

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

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## Pope Francis Visits Armenia



An official delegation greets Pope Francis in Yerevan, from left Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, and President Serzh Sargsyan and his wife, Rita

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) – Pope Francis returned to the Vatican after concluding a successful visit to Armenia, which delighted the small nation as well as Armenians around the world.

The world should never forget nor minimize the Ottoman-era slaughter of Armenians, Pope Francis declared Saturday, June 25, even as he urged Armenians to infuse their collective memory with love so they can find peace and reconcile with Turkey.

Turkey, though, did not budge. In its first reaction to the Roman Catholic Church leader's recognition of the 1915 "genocide," Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Nurettin Canikli called the comments "greatly unfortunate" and said they bore the hallmarks of the "mentality of the Crusades."

Francis began his second day in Armenia by paying his respects at the country's imposing genocide memorial and greeting descendants of survivors of the 1915 massacres, who have been emboldened by his comments upon arrival that the slaughter of Armenians a century ago was a planned "genocide" meant to annihilate an entire people.

The pontiff presented a wreath at the memorial and stood, head bowed, in silent prayer before an eternal flame as priests blessed him with incense and a choir sang haunting hymns.

"Here I pray with sorrow in my heart, so that a tragedy like

this never again occurs, so that humanity will never forget and will know how to

see POPE, page 9



Pope Francis plants a tree at the Armenians Genocide Museum and Memorial.

### A Period of Disunity: The ADL Experiences Difficulties in Overcoming Division in Its Ranks

The division in the ranks of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) still continues, despite the efforts made by the ADL Reform and Unity Movement. The Reform and Unity Movement convened two consultative meetings in Yerevan in October 2015 and April 2016 at which ADL representatives from all regions of the world were present. In light of profound developments in Armenian life and motivated by imperative and immediate needs, they decided to cooperate with various factions of the ADL. Unfortunately, another convocation was convened in Yerevan in May 2016 which continued to pursue the unhappy policy of political party division.

see DISUNITY, page 3

### DECLARATION

Recognizing the new dynamics in the Armenian Diaspora and the reality of the Republic of Armenia with the Ramgavar Party of Armenia fully integrated into its political, social and cultural fabric;

Considering the recent troubled state of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party-Ramgavar in the Diaspora and the recently established (2015) Reform and Unity Movement with the sole purpose to unite and reorganize the Party along modern and sustainable lines in order to continue to be relevant to the political realities in



ADL Reform and Unity Movement leaders meeting in New Jersey

Armenia, Artsakh and the Diaspora;

Cognizant of the fact that many regional districts, chapters and concerned individuals heeded the call of the Reform and Unity Movement to reform and unite the see DECLARATION, page 20

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Mirror-Spectator Annual Summer Break

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will close for two weeks in July, for its annual summer vacation break. The last issue before vacation will be that of July 2, while the first issue after the break will be that of July 23.

The office will close on Friday, July 1, and reopen on Monday, July 18. All press releases or calendar items can be sent to [editor@mirrorspectator.com](mailto:editor@mirrorspectator.com).

### Mkhitaryan May Be Traded to Manchester United

DORTMUND, Germany (Public Radio of Armenia) – Borussia Dortmund chief executive Hans-Joachim Watzke has admitted that they will decide Henrikh Mkhitaryan's future soon, the *Daily Star* reports.

Manchester United are closing in on the Armenian midfielder and Watzke confirmed that a new bid had arrived.

Dortmund were desperate to keep hold of the 27-year-old but an offer in the region of £33m looks like it has convinced them to sell.

They wanted him to stay and see out the last 12 months of his contract but agent Mino Raiola went into overdrive in a bid to get him out.

### Moscow Court Upholds Hayrapetyan Sentence

MOSCOW (PanArmenian.net) – The Moscow City Court on Tuesday, June 28, upheld a four-year prison sentence given to prominent Armenian businessman Levon Hayrapetyan for embezzlement of \$700,000, RAPSI reports from the courtroom.

The sentence thus came into force.

In April, Hayrapetyan was found guilty of stealing \$700,000 from the mother of former Bashkortostan senator Igor Izmaytyev sentenced to life for terrorism. In addition to the prison sentence Hayrapetyan was ordered to pay the victim 20.8 million rubles (about \$320,000).

According to investigators, he had misled the woman by promising a reduced sentence for her son when he could not influence the judgment.

The businessman has pleaded not guilty. According to his lawyer, the case has been a frame-up.

Hayrapetyan also stands charged with involvement in an embezzlement case under which Ural Rakhimov, son of the former head of Bashkortostan Murtaza Rakhimov, sold Bashneft, a mid-sized oil company he headed for three years, to the oil-to-telecoms conglomerate Sistema in 2009 at a huge "discount" of \$500 million.

Hayrapetyan holds dual citizenship, has assets abroad and was until recently living in Monaco.

## INSIDE

### Papal Revolution

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Martakert Celebrates Liberation Anniversary

STEPANAKERT, Karabagh (Public Radio of Armenia) – Martakert celebrated the 23th anniversary of its liberation on June 28. The day started with a military march. Authorities and citizens of Martakert and surrounding regions laid flowers at the monument of glory and visited the museum of memory of the victims of 1992-1994 military actions.

A concert featuring a group of singers from Armenia took place at the culture house of the city later in the day. The organizer of the initiative was Shushan Petrosyan, a long-standing friend of Martakert.

The events of April this year brought about new destructions, fifteen houses were completely ruined, more than 100 were damaged.

## Financial Assistance For 100 Families From Syria

ECHMIADZIN – On June 20, on the International Day of Refugees, with the blessings of Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, the Social Services Office of Mother See provided financial assistance to 100 needy Syrian families.

The event organized jointly with the Aleppo patriotic charity organization, began with the Lord's Prayer. Rev. Markos Mangasaryan, director of the Social Services Office of Mother See made remarks and reflected on the issues of the Syrian-Armenians who have found shelter in the Homeland. He stated that the needs and concerns of the Syrian-Armenians are constantly under the care and attention of the Armenian Church and personally attended to by His Holiness.

The event was also attended by Rev. Isahak Poghosyan, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Bulgaria.

## Artsakh Foreign Minister Meets CA Delegation

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic Karen Mirzoyan received member of the City Council of Glendale, former Mayor of Glendale Zareh Sinanyan and former member of the California State Legislature, candidate for California State Senate from Democratic Party Anthony Portantino on June 27.

The press service of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh) Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that during the meeting, Mirzoyan briefed the visitors on the current issues of the NKR foreign policy agenda, in particular, the situation created as a result of the military aggression by Azerbaijan in early April. Mirzoyan also touched upon the issues related to the intensification of ties and relations of the NKR with the outer world. Mirzoyan expressed his satisfaction with the adoption of the resolution by the California State Legislature supporting the right to self-determination of the people of Artsakh and underlined the importance of strengthening and developing friendly ties between the cities of Artsakh and California.

## Lawyers Demand Release of Oppositionist

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Lawyers for Zhirayr Sefilian demanded on June 28 his immediate release from prison, insisting that the radical opposition politician arrested last week did not plan to mount an armed revolt against Armenia's government.

Sefilian was taken into custody on May 20 for allegedly acquiring large quantities of weapons and cobbling together an attack squad with the aim of seizing government buildings and other important facilities in Yerevan.

Armenian law-enforcement authorities also announced the arrest of six other individuals. The case against Sefilian is apparently based on testimony given by some of them. The oppositionist and other leading members of his New Armenia Public Salvation Front, a radical opposition alliance, deny the charges as politically motivated.

# Volunteers Leave a Green Trace in Armenia

By Ani Melkonian

YEREVAN – The Armenia Tree Project is not just any environmental non-governmental organization (NGO). It is one of those great stories you wish you could be a part of; a story set in the early 1990s about an Armenian-



Volunteer Natalie Shahbol planting her first tree with ATP at Yerevan's Pokr Mher Military Educational Complex

American activist named Carolyn Mugar who had the wisdom and foresight to start an organization that would work to prevent Armenia from desertification.

Flash-forward 22 years later and the organization is responsible for planting more than five million trees throughout Armenia and Artsakh. ATP has created hundreds of green jobs in Armenia and even taken important strides in the sphere of environmental education. Its mission is larger than life: planting and caring for trees, these mystic beings without which life on earth would not be possible.

The story has inspired thousands of

“Partnerships multiply the reach, the impact and the value that each organization creates. Our 12 year collaboration with ATP embodies this spirit,” said Birthright Armenia Country Director Sevan Kabakian.

“Volunteering with ATP offers the perfect opportunity to give back and make a difference. It makes for a rich and diverse experience. Whether you're look-

ing to learn and see more of Armenia, exchange skills, work with village residents, or help educate children in the ways of the environment,” explains

Communications and Outreach Manager Kristine Hovsepyan, who also manages ATP's volunteer program. “Whether you're a ‘treehugger’ or just someone who cares about nature and people, ATP has a green job for you.”

There are several areas where volunteers can assist ATP: in the Community Tree Planting program, the Forestry division, the Environmental Education department, the PR department or at one of ATP's tree nurseries.

Natalie Shahbol, a water science major from California, was the latest ATP volunteer from Birthright. During her two-month stay Shahbol went to Karin village on a weekly basis to assist with lessons at the Michael and Virginia Ohanian Environmental Education Center. Her activities included assisting the teacher, preparing presentations, and conducting games and activities for visiting schoolchildren.

“Having the chance to interact and learn from students has to be one of my favorite parts of volunteering at ATP,” said Shahbol.

Details about ATP's volunteer program are posted on the “Get Involved” tab of their website. Typically, volunteers

in Armenia in order to be able to volunteer for ATP, and placement depends on the candidate's background and specific area of interest which should be outlined in their ATP application form. “When it comes to non-profits, every small action contributes to something bigger. Ultimately, when volunteering for ATP you are volunteering in the greening of Armenia so if the cause strikes a chord with you then be prepared to get your hands and shoes muddy,” notes Hovsepyan. “If this speaks to you then it's time to sign up and help create a greener, more sustainable Armenia.”

## Oskanian's Party Vows to Fight For 'Regime Change'

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Former Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian called for an end to President Serzh Sargsyan's rule and sweeping political and economic reforms in Armenia as his new political party held its founding congress on Friday, June 17.

“We will be ready to cooperate with all those political forces, organizations and individuals that want achieve regime change and implement radical changes in the country,” Oskanian said after being formally elected chairman of the party called Hamakhmbum (Consolidation).

Oskanian and several other senior members of the party were previously affiliated with the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK), the second largest parliamentary force. They quit the BHK last year after its founding leader, Gagik Tsarukian, was forced into political retirement following a standoff with Sargsyan. They are regarded by some observers as loyalists of former President Robert Kocharian.

Oskanian again insisted that Kocharian, who is very critical of the current Armenian government, is not behind the new opposition party. But he did not rule out the possibility of cooperation with the ex-president.

In his speech at the Hamakhmbum congress, Oskanian deplored what he called a lack of democracy, press freedom, judicial independence and “equal conditions” for doing business in the country. “We can constantly pretend that we are a democratic state with a free [market-based] economy but the fact is that we are not,” he said.

“For example, if you do business you will feel on your skin on a daily basis that conditions are not equal, that there is no competition, and that you cannot be sure about the safety of your holdings,” he said.

Kocharian faced similar accusations by his political opponents throughout his rule from 1998-2008. Oskanian served as foreign minister during that decade.

The Syrian-born former minister, who lived in the United States before relocating to Armenia in 1990, promised that his party will embark on “radical reforms” if it succeeds in coming to power.



A group of volunteers from Birthright Armenia helped ATP establish a small community forest in Paruyr Sevak Village.

people as well as organizations such as Birthright Armenia, Armenian Volunteer Corps and the US Peace Corps, whose volunteers have offered their time and skills to ATP over the years.

