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## Nine Years On: No Solid Steps Taken In Hrant Dink Assassination

ISTANBUL (*Hurriyet*) – No solid legal steps have been taken in the nine years since Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was assassinated outside his office in Istanbul on Jan. 19, 2007, as thousands of people gathered to commemorate the late *Agos* editor-in-chief on the anniversary of his death.

The large crowd filed past the military museum in the Sisli district at around 1:30 p.m. on January 19 to walk toward the *Agos* office building to read a statement at the site where Dink was shot dead by triggerman Ogün Samast nine years ago.

Accompanied by water cannons and armored vehicles, police took intense security measures along the route of the march as well as around the office of weekly *Agos* in Sisi's Osmanbey neighborhood.

A poster reading “we are here *Ahparig*, with longing, anger and determination!” was placed on the outer walls of the office building. “*Ahparig*” means “brother” in Armenian.

In legal terms, only one lawsuit has been filed into Dink's assassination, while an ongoing investigation was launched separately against 26 public officials into negligence at the time of the killing. None of the 26 probed officials, including former and current police chiefs, have yet been tried.

Relatives and followers of the case have



A mass protest in Istanbul marks the ninth anniversary of Dink's assassination.

claimed government officials, police, military personnel and members of Turkey's National Intelligence Agency (MIT) played a role in Dink's murder by neglecting their duty to protect the journalist.

When Dink was murdered, the 26 officials were on duty in police departments in Istanbul, Ankara and the Black Sea province of Trabzon, from which Samast came to Istanbul before shooting the prominent journalist in the head nine years ago. Samast was sentenced to 22 years and 10 months in prison after being tried in a juvenile court as he was 17 at the time of the shooting death of Dink.

Samast's killing of Dink was incited by

Yasin Hayal, who in 2004 carried out a bomb attack with collaborator Erhan Tuncel targeting a McDonalds restaurant see DINK, page 4

### Judge Refuses to Move Trial of Russian Soldier Accused Of Gumri Massacre

GUMRI, Armenia (RFE/RL) – An Armenian judge has refused to move the trial of a Russian soldier accused of murdering an Armenian family of seven from a Russian military base to an Armenian court.

Judge Harutyun Movsisian announced his decision as the trial of Valery Permyakov resumed on January 18 in Gumri, where Russia's 102nd Military Base is located. Permyakov was once stationed at the base and is currently jailed there on desertion charges.

Six members of the Avetisian family, including a 2-year-old girl, were found dead on January 12, 2015, in their home in Gumri. All the victims were shot dead or stabbed to death, and a 6-month-old boy who was stabbed in the attack died of his injuries a week later.

see TRIAL, page 2

### Senior Obama Aide Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – President Serge Sargisian praised US involvement in the South Caucasus and assistance to Armenia on Thursday, January 14, when he met with a visiting senior official in the administration of President Barack Obama.

Charles Kupchan, senior director for European affairs at the US National

see OBAMA, page 16



President Serge Sargisian (R) meets with Charles Kupchan, senior director for European affairs at the US National Security Council.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Armenian MP Seeks to End Religious Info On Turkish IDs

ANKARA (Ermeni Haber Ajansi) – Turkish Parliament Deputy Garo Paylan, an ethnic Armenian in the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), proposed this week that the line declaring the religion of an individual be removed from Turkish identity cards.

Paylan spoke during a January session of the Turkish parliament. He declared that as a result of his card stating that he is Christian, he has experienced discrimination numerous times at the hands of state bodies.

According to the haberciniz.biz, Paylan declared, “They would look at my name and immediately turn the card and examine the field for religion, [stating] Christian. For this reason, on numerous occasions, I have experienced discriminatory behavior. A matter which should take one day to carry out for me takes one week or 10 days.”

Paylan also criticized the “identity code” used on the identity cards, saying that this perhaps was instituted by the Special Commission in the Young Turk period of the Ottoman Empire, and it was continued by the Republic of Turkey.

### Warlick Meets with UK Minister on Karabagh

LONDON (Armenpress) – The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group US Co-chairman James Warlick this week met in the UK Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Minister for Europe David Lidington for consultations related to the settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict.

The two discussed the activities of the Minsk Group, as well as the issue of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict settlement.

### Riga Visit by Armenia Delegation

RIGA, Latvia (Armenpress) – Vice President of the National Assembly and the head of the Armenia-Latvia Parliamentary Friendship Group Eduard Sharmazanov, who is on an official visit in the Republic of Latvia, visited Saint Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church in Riga, accompanied by Ambassador of Armenia to the Baltic States Ara Aivazian and the representatives of the Armenian community in Latvia.

Sharmazanov discussed with the representatives of the Armenian community the issues they are concerned about, as well as issues related to Armenia and the Armenian people.

He conferred honors from the National Assembly to representatives of the Armenian community who had been instrumental in Riga for organizing the city's Armenian Genocide centennial events.

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### Picasso or Bust

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Archbishop Barsamian speaking

### DC Community Bids Farewell to Ambassador Tigran Sargsyan

WASHINGTON – Friends and community members paid tribute to the outgoing Armenian Ambassador to the US Tirgran Sargsyan and his family at the farewell reception at St. Mary Armenian Church on January 14.

Sargsyan will assume the chairmanship of the Eurasian Economic Commission Board in Moscow, Russia on February 1.

The farewell reception was presided over and attended by the Primate, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, and sponsored by St. Mary Parish Council. Also in attendance were Permanent Representative of the Republic of Karabagh in Washington Robert Avetisyan, the entire staff of the Armenian Embassy in Washington, Diocesan Legate Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Executive Director of Armenian Assembly Bryan Ardouny, Executive Director of Armenian National Committee Aram Hamparian and former US Ambassador to Armenia Michael Lemmon and his wife. Representing the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party were District Committee of US and Canada member Kevork Marashlian and Board member of ADL Armenia Varaztad Avoyan.

In his speech, Barsamian emphasized Sargsyan's dedication to the Armenian nation which he has served as president of the Council of the Araratian Diocese of see FAREWELL, page 16



## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Violinist Khachatryan Presented with Honored Artist Title

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenian Minister of Culture Hasmik Poghosyan awarded renowned violinist Sergey Khachatryan with the republic's honored artist title. The awarding ceremony took place on January 15 after the opening concert of the 7th Armenian Composing Art Festival in which the prominent violinist participated.

Khachatryan lives in Germany. Born in Yerevan, Armenia, Khachatryan won the VIII International Jean Sibelius Competition in Helsinki in 2000, becoming the youngest-ever winner in the history of the competition.

In 2005 he claimed first prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels. In recent seasons, he has performed with the Bamberger Symphoniker (Herbert Blomstedt and Jonathan Nott), Munich Philharmonic (James Gaffigan), Swedish Radio Symphony (Valcuha), Mariinsky Orchestra (Valery Gergiev) and Orchestre de Paris (Andris Nelsons and Gianandrea Noseda).

He has also collaborated with the Berliner Philharmoniker, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, London Symphony, London Philharmonic and Philharmonia Orchestra, among others.

## Deadly Swine Flu Hits Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Kazakhstan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenian officials say an outbreak of the H1N1 swine flu virus has killed 16 people in the country in the last two months.

Health Minister Armen Muradian said on January 15 that a 61-year-old woman died from the H1N1 virus on January 18, raising the death toll from the outbreak to 16.

According to Muradian, 92 patients with swine flu symptoms are currently being treated in emergency units at several medical institutions. He said 11 of them are in very serious condition.

Meanwhile, Education and Science Minister Armen Ashotian said that due to the outbreak, a winter break for secondary schools across the country had been prolonged by one week until January 25.

Health Ministry spokeswoman Anahit Haytayan said on January 14 that the deaths did not amount to an epidemic.

The deadly swine flu has caused deaths in Russia and other former Soviet republics.

Health officials in Russia's second-largest city, St. Petersburg, said on January 19 that five local residents died of the H1N1 virus, adding that more than 310 individuals had been hospitalized with symptoms of the disease.

Several other reports of deaths in Russia due to swine flu have also been reported.

The Ukrainian Health Ministry confirmed on January 19 that H1N1 has killed 51 people.

## ICRC Representatives Visit Armenian POW in Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited Armenian prisoner of war Arsen Bagdasaryan on January 13 in Azerbaijan.

"During the visit information about his family was conveyed to the prisoner, and he conveyed some information to his family," Communication Officer of the ICRC Mission in Nagorno Karabagh, Eteri Musayelyan, reported.

"The visit was conducted in line with the standard ICRC procedures. According to its mandate, the ICRC visits detainees to monitor their treatment and conditions of detention and help to ensure that they are able to maintain contact with their families," she informed.

Bagdasaryan was taken by Azeri forces on December 26, 2015.

# Inside the World's Saddest Zoo: Starving Bears And Lions Abandoned by Armenian Oligarch

By Allan Hall

GUMRI (DailyMail.com) – Banging their heads against the wall in despair and peering forlornly through the bars of their godforsaken cages, these are the inmates of the world's saddest zoo. The planet's worst animal park is probably also its smallest. Just three lions, two bears and two guinea pigs live out their boring, hunger-filled days in tiny cages, displaying all the signs of creatures slowly being driven mad by their unnatural existence. They are the residue of a billionaire's whim, bought as entertainment by an Armenian oligarch to underwrite his ego and parade before his friends in themed jungle parties.

The parties, along with the cash to care for the poor beasts, vanished at the same time as their owner. Now the animals scrape along on a starvation diet of slaughterhouse scraps and scavenged woodland plants brought to them by an elderly couple fighting hard to keep them alive.

The zoo is in the Armenian town of Gumri – the place where the family of Armenian-American reality stars the



A bear stares forlornly through the bars of its tiny cage in the desperate hope food may eventually come its way.

Kardashians hails from – but it has been over two years since it saw a paying guest.

The ragged, hungry and bewildered tenants – lioness Mary, seven, and her cubs Geeta, four, and Zita, two, along with bears Masha, four, and Grisha, nine – are cared for by an elderly couple who simply stumbled upon them one day. The civic authorities refuse to take on



One of the zoo lions bangs his head against his cage wall, displaying all the signs of a creature being driven mad by its unnatural existence.

any responsibility for them and the whereabouts of their former owner is unknown.

It is left to a dirt-poor pair of pensioners named Hovhannes and Alvina Madoyan to care for them. Hovhannes said: "I lost my job. I had nothing; my wife and I were walking by the deserted zoo when we heard these terrible cries of animals in torment. We came in to see the lioness and her cub literally frothing at the mouths from lack of water."

He continued, "My wife and I can't bear to see God's creatures in pain. We fetched water from them and then organized some meat from a local slaughterman. That is how we scrape by, feeding them what we can muster. It is the same for the bears. We moved into an old shed near the lion enclosure to be near to them five months ago." He added: "They are sad and lonely and, when they can be bothered, pace up and down their cages, showing the signs of being driven mad by boredom and inactivity. We cannot get anyone to help them. The previous owner was stuck in some kind of feud with local mobsters, the government doesn't want to get involved and it is the animals who suffer."

His wife Alvina went on: "I get up every morning and go into the woods to find food for the bears, but it is never enough. If I am lucky, some people donate some oats and cereal, which we can make into a kind of porridge for them...Last week, we were lucky to have been given the body of a baby foal to feed to the lions. It is not often they get a feast that big."

Once in a while, a vet might pop in to examine the animals from outside the cages. But no one has any money to pay for a proper examination.

Sussex-based animal welfare group International Animal Rescue is trying to raise awareness of the zoo's plight in the hope action will be taken by the authorities in Armenia, but the group is not raising funds itself. The group, which has animal sanctuaries for endangered orangutans in Borneo, is concerned that a harsh winter might prove lethal for the lion cubs. A spokesman said: "The fate of these animals should not be dependent on the philanthropy of an elderly couple who barely have enough for themselves. They endure in terrible conditions. We need to try to get enough money for them to be moved to a place where they can be better cared for."

For more information on the rescue effort or to enquire about donating, please email [ecocoalitionarmenia@gmail.com](mailto:ecocoalitionarmenia@gmail.com).

## Judge Refuses to Move Trial of Soldier Accused Of Gumri Massacre

TRIAL, from page 1

Permyakov, who was 18 at the time of the killings, was later detained near Armenia's border with Turkey after fleeing the Russian base.

The slayings led to numerous – and sometimes violent – rallies in Gumri and Yerevan in which participants protested Russia's military presence in the country and called for Permyakov to be tried in Armenian courts rather than by Russian military judges.

In August, a Russian military court found Permyakov guilty of desertion and sentenced him to 10 years in jail. The soldier pleaded guilty to charges of desertion with weapons, stealing firearms and ammunition, and illegally carrying weapons.

However, the trial did not address the killings themselves, and Permyakov was handed to Armenian officials to face murder charges.

Lawyers for the victims asked Judge Movsisian on January 18 to allow the location of the civilian trial to be moved to a regular Armenian court, but the judge rejected their request.

Movsisian also rejected the lawyers' call to recuse himself from the case and

adjourned the trial until January 22.

The lawyers had accused Movsisian of being under outside influence.

Permyakov, who is being defended by a court-appointed lawyer, was directly asked twice if he would agree to the trial being moved outside the Russian base.

At first, Permyakov said the location of the trial made no difference to him. But when asked a second time, he said he felt safer on the premises of the Russian base.

According to Armenian and Russian reports, Permyakov told military officials that he broke into the Avetisians' home to steal money to return to Russia because he couldn't bear being in the army anymore.

Commemorations were held for the Avetisian family in Gumri last week, on the anniversary of the slayings. Hundreds of people visited the victims' graves and attended a special liturgy at the city's central church on January 12.

Russia maintains a garrison of around 3,000 soldiers at the 102nd Military Base, located some 120 kilometers northwest of Yerevan.

Founded in 1941, the facility in

Gumri survived the Soviet Union's demise before receiving its current name – the 102nd Military Base – along with a 25-year lease, in the mid-1990s.

In past years, a number of violent incidents related to the Russian military presence have been recorded.

In 1999, two drunk Russian officers opened fire on shoppers at a local market in Gumri, killing two people and injuring dozens more. In 2013, unattended explosive devices left on the 102nd's firing range killed two teenagers.

In November, a 31-year-old Armenian stationed with Russian border guards was found hanged in the village of Gusanagukh, in the northern Shirak region.

In March, a 26-year-old Armenian national serving with Russian border guards was found hanged in Gumri.

Despite the incidents, many Armenians consider the Russian presence key to Armenia's security in the face of perceived threats from Turkey and Azerbaijan. Citizens in Gumri note that the 102nd base is an important local employer.



## INTERNATIONAL

# Armenia Hails Lifting Of Iran Sanctions

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) – Armenia welcomed over the weekend the lifting of Western economic sanctions against Iran, saying that the development bodes well for its closer commercial ties with the Islamic Republic.

The United States and the European Union announced the end of the crippling sanctions on Saturday after United Nations nuclear watchdog certified Tehran's initial compliance with a July 2015 agreement with world powers over the Iranian nuclear program.

"We welcome the start of the implementation of the agreement on Iran's nuclear program and the lifting of the sanctions against Iran," Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian said in a statement. "Armenia is interested in deepening mutually beneficial cooperation with friendly Iran."

The Armenian government reacted just as positively to the announcement of the landmark nuclear deal this summer. Senior government officials said at the time that the deal will speed up the implementation of Armenian-Iranian energy projects regarded as strategically important by Yerevan.

In August, the two neighboring states reached a final agreement on the construction of a new power transmission line which is due to significantly boost exports of Armenian electricity to Iran. The latter pays for that electricity with natural gas delivered to Armenia through a presently underused pipeline.

Iranian gas supplies should also increase significantly as a result of the \$117 million project mainly financed by the Iranian government. Work on the transmission line reportedly began later in 2015 and is due to be completed by 2018.

Energy and Natural Minister Yervand Zakharian said in July that greater oil revenues and the unfreezing of its assets in the US and the EU should also enable Iran to finance the construction of a major hydroelectric plant on the Arax River marking the Armenian-Iranian border. The \$350 million project has for years been stalled due to a lack of funding and serious restrictions on Armenian banking operations with Iran.

Iran's First Vice-President Eshaq

Jahangiri discussed these and other joint projects with Armenian leaders during an official visit to Yerevan in October. Jahangiri told them that the Iranian side is ready to boost Armenian-Iranian relations "without any limitations."

