to parliament. Women were an invaluable voice in the revolution, but are now ignored in the decision-making process. Revolutionary Sensorium is an immersive experience, yet its purpose is not solely to rekindle the emotions we felt during the revolution. It is a reminder of solidarity and unity in the midst of uncertainty. It is a reminder that peaceful protest can ignite change and that women and youth are indispensable to this process.

This is not Armenia’s first time participating in the Venice Biennale. In 2015, the Armenian Pavilion presented Armenity, which won the Golden Lion Award for Best National Pavilion. Its theme honored the centennial of the Armenian Genocide and was based on the premise of the formation of nation characterized by a dispersed identity. The artists featured in the pavilion were Armenians of the diaspora, descendants of the 1915 genocide survivors. The pavilion commemorated the darkest hour in Armenia’s history while shedding light on perhaps one of the most beautiful aspects of the Armenian nation – the Diaspora. In its portrayal of the diaspora as blossoming and flourishing in every corner of the world, borrowing from its adopted cultures while staying connected to an Armenian motherland, Armenity sent a message to the world – we are among you.

Armenia will have the chance to represent itself again at La Biennale di Venezia in 2021. It’s a chance for us to support our most talented artists in both the Armenian mainland and the diaspora, allowing them to showcase art inspired by our country’s past, present and future. This is not an easy initiative. To assemble a team of artists, curator, development director, and producers takes months to plan and of course, requires adequate funding and resources. It can be done, but it’s up to our commissioner and sponsors to see that the Armenian Pavilion can create something capable of actually effectuating the change we so often speak of.

(Tina Chakarian is an Armenian installation artist and business development specialist currently based in Yerevan. She is the development director of the Armenian Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia. For information on the exhibit visit Armenianpavilion2019.com.)

Why Universal Basic Income Is a Bad Idea Economically and Politically

By Daron Acemoglu

One should always be wary of simple solutions to complex problems, and universal basic income (UBI) is no exception. The fact that this answer to automation and globalization has been met with such enthusiasm indicates a breakdown not in the economic system, but in democratic politics and civic life.

Owing to the inadequacy of the social safety net in the United States and other developed countries, proposals for a UBI are gaining in popularity. The gap between the rich and everyone else has expanded significantly in recent years, and many fear that automation and globalization will widen it further.

To be sure, if the only choice is between mass impoverishment and a UBI, a UBI is preferable. Such a program would allow people to spend their money on whatever they value most. It would create a broad sense of ownership and a new constituency to shake up the system of big-money politics. Studies of conditional cash-transfer programs in developing economies have found that such policies can empower women and other marginalized groups.

But UBI is a flawed idea, not least because it would be prohibitively expensive unless accompanied by deep cuts to the rest of the safety net. In the U.S. (population: 327 million), a UBI of just \$1,000 per month would cost around \$4 trillion per year, which is close to the entire federal budget in 2018. Without major cost savings, U.S. federal tax revenue would have to be doubled, which would impose massive distortionary costs on the economy. And, no, a permanent UBI could not be financed with government debt or newly printed currency.

Sacrificing all other social programs for the sake of a UBI is a terrible idea. Such programs exist to address specific problems, such as the vulnerability of the elderly, children and disabled people. Imagine living in a society where children still go hungry, and where those with severe health conditions are deprived of adequate care, because all the tax revenue has gone to sending monthly checks to every citizen,

see INCOME, page 20



US Punishes Turkey by Canceling Sale of Jets

By Katie Rogers and Thomas Gibbons-Neff

WASHINGTON (*New York Times*) — The White House informed Turkey, a NATO ally, on Wednesday, July 17, that the United States would not sell it F-35 stealth fighter jets, in retaliation for the country’s purchase of Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile systems.

President Trump had said a day earlier that Turkey’s order for more than 100 American-made jets would be canceled. The S-400 system is one of Russia’s most advanced anti-aircraft weapons and can target and attack aircraft at an average range of roughly 155 miles, flying to an altitude of 82,000 feet.

“The F-35 cannot coexist with a Russian intelligence collection platform that will be used to learn about its advanced capabilities,” the White House said in a statement. “Accepting the S-400 undermines the commitments all NATO allies made to each other to move away from Russian systems.”

“This will have detrimental impacts on Turkish interoperability with the alliance,” the statement said.

Turkey accepted its first shipment last week of its \$2.5 billion purchase of Russian S-400 systems.

It was the latest twist in a long-running dispute

between the United States and Turkey over the purchase of Russian weapons, and it heightened the possibility of long-threatened American sanctions against a fellow member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Throughout the dispute, Trump has insisted that his personal relationship with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey is intact, despite Ankara’s pursuit of the Russian hardware.