Birthright Armenia in particular aims to tie diasporan youth to the homeland and to strengthen their identity through volunteer service and internships. So, naturally, ATP and Birthright have collaborated for many years.

are required to be a part of the Birthright Armenia program, which provides some financial support and structure including homestay housing, language training and a network of other volunteers who participate in excursions and group events.

Candidates for the ATP program must be 20-32 years old and must have graduated from high school. Candidates must also have a minimum stay of four weeks



## ARMENIA

# A Period of Disunity: The ADL Experiences Difficulties in Overcoming Division in Its Ranks

DISUNITY, from page 1

Meanwhile, following the April 2016 Reform and Unity Movement conference, the French-Armenian newspaper *Nor Haratch* printed an interview conducted by Jirair Tcholakian with American ADL leader Hagop Vartivarian, who is also chairman of the Press Committee of the ADL District Committee of the US and Canada, on May 21. The same interview appeared on June 11 in the Istanbul Armenian newspaper *Jamanak*, with introductory comments by the editor of the latter paper, Ara Kochunyan.

The interview is published below in translation. It contains, in addition to information on the ADL division, reflections on important contemporary issues concerning Armenia and the diaspora.

**From April 19 to 21, the ADL Reform and Unity Movement held its second conference in Yerevan. A communiqué was published on this occasion which announced that the negotiations between representatives of the Reform and Unity Movement and the leaders of the previous ADL Central Executive did not yield results. Could you express concisely why there is this issue? What is it in historical developments which has taken an irreconcilable course?**

To be honest, over the last 25 years, or, in other words, since the independence of the third Republic of Armenia, the ADL has not been able to regain its balance. It took decades, under the political conditions of the diaspora, for us to be able to establish amicable cooperation with the state authorities of Soviet Armenia despite the well-known obstacles of the Cold War. The rapid collapse of the Soviet order surprised not only our Armenian political and philanthropic institutions which were close to the homeland, but even the population living in Armenia.

Despite these conditions, the ADL established its structures in Armenia and turned into the second largest political force in the National Assembly. Unfortunately, the political authorities of the time in Armenia played a negative role concerning the traditional Armenian political parties, and as a result, we remained distant for a long time from the true political arena of Armenia. We were unable to rally our structures and rank and file under a single flag with the necessary force and instructions because the internal disciplinary structure of the ADL is more liberal and democratic. Slowly, the relations we cultivated for years with likeminded collaborating organizations fell apart, and, as a consequence, unfortunately an internal crisis began to take form. Even after eight consecutive representative assemblies, it remains unsolved.

The crisis does not concern a division in ideological views – fortunately. Otherwise, the party would have been divided into two a long time ago. Taking this as a point of departure, the two main factions over at least the last three years have had consultative meetings in order to seek paths or means to restoring the unity of the party. Let me also say that serious breaches of the bylaws were made by the ADL central executive through the unnecessary and unlawful geographical division of districts in order to assure the majority vote in the representative assemblies, which further aggravated relations between the two sides.

This sad state of affairs plunged our members into despair, and, even worse, indifference. The economic power of the party remains in the hands of other structures not subject to the central executive. Consequently, the central executive does not possess great financial means and is condemned to inactivity. It does not have influence on the press and other important mass means of communication to the extent that it does not even have an address for its physical headquarters. On the other hand, our ADL structures in Armenia continue their close collaboration with bodies not subject to the party center. It is under these conditions that in May an attempt will be made to convene the 27th General Representative Assembly of the ADL. They had already postponed the convoking of a general assembly which was to take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina last fall.

Meanwhile, in April [2016] the second convocation of the Reform and Unity Movement was held in Yerevan, and had positive results. The Movement could have announced the formation of a central executive, considering the majority of representatives present from various districts, but

because those present were more concerned with the future of the ADL, they did not take this step. They instead wished for dialogue to continue, and lead to the desired final unity.

**The ADL has always been supportive of the authorities of the Republic of Armenia, irrespective of the regime. Since independence, taking into consideration the political vicissitudes of the country, has the unfailing support of the ADL for the Armenian authorities altered at all? Has it been affected by internal divisions or questioning?**

It is a proven fact that the ADL, whether during the first, second, or now, third Armenian republics, has demonstrated unreserved and devoted cooperation. With no connection with the psychologically unhealthy state of wanting to be a part of the regime, we have extended our fraternal hand with the concern to be helpful to Armenia and our people regardless of any ideological differences with the people who are at the head of that regime. You know that in 1920, the ADL planned to purchase a fleet of 20 war planes from England which it was going to send to Yerevan, but the change in regime led to the failure of this plan [because of the English], and so we lost what was a very large sum of money for that time.

As far as the contemporary authorities are concerned, let me say that during the days of the signing of the Protocols with Turkey, we expressed our agreement concerning it. Meanwhile, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), which today collaborates with the Republican Party [of Armenia], greeted the president of our republic, Serzh Sargsyan, with hostile demonstrations when the latter came to Los Angeles. In large cities like New York, Cairo, Montreal and Los Angeles, the ADL organized meetings in support of the president. I am sure that when final unity is reestablished within our political party, we will again fortify our presence in the government as a positive force and a well-balanced political manifestation.

**As a member of the executive of the ADL, how would you imagine the economic revival of Armenia? What are the prospects?**

We must accept that the economic crisis in Armenia is not a unique situation. I am sure that you are well aware that it is a consequence of the depressed world economic condition, without even taking into consideration the unique difficulties of our homeland connected with the blockade, the fighting in Artsakh, the penalties being exacted against Russia by the West, and other factors independent of Armenia.

Despite all this, unfortunately the indifference of the oligarchs concerning this situation continues. They continue to exploit the wealth of the country in a one-sided manner without consideration of the rights of the people. As in the case of other formerly Soviet countries, in Armenia during a very short period of time, a handful of people who came to head the government or were connected to the regime controlled the natural resources and real estate of the country.

Weak laws were never applied and many of them remained unpunished. Patriotic Armenian businessmen from the diaspora immediately after the proclamation of the third republic came to Armenia but returned emptyhanded and disillusioned, sometimes having lost their capital investments.

Time brings experience, and today too a group of diasporan Armenians continues to make investments, with the hope that these mistakes will not be repeated. I am sure that these difficulties will be overcome eventually, and people will freely establish new businesses in Armenia.

Fortunately, Russia has opened its doors wide before Armenia's workers, and they send the money they earn to their families. Here at the risk of being repetitious, it is necessary to remind our compatriots that Russia remains Armenia's sole reliable friend in the region. Political figures who advance anti-Russian sentiments are simply unrealistic people.

**How do you envision the future of diasporan Armenians, and Armenia-diaspora relations in the economic, educational and cultural spheres?**

The experience of decades shows that the ADL has always fostered sincere Armenia-diaspora relations. I am happy to say that Minister of the Diaspora Hranoush Hakobyan is well aware of its



Hagop Vartivarian, chairman of the Press Committee of the ADL District Committee of the US and Canada

sincerity. She is very familiar with our leaders and with the founders of the Tekeyan Cultural Association. Again at the risk of being repetitious, let us recall that throughout the years of McCarthyism and the Truman doctrine during the Cold War, we fearlessly retained our ties with Soviet Armenia. We encouraged Diaspora Armenians to have a part in the homeland's successes and achievements, in its cultural, educational, scientific life. On the one hand, we familiarized diasporan Armenians with the great names in Armenia, and, reciprocally, the Armenians with diasporan ones. It should not seem strange if we say that 25 years ago when the third republic was born that the diasporan Armenians were already familiar with its achievements.

These relations must become closer over time. Political party or factional interests must not guide them – they must be led by pure patriotism. It must not serve to create zones of influence in diasporan communities for otherwise, this will cause the generation born and brought up in foreign countries to grow distant from the ideal of the homeland.

**The activity of the Church of Armenia has also always been a special focus of attention for the ADL. How do you evaluate the church's actions in Armenia and the diaspora from the perspective of the strengthening of faith, spiritual, educational and cultural activity, and the**

**cooperation among the hierarchical sees?**

It is not possible to have serious cooperation among the hierarchical sees or between our traditional political parties, the ADL, ARF and the Social Democratic Hunchakian Party, and the hierarchal sees, as long as the church crisis remains unresolved. Let people not pretend that this crisis does not exist. Some of the dioceses traditionally and legally belonging to the Mother See – the three dioceses of Iran, divided Greece, and three dioceses of North America – still remain separated from Echmiadzin, and in addition to Antelias, they are under the immediate supervision of the political authorities of the ARF. Though the serious events and national developments of the last 25 years, such as the great earthquake, the birth of the third republic, the Artsakh war and the liberation of territory, changes in the diaspora, the sad state of Syrian affairs, and the commemoration of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, temporarily froze the church crisis, it still remains the sad pain of the Church of Armenia. It is not possible to assure the unity of the church without restoring a lawful structure. This is the result of the Cold War. Now that the latter has ended, and Echmiadzin is living a golden age compared to the history of the last six hundred years, there is no reason for the division to be perpetuated. Our church's spiritual, cultural and educational activity will become much more evident and fruitful if we appear before Armenians and the world as a single, undivided church.

It must be recalled that this division had, and still has, its negative effects on the peaceful coexistence of Armenian communities. Large sums are being wasted in vain in order to maintain two diocesan seats and related institutions in the same communities. The separated church does not have the right to spend these sums collected from the people for the same purposes, if there already exists, for example, a legitimate Armenian diocese established for over one hundred years in the same city.

All of this becomes the reason for faith to gradually weaken among the new generation – the faith of the Armenian, respect toward the church. The church must not remain politicized and serve as a stage for political party and factional activity. The holy altar must serve the faith of the Armenian, as a symbol of love and unity.



Mer Doon girls, staff and local supporters enjoy an afternoon with their esteemed guests, Ambassador Erikas Petrikas and Iлона Petrikiene of Lithuania.

## Lithuanian Ambassador and Wife Visit Mer Doon

ECHMIADZIN, Armenia – Ambassador Erikas Petrikas, Lithuania's Ambassador to Armenia, and his wife, Iлона Petrikiene, recently visited Mer Doon, where they were treated to Mer Doon's hospitality. In addition to touring the facility, the ambassador and his wife enjoyed specially prepared Lithuanian food, dancing, singing and conversations with the residents. Karen Grigoryan, mayor of the city of Echmiadzin, was present for the visit and hosted them at City Hall.

The ambassador was impressed by the safe and loving home environment provided to the orphaned and disadvantaged girls living at Mer Doon. He said that a program like Mer Doon does not exist in Lithuania, and he commended the staff on operating such a unique organization.

In a letter to Mer Doon following his visit, Petrikas stated, "Let me to thank you for giving us an opportunity to learn about Mer Doon's activities, for the warm welcome, for organizing lovely hospitality, and for your devoted efforts. I think that the first steps to establishing friendly relations have already been achieved and will continue in the future. You have my deep respect."



## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## 28 Killed in Explosions At Istanbul Airport

ISTANBUL (*Guardian*) – Twenty eight people were killed in an attack on Turkey's largest airport, Istanbul Atatürk, according to the country's justice minister, on Tuesday, June 28.

Two suspects blew themselves up outside the security checkpoint at the entry to the international terminal, after police opened fire on them, according to another Turkish official.

A spokesperson for the Istanbul police told the *Guardian* that "a bomb exploded at the airport and there are many casualties," adding that the exact number is not yet known.

The police spokesperson said that one person, "maybe a terrorist," opened fire at police guarding the outside of the airport in order to gain access to the international terminal before detonating a bomb, "maybe a suicide bomb."

State-run TRT television said an explosion hit a control point at the international arrival terminal of the airport.