And late last month Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian visited Armenia to chair, together with Zakharian, a regular session of an Armenian-Iranian intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation. Zakharian said at the meeting that the upcoming sanction relief has already created a "favorable environment" for strengthening bilateral relations.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Eduard Nalbandian issued a statement: "We hail the launch of the implementation of the agreements reached over Iran's nuclear program and the lifting of the sanctions. Armenia is interested in deepening mutually beneficial cooperation with friendly Iran".

In news directly affected by lifting the sanctions, the Georgian government and Russia's gas monopoly Gazprom are discussing new terms of natural gas transit through Georgia to Armenia. The Georgian opposition and civil movements are holding protest actions in this connection, considering that the government in Tbilisi should not conduct negotiations with a country that has occupied parts of the territory of Georgia (Tbilisi considers its breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be under Russian occupation since the 2008 Russo-Georgian war).

However, the Georgian government did not fully disclose the essence of the negotiations, stating only about some details. For example, yesterday Georgia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy Kakha Kalalze said

that Russia suggests paying for the transit to Armenia with money and not with 10 percent of the transited gas as it does now. Besides, he said that Gazprom offers natural gas to Georgia at a lower price than the Azerbaijani state oil company, SOCAR.

The current struggle for the natural



Yervand Zakharian

gas markets of Georgia and Armenia began in view of Iran's intention to enter the market with less expensive gas. Judging by the statements of experts, Iran offers gas supplies to Armenia at a much lower price than Gazprom. At the same time, Georgia has to change its relationship with Gazprom after the enforcement of this country's Association Agreement and related Free Trade Area deal with the European Union, and it is possible that Georgia will refuse to transit Russian gas to Armenia at all. Then the Armenian market will be taken over by Iran and Russia's Gazprom, apparently, is now trying to keep at least the Georgian market.

Russia watchers often describe Gazprom as Moscow's political stick, and many European countries, including Ukraine, have announced their intention not to buy natural gas from Russia anymore in order to neutralize Moscow's political influence. It is possible that the same process has begun also in the Caucasus, where another major player, Iran, is likely to appear soon.

(Armenpress, ArmeniaNow and RFE/RL contributed to this report. See related editorial on page 14.)

## Swaziland Church Ownership Transferred to Echmiadzin

MBABAN, Swaziland (Armenpress) – On January 13, King Msvati III of Swaziland officially transferred the Holy Resurrection Armenian Chapel and the lands pertaining to the chapel to the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin.

The Diaspora Ministry of Armenia

later, the Armenian chapel of Swaziland truly became an Armenian chapel and one that will legally pertain to the Mother See from now on.

The Armenian Church in the distant African kingdom was constructed in 1989, thanks to Grigor Derbelyan.

the Armenian University of Cairo, for 12 years, Derbelyan worked in Khartum (Sudan) where there was quite a large Armenian community. Later, he settled in Swaziland where, according to him, he discovered a wonderful place called Pine Valley, which is not far from Mbaban, the capital of Swaziland. Seeing the place, Grigor decided that it is here where he wants to spend the rest of his life and die. In the center of Pine Valley, the landscape of which reminded him of Armenia, Grigor purchased an 11-acre plot, built a small Armenian chapel and planted 1,770 pine and fir trees. A small river flows aside the chapel.

Construction of the church was launched in 1985 and ended in 1989. About 60 people made contributions for construction of the chapel, including Olivetti Company, which hired Grigor for 12 years. The small church has two cupolas. Local construction materials were used to build the chapel. Interestingly, the part in the back of the chapel leans on a large stone that serves as an altar, like the Geghard Church in Armenia. Today, there is a small Armenian community of eight members in the small African Kingdom. The Armenians of the neighboring South African Republic help the Armenians of Swaziland care for the chapel and the lands pertaining to the chapel.



The Holy Resurrection Church in Swaziland

reported that a year ago, representatives of the local Armenian community submitted to King Msvati III of Swaziland a petition with the request to transfer the Holy Resurrection Church to the Holy See of Echmiadzin. A year

Derbelyan, citizen of Swaziland, was born in 1914 in Aintab. During the Armenian Genocide, his mother, with her 20-day-old son, reached her husband in Cairo by foot and died a few months later. Finishing his studies at

## International News

### Missile Attack Damages Armenian Church

ALEPPO (PanArmenian.net) – Militant groups on Sunday, January 17 launched a missile attack on several districts of Aleppo, Syria, also damaging the Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church, *Kantsasar* newspaper said in a Facebook post. No casualties were reported.

At least 4 Armenians were killed in the Islamic State-authored blasts in a Christian neighborhood of the Syrian city of Qamishli, Ermenihaber.am reports. According to Turkey-based Armenian newspaper Agos, the attack took place in a restaurant on December 30, killing 16 Christian civilians and severely wounding at least 35.

The bombs went off in the city center, near a security point run by government troops, said the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which relies on a network of activists and other sources inside Syria. It said the death toll rose to 18 after two more people died of their wounds. Syrian SANA's toll, however, remained at 16.

### Amal Clooney to Defend Azeri Journalist at ECHR

STRASBOURG (RFE/RL) – Radio Liberty Azerbaijani Service has confirmed that human rights lawyer Amal Clooney has offered to take the case of jailed Azeri journalist Khadija Ismayilova to the European Court of Human Rights.

Ismayilova, an RFE/RL contributor, and her lawyer are said to be considering Clooney's offer. Clooney has taken several prominent cases in recent years in such countries as Egypt, Armenia and the Maldives, defending people imprisoned on charges often seen by human rights groups as politically motivated.

Ismayilova was sentenced in September 2015 to 7.5 years in prison on charges of avoiding taxes and abusing her official position. Her case is widely viewed as trumped up in retaliation for her reports linking members of President Ilham Aliyev's family to massive business and real estate holdings.

### Turkish FM Links Ties With Armenia to Karabagh Settlement

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations is impossible without the settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on January 15.

In response to a question on relations with neighboring countries, Cavusoglu said Armenia has "occupied" 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory, *Haberler* reported.

According to Cavusoglu, the Nagorno Karabagh conflict concerns Turkey too.

Armenia's Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharyan said earlier that President Ilham Aliyev's remarks, suggesting that the meeting with his Armenian counterpart was a "formality," show the Azeri authorities' attitude toward negotiations.

### More than 7,000 Christians Killed in 2015 for Beliefs

LONDON (Armenpress) – A report in the British-based *Christian Today* indicates that in 2015, according to human rights activists, more than 7,000 Christians were killed simply for their faith.

That figure is 3,000 more than the previous year.

The January 14 story includes research from Open Doors international human rights organization. In addition, 2,300 churches were attacked or razed.

North Korea remains on top of the list as the worst place to be a Christian according to Open Doors, with 70,000 Christians estimated to be held in brutal labor camps. Elsewhere, ISIS ongoing brutality means Iraq has replaced Somalia as the second most dangerous place to be a Christian. Eritrea comes in at number three and, according to Open Doors, is "nicknamed the 'North Korea of Africa' due to high levels of dictatorial paranoia."



## INTERNATIONAL

## EU Committed to Peaceful Settlement of Nagorno Karabagh Conflict

BRUSSELS (PanArmenian.net) — The Cooperation Council between the European Union (EU) and Armenia held its 16th meeting on January 18. The EU was represented by Bert Koenders, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, acting as head of the European Union delegation on behalf of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, and by Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. The Armenian delegation was led by Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian, acting this year as the Chair of the Cooperation Council.

The European Union and Armenia reconfirmed their joint commitment to enhance and deepen their cooperation in all areas possible and compatible with Armenia's new international obligations deriving from its accession to the Eurasian Economic Union. At the session, the parties discussed steps towards the further development of Armenia-EU ties, as well as issues concerning bilateral dialogue, human rights reforms and EU assistance to Armenia.

"2015 was a unique year in terms of Armenia-EU cooperation, with the launch of negotiations on a new framework agreement marking a new page for both of us," Nalbandian said in his opening remarks. "We are confident the new agreement will reflect the extent and depth of bilateral relations, paving the way for mutually beneficial cooperation."

Thanking the EU for its support over many years, the Armenian foreign policy chief hailed the recent EU-Armenia agreement on visa facilitation, further expressing hope that the deal would lead to the abolition of visa requirements.

Also, the Armenian delegations dwelled upon their government's economic policy and the reforms in the judicial sector, while the Foreign Minister presented the events organized in commemoration of the Genocide centennial.

Nalbandian introduced the latest developments in the settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict, dwelling upon the escalation of situation on the contact line with Azerbaijan and Armenian-Azeri border due to Baku's destructive policy.

Both sides welcomed the launch of negotiations and provided further political guidance and impetus as regards the future EU-Armenia Agreement, meant to replace the current outdated Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and to reset their relations within the wider framework of the reviewed European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership.

The Cooperation Council reviewed recent political, economic and social reforms in Armenia. The EU took note of progress achieved in implementing these reforms and of Armenia's commitment to continue on this positive trajectory, while at the same time encouraging Armenia to accelerate reforms in specific areas, notably democracy and the rule of law, anti-corruption, human rights and fundamental freedoms, constitutional and judicial reforms. Particular attention was drawn to the need for reform of the electoral system, to the need to appropriately implement the new constitution and assure media freedom, as well as to the important role of civil society.

The Cooperation Council also addressed regional issues of common interest, including

the prospects for the resolution of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict. On the latter, the EU reaffirmed that the status quo is unsustainable and that the peaceful resolution of this conflict remains a priority issue for the EU. The security situation along the line of contact and the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan is a matter of serious concern. The EU reiterated its call for restraint and further engagement in the OSCE-led negotiation efforts. Moreover, the EU reiterated its support to the negotiations mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs aimed at settling the conflict. It encouraged further dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan, including at the level of Presidents and welcomed the summit held on the initiative of the Co-chairs in Switzerland on December 19, 2015, which provided an important opportunity for exchanges on the way ahead. Furthermore, the EU reiterated its willingness to support peace-building activities and its readiness to provide reconstruction and rehabilitation support to the regions affected by the conflict, once a peace deal is struck.

## ISIL Issues Rules for Sex Slavery in 'Caliphate'

LONDON (Reuters) — A fatwa from Islamic State (ISIL or ISIS) theologians says father and son cannot share a sex slave, among other regulations.

Islamic State theologians have issued an extremely detailed ruling on when "owners" of women enslaved by the extremist group can have sex with them, in an apparent effort to curb what they called violations in the treatment of captured females.

The ruling or fatwa has the force of law and

In an April report, Human Rights Watch interviewed 20 female escapees who recounted how ISIL fighters separated young women and girls from men and boys and older women. They were moved "in an organized and methodical fashion to various places in Iraq and Syria." They were then sold or given as gifts and repeatedly raped or subjected to sexual violence.

Displaced people from the minority Yazidi sect, who fled the violence in the Iraqi town of Sinjar, march in a demonstration at the Iraqi

Princeton University, Cole Bunzel, who has reviewed many of the group's writings, said the fatwa went beyond what has previously been published by the militants on how to treat female slaves.

"It reveals the actual concerns of ISIL slave owners," he said in an email.

Still, he cautioned that not "everything dealt with in the fatwa is indicative of a relevant violation. It doesn't mean father and son were necessarily sharing a girl. They're at least being 'warned' not to. But I bet some of these violations were being committed."

The fatwa also instructs owners of female slaves to "show compassion towards her, be kind to her, not humiliate her, and not assign her work she is unable to perform." An owner should also not sell her to an individual whom he knows will mistreat her.

Prof. Abdel Fattah Alawari, dean of Islamic

Theology at Al-Azhar University, a 1,000-year-old Egyptian centre for Islamic learning, said ISIL "has nothing to do with Islam" and was deliberately misreading centuries-old verses and sayings that were originally designed to end, rather than encourage, slavery.

"Islam preaches freedom to slaves, not slavery. Slavery was the status quo when Islam came around," he said. "Judaism, Christianity, Greek, Roman, and Persian civilizations all practiced it and took the females of their enemies as sex slaves. So Islam found this abhorrent practice and worked to gradually remove it."

In September 2014 more than 120 Islamic scholars from around the world issued an open letter to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi refuting the group's religious arguments to justify many of its actions. The scholars noted that the "reintroduction of slavery is forbidden in Islam."



Yazidi women forced out of Iraq

appears to go beyond ISIL's previous known rulings on slavery, a leading ISIL scholar said. It sheds new light on how the group is trying to reinterpret centuries-old teachings to justify the rape of women in the swaths of Syria and Iraq under its control.

The fatwa was among a huge trove of documents captured by US special operations forces during a raid targeting a top ISIL official in Syria in May.

Among the fatwa's injunctions are bans on a father and son having sex with the same female slave, and the owner of a mother and daughter having sex with both. Joint owners of a female captive are similarly enjoined from intercourse because she is viewed as "part of a joint ownership."

The United Nations and human rights groups have accused ISIL of the systematic abduction and rape of thousands of women and girls as young as 12, especially members of the Yazidi minority in northern Iraq. Many have been given to fighters as a reward or sold as sex slaves.

Far from trying to conceal the practice, ISIL has boasted about it and established a department of "war spoils" to manage slavery.

Turkish border

Fatwa Number 64, dated January 29, 2015, and issued by ISIL's Committee of Research and Fatwas, appears to codify sexual relations between ISIL fighters and their female captives for the first time, going further than a pamphlet issued by the group in 2014 on how to treat slaves.

The fatwa starts with a question: "Some of the brothers have committed violations in the matter of the treatment of the female slaves. These violations are not permitted by Sharia law because these rules have not been dealt with in ages. Are there any warnings pertaining to this matter?"

It then lists 15 injunctions, which in some instances go into explicit detail. For example: "If the owner of a female captive, who has a daughter suitable for intercourse, has sexual relations with the latter, he is not permitted to have intercourse with her mother and she is permanently off limits to him. Should he have intercourse with her mother then he is not permitted to have intercourse with her daughter and she is to be off limits to him."

ISIL's rape of female captives has been well documented, but a leading ISIL expert at

## Nine Years On: No Solid Steps Taken In Hrant Dink Assassination

DINK, from page 1

in Trabzon on the grounds that it was selling food during the holy month of Ramadan.

Hayal, who like Tuncel is a former member of a far-right political party and a right-wing nationalist youth group, was sentenced to life in prison for inciting Dink's murder. Tuncel had been appointed as an Assistant Intelligence Officer at the Trabzon Police Department and informed police a year before Dink's murder that Hayal had been planning to murder him. This information was then conveyed to the three police departments in Istanbul.

The investigation launched into the negligence of public officials at the time of Dink's murder is still ongoing, with 26 current and former police officers stated as suspects in the indictment. The indictment prepared by Gökalp Kökçü, an Istanbul prosecutor who has also been in charge of terrorism-related investigations, was approved by the Istanbul 14th Court for Serious Crimes after it was presented on December 9, 2015.

However, Kökçü was appointed to a department dealing with non-terrorism-related criminal activities as part of his job rotation system within the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, meaning that he was not able to head the investigation into the negligence of public officials in Dink's murder.

The Istanbul Chief Prosecutor's Office had returned the indictment to Kökçü in early November last year, arguing that "evidence that some of the suspects committed 'deliberate murder' could not be proven."

Lawyers representing the Dink family reacted against the indictment returned to Kökçü, which meant that cases will likely not be opened against the suspects.

Hakan Bakircioglu, a Dink family lawyer, said on November 4 last year that not opening a case against former police chiefs Ahmet Ihan Güler, Celalettin Cerrah, Re at Altay, Engin Dinç and other suspects, would exclude their integral responsibility in Dink's murder.

Recalling the first two versions of the indictment, the latest one drafted in late October last year, Bakircioglu said the two indictments charged former police chiefs Ali Fuat Yilmazer, Ramazan Akyürek, Tamer Bülent Demirel and Osman Gübel each with "deliberate murder," Engin Dinç, Re at Altay and Ahmet Ihan Güler each with "deliberate murder with negligence," and Sabri Uzun and Celalettin Cerrah each with "malpractice on public duty."

"Despite resistance and barriers in front of the interrogation and investigation of public servants who took part in Dink's murder, they were interrogated and investigated by the prosecutor [in charge of the case]," Bakircioglu said.