Trump has in the past praised Erdogan as an ally in the fight against terrorism while ignoring the Turkish leader’s authoritarian crackdown on his own people. When Erdogan visited the White House in 2017, the two hailed the arrival of a new era of relations after the presidency of Barack Obama.

This week, Erdogan appeared ready to trade on that relationship by suggesting that Trump had the power to waive any sanctions that would arise over the purchase.

Asked on Tuesday whether he would indeed impose sanctions, Trump deflected by blaming the Obama administration for failing to sell the Patriot missile systems to Turkey. The Obama administration did, in fact, consider selling Patriot missiles to Turkey, but negotiations

were repeatedly scuttled.

Ellen M. Lord, the Defense Department’s under secretary for acquisition and sustainment, said the S-400 and its radar systems could compromise the F-35’s stealth capabilities and jeopardize the fighter jet’s long-term security.

The F-35 program has already cost billions of dollars more than what was budgeted for its production, which was delayed years longer

than expected.

By March, Lord said, Turkey will be fully removed from the F-35 program. Still, she said, the American military’s alliance with Turkey remained strong, and Pentagon officials sought to cast the F-35 dispute as a specific response to a specific incident.

The statement from Turkey’s Foreign Ministry, however, described it as “the lack of the will to resolve the issue in good faith.”

Hairenik Association Donates Rare Books, Periodicals to NAASR

WATERTOWN — Rare books from the 1800s published by Armenian presses around the world as well as precious bound volumes of Armenian newspapers from the early 1900s and other hard-to-find treasures comprise the notable donation in July from the Hairenik Association of Watertown to the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). This collection represents a significant addition to NAASR’s Mardigian Library and will become accessible to the public after NAASR’s new Vartan Gregorian Building opens on November 1, in Belmont.

George Aghjayan, a member of NAASR’s Board of Directors as well as chairman of the ARF Eastern Region Central Committee was key to making this donation possible. “I have been a member of NAASR for over 20 years and well understand NAASR’s importance and value to the Armenian community. As a library and beacon of Armenian Studies, NAASR is the natural place for this special collection of works,” said Aghjayan.

“These rare books and periodicals are an incredible addition to NAASR’s rare book library,” commented NAASR’s Director of Academic Affairs Marc Mamigonian. “We are truly fortunate to be on the receiving end of such a rich and diverse collection and now have the privilege and responsibility of taking care of these materials and making them accessible to researchers.”

Ani Babaian, NAASR’s library curator, spent many days this summer at the Hairenik with Mamigonian, examining the collection and selecting materials that would augment existing holdings. She has now started to catalogue this significant donation according to Library

of Congress standards for inclusion in NAASR’s catalogue of more than 29,000 rare volumes, accessible online at www.naasr.org.

The Hairenik’s donation contains 28 boxes of books dating from the 19th century to the present, mostly in Armenian (Classical, Western, and Eastern), English, Turkish, and Armeno-Turkish. The donation includes books published by Armenian presses around the world in places such as Boston, New York, Constantinople (Istanbul), Tehran, New Julfa, Tiflis (Tbilisi), Cairo, Geneva, Vienna, Athens, Yerevan, Echmiadzin, Venice, Jerusalem, Smyrna, Aleppo, Providence, Fresno, and more — nearly all of them new to NAASR’s Mardigian Library.

Of special significance are the 48 oversized, bound volumes of Armenian newspapers and periodicals from the early part of the 20th century, including *Azk* and *Paykar* published in Boston; *Pahak*, published in Providence, RI; *Razmik*, published in Philippopolis (Plovdiv), Bulgaria; *Hayastan*, published in Sofia, Bulgaria; *Azatamart*, published in Constantinople (Istanbul); *Husaber*, published in Cairo; *Horizon*, published in Tiflis (Tbilis); and others.

The donated collection is especially strong in titles published by and about the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutun) and other Armenian political groups, but also contains large numbers of historical and literary works, including titles by the 20th century women diasporan writers Rima Garone, Zaruhi Galemkearian, Ewgine Shahnazar, and Eliz Gampurean.

Another notable part of the collection are a number of pamphlets, most dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Famous International Lawyer Benjamin Ferencz Joins Aurora Prize

AURORA, from page 1

Ferencz was one of the investigators working to hold the Nazis accountable for the crimes committed during World War II and acted as chief prosecutor for the US Army at the Einsatzgruppen Trial held in Nuremberg, Germany.

After graduating from Harvard Law School in 1943, he joined the Army and was deployed to Europe where he participated in the liberation of the German concentration camps. That experience profoundly affected Ferencz, determining the course of his future life and career.