A witness told broadcaster CNN Turk that gunfire was also heard from the car park at the airport. Taxis were ferrying wounded people from the airport, the witness told CNN Turk.

At least 11 people were killed earlier this month in a car bomb attack in central Istanbul, the latest in a series of terror attacks in Turkey.

## Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov to Visit Armenia On July 4

MOSCOW (Public Radio of Armenia) – Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will take part in a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the member countries of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in Yerevan on July 4, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharov said on June 28, TASS reports.

"The ministers will discuss current problems of international and regional security, cooperation on the international arena," she said.

The CSTO top diplomats will also exchange views on "combating terrorism and extremism in the light of the situation in the Middle East and Afghanistan," she said.

Moscow "hopes the Yerevan meeting will make a major contribution to the implementation of agreements reached at the top level," Zakharova said.

## Turkey, Israel Ink Deal To Normalize Ties after Six Years

ANKARA (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Turkey and Israel signed a deal on Tuesday, June 28 to restore ties after a six-year rift, formalizing an agreement which United Nations' Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said sent a "hopeful signal" for regional stability, Reuters reports.

The accord, announced on Monday by the two countries' prime ministers, was a rare rapprochement in the divided Middle East, driven by the prospect of lucrative Mediterranean gas deals as well as mutual fears over growing security risks.

It was formally signed on Tuesday by Turkey's Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioglu in Ankara and Israel's Foreign Ministry Director General Dore Gold in Jerusalem, officials said.

Relations between Israel and what was once its principal Muslim ally crumbled after Israeli marines stormed an activist ship in May 2010 to enforce a naval blockade of the Hamas-run Gaza Strip and killed 10 Turks on board.

Under the deal, the naval blockade of Gaza, which Ankara had wanted lifted, remains in force, although humanitarian aid can continue to be transferred to Gaza via Israeli ports.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said late on Monday the two countries might appoint ambassadors "in a week or two."

Israel, which had already offered its apologies for the 2010 raid on the Mavi Marmara activist ship, agreed to pay out \$20 million to the bereaved and injured. The deal requires Turkey pass legislation indemnifying Israeli soldiers.

## Armenian Protesters Place Black Wreath in front Of Istanbul Patriarchate, Demand Elections

ISTANBUL (*Nor Marmara and Jamanak*) – The decision of the German parliament to accept the events of 1915 as genocide created anger in Turkey toward Armenians as well as Germans. Under these circumstances, Istanbul Patriarchal Vicar Archbishop General Aram Ateshian sent a letter to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan criticizing the Bundestag resolution and in this fashion making clear the loyalty of the community to Turkey. This in turn led to anger among Armenians in Armenia, the diaspora, and even in Turkey.

The press in Armenia and some deputies of the Armenian parliament organized protests against Ateshian. They threatened to throw eggs at Ateshian if he came to Armenia during Pope Francis's visit. Ateshian, once he arrived in Moscow ahead of arriving in Armenia, instead chose to return to Turkey rather than head to Armenia.

In Istanbul, a group under the leadership of Tateos Bebek on June 22 went to the Patriarchate and demanded the election of a new patriarch. (The Patriarch of Istanbul, Mesrop Mutafyan, has been suffering from a serious degenerative disease for several years, thus making him incapable of acting as patri-



Armenian protesters place wreath at Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate demanding election of patriarch

arch. Ateshian was installed as acting patriarch until elections could take place.)

The unusual protest was sponsored by the Midk [Mind] association. Bebek and Harutyun Özer, joined by other Armenians that morning entered the cathedral and after lighting candles conducted a short prayer. They then assembled in front of the wall of the gate of the Patriarchate on Sevgi Street and placed a black wreath there upon which was written in Turkish that "We want to elect our patriarch."

Journalist Jaklin Celik read a declaration in the name of the protesters which repeated this demand. Her speech noted that for eight years, various excuses were used to avoid convening an election to regularize the status of an institution with 550 years of history.

The declaration, made in the name of the "Armenians of Turkey," also stated that the patriarchal see should have an official legal status. Afterwards the demonstrators silently dispersed. Representatives of Turkish mass media were present at the event.

## AGBU Montreal Welcomes Canadian Foreign Minister At its Armenian Genocide Commemoration

MONTREAL – On April 22, AGBU Montreal welcomed the Honorable Stéphane Dion, the foreign minister of Canada, to its Armenian Genocide Commemoration Ceremony at the AGBU Center. The event, which drew more than 500 people, marked the first time a Canadian foreign minister attended the commemoration ceremony.

"We preserve the memory of those who lost their lives and those who suffered during this genocide, and pay our deepest respects to their descendants, including those who now call Canada home," said Dion on behalf of the Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The event began with a cultural program – including performances by the Alex Manoogian School Choir, the AGBU Marching Band, the Scouts and the Mashtots Choir – and was followed by the keynote speaker, Representative of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic to the United States



The event had begun with a cultural program—including performances by the Alex Manoogian School Choir, the AGBU Marching Band, the Scouts and the Mashtots Choir.

and Canada Robert Avetisyan, who spoke about the interrelation of the Armenian Genocide and Nagorno-Karabakh, the impossibility of Azeri rule and the hope for independence.

"The unity our nation has once again

demonstrated during the most recent aggression by Azerbaijan against Artsakh, the bravery and heroism of our soldiers on the battlefield proved yet again that attempts of another Armenian Genocide would lead to unpredictable and tragic consequences for the aggressors themselves," said Avetisyan.

AGBU Montreal Chairman Chahe Tanachian and Hagop Arslanian, AGBU Montreal board member in charge of the Canadian Armenian Political Affairs Committee (CAPAC), also met with Dion to discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and bilateral relations between Canada and Armenia. Tanachian urged Dion to take a firm stance on the recent conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and to not only call upon the sides to immediately establish a cease-fire, but to also condemn the military actions initiated by Azerbaijan. "Canada must firmly condemn any sort of violence and ask Azerbaijan to return to the negotiating table under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group in order to find a peaceful settlement to this conflict," said Tanachian.



On April 22, AGBU Montreal welcomed the Honorable Stéphane Dion, the foreign minister of Canada, to the AGBU Center in Montreal at its Armenian Genocide Commemoration Ceremony.

# Community News

Tribute:

## Bob Semonian Was the Ultimate Tipster

By Tom Vartabedian

People often ask me where I get my ideas for stories. Most ideas are self-initiated and spontaneous. They come to me during periods of insomnia. They hatch like chicken eggs when I'm in deep thought inside a church pew. Or in the shower.

But others — and I'm rather emphatic about this — derive from you, my readers and friends, over the past 50 years.

One such reliable contact was Bob Semonian — no doubt the most recognizable Armenian in Watertown and Greater Boston, not to mention the entire country. For every friend, Bob seemed to have an idea for a story.

I know. He never left me off the hook whenever the two of us came together. Maybe it was the journalist in Bob that made him so reliable. As part owner of the *Improper Bostonian*, you always found him with a copy of the magazine on his person.

Semonian was a self-styled promoter, whether it was his magazine, his beloved Republican Party of Massachusetts or St. James Church Men's Club where he handled the monthly programming.

Our last conversation came from his hospital bed. Cancer was taking its toll on my diehard friend and he wanted to make sure I was onboard his speakers' platform to promote my new book, *The Armenians of Merrimack Valley*.

Barely audible, he had been unaware of my very own terminal cancer. We wound up comparing notes on our respective illnesses. It was apparent that he was in a more advanced state. Yet, here he was, fulfilling his responsibilities with the church and embracing those he loved around him.

The infectious smile was part of his persona, as if he were the candidate running for office. If you had an "IAN" for a surname, he was in your corner, whether he knew you or not.

One day aboard the Armenian Heritage Cruise, he grabbed my ear. He appeared out of nowhere as if shot from a cannon.

"Boy, have I got a story for you," he exclaimed.

"I'm holding my breath. What'cha got? An Armenian running for the president of the United States?"

"Not quite," he said. "But would you take a First Lady with an Armenian manicurist who's on this boat right now?"

Turns out Nancy Reagan's manicurist was an Armenian from California who had more stories to tell about the former actress than Hollywood itself.

There was no escaping Semonian on this day, unless you jumped overboard. He saw a good story and wanted someone to write it. Why he didn't take it for himself and his magazine was yet another question.

Who takes a cruise to work and write? I found myself a spot on deck with a good book and an umbrella drink, only to have him hunt me down.

He had with him the manicurist and was now bringing us together. Turned out to be a most provocative story for which I remained eternally grateful.

Go ahead and call him the perpetual networker who had a knack for not only making friends but influencing strangers. He always saw the positive side in an individual and manifested goodness. Semonian faced his cancer with courage and determination.

I can hear him now. "Have I got a story for you? There's an Armenian up here in Heaven who says ..."

My favorite contact, Bob Semonian, passed away June 22. May he rest in peace. (See the full obituary on Page 6.)



Fr. Vasken Kouzouian, Armine Hovhannissian and Yn. Arpi Kouzouian before the event

## Doing Well and Doing Good with Zumba Artsakh Fundraiser

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Cambridge held a Zumba dance party-fundraiser for Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh) on June 21.

Certified Zumba instructor Armine Hovhannissian and Women's Guild of Holy Trinity teamed up to organize the event. 34 teenage girls and women attended it. Hovhannissian, who also teaches Zumba in Abaka Center for Performing Arts in Watertown, led the party, spreading positive vibes of dance and music.

Hovhannissian said she was thrilled that money was raised for Artsakh. She said she also believes that dancing can unite the Armenian women "to do something good for the community."

"I love bringing people together. It is all about spreading positive energy, and I am so happy," Hovhannissian said. "Zumba brings people together. So, I am very passionate about this hobby." Hovhannissian works full time in Massachusetts General Hospital.

The participants danced for about an hour, as dynamic Latin rhythms followed each other, occasionally interrupted by popular American, Armenian and Russian dance songs. The participants particularly welcomed the Armenian dance melodies.

For some of the participants this was their first Zumba experience.

"I came to support the group. It is my first time," Linda Abkarian said. "I really enjoyed it."

Cynthia Kazanjian, another participant, said that she had always wanted to take Zumba classes, but never had a chance to do that.

"I enjoyed it immensely. It is always nice to get moving," Kazanjian said. "I think it is very good healthfully for all of us to be moving."

Yn. Arpi Kouzouian, Youth Director at Holy Trinity, said that \$255 raised that evening would be sent to the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church in America's fund for Artsakh.

Holy Trinity also collected donations for Artsakh back in April.



Participants stands for a shot before the event.



Participants enjoy Zumba.

## AIWA San Francisco Branch Helps Young Mother in Need

SAN FRANCISCO — In November 2015, the Women's Resource Center Armenia (WRCA), a support center for women and families in Armenia, reached out to the Armenian International Women's Association San Francisco (AIWA-SF) to help a family in urgent need. At the time both shelters in Armenia were at maximum capacity and a young mother had just mustered the tremendous courage to leave her abusive relationship.

The young mother had four children, ages 2-4, on November 30, 2015, after 11 years in a physically abusive marriage, she called the WRCA crisis hotline asking for help. At the time, she was also pregnant with a fifth child. She fled to her parents' home, where she was given temporary refuge, since there are no state-supported shelters or any other form of material or housing support for victims of domestic violence. Living in her parents home was only a temporary solution. With the only two non-governmental shelters in the country at capacity, the WRC organized a global fundraising campaign to collect enough resources to support this family.

Within 48 hours AIWA-SF appealed to its membership and support base and was able to send emergency funds directly to the WRCA and the family within a few days. An AIWA-SF member was able to meet with the ladies at the WRCA. As one of the first to respond to the outreach for help, AIWA-SF was able to grant immediate assistance to the family. Additionally, the mother and the WRC in Armenia felt additional encouragement knowing that her reality had touched the hearts of those half way around the globe in the United States of America, she felt supported and not alone.