# Community News

## Armenian Business Network Provides Career Help

Presents Career Day in Cambridge, Mass. February 20

By **Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The Armenian Business Network (ABN) is a relatively new Armenian group based in Boston, Massachusetts. Founded in 2011, it has grown quickly and has close to 10,000 members now. It provides free mentoring and career advice to any Armenian who needs it. ABN is organizing a major career counseling event at the Microsoft New England Research and Development Center (NERD) in Cambridge on February 20 for college students and young adults.

Jack Antounian is the founder of the group. He said, "The idea started as we were talking with friends about getting the Armenian youth

involved, and helping them with their career paths. It stems back to my background. When I came to this country in 1976 [from Lebanon], I didn't have a mentor and I learned things the hard way, concerning school and career selections. It was all trial and error."



Armenian Business Network founder Jack Antounian

With a background in engineering, Antounian eventually achieved his career goals. He led various high-tech manufacturing companies and supply chains, and currently is vice president of Operations at Revolabs Inc. a wholly-owned subsidiary of Yamaha Corporation and premier provider of audio solutions for unified communications, enterprise collaboration, and professional audio applications across a wide range of markets.

Antounian said, "If you had a mentor, it would be a matter of selection instead of going into the unknown. If you secure a position in a well-established company or group, that can act as a springboard in your career, but that means that you have to have connections and contacts. Some of us are fortunate to have them but others don't."

ABN, he continued, helps Armenians "gain access to people's knowledge, skill and connections. There is a level of trust that you need to build but ultimately the idea is to give and support without any expectations."

Even before establishing ABN, Antounian tried to help some of his friends' children by providing career advice and contacts through his professional network, and it worked. He said, "I thought, if that works, why not get others involved and help more kids."

It started with helping college graduates secure positions out of school, either internships or jobs, but the economic downturn led to many professionals losing their jobs, and needing help to find new positions, while small businesses faced grave challenges too. They could use a boost with consultancy ideas, and guidance on better marketing and business management.

Aside from personal and business assistance and development, ABN tries to support various endeavors of the Armenian community.

To help its broad constituency, ABN organizes various types of events and programs. It prepares workshops in order to help small see NETWORK, page 7



Children in the renovated classroom

## Paros Renovates Nerkin Karmir Aghpyur Village Elementary School

BERKELEY, Calif. — Thanks to a \$30,000 donation from Mike and Patricia Starzer of Highlands Ranch, Colo., children attending elementary school in the isolated border village of Nerkin Karmir Aghpyur now attend classes in a newly renovated wing of their school.

"This is the fourth project we have completed in this village," said Peter Abajian, Paros Foundation's executive director. "Three years ago, we began our work here by renovating the medical center. Then our efforts turned to the village's kindergarten that was renovated the following year. We also began implementing our Agribusiness on the Border project in this village; with six families receiving economic assistance to help grow their home-based businesses and improve the conditions for their families. We hope that this strategic approach to village development significantly improves the lives of these villagers."

The village of Nerkin Karmir Aghpyur is an isolated border village in Armenia's northeast Tavush province. 1,380 residents are living under the constant threat of cross border sniper fire from Azerbaijan. The village school was damaged during the war with Azerbaijan. While portions of the school have been partially renovated, the wing housing the elementary school classrooms, was in need of a complete renovation to provide the children with a clean, safe and sanitary environment in which to learn. A video about this project can be found on the Paros Foundation's website at [www.parosfoundation.org](http://www.parosfoundation.org).

Work consisted of rebuilding classroom walls, heating system upgrades, installation of new restrooms including water supply and sewer lines, installation of classroom doors, new flooring, electrical fixtures, new whiteboards and new and renovated furniture. In total, five classrooms (grades one through five), two restrooms and a large corridor were reconstructed. In response to the donation from the Starzers, Jean-Marie and Lori Atamian, the Starzers' friends and Paros supporters, recently announced that in 2016 they will underwrite the renovation of the remaining wing of the school, housing students in grades 6-12. This is the Atamian family's fourth project in this village. The final phase of the school reconstruction will be the kitchen and cafeteria, which are located in an adjacent building. We plan to secure pledges for this final phase this year.

The Paros Foundation underwrote all administrative expenses so that 100 percent of contributions were allocated to this project. To help this effort or another project of the Paros Foundation's Projects for Prosperity, please visit [www.parosfoundation.org](http://www.parosfoundation.org).



The ribbon-cutting ceremony with Sevan Amirians of Paros and excited students

## Armenian-American Veterans of Detroit Honor Kay Vartanian Of Dearborn

DEARBORN, Mich. — On November 14, 2015, the Armenian-American Veterans of Detroit celebrated their 70th anniversary by honoring all the men and women who have served or are serving in the United States Armed Forces. There was a Military Honor Guard, Presentation of the five military flags, and an empty table for all the missing servicemen and women, a blessing of the Veterans and Taps in memory of all veterans who have served. There was also a photo wall of honor displaying photos of Veterans, who served in wars from World War I to the present.

Kay Vartanian, who is a life long Dearborn resident, was honored for her service. Vartanian, who will be 102, was born on January 25, 1914 and lives in her Dearborn home. There is reason to believe she may be the oldest woman veteran in the area. She is a vibrant lady with stories to tell.

That evening, Master Sergeant Kay Vartanian was escorted front and center by members of the Vietnam Veterans of America Post 528 - Plymouth-Canton. US Rep. George Darany (D-



Kay Vartanian

Mich.) presented to Vartanian a tribute from himself and Gov. Rick Snyder.

Karen Nigolian, a Dearborn City Commissioner, presented her with a plaque from Mayor John O'Reilly.

Edward H. Korkoian, chairman of the event and president of the Armenian-American Veterans of Detroit, presented her with tributes from US Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) and US Rep. Debbie Dingle (D-Mich.).

Vartanian received a standing ovation from the 240 guests

She enlisted in the Army on September 1, 1943 and was stationed at Fort Oglethorpe, Ga. She served until her honorable discharge on January 11, 1946. She is the recipient of the Victory Medal, American Theater Ribbon, WAAC Service Ribbon and Good Conduct Medal.

The photo wall had more than 300 photographs and other memorabilia of Armenian men and women who have served the US armed forces. Kay, her late brother Lt. Col. Harold C. Vartanian, who served in the US Army in WWII, and her late nephew, Lt. Col. Donald N. Vartanian of the US Army were included on the wall.

All those attending were reminded that the brave servicemen and women pictured fought and served in places from WWI, WWII through today to protect the freedoms we all enjoy.



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Charlie Papazian Takes on New Role at Brewers Association

BOULDER, Colo. (BrewHound) – Charlie Papazian, the president of the Brewers Association and founder of the Great American Beer Festival, will step back from day-to-day responsibilities this month after 37 years.

Papazian, who “discovered craft homebrewing 45 years ago,” will remain an integral part of the Brewers Association, according to a statement published on the organization’s website. His title will shift to “founder, past president” and current CEO Bob Pease will add president to his title, the BA said.

“My 37-year journey as founding president has provided me a lifetime of fulfillment,” Papazian said in a statement. “Being part of an organization that serves to enhance the opportunities for professional and amateur craft brewers is especially rewarding. The hard work, dedication and long hours of past and current association staff and the community of brewers it has served has undoubtedly made the world a better place for every beer drinker.

Papazian is credited with founding the American Homebrewers Association, the Institute for Brewing Studies, Brewers Publications, the World Beer Cup and Great American Beer Festival. He is the founding publisher of *Zymurgy*, a magazine for homebrewers, and *The New Brewer*, a bi-monthly journal issued by the Brewers Association.

“The tens of thousands of individual stories

chronicling the success and joy that craft beer has brought to our lives inspires me,” he said in the statement. “Ultimately it’s the people and their communities who have been and continue to be involved with beer who make our current beer world so special. I look forward to continued opportunities that will enhance the world of beer.”

In addition to continuing to offer his perspectives on beer, Papazian will still attend “key Brewers Association and American Homebrewers Association events,” the organization said.

“The Brewers Association would not exist today without Charlie’s vision, guidance and determination,” Pease said in a statement. “What was once a dream is now an association that lifts up homebrewers, brewers, retailers, distributors, suppliers and beer lovers. We are honored and excited to continue building upon his success.”

Charlie Papazian is one of the most prominent and recognized names in the world of beer and brewing. His published commentaries provide insights into the industry, advice to homebrewers, and beer perspectives for beer drinkers. Since founding the American Homebrewers Association and Association of Brewers in 1978, he has helped guide the development of the association.

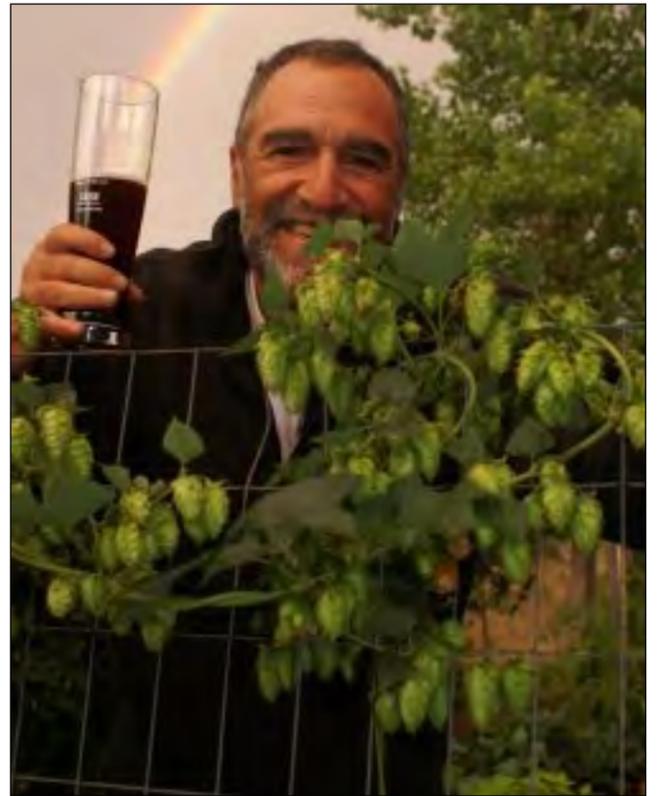
In his worldwide travels, he has been both lecturer and presenter at such prestigious

events as: The World Beer and Beverage Forum in Munich, National Press Club, Master Brewers Association of the Americas, American Society of Brewing Chemists, Institute of Brewing Asia-Pacific, BrewTec Tokyo, International Craft Beer Conference Japan, AHA National Conference, National Craft Brewers Conference, Chef des Chef International Trade Show, National Restaurant Association, Pizza Today Exposition, Great American Beer Festival, Nightclub and Bar Expo, Canadean’s International Beer Seminars, Amsterdam, Slow Food’s Salone del Gusto in Italy, BRAU Bevale Germany, Mondial de la Bière in Montreal, Rüdiger Ruoss’ Sommertage Workshops in Berlin, among others.

He is author of five best-selling books published by HarperCollins Books: *Microbrewed Adventures* (2005), *The Complete Joy of Home Brewing*, 4th Edition (2014), *The Home Brewer’s Companion*, 2nd Edition

(2014), *Home Brewer’s Gold* (1997), *The Best of Zymurgy* (1998), and *The Interactive New Complete Joy of Home Brewing CD-ROM*. He is the National Beer Examiner for [www.Examiner.com](http://www.Examiner.com)

He is founder of National Pie Day.



Charlie Papazian

## Syros Pushes Forward for Drugs Targeting Genes

WATERTOWN – Syros Pharmaceuticals raised \$40 million in equity to push forward with its pipeline of genetically targeted drugs, securing the cash it needs to take its top prospect into Phase II.

New investor Deerfield Management led the round, joining repeat backers Fidelity, WuXi

raised a \$53 million Series B in 2014 and got started with a \$30 million A round the year before.

With its new funds, Syros is blueprinting a Phase II trial for SY-1425, targeting acute myelogenous leukemia and myelodysplastic syndrome patients who have certain genetic mutations. The company expects to start enrollment in the first half of the year, and its new cash should carry Syros through to a first major data readout, “a critical inflection point for the company in validating its novel platform,” Deerfield Partner Jonathan Leff said in a statement.

Syros’ therapies affect what CEO Nancy Simonian has called “the operating system by which genes are regulated,” homing in on key proteins downstream processes.

The latest cash will also support the Watertown biotech’s work on an undisclosed second drug candidate, which Syros hopes to move into Phase I/II study this year.



CEO Dr. Nancy Simonian

Healthcare Ventures, Polaris Partners, Redmile, Aisling Capital and Alexandria Venture Investments.

The company, a 2015 Fierce 15 honoree,

## OBITUARY

### Rose (Dadaian) Bejoian

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Rose (Dadaian) Bejoian of Cambridge formerly of Watertown, died on December 4.

She was the wife of the late Kasper Bejoian.

She was the mother of Paul, Chris, Bob Bejoian and the late Barbara Bejoian; mother-in-law of Newell Thomas; grandmother of Casey, Ian, Tyler

and Kasper and sister of Elsie Minassian.

Funeral services were at Saint James Armenian Church, Watertown, on Friday, December 11. Interment at Ridgeland Cemetery, Watertown.

Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.

### Val Asbedian

BEDFORD, Mass. – Val Asbedian of Bedford died on January 16.

He leaves his wife, Nancy (Fantazian) Asbedian; children Susan Ciaffi and her husband Marco and James Asbedian and his wife Amy; and six grandchildren. He was the brother of the late Kenneth Asbedian.

Funeral services were held at St. Stephen’s Armenian Church, Watertown, on Thursday, January 21. Interment followed at Shawsheen Cemetery, Bedford.

Arrangements were by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Warwick Mayor Avedisian Congratulates New Detectives

WARWICK, RI (*Warwick Post*) – The Warwick Police Department honored three officers' advancement to detective rank and the promotion of a detective to sergeant Tuesday night at the community room inside Warwick Police Headquarters at 99 Veterans Memorial Drive.

Officers Nadine J. Parmenter, Nicholas A. Reay, and Gilda T. Fortier were named detectives by the Warwick Board of Public Safety, and Sgt. Frank J. McGee, III was promoted to sergeant.

McGee steps into a post vacated by a recent retirement, said Warwick Police Chief Col. Stephen McCartney. Although the department had just held a recognition ceremony Dec. 16, McCartney said, they decided not fill the empty sergeant's post right away, "Because we know we've got a good man ready to step up to the plate there in Sgt. Frank McGee."

McGee's father, retired Capt. Frank McGee, RI State Police, is an old friend of McCartney's, and, "We already know Frank is a solid guy who's done great work for us ever since he's done the job." McGee was a reliable Patrolman, McCartney said, and he wasn't surprised when he got promoted to detective. "He did a great job up there as a detective, and now I know he's ready to step up to the plate again, and particularly show our young police officers out there on the third shift, and be a great mentor," McCartney said.

McCartney said the Police Department is also going to begin recognizing officers when they're named detectives "While it's not considered a promotion per se, still they had to work hard as patrol officers. They had to take a test and go through a process, a very difficult process, for

ROB BORKOWSKI PHOTO



From left, Mayor Scott Avedisian and Col. Stephen McCartney present Nadine J. Parmenter with her certificate honoring her new rank as detective.

ROB BORKOWSKI PHOTO



From left, Mayor Scott Avedisian and Col. Stephen McCartney present Gilda T. Fortier with her certificate honoring her new rank as detective.

three months. in addition to the good work they did as patrol officers. So I think it's high time that we recognized them," the Chief said.

"Job well done," McCartney said to Parmenter and Fortier. Reay was not able to attend the event.

Mayor Scott Avedisian also offered his congratulations. "You've all done incredibly well. We're all proud of everything that you've done, and we look forward to wonderful things from you in the future."

Dep. Chief Michale Babula said they intended to keep the ceremony brief, but made it clear that was no commentary on the importance of the evening in the minds of the officers. "But the fact that this is brief, doesn't mean that this is any less important for these people. I've been on 33 years, and what I remember most clearly, is my

first few months as a sergeant, and my first few months as a detective," Babula said.

Babula addressed newly minted Sergeant McGee directly. "Frank, this will stick with you, the first time that you pull up to a call, where something truly bad has happened, and you realize, 'they're waiting for me to tell them what to do', and you realize that they're waiting for you to teach them how to be police officers. And one of the places you learned that is where you just came from, and that's what Jilda and Nadine are learning. This is where you take your ability to conduct investigations to a new level," the Deputy Chief said.