Ferencz also helped develop and implement rehabilitation programs for people persecuted by the Nazi regime and played a role in the negotiations that led to the Reparations Agreement between Israel and West Germany, signed in 1952. He has dedicated his life to

fighting for human rights and global peace, making it his mission to promote the establishment of an international rule of law.

“I’m very impressed with the work Aurora is doing around the globe. We have a shared goal to create a more humane society under the rule of law, and I was pleased to accept the invitation to join the Aurora Prize Selection Committee as its honorary co-chair. My experience has taught me that creating a world of support and compassion takes a great deal of time, commitment and effort, so I’m excited about being part of a community who has made this its mission,” said Ferencz.

The Selection Committee for the Aurora Prize includes three Nobel laureates, several former heads of state, high-level diplomats, and other public figures and influential members of the international community.

Why Universal Basic Income Is a Bad Idea Economically and Politically

INCOME, from page 19

millionaires and billionaires included.

Although UBI makes for a good slogan, it is a poorly designed policy. Basic economic theory implies that taxes on income are distortionary inasmuch as they discourage work and investment. Moreover, governments should avoid transfers to the same people from whom they collect revenue, but that is precisely what a UBI would do. In the U.S., for example, around three-quarters of households pay at least some federal income or payroll taxes, and an even greater share pays state taxes.

Besides, a more sensible policy is already on offer: a negative income tax, or what is sometimes called “guaranteed basic income.” Rather than giving everyone \$1,000 per month, a guaranteed income program would offer transfers only to individuals whose monthly income is below \$1,000, thereby coming in at a mere fraction of a UBI’s cost.

UBI advocates would argue that non-universal transfer programs are less attractive because voters will not embrace them as enthusiastically. But this criticism is unfounded. Guaranteed basic income is just as universal as national health insurance, which does not dispense monthly payments to everyone, but rather benefits anyone who has incurred medical costs. The same is true of programs that unconditionally guarantee support for basic needs, such as food for the hungry and unemployment insurance for the jobless. Such policies are widely popular in the countries that have them.

Finally, much of the enthusiasm for UBI is based on a misreading of employment trends in advanced economies.

Contrary to popular belief, there is no evidence that work as we know it will disappear any time soon. Automation and globalization are indeed restructuring work, eliminating certain types of jobs and increasing inequality. But rather than build a system where a large fraction of the population receives handouts, we should be adopting measures to encourage the creation of “middle class” jobs with good pay, while strengthening our ailing social safety net. UBI does none of this.

In the U.S., the top policy goals should be universal health care, more generous unemployment benefits, better-designed retraining programs and an expanded earned income tax credit (EITC). The EITC already functions like a guaranteed basic income for low-wage workers, costs far less than a UBI and directly encourages work.

On the business side, reducing the indirect costs and payroll taxes that employers pay for hiring workers would spur job creation, also at a pittance of the cost of a UBI. With higher minimum wages to prevent employers from freeriding on workers’ tax credits, an expanded EITC and reduced payroll taxes would go a long way toward creating worthwhile jobs at all levels of the income distribution.

Equally important, these solutions leverage democratic politics. The same cannot be said for a UBI, which is parachuted from above as a way of placating the discontented masses. It neither empowers nor even consults the people it aims to help. (Do workers who have lost their middle class jobs want government transfers or an opportunity to get another job?) As such, UBI proposals have all the hallmarks of the “bread and circuses” used by the Roman and

Byzantine Empires — handouts to defuse discontent and mollify the masses, rather than providing them with economic opportunities and political agency.

By contrast, the modern social welfare state that has served developed countries so well was not handed down by tycoons and politicians. It aimed to provide both social insurance and opportunities to people. And it was the result of democratic politics. Ordinary people made demands, complained, protested and got involved in policy making, and the political system responded.

The founding document of the British welfare state, the World War II-era Beveridge Report, was as much a response to political demands as to economic hardship. It sought to protect the disadvantaged and create opportunities, while encouraging civic engagement.

Many current social problems are rooted in our neglect of the democratic process. The solution isn’t to dribble out enough crumbs to keep people at home, distracted and otherwise pacified. Rather, we need to rejuvenate democratic politics, boost civic involvement and seek collective solutions. Only with a mobilized, politically active society can we build the institutions we need for shared prosperity in the future, while protecting the most disadvantaged among us.

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(Daron Acemoglu, a professor of economics at MIT, is co-author (with James A. Robinson) of “Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty” and “The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and the Fate of Liberty” (forthcoming from Penguin Press in September 2019).)