The WRCA shares that the "funding provided by AIWA-SF was both a valuable monetary contribution as well as an act of solidarity and support. Not only did it allow us [WRCA] to solve some urgent financial hardships for the family and her children at the moment, but it also proved that women's organizations, if united, can do much more in the ongoing fight for women's right and dignity worldwide."

Right after getting the financial aid, the WRCA conducted the activities which were initially discussed with AIWA-SF, a safe house was rented for her and her children and all efforts were concentrated on her empowerment to become more self-efficient and independent. Six months after receiving support from the WRC, the young mother is in a much healthier place. She is able to care for her now five children. AIWA-SF board member Viktoria Ter-Nikoghosyan PhD, was able to liaison both with the WRCA staff and the young mother to provide additional coaching on overcoming trauma. Both organizations will continue to support her.

Donations can be sent to: AIWA-SF 15559 Union Ave #227, Los Gatos, CA 95032.

The Women's Resource Center Armenia is the first resource and support center for women created in the region of South Caucasus.



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Tekeyan Central Board Assembles in New Jersey

FRANKLIN LAKES, N.J. – Members of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of the United States and Canada were guests at the home of Hilda Hartounian, newly elected chair of the Greater New York TCA chapter, and her husband Saro Hartounian on June 26. Members of the local chapter executive were present along with other guests. The visitin members of the TCA Central Board included Dr. Arshavir Gundjian of Montreal, Edmond Azadian of Detroit, Hagop Vartivarian of New Jersey, Papken Megerian of Philadelphia, and Arto Manoukian of Montreal. Chairman of the London TCA branch Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian (Koumrouyan), Vartan Nazerian of Los Angeles and former long-term TCA Executive Secretary Kevork Marshlian of Washington, DC, were also present.

After dinner, Hagop Vartivarian spoke words of appreciation concerning the hosts on behalf of the guests, and about the activities of the Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group. He declared to the TCA leadership that the greater

New York chapter was ready to have its own center in New Jersey in order to support its wide-ranging activities and other Armenian goals. Hilda Hartounian in turn expressed her thanks that the TCA leadership accepted her invitation.

Azadian, Gundjian and Manoukian then spoke in recognition of the activities of the New York TCA chapter and also stressed the necessity of having a TCA center in New Jersey. Chairman of the Megerdchian Group Harout Chatmajian spoke about the mission of the theatrical group as preservation of Armenian identity and the Western Armenian language. Barkev Kalayjian, the treasurer of the chapter, spoke of his wonderment at the fecund cultural activity of the TCA.

Finally, host Saro Hartounian expressed his full support of the plan to establish a TCA center locally, as it would allow assuring a place for the new generation's efforts for the preservation of its Armenian identity and the dissemination of Armenian culture.



A group picture of the Tekeyan guests

## OBITUARY

### Robert 'Bob' Semonian Longtime Republican Activist

WATERTOWN – Robert "Bob" Semonian died at age 77 on June 22, following a prolonged battle with colon cancer.

Semonian had a distinctive and driven personality that gave impetus to his legendary networking abilities as a vitally social member of the Massachusetts Armenian community. As a gregarious champion of Armenian causes and organizations, he made continuous and significant contributions to the Knights of Vartan, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, Armenian Museum of America,

products, merchandise and donations for humanitarian relief in Armenia. His networking talents got the mayor of Boston involved to provide aid to the Armenian victims of the devastating earthquake, including arranging more than 30 doctors to be sent to Armenia.

Semonian had a passion for politics and was a longtime leader in Massachusetts Republican circles. He was particularly proud of being a delegate from Massachusetts at eight Republican National Conventions. He was a highly valued member of the Massachusetts Republican establishment and was state chairman for Pat Buchanan's and Pat Roberston's presidential campaigns.

His Republican activities included providing significant assistance in organizing ethnic groups throughout the state – particularly Armenian, Asian and Indian communities – to support the Republican candidacies of William Weld, Mitt Romney and Charlie Baker. He was extremely well regarded by the Republican governors and appointed to various commissions during their administrations because of his dedicated work and support. Semonian was touched by a lengthy conversation with Governor Baker while he was in the hospital.

At one point, he served as chairman of the Watertown Republican Town Committee. He was Massachusetts state vice chairman for Ronald Reagan, and Nationalities Chairman in the state. Through his nationwide political contacts, Semonian provided the vitally important link to get eight states to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

As an avid traveler, he took great pride in representing the Boston Armenian community at the Forum of Armenian Associations of Europe at conferences that took place in Brussels, Budapest, Venice and Uppsala, Sweden. He always enjoyed the friendships he developed throughout the US, particularly California, and friends he made in South America.

Born and raised in Watertown, the son of Leon and Veron Semonian, he was a lifelong resident and thoroughly enjoyed the community life of the city and was noted as a convivial friend and a loyal supporters of all the organizations to which he belonged.

Semonian leaves his brothers, Leon and wife Marion, and Suren and wife Carol; his late sister Grace and Harry Ahmadian; his nephews Mark Semonian and Paul Semonian; his nieces Wendy Semonian, Nancy Day, Janis Baer, June Darmanian, Joan Ahmadian, the late Leslie Semonian and innumerable close friends.

Funeral services were at St. James Armenian Church of Watertown on Tuesday, June 28.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to St. James Armenian Church (for the Leslie Semonian Computer Center) or The Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Brookline, MA (for Leslie's link Ewing Sarcoma Fund).

– Paul Boghosian



Armenia Tree Project, and St. James Armenian Church among many other Armenian civic and community organizations that made him the "Uncle Bob" of the Armenian community.

He was a 45-year member and past president of the Armenian Students Association. As a life member, he served on the Board of Trustees until his passing.

Over the years, Semonian's reputation and his extensive national, political and business contacts made him the "go to" person to the Armenian organizations and prominent leaders whenever fundraising was needed for projects that benefitted the Armenian community.

In recent years, as chairman of the Speaker's Committee of the Men's Club of St. James Armenian Church, he arranged dozens of prominent Armenians to speak who provided inspiration, guidance and leadership to this always-popular program that attracted hundreds of people each month.

As treasurer of the *Improper Bostonian* magazine, founded by his nephew, Mark Semonian, Bob became further known as an accomplished networker throughout the greater Boston business, civic and political communities.

Bob Semonian's leadership took center stage in the aftermath of 1988 Armenian earthquake. As a founding director of the Boston Earthquake Coalition, he was responsible for generating hundreds of thousands of dollars in



From left, Saro and Hilda Hartounian speaking with Hagop Vartivarian



From left, Hilda Hartounian, Nadia Gundjian, and Dr. Arshavir Gundjian

## Donations

Arto Manoukian of Montreal, Canada donates \$100 to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator in appreciation of its excellent coverage of our national issues.

The Raffi and Nina Festekjian Foundation donated \$2,000 to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator in memory of Artoun Nazareth Festekjian.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Detroit TCA Welcomes Rev. Jebejian to Community

BLOOMFIELD, Mich. — On Thursday, June 23, Edmond and Nora Azadian opened their home on behalf of Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) to host a dinner welcoming the new Priest at St. John Armenian Church, the Very Rev. Aren Sarkis Jebejian to the community. Members from the local chapter attended and enjoyed an opportunity to speak with Jebejian and learn more about him.

Edmond Azadian and Diana Alexanian, the chair of the local TCA chapter opened the evening with welcoming remarks for Jebejian and best wishes for a long relationship with St. John Armenian Church and the metro Detroit American-Armenian community.

Jebejian thanked all present for the opportunity to meet members of the church and the Community on a personal level and gave a brief overview of some of his plans and his hopes for the future of St. John Armenian Church. A delicious Armenian dinner was served by the Tekeyan Cultural Association ladies and enjoyed by all. Guests stayed and enjoyed conversation, fellowship and the Azadians' hospitality until late into the night.



The Very Rev. Aren Jebejian with Edmond Azadian



The cake welcoming the Very Rev. Aren Jebejian Members of the TCA Detroit Chapter, with Chair Diana Alexanian at right



## Good Samaritans Rescue Man, 91, from Burning Lowell Home

By Lisa Redmond

LOWELL, Mass. (*Lowell Sun*) — A 91-year-old World War II veteran was rescued from a two-alarm fire that raced through his Centralville home on Friday, June 17, by three Good Samaritans who kicked in his doors and brought the man out safely.

"I'm very lucky," said a frail George Garabedian, as he sat across the street, still in his pajamas, watching Lowell firefighters douse the blaze at his 59 Third St. home Friday afternoon.

Firefighters responded to the address after receiving a call shortly before 3 p.m. of smoke coming from the building. A second-alarm was struck as flames and smoke poured from the three-story home.

Firefighters were still on the scene Friday evening. The cause and origin of the fire were not immediately available.

Garabedian and his 28-year-old grandson, Nick Griffin, were the only two people living in the house. Griffin and his parakeet, Bruno, got out safely.

Garabedian, who lives on the first floor, told *The Sun* he was watching television when his door was kicked in and he was ushered out of the house.

Jacob Fortier, 17, kicked in the front door and two other Good Samaritans, who did not wish to be identified, broke down the back door, to rescue Garabedian.

"If it weren't for them, I'd still be in there," Garabedian said.

Alexandra Silva, who lives next door, said she was home with her son when she saw heavy smoke pouring from Garabedian's home.

Fortier, her brother, had just arrived at her house to celebrate his last day of school, when she yelled that the house across the street was on fire and an old man lived there.

"All I heard was fire and old man," Fortier said.

Fortier said he sprinted across the street, kicked in the front door and saw Garabedian sitting there.

"I told him his house was on fire. He had to get out," Fortier said.

Realizing that everyone was safe, Silva hugged her brother, telling him, "He's a good boy."

## FEC Settles Jean Schmidt Ethics Case

WASHINGTON (*Cincinnati Enquirer*) — Former Republican Congresswoman Jean Schmidt faces a \$2,500 fine for not reporting legal assistance provided by a pro-Turkish group.

The Turkish Coalition of America Inc., which aided Schmidt in several legal disputes connected to her political career, will pay a \$25,000 fine, the Federal Election Commission said in its letter to all parties in the matter.

The June 10 agreement with the FEC comes nearly five years after Schmidt political opponent David Krikorian leveled the accusation, part of a multi-front battle between the two over Schmidt's support of Turkey in Congress and Krikorian's characterizations about her support.

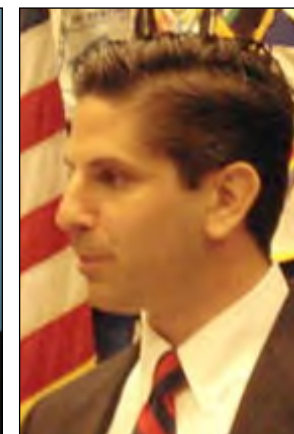
Neither Schmidt or Krikorian are in politics anymore, but the battle has continued, long after voters rejected them both. Schmidt beat Krikorian in 2008 to keep her 2nd Congressional District seat but later lost the 2012 Republican primary to now-Rep. Brad Wenstrup of Columbia Tuscum.

Schmidt reported she had repaid Turkish Coalition of America \$42,812 in legal fees and expenses, but in fact, the TCA provided free legal services to Schmidt worth \$651,244 in several cases from 2008 to 2011, the FEC said. Schmidt was represented by TCA's legal arm, the Turkish American Legal Defense Fund.

"We are pleased that this matter was resolved in the manner that explains the mitigating circumstances and the ambiguous state of the



Jean Schmidt



David Krikorian

law," said David Saltzman, legal counsel for the Turkish Coalition of America. "Rather than litigate this matter, the Turkish Coalition of America agreed to settle on favorable terms and thereby keeps its focus on its programs that help foster understanding and cooperation across the globe."