"These are big moments in these peoples' lives," Babula told the crowd before turning his attention to the officers, "and I want to congratulate all of you."

## Armenian Business Network Provides Career Help

NETWORK, from page 5

businesses, and has networking events once a quarter. Antounian said that average attendance at the latter is 150 people, and growing, with the last event attracting close to 200 people. They are held at Armenian-owned restaurants or hotels in the Boston area in order to also benefit Armenian businesses.

Antounian noted, "The nice thing about it is that we are a mosaic of our Armenian backgrounds and communities. Our members are from all types of different backgrounds, political, religious, and geographical. It is really beautiful." The only requirement is to be Armenian, or to be "Armenian by choice."

There are several types of programs to help individuals directly. Mentors can be found in relevant fields to provide guidance, while in the Champion-an-Armenian program, more intensive and continuous help is provided. Antounian said, "The 'champion' takes someone under his wings and guides him or her until the desired goal or result is reached, whereas the mentor provides direction, and stops until asked again." Resumes or business plans can be reviewed and improved.

The information is kept confidential, and tracking, which must be on an anonymous basis, is not that extensively done, so Antounian could only estimate that roughly 20-30 individuals have used the Champion program, with a 60 to 70 percent success rate.

Antounian gave an example of how ABN works. He said, "Typically somebody approaches you, saying, 'I just lost my job, so and so thought it would be a good idea to reach out to ABN and to you for assistance. Can you help me?' We start from that and take a look at what happened. We assess the situation, look at their background, and look at strategies based on their skill set – where are they and where do they want to be?"

What are some of the gaps to fill in and strengths necessary to highlight?" ABN works on short-term and long-term strategies. If the applicant needs a job immediately, for example, one cannot be too picky, as opposed to a situation allowing more time for achieving results.

Assistance can also be provided in an informal fashion or for a very specific problem not necessarily career-connected. Antounian said the organization has helped people moving from Armenia to Boston, or Syria to Paris, to find places to stay or work through members who are in the destination cities.

For certain types of requests that are made publicly to the entire network, via its Facebook or LinkedIn sites, any of the 10,000 members theoretically could respond. If nobody does, then the ABN executive members step in and stimulate the discussion publicly or privately.

The range of fields for assistance is as wide as the range of professions and interests of members. While 55-60 percent of members live in the New England area, primarily in greater Boston, the group is expanding rapidly, with Armenia being its highest growth area. It is open to starting branches in different US regions or other parts of the world.

The ABN partners with other Armenian organizations occasionally to help what ABN feels are useful programs. For example, the Knights of Vartan has a scholarship program for students. When the latter are ready for an internship or career placement, the Knights connects the students with the ABN to help the latter.

Antounian stressed that "We don't get any financial assistance from any organization. If anything, we support and encourage our members to support other organizations. We don't charge, so that everything we do is done pro bono. This is true even for the organizations that support

us. They get something in return too, such as [good] public relations." Furthermore, the group does not incur many expenses. It uses free or inexpensive technology when possible, like Facebook or LinkedIn for communications.

The present executive team of ABN, aside from founder Antounian, includes two people involved since the early years – corporate marketing director Arlette Yegumians and real estate company managing member George Haroutiounian, and relative newcomer Karina Demurchyan, a real estate consultant who has been on the executive for a little over a year. Previous executive member Emil Vartan is no longer with ABN, while Paul Yeghiayan has taken a break after moving to Washington D.C.

ABN has decided for the first time to organize a career day this year for high school seniors, college students and young adults. The February 20 event has limited seating, so that only the first 160 registrants can participate. Antounian said, "The concept is almost like a school guidance counsellor session. The only difference is that the counselor in this case is an accomplished professional expert in a particular field – usually CEOs or other executives with commanding positions in their respective industries. Not only will they share what is currently needed and what currently helps you become competitive, but they will point out where the industry is going and how you can prepare for it."

Antounian said that the extra element of having Armenians who share similar backgrounds in terms of upbringing and family show how they succeeded in their careers can be inspirational to young Armenians. Furthermore, relationships may be established as there is a potential for networking.

The keynote speakers are Dr. Jerome Isaac Friedman, holder of the 1990 Nobel Prize in

physics, Inessa Rifkin, co-founder and CEO of the Russian School of Math, Peter Koutoujian, the sheriff of Middlesex County, and Dr. Anna Ohanyan, chair of the Department of Political Science and International Studies at Stonehill College (Easton, Mass.).

There will be three 50-minute parallel breakout sessions covering the following 12 field or industry groupings: biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, medical and health care, engineering and sciences, internet technology and software, finance and accounting, marketing and sales, arts and humanities, education, legal, international relations and politics, manufacturing, and architecture, civil engineering and real estate. Each session will have two to three speakers and most of them are Armenian by background. All attendees will have the opportunity to attend their top three panel discussion and/or presentation-style sessions of choice.

A one-hour reception at the 11th floor of the Microsoft NERD Center will be the conclusion to the event, at which participants can network with the industry experts and fellow attendees.

In addition to Yegumians and Demurchyan, members of the ABN executive board members, there is a special group of people involved in organizing this event. It includes Sona Antonyan, Michael Demirchian, Raffi Kotikian, Ani Zargarian, David Hamparian, Yelena Bisharyan and Harry Glorikian. Dr. Edward Shapiro, a Russian-American scientist who founded the organization Nobel Laureates' School Visits, assisted in getting Dr. Friedman for the event.

The career day will begin at 1 p.m. and end at 6 p.m. at the NERD Center, at 1 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, MA. For more information on ABN and registration for the February 20 career day, see [armenianbusinessnetwork.com](http://armenianbusinessnetwork.com). To join ABN, use its Facebook or LinkedIn web pages.



## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Armenian Striker Yura Movsisyan Returns To Real Salt Lake From Spartak Moscow

SALT LAKE, Utah (Vavel) – The long rumored deal has been completed: Armenian striker Yuri Movsisyan is returning to Real Salt Lake as an on loan Designated Player from Spartak Moscow of the Russian Premier League.

Movsisyan was with the Utah club

“For me, it’s been a long time I’ve been wanting to come back,” said Movsisyan in a team statement. “Obviously Salt Lake was my first choice because it was such a great place for me and my family. I felt at home in Utah. Leaving with a championship – I want to come back and do that again. I want to win more cham-

thing to come back.”

Since leaving Rio Tinto Stadium, Movsisyan has bounced around in both Denmark and Russia. With Randers, he played in the Europa League, and made such an impression that he attracted the interest of FC Krasnodar. After two seasons there, where he averaged nearly a goal every two games, the Armenian international moved to Spartak Moscow, one of the most storied clubs in Russian history. He went on to make 62 appearances for The People’s Team while scoring 25 goals.

In addition to his club career, the striker brings with him an international pedigree. The 28-year-old has scored 10 times in 35 appearances for his national team. The RSL hierarchy are clearly hoping that he will bring that quality to their team once again.

“Yura is a goalscorer,” said RSL general manager Craig Waibel. “He’s always been a goalscorer and statistically speaking, his numbers are undeniably productive no matter where he’s played. He’s at an age right now and at a point of his life right now, he had a priority with his wife that they wanted to move back to the States. Everything just added up to make sense for him to come. We have an undeniable interest to bring in good soccer players and goalscorers and Yura is one of those. We believe he’s a double-digit goalscorer and we’re really excited to get him back out on the field and start producing.”

The Claret-and-Cobalt will be hoping that he can bolster what was the league’s second worst offense in 2015.



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO

Yura Movsisyan

from 2007-2009, and made 48 appearances for the Claret-and-Cobalt while scoring 15 goals. His first stint at the club came to a fairytale ending when he won the 2009 MLS Cup Final before moving on to Danish side Randers FC.

pionships with Salt Lake – with the club that I was part of the evolution. I was part of the team that went basically from the bottom to being champions. This is what I want to do again and what I’m excited about. For me, it’s an amazing

## Celebrity Plastic Surgeon, Dr. Raffi Hovsepien, Named Top Doctor 2016

BEVERLY HILLS – Plastic surgeon Dr. Raffi Hovsepien was named Top Doctor 2016 by *Los Angeles Magazine* for outstanding work, professionalism and expertise.

“In all I do, my goal is to make my patients happy and do what is best for their health and appearance. I strive for perfection in each procedure. I love being able to shape the lives of my patients. It’s an honor to be recognized for my hard work.”



Dr. Raffi Hovsepien

Hovsepien is a triple board certified Beverly Hills plastic surgeon. He has worked in aesthetic, plastic and reconstructive

surgery innovation.

Hovsepien encourages multiple patient consultations to ensure the most individualized treatments and counseling. He has spent his entire career studying facial, breast and body aesthetics to guarantee beauty for his patients.

Dr. Hovsepien has co-authored and edited various books in his field and has published many original journal articles. He has received more than 65 awards and achievements. Some of the awards include “America’s Top Plastic Surgeons,” “The Patients’ Choice Physician Award,” “2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st Century Award,” and “2010’s ‘Man of The Year Distinction’ award.”

Hovsepien has also appeared on multiple television programs.



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# Arts & Living

## Picasso Bust at Center of Custody Battle Between Gagosian and Qatar Royal Family

By Robin Pogrebin

NEW YORK (*New York Times*) – The high-powered art dealer Larry Gagosian says he bought it. The royal family of Qatar says it bought the sculpture, too. And now they are facing off in court over who owns Picasso's important plaster bust of his muse (and mistress) Marie-Thérèse Walter, a star of the Museum of Modern Art's popular "Picasso Sculpture" show.

The seller, in both cases, was Picasso's daughter Maya Widmaier-Picasso, 80. She declined to comment on why she appears to have sold the artwork twice.

In a legal action filed on Tuesday, January 5 in federal court in Manhattan against the Qatari family's agent, Gagosian claims that he bought the 1931 sculpture in May 2015 for about \$106 million from Ms. Widmaier-Picasso, and then sold it to an undisclosed New York collector who expects to receive it after MoMA's show closes on Feb. 7.

But the Qatari family's agent, Pelham Holdings, run by Guy Bennett, maintains in its own court documents that it secured an agreement with Widmaier-Picasso to buy the work in November 2014 for 38 million euros, or about \$42 million.

The bust, a major work from a highly creative period in Picasso's life, reflects the evolution of a new erotic style of curves and exaggerated forms inspired by Walter's charms.

The conflict exposes the stubbornly elusive nature of an increasingly competitive art market, in which deals are made behind closed doors and ownership can be ambiguous.

The case is further complicated by the particular nature of Picasso's family, which includes a multitude of wives, muses, children and grandchildren who over the years have wrangled over the patriarch's valuable creations, and in many cases sold off works.

Picasso's total fine art sales in 2015 were just over \$652 million, beating out Andy Warhol for the year, according to Artnet, the New York-based art platform. Last May, Picasso's 1955 painting "Les Femmes d'Alger (Version 'O')" sold at Christie's for \$179.4 million, a high for any artwork at auction, not accounting for inflation.

In the action filed on January 12 against Pelham, the Gagosian Gallery asked a judge to "quiet" any challenges or claims to its title of the bust.

"We bought and sold the sculpture in good faith without knowledge of the alleged claim," the gallery said in a statement, referring to Pelham's lawsuit. "We are entirely confident that our purchase and sale are valid and that Pelham has no rights to the work."

Gagosian has a longstanding relationship with members of the Picasso family, having collaborated with Diana Widmaier-Picasso, the artist's granddaughter, on a show of Picasso's sculptures at Gagosian's uptown New York gallery in 2003.

In 2011, his Chelsea gallery exhibited the plaster bust along with other work inspired by the relationship between Picasso and Walter, who were Maya Widmaier-Picasso's parents (the pair never married). The show prompted several bidders to offer "more than \$100 million for the work," Gagosian's court papers say.

According to Pelham's filings, Widmaier-Picasso originally agreed to sell the sculpture in November 2014 through the art dealers Connery, Pissarro, Seydoux, a now disbanded firm, to Pelham, which bought it on behalf of Sheik Jassim bin Abdulaziz al-Thani. He is see PICASSO, page 13



Work by Kevork Mourad

## Gallery Z Commemorates 15th Anniversary, Presents Two International Painters

PROVIDENCE – Gallery Z will present works by two internationally-known Armenian painters, Kevork Mourad and Harut Aghajanian, through Saturday, February 6.

Renowned painter Kevork Mourad was born in 1970 in Syria. Of Armenian origin, he received his MFA from the Yerevan Institute of Fine Arts in Armenia. He has recently exhibited at Galerie Claude Lemand in Paris, and at the Art Paris Art Fair in 2015. He has had solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Platform in Kuwait, 2014, previously at Gallery Z, at JK Gallery, Los Angeles, the Rafia Gallery, Damascus, Syria, which represents him in the Middle East, and at the Courtyard Gallery in Dubai (2010). Five of his pieces are in the permanent collection on the 70th floor of the Bourj Khalife in Dubai.

Mourad has twice had work auctioned at Christie's Dubai. He has exhibited and painted live in "Art Moment 2014" in Budapest, Hungary. "The Map of Future Movements," a digital piece, was part of a touring group exhibition in Jerusalem and Ramallah, and was included in the 2010 Liverpool Biennial. Six of his pieces are in permanent residency at the Gumri Museum in Armenia, and several more at the Armenian Library and Museum of America in Watertown.

Group shows include the NYU Small Works Gallery in both 2005 and 2007. He has also perfected a technique of spontaneous painting, during which he shares the stage with many world class musicians including Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble, of which he is a member as a visual and teaching artist. He has co-produced and directed two plays that have toured and been performed internationally, and has created the animation for an opera by Lembit Beecher, "I Have No Stories to Tell You," commissioned by Opera Philadelphia. Mourad has also designed stop-motion animation for Manuel De Falla's "Master Peter's Puppet Show," which he performed with the Knights at Tanglewood in July 2015 to great acclaim.

Mourad lives in New York City and maintains a studio in Brooklyn, when he is not traveling internationally.

Harut Aghajanian is an Armenian artist born in Iran in 1956. He studied at Terlemezian College art school in Yerevan from 1984 to 1987; in 2002 he was awarded a prize by the Gemmayse Development Association (ADG). His paintings have been exhibited in the Beirut, Lebanon, art galleries Bronte and Zeina Sultan, and in Boston. Many of his works are in private collections in the United States and several European countries.

This exhibit includes a selection of beautifully balanced exquisite figurative works on paper in both black and white and soft wash tones. In some, animal heads emerge tucked amongst finely drawn huddled human figures.

In addition, Gallery Z displays an ever-changing extensive and diverse selection in salon style of original Fine Art works (paintings, photographs, drawings, mixed

see ANNIVERSARY, page 11



A painting by Harut Aghajanian

## Haig Hovsepian Wins Concord Orchestra's Young Artist Competition

CONCORD, Mass. (*Wicked Local*) – Each year, the Concord Orchestra features a young performer selected by the annual young artist competition. The competition is open to musicians of high school age or younger who live in eastern Massachusetts. The winner is chosen by a panel of orchestra members and the music director. The winner also receives a cash prize from the Ehlers Memorial Scholarship Fund.

This year's winner is 17-year-old Haig Hovsepian, of Belmont. Hovsepian will perform Khachaturian's Violin Concerto in D minor in the orchestra's winter concert at 8 p.m. January 29 and 30 at the Performing Arts Center at 51 Walden St., Concord.

In addition to fine performances by these talented young artists, the Concord Orchestra is excited to perform works by Joyce Mekeel and George Frederick Handel with The Spectrum Singers, John Erhlich, music director. This highly-regarded chorus performs music from all musical periods and has recently collabo-



Haig Hovsepian

rated with Emmanuel Music, the Indian Hill Symphony Orchestra and The Cantata Singers.

Joyce Mekeel's *Toward the Source* for orchestra and chorus was commissioned by the Concord Bicentennial Committee and was premiered by the Concord Orchestra and the Concord-Carlisle High School Concert Choir for the April Patriots' Day celebration in 1975. Mekeel did extensive research to complete her assignment to interpret "Concord, its rivers, and its search for values."