"With these actions, the FEC has finally delivered a small measure of justice," said Krikorian in an emailed statement. "The Turkish Coalition of America should have its 'charitable' status revoked for its willful and egregious violations of campaign finance law."

## House Members Unite to Read Stanford Rape Victim's Letter

By Jasmine Aguilera

WASHINGTON (*New York Times*) — Hoping to dramatize the issue of campus sexual assault, 18 members of the House took turns on June 15 reading portions of the 7,200-word letter a woman known as Emily Doe wrote to the former Stanford University student who raped her.

The letter — which the victim read at the sentencing of the former student, Brock Turner — described her anguish after the assault and during Turner's trial, and went viral after it was published on BuzzFeed. It attracted attention to the case and to the light sentence that a California judge gave Turner, causing national outrage and leading to a petition campaign to remove the judge, Aaron

Persky.

Reading the letter in its entirety on the House floor was an attempt to share the voice of sexual assault victims and to build support for legislation that would require the Department of Education to provide a list of institutions under investigation for sexual assault, said Rep. Jackie Speier, the California Democrat who organized the reading and is the sponsor of the bill.

"We don't sweep murder cases under the rug, but we have for decades been sweeping rape cases under the rug," Speier said in an interview Wednesday night.

Twelve of the 18 readers were women, but the group was bipartisan, bringing together lawmakers who rarely cooperate. They included liberals like Speier and three Republicans. Representative Paul Gosar of Arizona, a conservative Republican, said

he had been horrified when he read Emily Doe's statement.

"People need to learn from this," Gosar said. "I'm a father too. I have two daughters. This should matter to everyone."

Gosar said that he was not sure whether adding a rape victim's testimony to the *Congressional Record* would lead to legislation to better address campus sexual assault, but that he thought it would at least help promote awareness.

Previous attempts to pass legislation related to sexual assault on college campuses and in the military have not ended well.

The Santa Clara County government released the more-than-7,000-word statement read by the victim in the courtroom. She detailed the shock of finding out what happened to her after the attack, and the wrenching aftermath.



Rep. Jackie Speier (D-San Mateo)



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# The Best Grocery Store In America: Kalustyan's

By Adina Steiman

NEW YORK (*Epicurious.com*) – “Just call Kalustyan's.”

From the first day of my internship at a food magazine, I kept hearing that refrain from older, wiser editors. At first, I was confused. Why are you telling me to call an Indian market in Curry Hill when I'm trying to track down Thai galangal root? I'd mutter under my breath.

But on the other end of the line, Kalustyan's was always saying yes. “We've got that,” they'd say. (I swear Staples stole that catchphrase from Kalustyan's.)

I was interning at *Saveur* at the time, and there were plenty of esoteric recipes to test, with ingredients that seemed designed to stump even the most well-stocked specialty store. Still, every time I called, the Kalustyan's staff remained unruffled. “Yes,” they'd answer, with almost a hint of impatience, a slight tone of offense at my daring to doubt them. “We have that, too. When did you want to come by?”

When I did stop by, though, I only became more baffled. I stepped into what looked like a typical Mediterranean or Middle Eastern fruit and nut market, but one that seemed to be overrun by a depth of spice aroma so dramatic it was practically physically tangible. I walked through what must have been clouds of ambient, aerated asafoetida to the spice section, and I could practically feel my bloodstream flood with endorphins. They didn't just have garam masala. They didn't just have chaat masala. They had spices I'd never heard of, spices never mentioned in English-language cookbooks. They seemed to have everything even though, unlike that big-box office supply store, they occupied a relatively small storefront on Lexington Avenue.

They had camphor, an ingredient I'd only seen in Vick's VapoRub, but which is also apparently used in Indian cooking. They had Japanese bamboo salt. They had edible dried cornflowers. They had sun-dried eggplant and Ayurvedic herbs and tiny French beans that looked like grains of rice. Like Hermione Granger's purse, Kalustyan's seemed more flavor-dense per square foot than any other food store I'd ever entered.

But Kalustyan's wasn't content to just be a wonderland of Indian ingredients. In fact, it started out not selling them at all. The store opened in 1944 as an Armenian food store selling dried fruit and nuts, and expanded to include Indian ingredients when the neighborhood saw an influx of Indian immigrants in the 1960's and 70's. Then the store kept expanding its inventory (and its physical space), decade by decade. Today, Kalustyan's stretches across three storefronts, but even that square footage doesn't prepare you for the Brobdingnagian abundance that's inside.

Of course, even the most potent of magic couldn't create a store that encompasses every fresh specialty ingredient on the planet. Kalustyan's focuses on shelf-stable pantry ingredients, but even those aisles can alternately trigger moments of self-doubt and glee. “You know nothing, Kalustyan's Shopper,” those aisles seem to whisper. So if you're anything like me, you enter into something of a retail fugue state, selecting that day's most mystifying and delicious-looking discoveries in your basket and parading them like a badge of curatorial honor.

The vastness of their variety frightens me. Camphor? My tongue might explode if I touch it. Ayurvedic herbs? Probably only safe in the hands of trained professionals. Ghost chilies? Even the chili dust stings my hand.

Am I really living my best life, I wonder? I have a pretty well-stocked, well-travelled pantry at home, but I'm suddenly doubting its bonafides. This is how you talk yourself into



One of the many packed shelves at Kalustyan's

buying three new kinds of *dal*. And I'm not just buying ingredients—I'm buying talismans, items that help me explore a culture without having to travel there, to in some small way taste what it's like to live somewhere else.

I imagine the other shoppers feel the same way. They're not tourists (the neighborhood is too unfashionable for that). They're not food-stalking hipsters. They're fellow travelers, like me. And though they might need help navi-

gating the maze-like aisles, they seem sure about one thing: Somewhere on those legendary shelves, Kalustyan's will have what they need.

Kalustyan's is located at 123 Lexington Ave.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Pope Francis Visits Armenia

POPE, from page 1

defeat evil with good," Francis wrote in the memorial's guest book. "May God protect the memory of the Armenian people. Memory should never be watered-down or forgotten. Memory is the source of peace and the future."

He greeted descendants of the 400 or so Armenian orphans taken in by Popes Benedict XV and Pius XI at the papal summer residence south of Rome in the 1920s.

Also approaching Francis was Sosi Habeschyan, 68, and her sister; their mother was a genocide orphan adopted and raised by Danish missionary Maria Jacobsen, who worked in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and wrote about the massacre.

Francis returned to the theme of memory during a Mass in Gumri, where several thousand people gathered in a square for his only public Mass of his three-day visit to Armenia.

"Peoples, like individuals, have a memory," he told the crowd from the altar. "Your own people's memory is ancient and precious."

Francis again raised the importance of memory at an evening prayer in Yerevan's Republic Square, drawing the largest crowds of his visit — about 50,000, according to Vatican estimates.

With the patriarch of the Apostolic Church, Karekin II, by his side and President Serzh Sargsyan in the front row, Francis said even the greatest pain "can become a seed of peace for the future."

Pope Francis defended using the term "genocide," saying on Sunday, June 26, that's how he has always referred to the mas-

Catholicos Karekin II, both walking under a gold-brocaded canopy as incense furred around them. During the 2-hour service celebrated by Karekin, Francis stood to the side of the altar and offered a greeting calling for greater unity between the two churches.

"May an ardent desire for unity rise up in our hearts, a unity that must not be the submission of one to the other, or assimilation, but rather the acceptance of all the gifts that God has given to each," he said. "Let us pay heed to the younger generation, who seek a future free of past divisions."

The Armenian Apostolic church and a few other Oriental Orthodox churches split from the Catholic Church in the 5th century in a dispute over the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ. The division arose some six centuries before the Great Schism that split the rest of Orthodoxy from Rome.

While still divided over the primacy of the pope, the Apostolic and Catholic churches have friendly relations. Francis and his papal delegation stayed at the Echmiadzin cathedral complex as guests of Karekin.

The two men expressed their joint concern for Islamic extremist attacks against Christians in the Middle East.

"The martyrs belong to all the churches and their suffering is an 'ecumenism of blood' which transcends the historical divisions between Christians, calling us all to promote the visible unity of Christ's disciples," the declaration read.

It repeated a line from a 2001 declaration penned by St. John Paul II and Karekin that the slaughter of Armenians was the "first genocide of the 20th century," and hailed the progress made in warming relations.

After Sunday's liturgy and a formal luncheon, Francis headed west toward Armenia's border with Turkey to visit the Khor Virap monastery, one of the most sacred sites in Armenia. The monastery lies in the shadow of Mt. Ararat, where, according to legend, Noah landed his Ark after a great flood. He and Karekin released two white doves in a message of peace toward Turkey.

Pope Francis hailed the Vatican's "growing closeness" with the Armenian Apostolic Church and called for an eventual union between the two Christian denominations at the end of a three-day visit to Armenia on Sunday.

In a joint declaration, Francis and Catholicos Karekin II pledged to promote Christian unity around the world by further deepening relations between their ancient churches.

They also expressed concern at the "secularization" of contemporary societies, reaffirmed their opposition to same-sex marriage, condemned the persecution of Christians in the Middle East and urged world powers to end bloody conflicts in and outside the region.

"In this regard we also express our hope for a peaceful resolution of the issues surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh," they said in the statement signed at Karekin's headquarters in Echmiadzin, a small town near Yerevan.

After the signing ceremony, Francis and Karekin headed to the nearby historic monastery of Khor Virap where they prayed together and released two doves symbolizing peace towards Mount Ararat situated just a few kilometers away in Turkey.

Khor Virap was built at the site of a dungeon where St. Gregory the Illuminator, the first Armenian Catholicos, had been imprisoned before convincing King Tiridates III to adopt Christianity as Armenia's state religion.

Francis repeatedly paid tribute to Armenia's Christian heritage during the trip that set another milestone in a rapprochement between the Roman Catholic and Armenian churches. The two churches essentially ended their long-standing theological differences with a joint statement issued in 1996. In 2001, John Paul II became the first Pope to have ever visited Armenia.

Successive Armenian governments have similarly sought closer ties with the Vatican. President Serzh Sargsyan attended Francis's papal inauguration in 2013 and again visited the Vatican in 2014 and 2015.

Sargsyan, whose influential son-in-law is Armenia's ambassador to the Holy See, attended most of Francis's engagements in Armenia, including an ecumenical service held in Yerevan's biggest square on Saturday.

Francis and Karekin praised "the continuing and growing closeness in faith and love" between their churches. "Today we are convinced of the crucial importance of furthering this relationship, engaging in deeper and more decisive collaboration not only in the area of theology, but also in prayer and active cooperation on the level of the local communities, with a view to sharing full communion and concrete expressions of unity," they said in their declaration.

Francis made a case for a complete reunion when he attended and addressed an open-air Armenian Apostolic mass held by Karekin II in Echmiadzin on Sunday morning. He called for "a unity that must not be the submission of one to the other, or

assimilation, but rather the acceptance of all the gifts that God has given to each."

"We and our people will always pray for you, my beloved Brother, and your endeavors for the sake of the welfare and peaceful life of humankind," Karekin said for his part.

The joint declaration by the two men stresses the importance of global Christian unity in the context of an "immense tragedy" suffered by ancient Christian communities in the Middle East. "The martyrs belong to all the Churches and their suffering is an 'ecumenism of blood' which transcends the historical divisions between Christians, calling us all to promote the visible unity of Christ's disciples," it says.

In a clear reference to Islamist extremism, the document condemns a "presentation of religion and religious values in a fundamentalist way."

Francis and Karekin further deplored the declining role of religion in many Christian nations. "The secularization of large sectors of society, its alienation from the spiritual and divine, leads inevitably to a desacralized and materialistic vision of man and the human family," they said. "In this respect we are concerned about the crisis of the family in many countries."

The declaration emphasizes that both churches believe that marriage can only be an act of "faithful love between man and woman."

Karekin's sermon delivered at the Echmiadzin mass contained emphatic defense of this and other religious values. He went as far as to assert that attempts to "build a world without God" are at the root of political, socioeconomic and even environmental problems facing humanity.

## Greater Recognition for Genocide

Armenia expects more countries to recognize the 1915 massacre of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire as genocide after remarks by Pope Francis and the stance taken by Germany's parliament, President Serzh Sargsyan said.

Germany's lower house adopted a resolution this month declaring the killings of Christian Armenians by Ottoman forces in World War One a "genocide," a term used by many Western historians and parliaments, but rejected by Ankara.

During a visit to Armenia on Friday, the pope departed from his prepared text to use the term, angering Turks.

"The principled position of the pope and the views expressed by the Bundestag will pave the way for new recognitions by other nations," Sargsyan told Reuters in an interview.

"Germany is a very important and significant actor on the international stage and this [decision] will serve as a good example for other nations to follow and to learn from it," he said.

Sargsyan criticized Turkey's position over its aspiration to join the European Union, saying Ankara was trying to use a policy of dictatorship to bring pressure to bear on the bloc.

"I don't think that Turkey is ... an actor that can impose its views, or exercise pressure, on the European Union," he said. "I don't honestly see any prospects that would pave the way for Turkey joining the EU."

## Vatican Replies

The Vatican has defended the pope's stand on the Armenian genocide as an ideology aimed at bringing peace and reconciliation, not war, and rebuking Ankara's vocal criticism of Francis' alleged "crusader" mentality.

Repeated references to the 1915 Armenian genocide by the Ottoman Turks made by Pope Francis during his three-day visit to Armenia, has sparked condemnation by Turkish officials.

After the pontiff made his first statement on the topic as soon as he arrived in Yerevan on Friday, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Nurettin Canikli called Francis' statements "greatly unfortunate" which Ankara does not "take seriously."

"The goal is to squeeze Turkey in the corner," said Canikli on Saturday, accusing Francis of siding with European Union values. "It is, unfortunately, possible to see all the reflections and traces of crusader mentality in the actions of the papacy and the pope."

On Sunday, the director of the Vatican Press Office strongly dismissed Turkish accusations of a 'Crusades' mentality when the pope used the word 'genocide' to describe the massacre of 1.5 million Armenians a century ago.

Father Federico Lombardi said that neither Francis' statements nor his actions ever suggested a Crusades-like mentality of the pontiff. The focus of Francis, according to Vatican is to resurrect the "spirit of dialogue."

"The pope is on no crusade," Lombardi said. "He is not trying to organize wars or build walls but he wants to build bridges... he has said no words against the Turkish people," Vatican Radio reported.

Despite steaming criticism from Turkey, the Pope has once again made a reference to the tragic events of last century when he remembered the "victims of hatred" for the third consecutive day, as he concluded his tour of Armenia.

May the Armenian Church walk in peace and may the communion between us be complete," Francis said at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy in the Armenian Apostolic Cathedral in Echmiadzin. "Let us respond to the appeal of the saints, let us listen to the voices of the humble and poor, of the many victims of hatred who suffered and gave their lives for the faith."

"Let us pay heed to the younger generation, who seek a future free of past divisions...may there be joined the light of the love that forgives and reconciles," Francis added.

(Reports from RFE/RL, Reuters, Associated Press, Russia Times and Vatican Radio were used to compile this report.)



The Pope is welcomed by two young children in Armenia.

sacre, he didn't mean anything offensive by it and that it would have been "very strange" to have avoided it.

Turkey accused Francis of adopting a "Crusades"-like mentality by terming the 1915 killings a "genocide" during his three-day visit to Armenia — a charge the Vatican strongly dismissed.

Asked Sunday en route home from Armenia why he decided to add "genocide" into his prepared remarks, Francis said it was simply the term that he had always used in Argentina, where he was close to the Armenian community.

"When we spoke of the Armenian extermination, the word we used was 'genocide.' I didn't know any other," he said. Only after arriving in Rome as pope did he learn of other phrases — the "Great Evil" or the "terrible tragedy" — and that "genocide" carried legal weight given Armenian claims for restitution.

But Francis said he decided to use the word Friday in his welcome speech at the Armenian presidential palace since he had said it before, St. John Paul II had said it before, and "it would have seemed very strange to not say it in Armenia."

He added: "I have never said it with an offensive spirit, but objectively."

Francis wrapped up his trip Sunday with calls for closer ties with Armenia's Oriental Orthodox church and a joint declaration with the Apostolic Church leader on the plight of Christians in the Mideast. He also visited a monastery near Armenia's closed western border with Turkey, where he and the Armenian patriarch released two white doves of peace.

But it was Francis' recognition on Day 1 that the 1915 slaughter by Ottoman Turks of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians constituted planned "genocide" that continued to reverberate.

Turkey issued a harsh rebuttal late Saturday, with Deputy Prime Minister Nurettin Canikli calling the comments untrue, "greatly unfortunate" and saying they bore the hallmarks of the "mentality of the Crusades."

On Sunday, Francis turned his attention to religious affairs, participating in an open-air liturgy on the grounds of the Armenian Apostolic Cathedral in Echmiadzin, the seat of the Oriental Orthodox church here. The landlocked nation of 3 million was the first nation in the world to adopt Christianity as a state religion in 301.

Amid haunting chants, Francis processed up and down the central walkway of the Echmiadzin complex alongside the patriarch,



## SPECIAL FEATURE

# The Challenge Of Peace

**Muriel Mirak-Weissbach**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Much has been made of the official Turkish reaction to statements made by Pope Francis during his visit to Armenia June 24-26. That hysterical response was as predictable as it was tasteless. One might take due note, but then move on.

The central thrust of the Pope's visit was not his recognition of the genocide per se but his guidance on the course to follow to overcome the enduring adversary relationship between Armenians and Turkey, and beyond. His appeal to Armenia's church and political leaders, as well as its people – especially the younger generation – was to mobilize those same spiritual and psychological resources which have made Armenian survival possible to intervene in the cause of peace and justice, not only there but throughout the world.

Although he is a head of state, it was with his moral authority as a spiritual leader that Pope Francis addressed issues of political import, which constituted a certain challenge to the Armenian people, whether in the Republic of Armenia or the Diaspora. In a video message sent on June 22 to the people of Armenia, and reported on the Vatican radio website, the Pontiff outlined the main themes of his mission. He would make this “visit to the first Christian country,” he said, as a pilgrim, who would “draw on the ancient wisdom of your people and to steep myself in the sources of your faith.” He appealed for perseverance, not to give up “even in the face of the repeated assaults of evil,” and pledged his support for efforts towards peace and reconciliation. In parallel he would seek to fuel the process towards unity of all Christians.

## Peace, Reconciliation and Unity

In his entry in the guest book at the Tsitsernakaberd genocide memorial, Pope Francis wrote: “Here I pray with sorrow in my heart, so that a tragedy like this never again occurs, so that humanity will never forget and will know how to defeat evil with good.... May God protect the memory of the Armenian people. Memory should never be watered down or forgotten: memory is the source of peace and the future.”

Throughout his visit he developed the deeper implications of this message. The sufferings of the genocide should never be forgotten. “Not to forget them, he said in Yerevan, “is not only a



Pope Francis writes in the guest book of the Armenian Genocide museum, with Mount Ararat in the background

right, it is a duty,” to warn against recurrence of such horrors. At the same time, he recalled “with admiration” how Armenians had survived through the power of their faith, which is their “true strength.” The Pope compared the “wounds still open, caused by fierce and senseless hatred” to the wounds of the risen Christ, shown to the disciples on Easter. “Those terrible, painful wounds suffered on the cross, transfigured by love,” he said, “have become a wellspring of forgiveness and peace.” That means, “Even the greatest pain, transformed by the saving power of the cross, of which Armenians are heralds and witnesses, can become a seed of peace for the future.”

How memory of such suffering, infused by love, can become the impetus for peace is a difficult concept, and not only intellectually. It requires a fundamental shift, emotionally and psychologically, in the mind of the persecuted. It means resisting “being



Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and Pope Francis released doves on the border between Armenia and Turkey

caught up in the illusory power of vengeance,” a point Pope Francis was to reiterate. Appealing explicitly to Armenian youth, he said they should “strive to be peacemakers” and build a “culture of encounter and reconciliation.” Saint Gregory of Narek, whom Francis proclaimed a Doctor of the Church last year, he dubbed here as a “Doctor of Peace” and quoted a bold passage from his *Book of Lamentations*: “Remember [Lord,] those of the human race who are our enemies as well, and for their benefit accord them pardon and mercy.... Do not destroy those who persecute me, but reform them; root out the vile ways of this world, and plant the good in me and in them.” Again, with reference to Gregory, Francis said that this “master of life,” taught that we all are in need of mercy; despite failings and injuries, “we must not become self-centered....”

Defeat evil through the power of good – this is the concept that reverberated through the Pope's several homilies and speeches. In

which may thwart the search for peace. He laid down the gauntlet to all of us Armenians, whether in the Republic or abroad. History has provided enough tragic examples that peace treaties may be worth less than the paper they are written on. Unless there is a fundamental revolution in thinking, a deliberate emotional and psychological change in the minds and hearts of those seeking to overcome conflicts – and on all sides – the paper remains nothing more than paper. Not to mention unity –



Blessing young people after the program

the struggle for unity of Armenians, and the broader unity of all Christians, Pope Francis again reached back into Armenian church history for examples, and again stressed the need to combat negative personal inclinations. The saintly Catholicos Nerses Shnorhali, he said, who was “Tireless in seeking unity, [...] sought to achieve Christ's will that those who believe ‘may all be one.’ Unity,” he went on, “does not have to do with strategic advantages sought out of mutual self-interest...” Francis added that we must “abandon rigid opinions and personal interests” in the name of love, love which is also “capable of softening the hardness of the heart of Christians, for they too are often concerned only with themselves and their own advantage.”

## Self-reflection

That this Pope has the authority to speak his mind on such matters is irrefutable; he has not only paved the way in the international diplomatic arena for political and institutional recognition of the genocide, he has also called members of his own Curia onto the carpet for their personal failings. If the Pontiff was generous in his appreciation of the strength of the Armenian Church and its people through centuries of tribulations, as well as the beauty of its intellectual and artistic accomplishments, he was no less forceful in his appeal for willful change in a certain mindset

whether of the Armenians or of the churches.

In following the reports of Pope's visit, I was reminded of a couple of singular encounters with fellow Armenians in recent years. The young taxi driver in Glendale, who had been in the US only a few years, told me with grim joy and fierce pride about how he had “shot and killed four Turks” in the war. Or the woman who came up to me after a book presentation in Boston and asked me if I knew any Turks in Germany, and if yes, whether or not I would shake hands with them.

(Muriel Mirak-Weissbach is the author of *Through the Wall of Fire: Armenia – Iraq – Palestine: From Wrath to Reconciliation*. She can be reached at [mirak.weissbach@googlemail.com](mailto:mirak.weissbach@googlemail.com))



Pope Francis laid a wreath at the Armenian Genocide memorial.



## SPECIAL FEATURE

## Pope and Catholicos Sign Joint Statement on Justice and Peace

ECHMIADZIN (Vatican Radio) – Pope Francis and Catholicos Karekin II on Sunday, June 26, signed a common declaration, giving thanks for the progress towards Christian unity, and appealing for peace in the Middle East and other regions torn apart by conflict, terrorism and religious persecution.