The piece relates the town's history from 1635 to the time of the transcendentalists. The chorus recites Indian place names, sites on the river, Biblical quotes, tombstone inscriptions and the name of every colonial fighter at the North Bridge the day of "the shot heard 'round the world." It concludes with a quote from the hymn that Ives used as the basis of the *Concord Sonata*, a work inspired by the transcendentalists.

Other works on the program are *From the Censer* from Handel's oratorio *Solomon* and Mendelssohn's *Symphony No. 5, Reformation*.

Two runners-up, Amir Siraj and Katherine Liu, both on piano, will perform at 7.15 p.m.

Cost: \$30 for adults, \$25 for senior citizens and \$10 for students.

For tickets and further information visit [www.concordorchestra.com](http://www.concordorchestra.com)

# New Book Retraces Grandfather's Steps into Syria and Salvation

The new book from former writer for the online magazine *Salon*, Dawn Anahid MacKeen, has just been published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Titled *The Hundred-Year Walk: An Armenian Odyssey*, the book is a retracing of the steps of the author's grandfather's forced march in the desert.

Below is an excerpt from the book, courtesy of *Salon*.

At the busy border crossing into Syria, the sun beat down onto the stream of cars that twisted out of view. A thousand reflections scissored off the windshields, mirrors, and hubcaps on vehicles that packed the road like an old junkyard. Momentarily blinded, I averted my eyes and turned toward the forbidding checkpoint out of Reyhanlı, Turkey. I was nervous, jumpy at every horn blare. Only fifteen minutes had passed since Jemal had dropped me off to park the van, but it seemed he'd been gone too long. In another fifty yards, I'd face the uniformed guards, and I had to get my story straight. I glanced at my security blanket, my gray cell phone; approximately ten in the morning, and no missed calls. In the swell of heat and exhaust on this August Friday, I felt like collapsing. On the asphalt, massive cargo trucks leaving Turkey idled. They roared on, advanced a few feet, then went off again, while pedestrians zigzagged through without fear.

I was keeping an eye out for Jemal, but my gaze kept returning to the surrounding mountains, parched and imposing, the color of dirt and not much else. The place couldn't be more different than where we had been the afternoon before: relaxing high above the clouds in Turkey's last Armenian village, Vakıflı



Dawn Anahid MacKeen

**"The crime of being Armenian: Sick, dehydrated, I was following my grandfather's path through Syria as he fled the Turks. How must he have suffered?"**

Köyü, a serene oasis of stone homes and tall trees that perfectly followed the sweet serenade of the Kilis bathhouse. I'd been healthy there, too, but had fallen sick later that night. Now dehydrated and dizzy from repeatedly throwing up, I took another swig from my plastic water bottle. Water. It was all my body wanted; I could never wash enough down my sore throat. I studied the rises from ground to peak. Could I hike across

these heights as my grandfather did? In this condition? Somewhere beyond this point, he had suffered the most.

I can turn around now, I told myself. But I could not. I had spent too long getting there, a day of flying to Istanbul, two weeks of traveling overland through Turkey, six months of planning, and a lifetime of family stories, all leading me to this corridor once part of the Ottoman Empire. Ever since I could remember, I had heard the dramatic tales from my mother: how my grandfather wandered for years in the desert of what is now Syria; how he, Stepan Miskjian, staggered a week with two cups of water, trying to escape from the Turks who were trying to kill him, for the crime of being Armenian.

Only halfway into my nine-hundred-mile journey, and I was already weary. And I was a well-fed thirty-six-year-old traveling by car and train, not on foot as Stepan did. I was the one sleeping in beds rated by stars, not outside on the hard ground under the constellations. Just an hour after leaving my air-conditioned hotel room, I was weak and feverish and needed a bathroom. And I was still far from my endpoint, a godforsaken mound of dirt named Marqada just short of the Iraqi border, where my grandfather's caravan of thousands met its end.

I glanced at my cell phone again; only five minutes had elapsed. I wasn't even moving, but rivulets of sweat were nose-diving off my forehead. Not only did I look ridiculous in my mock neo-colonial disguise of a hat, sunglasses, and baggy linens, but now, I feared, I appeared suspicious too, as if I were hiding contraband. Where is Jemal? Passport control would ask why I'd come to the region, and I wanted him there in case anything went wrong. I hadn't been completely up-front about my research when I'd applied for a tourist visa to both countries. Ten days earlier, the Turkish police had followed and photographed me and I was still spooked. I wondered if there was some sort of file on me.

At last I heard Jemal's cheerful voice: "Hello, Dawn!" He was carrying my luggage. With the crowds, he had had to park a distance away. After a week of his guiding me over the mountain ranges my grandfather had been forced to climb, I now had to say goodbye. I would miss his jovial laugh and his protective paternal instinct. In a few minutes, I would cross the border, the portal to the Euphrates camps, Deir Zor, the

Khabur River, everything I'd read about.

Escorting me to the guard's booth, Jemal asked for my passport. I extracted it from my money belt, always embarrassing, as I wondered what others must think of us Americans, holding our valuables so close to our underwear. He handed over my blue identification card, and the two began to talk. I smiled to deflect my nervousness. I should have been watch-

ing them, rehearsing my lines one last time, but my attention retreated to the mountains. Could I climb them? No, I couldn't. Certainly not today. How did he do it? How did anyone?

As the officer questioned me, I tried to answer like any tourist would, expounding on my lifelong desire to visit the ancient riches of Turkey and Syria, which was partly true. I wasn't lying per se, and I wanted to be more forthcoming, but given that it was illegal to say the words Armenian genocide in Turkey, I didn't want to take any chances. The Turkish guard waved me through.

"Teshekkür ederim." I thanked Jemal with my few words of Turkish.

"Rica ederim." He smiled broadly.

As I shouldered my luggage and began to walk away, my legs felt unsteady beneath me. One more hurdle to go, with the Syrian guards. I was so close now, and I thought about the kind Arab sheikh who had sheltered my grandfather, saving his life, and whose family I was traveling to Syria to find. Not even my mother, Anahid, knew about this part of my quest. At seventy-nine, she was already beside herself with worry about me, her only daughter, and this part of the trip made her the most anxious.

In many ways, Syria was a police state, intolerant of dissent and willing to imprison those who threatened the regime. The country was ruled with a firm hand by President Bashar al-Assad. I'd heard about his infamous Mukhabarat, commonly called the Syrian secret police, which tracked its citizens and routinely accused foreigners of being spies. Still, I hadn't been that concerned until a family friend from the region warned me about traveling there alone. "You don't know Syria," she'd said. "It's not like other countries." The United States warned travelers against going to Syria and accused Syria of sponsoring terrorism. Just the year before, armed men had attacked the American embassy in Damascus with grenades and explosives, killing one person and injuring thirteen.

"Dawn! Dawn!" I heard Jemal call out. "You . . . cannot . . . walk . . . border," he cried in his limited English.

"Yes, I can."

"No, it's too far," he said.

"How far?"

"Too far walk."

"How far?"

"Maybe five kilometers?"

"Oh." I glanced at the road that soon disappeared, exposed to the glare of the sun, without any visible shade. Before coming, I had imagined a short footbridge, like the one from California into Tijuana, Mexico. Instead, there was a vast no man's land I'd have to cross. I was so stupid. After a few paces, I was melting.

"Can you take me?"

"I'm sorry, Dawn, no have papers," he said.

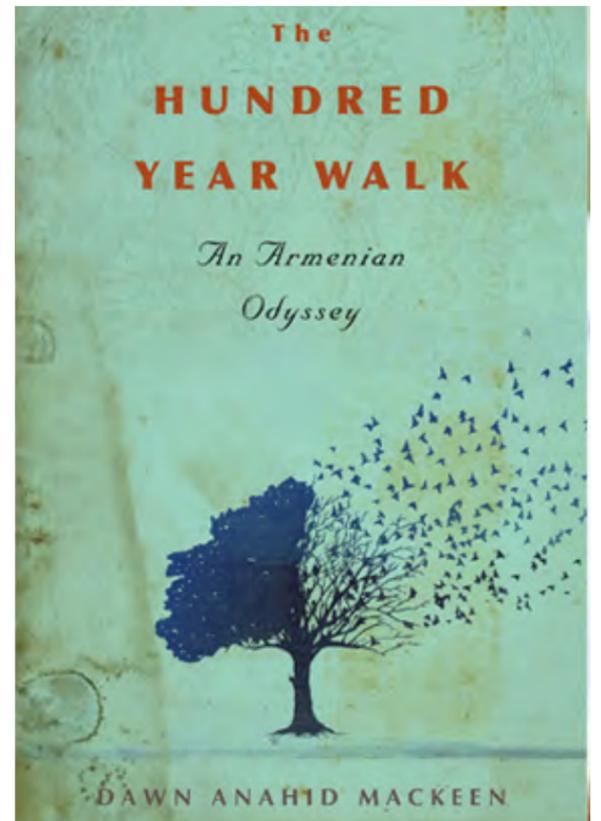
Within moments, Jemal went to work on a new plan. "Wait here." Striding into the middle of the road, where the bottleneck lifted, he began waving to passing vehicles. What is he doing? He's going to get run over. Several drivers slowed, exchanged words with him, and then accelerated. Finally, the door of a station wagon swung open, and a middle-aged guy popped out. He and Jemal approached me.

"You give five dollars," Jemal said. "He take you."

The man studied me, waiting for my reaction. He wasn't much older than me, short, with dark hair. Shifting his feet, he seemed to be in a hurry. Without another choice, I reluctantly dug into my bag, and withdrew five U.S. dollars, crumpled among my Turkish liras.

Now the man gestured me to the back passenger seat. Ducking in, I realized it was overloaded with men. Not a single woman. Two sat in the front seat, three in the space next to me, and a pile of others in the trunk area with the baggage, knees pressed to chests.

"Hello," I said. Nothing. I tried a few words in Turkish. They still didn't respond, continuing their chatter. They spoke



Arabic, I realized, stupidly slow through my fog of illness. Thumbing through my phrasebook, I attempted the basic greeting: Marhaba, shlonik? Hello, how are you? I mangled it so much their eyebrows furrowed. Inside was stuffy, the vinyl seat sticky with sweat. I knew nothing about them; they might have had contraband in the back.

As the car accelerated, I stared out the window, getting a closer look at these desecrated mountains that formed the barrier between Turkey and Syria. I had imagined the landscape of this area would be desert, similar to Palm Springs. But somehow it seemed more forsaken. It was near this border that my grandfather had first realized his life was in danger, that a much darker objective was driving the deportations.

The station wagon sped forward until a Turkish guard blocked the road. Another checkpoint. Apparently, we were still in Turkish domain. The guard scrutinized me for a little while, then spoke to the driver. He handed over his paperwork. The official flipped through the pages, then pointed to the side of the road. We were being pulled over. I panicked. Had the guards at the border crossing figured something out about me? A queasy feeling welled up in my throat. I heaved. I was about to vomit again.

The car turned to the right, parking opposite a small office. I took out my cell phone to tell my fixer on the Syrian side what was happening. God. I tried to dial. Nothing. Goddamn it. I tried again. I glanced down—there was no signal, and I was on my own.

## Welcome to Syria

2007

On this barren stretch between Turkey and Syria, I felt a kick of stomach pain. I doubled over, dropping my head between my knees; the nausea intensified. Then came another wave. Still stuck in international limbo, I felt like screaming. I never foresaw that this trip across the border into Syria could go so wrong, that I would end up hitching a ride with a carload of strange men, that I would be pulled over, effectively imprisoned between the two countries and brown mountains.

The heat was stifling here, the sun's lashings excruciating. My skin was reddening into blotches, hypersensitive because of an antibiotic I'd taken the previous night. Nearby stood the car's other passengers. Shifting their feet, they, too, seemed impatient; our driver had been in that nearby building for what felt like ages. Are they detaining him? What has he done? How I longed to be singing my way across eastern Anatolia again with Jemal and Baykar. I was half delirious, half paranoid, certain only that I had to extract myself from this situation. On wobbly legs, I crossed the hot asphalt and strode through the ripples of heat to the Turkish sentry stationed outside the office.

"Do you speak English?"

"A little," he said.

"I'm not with these men. I just met them. Can I continue on by foot?"

"It is still very far," he said.

Defeated, I sat back down in the blistering sun. A lone

see SALVATION, page 11



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

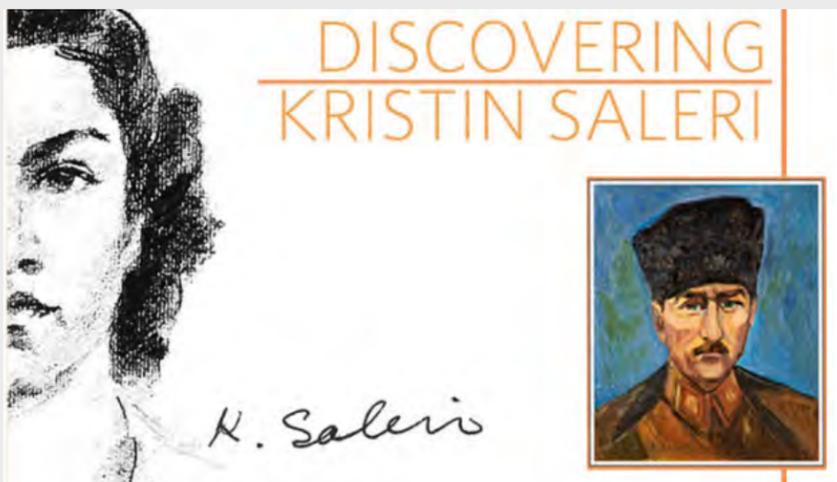
## Madden Library Exhibition to Feature Pioneering Armenian Artist from Istanbul

FRESNO – The Henry Madden Library at Fresno State will present a retrospective exhibition of artwork by Kristin Saleri – a pioneering 20th-century artist of Armenian heritage who lived in Istanbul – from February 6 to May 31 in the Leon S. Peters Ellipse Gallery and Pete P. Peters Balcony gallery.

Despite the challenges presented by her

from Christian images to whirling dervishes, and from Mother Earth to the Tree of Life. Her message was one of inclusivity, expressing her deep appreciation for the range of diversity in nature and humanity.

The exhibition is curated by Fresno natives Joyce Kierejczyk and Carol Tikijian, who also curated a spring exhibition at the Fresno Art



gender and ethnicity, she secured her place as a member of the founding generation of modern art in Turkey.

Saleri, who trained in Paris, was influenced stylistically by Impressionism and used art to convey a message of modern feminism. Her work is filled with images evoking her love of the vast Anatolian landscape and its people – from women in traditional village dances to Bosphorus fishermen to laborers in booming post-World War II factories.

Stylistically, Saleri's work presents a blend of Eastern mysticism and Western Impressionism. Her folkloric themes range

Museum of works by artists of Armenian descent in commemoration of the centennial of the Armenian genocide. The artworks exhibited are on loan from members of Saleri's family who reside in Houston.

The public is invited to join Peter McDonald, dean of Library Services, and the Discovering Kristin Saleri committee for the Gala Donors Opening Dinner with the artist's family and a preview of the exhibition at 6 p.m. Friday, February 5. Tickets for the three-course catered dinner are \$100.

For more information on the artist, visit [www.kristinsaleri.com](http://www.kristinsaleri.com).

## Gallery Z Commemorates 15th Anniversary

ANNIVERSARY, from page 9

media, glass, sculptures, assemblages, etchings, lithographs) from Gallery Z's deep stable of over 300 fine artists, locally, nationally and internationally renowned, along with fine ceramics and pottery, jewelry and Armenian and international handicrafts.

The adjacent "Italy" room expands the vibrant local Federal Hill Italian cultural atmosphere with "Dreamy Venice," filled with luminous handmade small Murano glass gifts (paperweights, ornaments, vessels, perfume bottles) and Murano glass jewelry (pendants, necklaces, bracelets, rings, earrings, watches, hair clips), all personally chosen and imported from

Venice by Gallery Associate Linda Kamajian in a sparkling rainbow of colors. These are set amidst fine art paintings and photographs related to Italy or by some of Gallery Z's established Italian-American fine artists.

Gallery Z offers an intimate setting and provides a center for experiencing fine art in a historic Providence neighborhood. Although there are no Gallery Night official events December through March, Gallery Z carries the torch by hosting a free opening reception for the current exhibit every third Thursday of the month, 12 months of the year. Gallery Z is a tax-free zone.