At the conclusion of a three-day pastoral visit to Armenia, the first country to embrace the Christian faith, the Pope joined the Patriarch in calling for a peaceful resolution in neighboring Nagorno-Karabagh. The declaration also recalls “the extermination of a million and a half Armenian Christians, in what is generally referred to as the first genocide of the twentieth century.”

In the statement the two religious leaders pray for a change of heart in all who commit violence, as well as imploring leaders of nations to hear the cry of those people “who have urgent need of bread, not guns.”

The full text follows:

Today in Holy Echmiadzin, spiritual center of All Armenians, we, Pope Francis and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II raise our minds and hearts in thanksgiving to the Almighty for the continuing and growing closeness in faith and love between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Catholic Church in their common witness to the Gospel message of salvation in a world torn by strife and yearning for comfort and hope. We praise the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for enabling us to come together in the biblical land of Ararat, which stands as a reminder that God will ever be our protection and salvation. We are spiritually gratified to remember that in 2001, on the occasion of the 1700th anniversary of the proclamation of Christianity as the religion of Armenia, Saint John Paul II visited Armenia and was a witness to a new page in warm and fraternal relations between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Catholic Church. We are grateful that we had the grace of being together, at a solemn liturgy in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome on 12 April 2015, where we pledged our will to oppose every form of discrimination and violence, and commemorated the victims of what the Common Declaration of His Holiness John-Paul II and His Holiness Karekin II spoke of as “the extermination of a million and a half Armenian Christians, in what is generally referred to as the first genocide of the twentieth century” (September 27, 2001).

We praise the Lord that today, the Christian faith is again a vibrant reality in Armenia, and that the Armenian Church carries on her mission with a spirit of fraternal collaboration between the Churches, sustaining the faithful in building a world of solidarity, justice and peace.

Sadly, though, we are witnessing an immense tragedy unfolding before our eyes, of countless innocent people being killed, displaced or forced into a painful and uncertain exile by continuing conflicts on ethnic, economic, political and religious grounds in the Middle East and other parts of the world. As a result, religious and ethnic minorities have become the target of persecution and cruel treatment, to the point that suffering for one's religious belief has become a daily reality. The martyrs belong to all the Churches and their suffering is an “ecumenism of blood” which transcends the historical divisions between Christians, calling us all to promote the visible unity of Christ's disciples. Together we pray, through the intercession of the holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, for a change of heart in all those who commit such crimes and those who are in a position to stop the violence. We implore the leaders of nations to listen to the plea of millions of human beings who long for peace and justice in the world, who demand respect for their God-given rights, who have urgent need of bread, not guns. Sadly, we are witnessing a presentation of religion and religious values in a fundamentalist way, which is used to justify the spread of hatred, discrimina-

tion and violence. The justification of such crimes on the basis of religious ideas is unacceptable, for “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace” (I Corinthians 14:33). Moreover, respect for religious difference is the necessary condition for the peaceful cohabitation of different ethnic and religious communities. Precisely because we are Christians, we are called to seek and implement paths towards reconciliation and peace. In this regard we also express our hope for a peaceful resolution of the issues surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh.

Mindful of what Jesus taught his disciples when he said: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you

came to me” (Matthew 25: 35-36), we ask the faithful of our Churches to open their hearts and hands to the victims of war and terrorism, to refugees and their families. At issue is the very sense of our humanity, our solidarity, compassion and generosity, which can only be properly expressed in an immediate practical commitment of resources. We acknowledge all that is already being done, but we insist that much more is needed on the part of political leaders and the international community in order to ensure the right of all to live in peace and security, to uphold the rule of law, to protect religious and ethnic minorities, to combat human trafficking and smuggling.

The secularization of large sectors of society, its alienation from the spiritual and divine, leads inevitably to a desecralized and materialistic vision of man and the human family. In this respect we are concerned about the crisis of the family in many countries. The Armenian Apostolic Church and the Catholic Church share the

same vision of the family, based on marriage, an act of freely given and faithful love between man and woman.

We gladly confirm that despite continuing divisions among Christians, we have come to realize more clearly that what unites us is much more than what divides us. This is the solid basis upon which the unity of Christ's Church will be made manifest, in accordance with the Lord's words, “that they all may be one” (John 17.21). Over the past decades the relationship between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Catholic Church has successfully entered a new phase, strengthened by our mutual prayers and joint efforts in overcoming contemporary challenges. Today we are convinced of the crucial importance of furthering this relationship, engaging in deeper and more decisive collaboration not only in the area of theology, but also in prayer and active cooperation on the level of the local communities, with a view to sharing full communion and concrete expressions of unity. We urge our faithful to work in harmony for the promotion in society of the Christian values which effectively contribute to building a civilization of justice, peace and human solidarity. The path of reconciliation and brotherhood lies open before us. May the Holy Spirit, who guides us into all truth (cf. John 16:13), sustain every genuine effort to build bridges of love and communion between us.

From Holy Echmiadzin we call on all our faithful to join us in prayer, in the words of Saint Nerses the Gracious: “Glorified Lord, accept the supplications of Your servants, and graciously fulfill our petitions, through the intercession of the Holy Mother of God, John the Baptist, the first martyr Saint Stephen, Saint Gregory our Illuminator, the Holy Apostles, Prophets, Divines, Martyrs, Patriarchs, Hermits, Virgins and all Your saints in Heaven and on Earth. And unto You, O indivisible Holy Trinity, be glory and worship forever and ever. Amen.”

Holy Echmiadzin, June 26, 2016

His Holiness Francis

His Holiness Karekin II



Pope Francis and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II in Yerevan

## Pope Francis Receives Noah's Ark model as Gift from Armenia

YEREVAN – The ecumenical ceremony led by Pope Francis and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II took place in Yerevan Saturday, June 25.

To the strains of George Handel's *Hallelujah*, children came up to the stage, holding grape vines, soil and water in their hands. Parallel with this, the video material on Noah's Ark was screened, accompanied with the video message by Archbishop Armash Nalbandian, leader of the Damascus Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

“In the recent years, Armenia has become a similar ark of rescue for thousands of migrants from Middle East, whose ancestors escaped the Armenian Genocide by miracle. And now Armenians from Syria, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Turkey, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait and Iran will put handful of soil in the ark, where an Armenian grape vine will be planted. And let this gift to the Holy See - the Noah's Ark with a part of Armenia - remind of this important spiritual ceremony,” Nalbandian noted.

The Catholicos and the Pope approached the model ark, where they were joined by girls and boys dressed in the national costumes of Armenian provinces.

They gave the Catholicos and Pope Francis the soil, brought from their respective countries, for consecration. These children had come from different regions of Syria, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Turkey, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait and Iran.

The theatrical allegory symbolized a Biblical scene: the grape vine symbolizes Noah's path to rescue and revival, since it was exactly Noah who, according to the Bible, went down Mount Ararat and planted a grape twig. It is no coincidence that the emblem, which has been created on occasion of Pope Francis pilgrimage to Armenia, included the Biblical Mount Ararat.





## COMMUNITY NEWS



## Pope Addresses President, Diplomats

YEREVAN – On June 24, Pope Francis addressed President Serzh Sargsyan and a gathering of the diplomatic corps in Yerevan. The full text of his speech is below.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It gives me great joy to be here, to set foot on the soil of this beloved land of Armenia, to visit a people of ancient and rich traditions, a people that has given courageous testimony to its faith and suffered greatly, yet has shown itself capable of constantly being reborn.

“Our turquoise sky, our clear waters, the flood of light, the summer sun and the proud winter borealis... our age-old stones ... our ancient etched books which have become a prayer” (Yeghishe Charents, “Ode to Armenia”). These are among the powerful images that one of your illustrious poets offers us to illustrate the rich history and natural beauty of Armenia. They sum up the rich legacy and the glorious yet dramatic experience of a people and their deep-seated love of their country.

I am most grateful to you, Mr President, for your kind words of welcome in the name of the government and people of Armenia, and for your gracious invitation that has made it possible to reciprocate the visit you made to the Vatican last year. There you attended the solemn celebration in Saint Peter’s Basilica, together with Their Holinesses Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians, and Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, and His Beatitude Nerses Bedros XIX, Patriarch of Cilicia of the Armenians, recently deceased. The occasion was the commemoration of the centenary of the *Metz Yeghêrn*, the “Great Evil” that struck your people and caused the death of a vast multitude of persons. Sadly, that tragedy, that genocide, was the first of the deplorable series of catastrophes of the past century, made possible by twisted racial, ideological or religious aims that darkened the minds of the tormentors even to the point of planning the annihilation of entire peoples.

I pay homage to the Armenian people who, illuminated by the light of the Gospel, even at the most tragic moments of their history, have always found in the cross and resurrection of Christ the strength to rise again and take up their journey anew with dignity. This shows the depth of their Christian faith and its boundless treasures of consolation and hope. Having seen the pernicious effects to which hatred, prejudice and the untrammelled desire for dominion led in the last century, I express my lively hope that humanity will learn from those tragic experiences the need to act with responsibility and wisdom to avoid the danger of a return to such horrors. May all join in striving to ensure that whenever conflicts emerge between nations, dialogue, the enduring and authentic quest of peace, cooperation between states and the constant commitment of international organizations will always prevail, with the aim of creating a climate of trust favorable for the achievement of lasting agreements.

The Catholic Church wishes to cooperate actively with all those who have at heart the future of civilization and respect for the rights of the human person, so that spiritual values will prevail in our world and those who defile their meaning and beauty will be exposed as such. In this regard, it is vitally important that all those who declare their faith in God join forces to isolate those who use religion to promote war, oppression and violent persecution, exploiting and manipulating the holy name of God.

Today Christians in particular, perhaps even more than at the time of the first martyrs, in some places experience discrimination and persecution for the mere fact of professing their faith. At the same time, all too many conflicts in various parts of the world remain unresolved, causing grief, destruction and forced migrations of entire peoples. It is essential that those responsible for the future of the nations undertake courageously and without delay initiatives aimed at ending these sufferings, making their primary goal the quest for peace, the defense and acceptance of victims of aggression and persecution, the promotion of justice and sustainable development. The Armenian people have experienced these situations firsthand; they have known suffering and pain; they have known persecution; they preserved not only the memory of past hurts, but also the spirit that has enabled them always to start over again. I encourage you not to fail to make your own precious contribution to the international community.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of Armenia’s independence. It is a joyful occasion, but also an opportunity, in cherishing the goals already achieved, to propose new ones for the future. The celebration of this happy anniversary will be all the more significant if it becomes for all Armenians, both at home and in the diaspora, a special moment for gathering and coordinating energies for the sake of promoting the country’s civil and social development of the country, one that is equitable and inclusive. This will involve constant concern for ensuring respect for the moral imperatives of equal justice for all and solidarity with the less fortunate (cf. JOHN PAUL II, Farewell Address from Armenia, 27 September 2001: *Insegnamenti* XXIX/2 [2001], 489). The history of your country runs parallel to its Christian identity preserved over the centuries. That identity, far from impeding a healthy secularity of the state, instead requires and nourishes it, favouring the full participation of all in the life of society, freedom of religion and respect for minorities. A spirit of unity between all Armenians and a growing commitment to find helpful means of overcoming tension with neighbouring countries, will facilitate the realization of these important goals, and inaugurate for Armenia an age of true rebirth.

The Catholic Church is present in this country with limited human resources, yet readily offers her contribution to the development of society, particularly through her work with the poor and vulnerable in the areas of healthcare and education, but also in the specific area of charitable assistance. This is seen in the work carried out in the past twenty-five years by the Redemptoris Mater Hospital in Ashotzk, the educational institute in Yerevan, the initiatives of Caritas Armenia and the works managed by the various religious congregations.

May God bless and protect Armenia, a land illumined by the faith, the courage of the martyrs and that hope which proves stronger than any suffering.