The gallery is located at 259 Atwells Ave.

## New Book Retraces Grandfather's Steps into Syria and Salvation

SALVATION, from page 10

branch of shade barely covered an arm, and I contorted in vain into its silhouette. Finally, our driver came barreling out the door, rushing toward us. He motioned for us to get back into the car. After we'd piled in again, the station wagon sped the remaining distance, the road winding at a slight grade. I couldn't believe that I'd thought I could walk this in my depleted state. Up ahead loomed the Syrian checkpoint, spanning the road like a bridge. The last hurdle, I thought.

In that moment, another officer stepped into our lane and waved us down. Beside the car, he addressed the men in Arabic. At once, my fellow passengers retrieved their passports and gave them to the officer, signaling for me to do the same; at least, that's what I assumed their gestures meant. Leaning forward, I handed mine to the official. After a brief inspection, he began to return the precious documents, fanning them out around the car like sold-out concert tickets. Nearly incoherent from my sickness, I extended my hand, expectant. Instead, he directed me out of the car with a stern voice. Now I really started to panic.

Through the windows, the car's men stared at me as I extracted my heavy roller bag from the trunk. They were all strangers to me, but they were more comforting than this guard, who now led me to a spartan governmental office. There, an official sat behind a desk busily questioning another foreigner, a young girl in her twenties. When finished, he turned to me, his demeanor pleasant as I took the hot seat. I tried to appear calm.

"Why have you come to Syria?"

"I want to visit the country."

I kept quiet about retracing the deportation route. An Armenian filmmaker had shared with me his experience of being granted permission to shoot a documentary about the genocide and then having it revoked. I couldn't jeopardize this trip; I needed to find the family of the Arab sheikh who'd saved my grandfather. I didn't even know if this was possible, but I had to try. So I had decided to enter as a regular tourist instead of a journalist. In essence, that was what I was. I just had different landmarks on my itinerary than most sightseers.

"Why Syria?" the man asked.

"I am also visiting someone." Before I left, a family friend had insisted I stay with her aunt, a resident of Aleppo, so I wouldn't be completely on my own. I argued with her for the longest time, maintaining that I had plenty of experience traveling in foreign countries and handling unexpected situations. "It will be easier if I just check in to a hotel," I said, not wanting to impose, but she wouldn't hear of it. As I sat in this office now, trapped, I felt immensely grateful for her persistence. Someone is expecting me, I told myself, someone will know if I go missing. The official flipped through the pages in my passport and lingered on one, covered in stamps. "Why did you visit Brazil?"

"For vacation," I said. I found this question-

ing so curious: How could my trip to the Amazon, where I fished for piranhas, now be suspicious? I was no fearless femme fatale agent, though I could understand the mistaken identity. In Brazil, I ran at the speed of light from a tiny spider and courageously posed next to a restrained baby crocodile. The inspector's mistrust was astonishing, yet real, and he pressed me on the specifics for the next hour, almost down to the number of bugs that had stung each leg. I was trying to appear casual, but my arm began to shake, so I braced it in between my knees. Finally, a middle-aged man with cropped hair appeared at the doorway and spoke in Arabic. I recognized his strong voice and lilting cadence. It was my Syrian translator, Levon (whose name I've changed). I'd never met him in person, but I had spoken to him several times before my arrival and, thanks to the urging from my family friend, had requested he meet me on the Syrian side.

"Parev," we said to each other in Armenian. "One minute," he said, and he vouched for me to the official. Into his hands, I was soon released, and we drove the remaining miles to Aleppo, passing arid land dotted with square homes. I'd learn later that this suspicious treatment at the border was standard fare for foreigners entering the country. But what had begun as routine escalated into something else the farther I traveled into the country. In the car, Levon quickly shifted gears from rescuer to tour guide and began to tell me about their thriving community of a hundred thousand, the majority living in Aleppo. Many Syrian-Armenians were originally from Anatolia, Levon explained, and had settled there following the Armenian genocide.

After we wound through the sprawl of the city, Levon dropped me off at my contact's spacious house, where I crashed for days, vomiting, curled up like a worm. Her poof of a white poodle kept tiptoeing into my room, curious about the visitor, her nails against the tile always foretelling her arrival. I had a permit to remain in the country for only two short weeks, and precious days were passing as I slept, febrile, the air oppressively hot. I couldn't imagine lying outside in this state, exposed to the sun or snowdrifts, like my grandfather. Despite a soft bed and a gracious host as nurse, I was miserable. At last, that Monday, my powerful antibiotic finally chased down my temperature. Not losing another minute, I climbed into the back seat of a taxi, an Armenian driver behind the steering wheel and Levon in the passenger seat. Together, we set out east to visit the region that was once riddled with camps, the places where my grandfather had lived and nearly died.

(Excerpted from *The Hundred Year Walk: An Armenian Odyssey* by Dawn Anahid MacKeen. Copyright © 2016 by Dawn Anahid MacKeen. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.)

## Christmas Concert in Providence

PROVIDENCE – On Sunday, January 3, the Cultural Committee of Saints Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church of Providence presented the concert "Silent Night, Holy Night" in the sanctuary of the church.

This Christmas concert included the Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island and the Junior Choir of Saints Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church. This special evening also featured performances by talented soloists.

The Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian, the Diocesan Vicar was present at the concert. Joyce Avedisian, Chair of the Parish Council, gave the opening remarks and welcomed everyone.

Konstantin Petrossian, artistic director and conductor of the Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island and Junior Choir, presented a program featuring Armenian and international Christmas carols and songs. The Armenian Chorale sang a variety of songs from sacred

to secular.

Petrossian arranged for many soloists to perform in this concert: singers Joanne Mouradjian, Debra Pjojian, Gohar Manjelijian, Sarkis Yepremian, flutist David Griego. The concert ended with the Armenian Chorale and Junior Choirs performing Park Ee Partzoons and Silent Night. The final song was Joy to the World, accompanied by Griego on the flute. Mari Panosian provided the organ accompaniment.

Father Shnork Souin, pastor of Saints Sahag and Mesrob Church offered the closing remarks and led all in the Lord's Prayer.

A lovely pre-concert gathering took place in the Egavian Cultural Hall. Many friends of the bazaar committee led by Marc Janigian prepared this lunch. The gathering allowed people to share ideas and truly help celebrate the season.



The two choruses



ARTS & LIVING

# Letters to You Book Launch with Fashion Show and Art Exhibit on January 30

BOSTON – Three different genres of creativity and art will dovetail on Saturday, January 30 at Boston's Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel. The event will feature creations by author Zareh Zurabyan, fashion designer Samuel Vartan and artist Lucie Abdalian, the latter two inspired by Zurabyan's book.

The event, which will take place at 7 p.m., is the official *Letters to You* book launch by Zurabyan. Also featured will be a fashion show by Vartan inspired by some of the letters which appear in the book, and an art exhibit by Abdalian based on the last three letters of the book.

Fashion designer Vartan chose eight letters of the book which inspired him to design eight pieces of clothing. It is abstract symbolism. In other words, his work could match how he pictures a character in the book, or a dress may convey the same emotion that was portrayed in the respective letter.



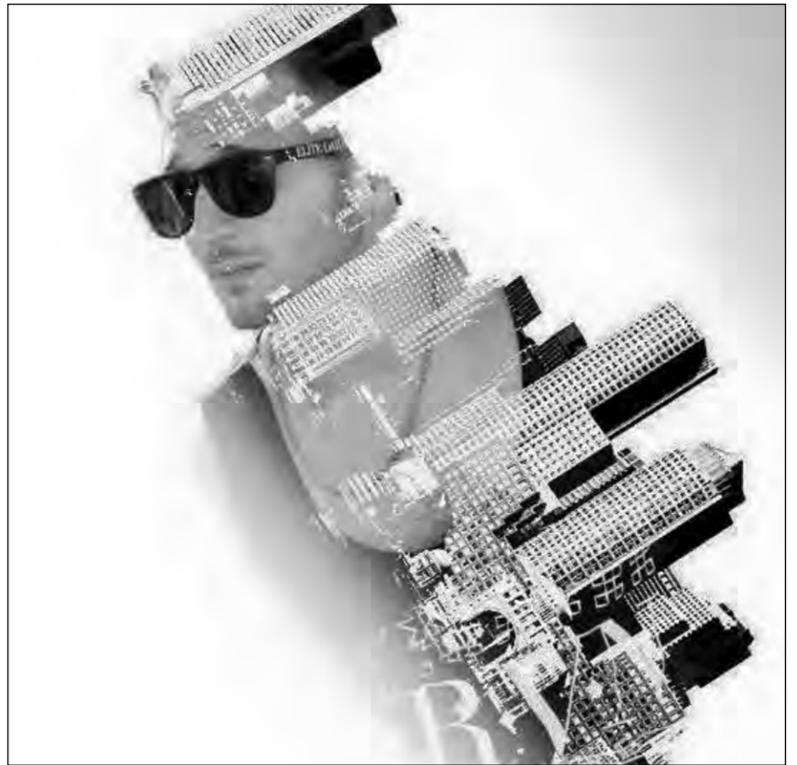
Lucie Abdalian and Zareh Zurabyan in New York City above Central Park

This book is a collection of letters from different characters, completely unrelated to each other, however with an underlying theme. Each letter portrays a perspective on life, and with each turn of the page, the reader gets to see different shades of global reality in human relationships. The book is designed so that each letter has a specific photograph with abstract symbolism expressing the emotions/message of the letter.

This event is free, and its purpose is to promote creativity. Come dressed to impress, network and meet new people. Be entertained by beautiful fashion and art, and engage in meaningful conversations about the perspectives of our lives through the book *Letters to You*.

The book will be available at the event, and the author will sign it for you.

Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel is located at 606 Congress St.



An urban Zareh Zurabyan's book



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## Rev. Vahan H. Tootikian Releases 38th Book

By Rev. George Kevork Terian

DETROIT – In the first week of the New Year, the Armenian Heritage Committee of Greater Detroit released the 38th book of Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian titled *Observances and Observations/Doner Yev Nshmarner*. This hard-cover bilingual volume consists of 158 pages and is composed of 26 English and 15 Armenian articles and essays dealing with religious, social, theological and Armenian subjects.

The author has dedicated this book to the church of his birthplace, Emmanuel Armenian Evangelical Church of Ekiz-Olouk, Kessab (Syria), where he received his early Christian education.

In this book, the author tackles tough questions that relate to our existence and does not shy away from giving Biblical answers to the problems that we encounter. He deals with the "why" type of questions that people with inquisitive minds often raise, such as: Why do we commemorate certain religious, national and ethnic holy days and holidays? (pp. 14-40); Why do people pay "lip service" to their Creator and to their fellow creatures rather than paying "heart service"? (pp. 48-51); Why are some people, especially professionals, jealous of one another, and how do they cure this deadly sin? (pp. 58-60); Why do people drift with the crowd? (p. 61); Why do people make some unimportant matters seem important? (p.75); Why is the Armenian culture so vital for the Armenians? (pp. 128-130). The author analyses these and similar questions and provides answers from a Christian perspective.

What I particularly like about the book *Observances and Observations* is its immense depth. Every paragraph contains words of wisdom, and every sentence needs to be read carefully to be fully comprehended.

What makes this volume valuable is its candid discussions about society, life, things that are deep within us that cause us to groan and laugh, reflect and ponder, and most of all, never to give up hope. It is well-written and reflects the author's empathy with our dilemmas and aspirations.

I highly recommend the reading of this book to all those who, in an age of uncertainty, are looking for a firm foundation for their lives; for those who, in a time of confusion, want to retain clarity of mind; and for those who, in a period of doubt, want to cling to the enduring truths of the Gospel.

This hard cover bilingual book may be obtained at \$30 from the Armenian Heritage Committee, 3922 Yorba Linda Blvd. Royal Oak, MI 48973.



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## CALENDAR

## MASSACHUSETTS

**JANUARY 24 – “Who Today Remembers” Portraits of Survivors** By Mary Hilt-exhibition opening and reception. The artist will be available for explanations of the pieces during the opening, Adele & Haig Der Manualian Galleries (3rd Floor of ALMA). 2-4 p.m. The event is free and open to the public and light refreshments will be served at the reception.

**JANUARY 30 – Letters to You Book Launch - Fashion Show - Art Exhibit: Author Zareh Zurabyan** signs books; Samuel Vartan fashion show and Lucie Abdalyan's art exhibit inspired by Letters to You. No admission charge. 7 p.m., Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel, 606 Congress St., Boston, (617) 338-4111.

**FEBRUARY 6 –Tsapik, Tsapik Children's program featuring Noun Karapetian and Zangakner** Performing Arts Ensemble. Sponsored by St. James Ereuni Armenian School. 4 p.m. at St. James Armenian Church Charles Mosesian Cultural & Youth Center - Keljik Hall, Watertown. Admission \$25; For tickets call Armine at 508-494-6008.

**FEBRUARY 12 – Panel Discussion, “Nagorno-Karabagh: Where Is It Headed and How Did It Get There?”** 7 p.m., Friday. Moderated by Dr. Anna Ohanyan, Stonehill College. Introduction to history by Dr. Simon Payaslian, Boston University. At Northeastern University McLeod Suites, Curry Student Center, 3rd floor, 346 Huntington Ave., Boston. Organized by NAASR and the Northeastern Armenian Students Association.

**FEBRUARY 20 – Armenian Business Network Career Day** for Armenian high school seniors and college students, Saturday, 1-6 p.m., Microsoft N.E.R.D. Center in Cambridge, MA. Meet prominent mentors from many professions. Don't miss out on this great opportunity! Registration required, Feb. 1 deadline. No charge. For details: [www.armenianbusinessnetwork.com](http://www.armenianbusinessnetwork.com).

**FEBRUARY 24 – Resilient Women Series: Armenian Women in Iran**, Wednesday, 7 p.m. reception, 8 p.m. presentation. Speaker: Ani Babaian-Khachikian. Co-sponsored by AIWA New England Affiliate and NAASR at Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic Street, Arlington, MA. RSVP at [aiwanewengland@aol.com](mailto:aiwanewengland@aol.com) or 617.501.1215

**MARCH 6 – Book Launch, commemorating International Women's Day: In the Ruins** by Zabel



**“Tsapik Tsapik” Children's program on February 6 will feature singer Noun Karapetian and the Zangakner Performing Arts Ensemble. The program is sponsored by St. James Ereuni Armenian School and will take place at 4 pm., St. James Armenian Church's Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, Keljik Hall, Watertown. Admission is \$25. For tickets, call Armenia at 508-494-6008.**

Yessayan. Sponsored by the Armenian International Women's Association. 2 p.m., Watertown Free Public Library.

**MAY 12 – Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston Presents** the Dr. Michael and Joyce Kolligian Distinguished Speaker Series, with John Prendergast, founder of “The Enough Project,” an initiative to end genocide and crimes against humanity, co-founder “The Sentry,” a new investigative initiative focused on dismantling the networks financing conflict and atrocities. 7 p.m. Thursday at Charles and Nevert Talanian Cultural Hall, Holy Trinity, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA Info: 617.354.0632

**SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 2 – 25th Anniversary Celebration**, Armenian International Women's Association. Charles Hotel, Cambridge.

**NOVEMBER 29 – Full Circle: The Art of Barry M. Martasian**, exhibition opening reception, 2 to 4 p.m., The Armenian Museum of America, the Adele & Haig Der Manuelian Galleries (3rd Floor). Watertown. Martasian's art is heavily influenced by graffiti, which he sees as the result of the innate human desire to leave a visual mark on the world. On view through January 17. Light refreshments will be served. Free and open to the public.

## NEW JERSEY

**MARCH 18 – Cultural Committee of St. Thomas Armenian Church presents A Night at the Opera**, Anoush by Tigranian, HD Opera with K. Kasbarian, D. Levonian, A. Garabedian, M. Andonian. Friday, 7:30 p.m., Atrium, 174 Essex Drive, Tenafly, NJ 07670. Wine and cheese reception. Donation \$10 adults & children. For reservations, please contact: Talar Sesetyan Sarafian: (201) 240 – 8541 or Church Office: (201) 567 – 5446.

## NEW YORK

**APRIL 5 – Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) presents Sahar Arzruni in Benefit Concert** “Together for Armenia,” Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. An evening of solo piano music to benefit the Vanadzor Old Age Home administered by FAR. Merkin Concert Hall - Kaufman Music Center, 129 West 67th Street, New York. Tickets \$35, will go on sale in February 2016. Please contact FAR for more info: [noune@farusa.org](mailto:noune@farusa.org) or 212.889.5150.

## Picasso Bust at Center of Custody Battle Between Gagosian and Qatar Royal Family

PICASSO, from page 9

married to Sheika al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, chairwoman of the Qatar Museums Authority, who has become one of the most powerful players in the art world. The Thani family has ruled the oil-rich state since its founding in 1850.

In court papers, Gagosian questions how Pelham managed to secure Widmaier-Picasso's “supposed consent to such an unreasonably low price,” referring to the \$42 million, and whether the Pelham agreement was ever valid, since it requires “full payment.”

After consulting with her daughter Diana, who reminded her mother of the offers in excess of \$100 million, Gagosian's papers say, Widmaier-Picasso contested the sale as “null and void,” returning the 6 million euros (roughly \$6.5 million) of the purchase price that Pelham had paid so far.

According to Pelham's court papers, Widmaier-Picasso's counsel, Sabine Cordesse, asked in April 2015 that the sale to the royal family be canceled. Pelham says Cordesse “told them that Widmaier-Picasso lacked mental capacity” to agree to the transaction “due to purported medical issues.” Cordesse, reached on Tuesday in Paris, declined to comment.

Pelham further asserts that its purchase of the sculpture was negotiated by Widmaier-Picasso's son, Olivier Widmaier-Picasso, “whom no one contends was ever cognitively impaired or had any interest other than negotiating a fair market value for the sculpture.”

Gagosian later made his deal with Diana Widmaier-Picasso, Pelham says, “in an attempt to thwart Pelham's rights because they sought a higher purchase price.”

Gagosian asserts that Maya Widmaier-Picasso agreed to sell the work to him in May for \$105.8 million, with

the understanding that he would resell it.

That same month, Pelham sued Widmaier-Picasso and Connery, Pissarro, Seydoux in Switzerland to enforce the sale. It then obtained a court order to prevent Widmaier-Picasso from moving the sculpture, an injunction which has been challenged and is under appeal.

Gagosian maintains that on October 2, 2015, title passed to him after his third payment to Widmaier-Picasso, and that he has to date paid \$79.7 million, or 75 percent of the purchase price.

The dealer added in court papers that he “did not learn anything” about Pelham's claim to the work until later that month, when Pelham – realizing that the disputed sculpture was in the MoMA show – alerted Gagosian that it had a “priority claim” to the work.

Glenn D. Lowry, MoMA's director, said he had no comment on the case.

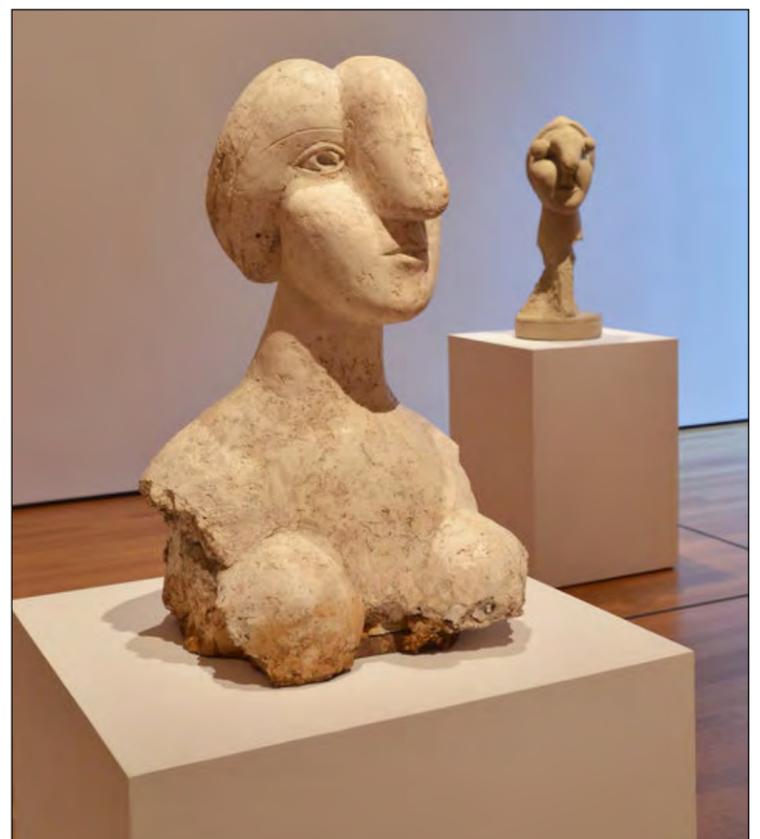
Experts say the dispute casts a shadow over a prized piece of art history. “It's regrettable that this has come to a quarrel between dealers and collectors,” said John Richardson, Picasso's longtime biographer. “It's a major work by Picasso.”

Since late November, Pelham says it has been trying to get the Gagosian Gallery to provide information regarding the sale.

“They continue to obfuscate the relevant facts,” Pelham charges.

Gagosian made clear that his dispute is with the Qataris' representative, not the royal family. “We have the highest respect for Sheik al Thani, a longtime friend of the Gallery,” the dealer said in a statement, “and regret that he has been unfairly drawn into this matter.”

(Doreen Carvajal contributed reporting from Paris.)



“Bust of a Woman” is currently on display at the Museum of Modern Art as part of the exhibition “Picasso Sculpture.” (Philip Greenberg for the *New York Times*)



## COMMENTARY

## COMMENTARY

# Sailing Along with Iran's Trade Winds

By Edmond Y. Azadian

During his last State of the Union address, President Barack Obama announced that another war had been avoided, referring to the Iran nuclear deal which began dismantling the sanctions imposed on Iran in return for the latter getting rid of its nuclear weapons. The historic accord was signed on July 14, 2015 in Vienna between six leading powers and Iran, and it took effect on Saturday, January 16, after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) certified Iran's compliance with the agreement regarding the country's nuclear program and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Thus the sanctions regime imposed on Iran by the United States has been substantially weakened.

The sanctions had been imposed by a presidential decree and by congressional action dating back to 1979, and later expanded in 1995. The first set can be lifted by the president but the latter will need congressional action, which may hit some hurdles down the road depending on any change in the configuration of the next congress.

There was certainly jubilation in Iran as well as a sigh of relief in the entire region, but some tough talk on the US presidential campaign trail. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had secured billions of dollars of additional US aid to Israel and had managed to divide the Israeli lobby in America, acquiesced only grudgingly to the fact. He continued to state that "Iran has not given up its nuclear ambitions" and that he would keep watching its actions closely. On the presidential campaign trail, Republican candidate Ted Cruz vowed to throw out the Iran nuclear deal on the first day he is in office, with his eyes focused on Netanyahu, rather than the US electorate.

President Obama was able to achieve the Iran deal against all odds, like the Cuban rapprochement, because he was able to read the war weariness of the public after the waste of trillions of dollars of US taxpayers' money and the precious blood of our youth in uniform. That war weariness was signaled in the successive defeats of the campaigns of John McCain and Mitt Romney, for whom a strong defense was a euphemism for entering yet another war, all under the guise of patriotism, while directing taxpayer money to the military industrial complex.

No nation in the world can match nor challenge American military supremacy in the foreseeable future. That is why Britain's opposition Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn is advocating the decommissioning of the UK's nuclear submarines, symbols of the waste of taxpayers' money.

Iran was on the military radar of the Bush-Cheney administration along with Iraq, Syria and Libya, which are enjoying the fruits of "democracy building" in their respective blood-baths.

Despite the demonization of the Tehran regime, the mullahs proved that they were competent to play the game of diplomacy and get their country out of political isolation.

The proven venue of diplomacy may also lead to a settlement of the Syrian nightmare, in which Tehran is a major player.

Incidentally, the West used and deepened the religious fault lines in the Middle East in order to fragment and pulverize several Arab countries. Despite the fact that those fault lines have historically existed, they exploded only in recent decades, which served interests other than those nations and led to a new profile of the region. However, ironically, the unintended consequence of the "divide and conquer" policy is that Iran became its major beneficiary, mobilizing the Islamic world within the Sunni-Shia divide.

At this time, Tehran enjoys great influence in Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen (Shiite Houthis) and among the Shiites of Kuwait. In Syria, Iran supports the Alawis, a Shiite branch. There are more than 4 million Shiites in Saudi Arabia, living right by the Saudi oil wells. Thus, Iran dominates the "Shiite crescent" in the region, opposed by Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel, at best odd bedfellows.

Iran has the eighth largest army in the world, with a population of 80 million and growing at the rate of one million a year.

The International Monetary Fund estimated that Iran's GDP for the year has been \$393.5 billion, a growth of 1 percent despite the sanctions. The forecast is that it will rise to 4.5-5 percent during 2016-2017.

As a result of lifting the sanctions, \$100 billion of frozen assets will be freed to boost its economy. With the lifting of the sanctions regime, Iran will pump 500,000 more barrels of oil daily to boost the total to 2 million barrels.

Tehran assures the members of OPEC that the additional pumping will not impact the oil market any further, since the major buyer will be China, which was already trading with Iran, despite the sanctions.

Armenia is the only country which has had stable friendly relations with Iran, and thus it is in a position to participate in all the positive ways which will link Iran to the world. In fact, it can act as a bridge between Iran and Europe.

"We welcome the start of the implementation of the agreement on Iran's nuclear program and the lifting of sanctions against Iran," said Armenia's Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian this week.

The Tehran government has already signaled that it is ready to further develop economic relations with Yerevan.

During a visit last October to Armenia, Iran's First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri discussed projects with Armenian leaders, telling them that the Iranian side is ready to boost Armenian-Iranian relations, "without limitations."

Besides the economic development between the two countries, Armenia will benefit from the reconfiguration of geopolitical realignments in the region.

In the first place, Iran is offering cheaper gas to Georgia. Should an agreement be reached between the two countries, the pipelines will run through Armenia. Also, because of economic necessity, Tbilisi has been siding with Baku, the source of its gas,

thus becoming the third member of the blockade imposed by Turkey and Azerbaijan. That blockade will be loosened if Georgia's interests are better served with Iran. Azerbaijan, whose currency, the manat, has suffered a dramatic drop recently, will further lose on the gas market with Iran's emergence as a major power in the region. And finally, Iran's perennial adversary, Turkey, will further lose ground in the region in addition to its confrontation with Russia.

Last August, Iran and Armenia

reached a final agreement on the construction of a new power transmission line which will boost the export of Armenian electricity to Iran, and which in turn will pay for the electricity with natural gas delivered through a pipeline which is used under capacity. Energy Minister Yervand Zakharyan has announced that with the unfreezing of the assets, Iran will be able to finance the construction of the hydroelectric plant on the Arax River. The \$350-million project had been shelved because of a lack of funds earlier.

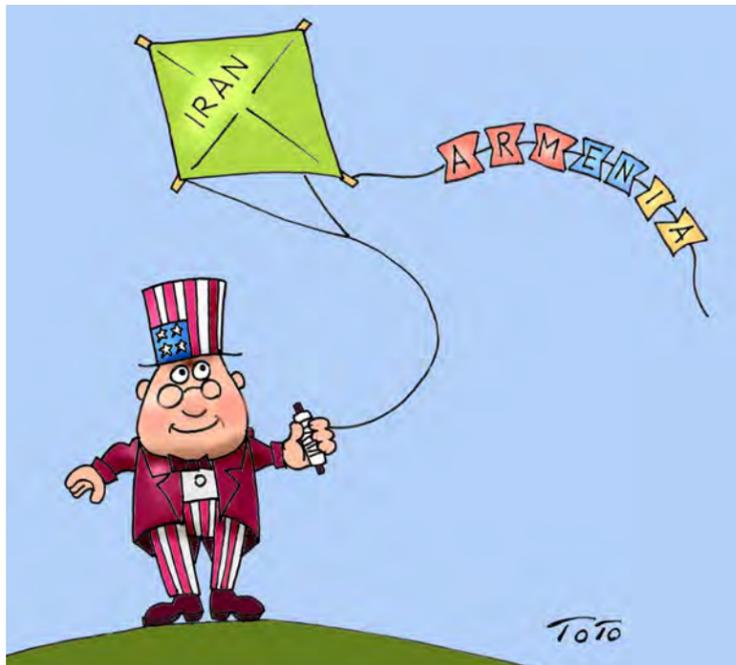
Armenia is dependent for its gas supply on GazProm of Russia. Now, with the availability of a larger Iranian gas market, Yerevan is able to bargain a lower rate with Russia.

Thus far, Armenia's exports to Iran have been limited because of the Eurasian Economic Union's high tariffs, which need to be negotiated between EEU members and Tehran to lower them to boost exports.

A North-South highway linking the Gulf countries to Europe has a better chance of being constructed through Armenia. That will also contribute to the rise of the tourism industry in the country.

Iran's political and economic emancipation is a bonanza to its neighboring countries. It remains for Yerevan to take advantage of this unique development to improve its economy, to stabilize the country and provide reason and hope to the population not to emigrate.

Political developments work in a fluid realm; they may change course any time for any reason. We have to sail with the favorable trade winds as long as they last.



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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. Haroutium Arzoumanian, Taleen Babayan, Diana Der Hovanesian, Philip Ketchian, Kevork Keushkerian, Harut Sassounian, Hagop Vartivarian, Naomi Zeytoonian

#### CORRESPONDENTS:

Armenia - Hagop Avedikian  
Boston - Nancy Kalajian  
Philadelphia - Lisa Manookian  
Berlin - Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

#### Contributing Photographers:

Jacob Demirdjian and Jirair Hovsepijan

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#### Baikar Association, Inc.

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

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E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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Baikar Association, Inc.

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## COMMENTARY



**My Turn**  
By Harut Sassounian

## Turkey was First Country to Recognize the Armenian Genocide – in 1918

The Armenian Genocide is rarely discussed in the Turkish Parliament; and even rarer are statements calling for its recognition.

On January 14, 2016, two of the three recently elected Armenian members of the Turkish Parliament boldly dared to raise the issue of the Armenian Genocide in their parliamentary remarks.

Selina Dogan, representing the opposition Kemalist CHP Party (Republican People's Party), made the following statement in Parliament: "Since this issue concerns not only Armenians but also Turkey, therefore, it should be raised in the Turkish Parliament and not in other parliaments. Otherwise, on every April 24, we will continue making trite statements and hastily rid this topic from our minds. I am convinced that none of us is interested in doing so. I would like to remind you that during a 2015 public rally in Erzurum, the Prime Minister clearly stated that the deportation is a Crime against Humanity."

Garo Paylan, representing the Kurdish opposition HDP Party, then took the floor and also spoke about the Armenian Genocide: "One hundred years ago the Armenian people were uprooted and exterminated by a decision of the State. My family – grandfather and his family – also suffered from these events. My grandfather was orphaned, having lost both parents. I am from the generation of orphans and leftovers of the sword, living in this land. My race is massacred."

As Paylan was speaking, several members of Parliament shouted in disapproval. Baki Shimshek, member of the ultranationalist opposition MHP Party, warned: "We are in the Turkish National Assembly. No one can say that genocide was committed. Such rudeness is unacceptable!"

Although this was an unusual discussion, it was not the first time that affirmative statements were made in the Turkish Parliament on the Armenian Genocide. In November 2014, Sebahat Tuncel of HDP Party proposed a resolution condemning the Armenian Genocide. Tuncel urged Pres. Erdogan to come to the Parliament to acknowledge and apologize for the Armenian Genocide and other mass crimes. The resolution also asked Erdogan to repeat his apology publicly at one of the sites of mass killings, and declare April 24 as an official Day of Mourning. In addition, the Parliament was requested to form a Truth Commission and make public all documents in state archives pertaining to these mass crimes. Finally, the proposed resolution sought moral and material restitution for descendants of the victims. Not surprisingly, Tuncel's resolution was quickly suppressed, never to see the light of day again!

As I reported over a year ago, Tuncel's proposal was not the first time that a resolution was submitted to the Turkish Parliament to recognize the Armenian Genocide. On November 4, 1918, the newly-constituted Ottoman

Turkish Parliament discussed at length the crimes committed by the Young Turk Government, after a motion was presented stating: "A population of one million people guilty of nothing except belonging to the Armenian nation were massacred and exterminated, including even women and children." In response, Minister of Interior Ali Fethi Okyar declared: "It is the intention of the government to cure every single injustice done up until now, as far as the means allow, to make possible the return to their homes of those sent into exile, and to compensate for their material loss as far as possible."

As a result of this motion, a Parliamentary Investigative Committee was set up to collect all relevant documents describing the actions of those responsible for what was then called, "Armenian deportations and massacres." The evidence was turned over to the Turkish Military Tribunal and those found guilty were hanged or given lengthy prison sentences.

In addition to this parliamentary motion, we need to recall the words of Kemal Ataturk, first President of the Republic of Turkey, who was quoted by the *Los Angeles Examiner* on August 1, 1926, as stating: "These leftovers from the former Young Turk Party who should have been made to account for the lives of millions of our Christian subjects who were ruthlessly driven en masse from their homes and massacred."

The combination of the 1918 Parliamentary motion, the guilty verdicts of the Turkish Military Tribunals, and the damning words of President Kemal Ataturk qualify Turkey as the first country that recognized the Armenian Genocide!

Consequently, rather than seeking recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey, Armenians should demand restitution for all their losses, as promised 98 years ago by Minister of Interior Fethi Okyar!

# Turkey Walks Diplomatic Tightrope in Iran-Saudi Showdown

By Suraj Sharma

**T**URKEY must avoid taking sides in the current Saudi-Iran dispute to avoid being fully dragged into the sectarian quagmire in the Middle East, analysts have said.

Simmering tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia boiled over on the first weekend of January after Riyadh executed 47 people, including Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr.

Despite Turkey having friendly relations with both countries, the government in Ankara has moved closer to the Saudis since the accession of King Salman last year; slamming Iran's alleged involvement in Yemen, joining a Saudi-led "anti-terrorism" alliance and last week setting up a "strategic cooperation council".

Relations with Tehran, meanwhile, have strained due to Yemen, Iran's support of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and its interventions in Iraq.

But analysts warned that Ankara must resist any attempts by Saudi Arabia to fully involve it in its direct dispute with Iran, a move that could prove costly to Turkish diplomacy as well as its economy.

Ahmet Kasim Han, a professor of international relations at Istanbul's Kadir Has University, said Turkey had too much at stake to involve itself in another regional dispute.

"Turkey's relations with its number one gas provider Russia are frozen. It is very unlikely that Ankara will want to ruffle the feathers of its second-largest gas supplier, Iran, at this point," Han told Middle East Eye (MEE).

"I don't see how Ankara could be keen to add another headache to an already long list

caused by its foreign policy positions of late. Under normal circumstances I don't see the Saudis being able to drag Turkey into this conflict."

However, he added that might change "given the situation in the Middle East is very fluid".

### Benefits of neutrality

Kerem Alkin, a macroeconomist and professor at Istanbul's Medipol University, believes Turkey is well aware of the advantages of adopting a neutral position in the region and will resist Saudi attempts to drag it into the conflict as long as Iran doesn't do anything to further sour relations with Ankara.

"We just need to look back at the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988. Turkey maintained

ing tougher times and is unlikely to jeopardize them now and risk even more uncertainty along its already volatile borders."

In an address to his party's MPs on January 5, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said: "We expect all countries in the region to show common sense and take steps aimed at easing the tensions in the region."

He added: "As Turkey, we are ready to make any effort to solve the problems between the two countries."

Earlier on January 4, Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulus criticized both Saudi Arabia and Iran and called for calm.

Apart from chastising Iran for not providing sufficient protection for foreign diplomatic missions on its territory, he also criticized the Saudis for political executions, keeping Ankara on the same page as its

ferent picture, according to Han.

In Han's view, there is a convergence and overlapping of Israeli and unofficial Saudi foreign policy aims, which suits Turkey. Han said he believed recent comments by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan explaining how much Israel and Turkey needed each other in the region point to Ankara's longer term plans.

"We know that Israeli and unofficial Saudi foreign policy overlap and Turkey will try to adjust its policies and fall in tune with those two countries, thus forming an anti-Iran alliance in the mid to long term," said Han.

Ever since Turkish-Russian relations nosedived in November 2015 after the shooting down of a Russian jet, Ankara has been rattled and fears an expanding Russian-Iranian alliance that could leave it isolated in the region.

But most analysts agree that Turkey has no option other than adopting a non-sectarian and neutral position at the moment as the other two regional heavyweights collide. The missed economic opportunity alone by shunning Iran just as it is about to open up to the outside world would be a blow that Ankara can ill afford.

Regardless of the financial incentive that close relations with the Saudis brings in terms

of investments in the economy, Turkey needs to ensure that it doesn't damage its relations with Iran beyond the point of repair in order to reap the economic benefits of its years of friendly ties with Tehran.

"Once nuclear-related sanctions on Iran are lifted, Turkish firms involved in manufacturing, construction, retail and so many other sectors will find themselves in a prime position to take advantage of an untapped market of 80 million people," said Alkin.

"If Turkey wants to attain its lofty centennial goals in 2023, it will have to have all these markets rather than substituting one lost market with another," said Alkin.

(This commentary originally appeared in Middle East Eye.)

Ever since Turkish-Russian relations nosedived in November 2015 after the shooting down of a Russian jet, Ankara has been rattled and fears an expanding Russian-Iranian alliance that could leave it isolated in the region.

strict neutrality and was rewarded with massive export volumes to both countries," Alkin told MEE.

"If Iran wants to see Turkish neutrality, it too will have to adopt a neutral position in the Turkey-Russia dispute. Otherwise there is a likelihood that Turkey will take sides regardless of its natural inclinations," said Alkin.

Mensur Akgun, the chairman of the international relations department at Istanbul's Kultur University, said he believed it was in Turkey's interest to maintain amicable ties with Iran, which it shares a border with.

"All statements thus far from government officials suggest that Turkey is going to maintain a balance and call on both sides to defuse tensions," Akgun told MEE. "Turkey has maintained amicable ties with Iran dur-

Western and NATO allies.

Akgun also believes Turkey will not be forced into siding with Saudi Arabia despite their shared views on Syria since it considers Qatar as its main ally in the Gulf.

"Qatar is the key country for Turkey among the Gulf states. Just like Doha has refrained from taking sides, I think Turkey too will refrain from taking sides in this situation," he said.

### Longer term strategies

While Turkey will avoid siding with the Saudis in the short term because it will hurt it both economically and diplomatically – and also because the United States appears keen to keep itself out of this crisis – the medium to long-term represents a totally dif-



# Armenian Honorary Consulate Opens in Tirana

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – An Armenian honorary consulate opened in the capital of Albania, Tirana, according to the Albanian Telegraphic Agency. Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia Varuzhan Piranjani was presented in Tirana during a special ceremony with the participation of representatives from Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other ministries, honorary consuls of some countries, representatives of media and business, and the Armenian community in Albania. The opening of the honorary consulate will help restructure cooperation between the two countries in the area of joint economic development, trade and tourism exchanges, and the implementation of various projects.

In his speech, Piranjani stressed the need to deepen interstate cooperation between the two countries while highlighting the already excellent relations. According to him, tourism is an area which should be developed by both countries. These two countries, which have almost the same geographical size and population, and whose languages come from the family of Indo-European languages but are unique, are subjects of important historic and linguistic studies.

“Armenia is considered as the first country in the world to embrace Christianity in the fourth century and among the first countries with a unique alphabet since the fifth century. Just these two historic clues suffice to understand the role and contribution of Armenia and the Armenians [to the world]. This is the first time in history that Armenia has an honorary consul in Albania. Therefore I feel honored but also feel the responsibility for the task I have been assigned. Having an Armenian father and an Albanian mother will make me more responsibly and passionately involved in this duty,” Piranjani said.

The appointment of an honorary consul is a big step forward in establishing this cooperation. Piranjani expressed his confidence that this cooperation will come to fruition. The first steps taken so far include the publication of dictionaries and books, the production of documentaries on the Armenian community in Albania, meetings involving the Armenian community and representatives of Armenia, friendly soccer matches, and participation in athletics and weightlifting events.

Piranjani added that Armenia has recently seen important changes in all walks of life, such as economy, culture, modernization of life and youth as well as more openness to the world, upgraded infrastructure and increase in the number of tourists. In Piranjani’s opinion, Armenia, with its mountainous terrain and countless historic sites and museums which bear testimony to an ancient and rich culture, and Albania, with its mild weather and enchanting coastline, have a lot to offer to the citizens of each other’s countries. The organization of events such as artistic exhibitions, friendly matches and shows will be a great opportunity to promote the cultural treasury of both countries.

The presentation of available opportunities and the provision of incentives for investments in Armenia and Albania will be promoted through the chambers of commerce of both countries as well as through participation in fairs in Armenia and Albania, as in the case of the agri-food industry.

The recent match between the national soccer teams was another opportunity to get to know Armenia and Albania on a mutual basis. Armenia’s honorary consul in Albania stressed that the Armenian Diaspora is another important factor for Armenia given that around 8 million Armenians are part of its Diaspora. Apart from their significant contribution to the country’s economy, they have become the best ambassadors of Armenia and Armenians overseas, especially with prominent people such as artists, businessmen, politicians, sportsmen and sportswomen such as the great Charles Aznavour.

The Armenian community in Albania has been and remains a small but solid community. There are roughly 30-35 families of Armenian descent who have preserved a good part of their traditions and in some cases even the Armenian language. This small community has had the chance to live among the Albanians who have been very hospitable from their

arrival in Albania to this day.

Piranjani said, “They found in Albania their second home and were easily integrated in the Albanian society for which they will be always grateful to the Albanians.” Almost all members of this community have managed to get a university education and made a name for themselves in professions as diverse as university teachers, engineers, doctors, artists and economists, and, above all, are hardworking and decent people, he continued.

“Piranjani will spare no effort to boost and encourage the relations between Armenia and Albania in a constructive fashion,” said the ambassador of Armenia to Albania, Gagik Ghalatchian (resident in Greece). His message reads, “On behalf of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia and on my personal name, I wish to congratulate you and the Armenian community in Albania on the opening of the Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Armenia in Tirana.”

Ghalatchian continued, “It is our desire to deepen bilateral cooperation with Albania in all areas of mutual interest and the opening of the Honorary Consulate is a practical and fundamental step in this direction. I am fully confident that the Honorary Consulate will make a significant contribution to development of trade, economic and scientific ties between the two countries.”

The head of Armenian community in Albania, Xovasar Çakmakxhian, in his address to the guests looked back on the history of this community in Albania. It originated in 1914-1915 and 1920-1922. The first two Armenians who set foot in Albania came from the Ballxhian and Bodikian families as part of the Ottoman army in 1913. After Albania’s declaration of independence, they settled in Albania to start their families by marrying Albanian women and living in Elbasan.

The year 1915 saw the first wave of Armenians coming en masse via Greece and Syria to escape the persecution of the Turks. At that time many Armenians were forced to settle in different countries all over the world. A large number settled in France: over three hundred Armenians. In 1922-1924 during King Zog I’s reign around 30-50 Armenian families were accommodated in Albania. At the outset, one part of the Armenians engaged in handicrafts and others in the coffee trade. Many of them were involved in intellectual activities.

Poturlian (Mokini) worked as the personal doctor of Zog. After the 1990s, Armenians started to establish contacts with other communities abroad, mainly with their Diaspora in Greece and that in France which was bigger in size. In Albania the Armenians created the Cultural Association of Armenians in Albania.

In 1993, Archbishop Kiud Nakkashian of the Armenian Church in France made a visit to Albania where he gathered together the Armenian community in a meeting held in St. Anoni Church in Tirana. “Armenians have given great hospitality to the Albanians,” Xovasar says. The relations between this community and the Albanian population have been very good, which is reflected not only in the excellent hospitality but also in mixed marriages, aid and mutual respect.

Armenians have preserved their traditions for many years as well as the language, religion and holidays. Unlike the rest of the world who celebrate Christmas on December 25, Armenians mark this day on January 6 as they belong to a different denomination, new for Albanians. They have preserved the Armenian language. Some of them bear Armenian nationality, as Xovasar does. A special tradition handed down from generation to generation is the wedding. Before the bride enters the house, a rooster will be sacrificed on her feet and afterwards she has to break with one foot a plate set down on her feet.

Today there are around 800 Armenians living in Albania. Xovasar considers himself to be “100 percent Armenian due to his Armenian parents but also “100 percent Albanian” because he was born and raised in Albania where he has built everything up. According to a study conducted by Gjin Varfi, in the Armenian village of Vlora, there is a church which is presumed to have been built by an

Armenian community in Albania. The St. Koll Church is thought to originate from Armenia because it has been built in the style of Armenian churches which feature pointed domes. The Byzantine period when it was built

(the 11th-12th centuries) could have been the time when Armenians started to settle there as part of the movements within the territories of Byzantine Empire. This church is the first of its kind in the Albanian territories.

## DC Community Bids Farewell to Ambassador Tigran Sargsyan

FAREWELL, from page 1

Yerevan, director of Central Bank of Armenia, prime minister of Armenia and as ambassador to the United States, which embodies his values as religious, economic expert and politician. On behalf of Armenian Assembly, member of Board of Trustees Annie Totah thanked the ambassador for his cooperation during his short tenure in Washington and wished him success in his new leadership endeavor.

Also speaking at the program were Rita Balian and Father Hovsep Karapetian, pastor of St. Mary Church.

Ambassador Sargsyan thanked the Armenian Community of Greater Washington for their unconditional support given to Armenia, for their complete

cooperation during the Centennial activities dedicated to the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide last May when the hierarchy of the Armenian Nation, President Serge Sargsyan, and Holy Fathers Karekin II and Aram I were visiting Washington.

Ambassador Sargsyan has been Chairman of Armenia’s Central bank from 1998 to 2008 and from 2008 to 2014, Prime Minister of Armenia.

On February 1, Mr. Grigor Hovhannisyian, former Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles and Ambassador in Mexico will assume his duties as the new Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to the USA.



From left Kevork Marashlian, Ambassador Sargsyan with his son Margos, Armen Sargsyan, Armenia’s Ambassador to China, and Varaztad Avoyan

## Senior Obama Aide Visits Armenia

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Security Council, arrived in Yerevan the day after visiting Baku and holding talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

The Armenian presidential press office said Sargsyan discussed with Kupchan a range of issues, including the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, broader regional security and Armenia’s relations with NATO and the European Union. It quoted Sargsyan as saying that US-Armenian relations have “constantly developed” since the early 1990s.

“The President underscored the importance of the US assistance to Armenia’s economic development, reforms, democratization and civil society, as well as the US government’s continuous efforts to maintain stability in the region,” the office added in a statement.

According to the statement, Kupchan, for his part, praised Armenia’s participation in the NATO-led missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo. Sargsyan was among some 50 heads of state and government who were invited by Obama to a UN peacekeeping summit held in New York in September. Addressing the summit, the Armenian leader affirmed Yerevan’s readiness to join more peacekeeping missions abroad in the near future.

Kupchan also held separate talks in Yerevan with Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian. The Armenian Foreign Ministry said he described

bilateral ties as “strong” and reaffirmed Washington’s commitment to “a free, prosperous and secure Armenia at peace with its neighbors.”

The official Armenian sources gave no details of Kupchan’s discussions with Sargsyan and Nalbandian on the unresolved Karabagh conflict. The issue was also on the agenda of his talks with Aliyev.

The US official visited Azerbaijan more than a month after Obama reportedly sent a letter to Aliyev inviting him to a global nuclear security summit that will begin in Washington on March 31. Aliyev’s chief foreign policy aide, Novruz Mammadov, was quoted by Azerbaijani media as saying on Thursday that the letter also contained “thoughts on ways of resolving the Karabagh conflict.” Mammadov did not elaborate.

It is not yet known whether Sargsyan too has been invited to the summit to be hosted by Obama.

The United States co-heads the OSCE’s Minsk Group on Karabagh along with Russia and France. Its chief Karabagh negotiator, James Warlick, said earlier this month that the conflicting parties and the three mediating powers should “intensify work towards a negotiated settlement in 2016.”

“The parties say they are willing. If not now, when?” Warlick said.