## Pope and Catholicos of All Armenians Meet at Echmiadzin

VAGHARSHAPAT – On the evening of June 24, the meeting of Pope Francis of the Roman Catholic Church and Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians; was held in the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin. The meeting was attended by the delegation of the Catholic Church; Bishops of the Armenian Church, Diocesan Primates from Armenia and Diaspora and Locum Tenens.

During the meeting, Karekin II welcomed Pope Francis to the Biblical land of Armenia and the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin. He also conveyed his fraternal love and best wishes to the members of the delegation.

“There is joy in our homes and in our souls today, as our beloved brother has visited the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, and as the Armenian nation has a special warm affection for him. The clear evidence of this is the presence of the high-ranking priests from our dioceses around the world, who have travelled here together with the faithful of their communities. Our people consider your visit as an opportunity and chance to express their feelings of gratitude for your



At Echmiadzin – Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II gave a tour of Holy Echmiadzin to Pope Francis and his delegation.

cares towards our people, the Armenian Church and Nation. In this sacred sanctuary we offer our prayer to heaven, asking Lord to grant you long healthy years to guide the Roman Catholic Church, and implement the mission of Christ’s Church together with the Spiritual Primates of the Sister Churches and the faithful, for the sake of a more peaceful and better world and the happier life of the humankind”, stated the Catholicos of All Armenians.

The Roman Catholic pontiff expressed his gratitude to the catholicos for the warm reception and fraternal love, stressing that in Holy Echmiadzin he feels at home. Emphasizing the importance of united prayer and peace in the remarks of the catholicos, Pope Francis added that as churches they are called to be the preachers of peace.

At the end of the meeting, a mutual presentation of the delegations of the two churches and an exchange of gifts was made.

On the occasion of the visit, the Catholicos of All Armenians presented a Liturgical Chalice to Pope Francis, on which the St. Peter Basilica of the Vatican and the Mother Cathedral of Holy Echmiadzin were engraved on the sides of the cup, as well as the holy apostles of the two churches. Catholicos Karekin also presented an icon of the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide and a miniature sculpture of the Pope. In turn, the Pope gifted to the catholicos a mosaic of the Holy Mother of God.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Pope Francis recorded a message in the Pontifical Memory register.

Following the meeting a private meeting between the two Pontiffs was held.



Thousands outside Holy Echmiadzin where Pope Francis was celebrating Mass.



Pope Francis and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II



COMMUNITY NEWS



Pope Francis and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II in Yerevan after the presentation of the miniature Noah's Ark, created by Michael Aram



Pope Francis and Catholicos Karekin II bless people attending the mass.



Pope Francis meets with the cabinet members, including Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian and Chief of Staff Vigen Sargsyan



Pope Francis and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II at the eternal flame



Presidential Chief of Staff Vigen Sargsyan, left, with Cardinal Leonardo Sandri



## COMMUNITY NEWS



Pope Francis at the Armenian Genocide monument outside Yerevan

# Pope Visits Gumri

GUMRI, Armenia (Vatican Radio) — On June 25, the second day of his visit, Pope Francis celebrated Holy Mass in the Armenian city of Gumri.

At the start of the Liturgy, Karekin II, Catholicos of all Armenians welcomed the pontiff by thanking the Catholic Church which “gave a helping hand of brotherly love to the victims” of the devastating 1988 Armenian earthquake which killed 25,000 people and left hundreds of thousands homeless.

The Catholicos noted with satisfaction that “Gumri is one of those historical towns of Armenia where centuries-old Armenian Christian values have flourished” and that they “are bearers of a beautiful tradition of Christian brotherly coexistence.”

Catholicos Karekin cited the city’s Church of the Holy Mother of God which opened its doors to Christians of all denominations during “the Soviet years of atheism when churches were being destroyed or shut in Armenia and only through the zealous resistance of our people, the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin and a few other churches were still open.”

The Catholicos also noted the “seal of anguish” that distinguishes Gumri which “felt the heavy blows of the Ottoman Empire’s devastating and invasive politics” when “our people were subjected to genocide” at the beginning of the twentieth century.”

The text of the Catholicos’ sermon is below.

*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*

John 13:34

Your Holiness, Beloved spiritual brothers and faithful children, Today, as our Church is commemorating the Feast of the Holy Apostles of the Lord, this message directed by our Lord to His disciples, is so ever sweetly and powerfully resounding in our souls. With this God-given warm feeling of love in the name of all the faithful of the region we welcome you to the city of Gumri, beloved brother in Christ. It brings us great joy to be joining you in prayer, a great friend of the Armenian Church and the Armenian people, in a Mass celebrated by you.

Gumri is one of those historical towns of Armenia where centuries-old Armenian Christian values have flourished, where the history and culture of our people and the spirit of generosity have harmoniously been shaped. The people of Gumri are distinguished for their particularly profound faith and love towards the

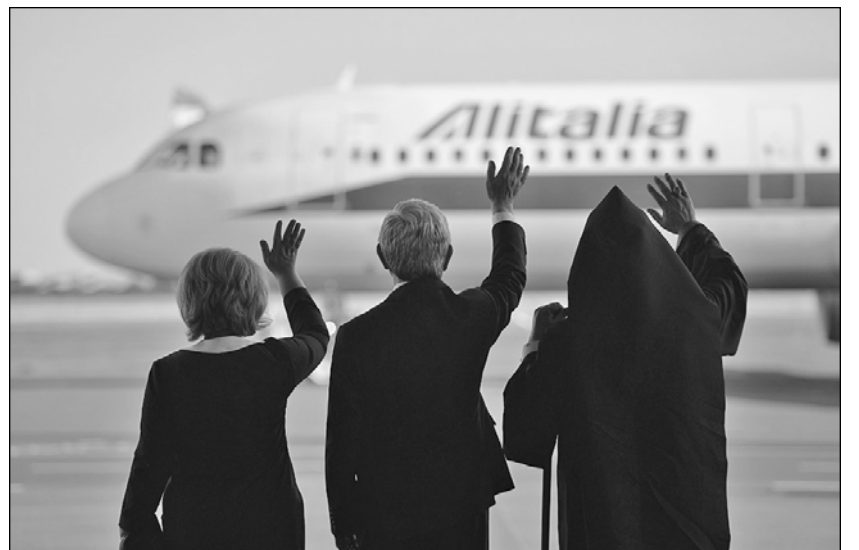
Church. They are also bearers of a beautiful tradition of Christian brotherly coexistence, which is witnessed by the prayerful presence of the faithful of the Armenian Apostolic and Catholic Churches, as well as of other Christian denominations. During the Soviet years of atheism churches were being destroyed or shut in Armenia, and only through the zealous resistance of our people, the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin and a few other churches were still open. During that time, Gumri’s church of the Holy Mother of God (Yotverk) opened its maternal bosom and became a haven and a place of prayer for all the Christians of the Northern districts of Armenia and of the ethnically Armenian towns and villages of Georgia, regardless of their national identity or what denomination they belonged to, may they be Armenian Apostolic, Catholic or Eastern Orthodox. The Northern apse of Yotverk church was turned into a place of prayer for the Catholic faithful where the crucifixion statue in the Catholic tradition, brought from the Catholic Church of Arevik village, was erected and is maintained to this day. While the Southern apse was provided to the Russian Orthodox where in a most honorable place, the Russian icon of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker was placed. Thus, Gumri and the church of the Holy Mother of God (Yotverk) became a tangible provider and preacher for ecumenism, years before the modern definition of ecumenism was established.

Beloved brother in Christ, the city which we are visiting today, on its warm and hospitable heart, also carries the seal of anguish. At the dawn of the twentieth century, when our people were subjected to genocide, Gumri as well felt the heavy blows of the Ottoman Empire’s devastating and invasive politics. Today as well Gumri faces closed borders as a witness to the genocide committed one hundred years ago and to the continuous denialist policies.

The pious people in Gumri stood against the disaster of the earthquake through faith and brave heart. On this occasion we extend our words of appreciation to the Catholic Church, who also in those difficult days gave a helping hand of brotherly love to the victims of the earthquake, according to the words of the apostle, “And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds.” (Hebrews 10:23-24). Today as well our Children in Gumri continue to overcome the difficulties and make dedicated efforts to transform Gumri into a prosperous and thriving city. The testimonies to this are the Catholic Church, built in the recent years, and the two restored historic churches, gracefully overlooking this square as symbols of the revival of Gumri.

Giving thanks to the Lord for this blessed day of unity of prayer in Gumri, together with our beloved brother Pope Francis, we bring to you, dear faithful, our plea and wish so that through the firm steps of faith, brotherly love, and hope, you may witness in this world to the following commandment of Christ, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (John 13:34)

With this wish we also greet and extend our appreciation and blessings to government officials of Gumri and the region, and to our faithful people of Shirak. We bring our appreciation and



President Serge Sargisyan and his wife, Rita, and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II see off Pope Francis.

blessings to the Primate of the Diocese of Shirak, His Grace Bishop Michael Ajapahyan, and his co-serving clergy, as well as to the clergy of the Catholic community under the leadership of His Eminence, Archbishop Rafael Minassian. We wish them, with the support of the Lord, to successfully continue the pastoral care of their flock and the partnership in brotherly love.

We extend our prayer to Almighty God with the intercession of the Holy Apostles and all the witnesses of the Lord, for peace in the world, a prosperous and secure life for humanity and for the vibrancy of the holy Church of Christ.

Your Holiness, our dear brother in Christ, your visit to Gumri is a spiritual renewal for the faithful of the region of Shirak, and it shall always be remembered with warmth and love.

Again with a joyous heart we reaffirm that your visit is a new testimony to the fraternal relationship between our churches.

May God keep steadfast the brotherhood and make fruitful the cooperation between our churches. Forever and ever. Amen.

# Arts & Living

## 14 Ounces of Love, One Ounce of Metal

By Isaac Feldberg

BOSTON (*Boston Globe*) – On any gift-giving occasion in the Megerdichian household, the most exciting presents to unwrap were always both the smallest and, funnily enough, the heaviest.

Some boxes held metal miniature re-creations – a brass violin with horsehair strings and a latched case; an aluminum piano music box that played Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head. Others concealed stainless-steel jewelry, intricately detailed, immaculately formed. And others still contained children's toys, like steel tractor-trailer sets to be nudged along the wooden floors of their Cambridge home.

"They were 14 ounces of love, 1 ounce of metal," says Robert Megerdichian, 63, of the tiniest pieces his late father, Abraham, bestowed upon the family throughout his lengthy career as a machinist. "He started off with a solid block of metal, brass, aluminum, copper, or stainless steel, and he gouged away, like a sculptor would, like an artist would, to create all of these objects."

Megerdichian's description of his father as an artist has recently earned official validation, with museums across New England displaying an array of Abraham's pieces. The Attleboro Area Museum of Industry, the Lynn Museum, and Boston's Museum of Science all currently house some of his metal miniatures. Additional museum exhibits are set to open in the fall, including at Connecticut's New Britain Industrial Museum. For more than half a century, however, Abraham's creations were reserved for his loved ones.

"He wanted to make utilitarian objects but he also wanted to make personal gifts," says Megerdichian, who professionally measures and draws floor plans for architects. "It was important to him to make things that made the people he cared for happy."

Born in Franklin to Armenian immigrants, Abraham was raised in Cambridge and lived there for most of his life, working as a machinist. It was in the 1950s, at his place of work at a factory in Lynn, that he first explored metal art. During 20-minute lunch breaks, Abraham would parse through scrap bins, carefully selecting worthy material, and repurpose what he could to craft everything from cutlery to candleholders.

"He machined all these pieces for the house, at first a lot of them very practical," Megerdichian recalls. "But his hobby evolved into a passion for these elaborate metal miniatures."

By the time he died in 1983, Abraham had completed more than 300 items, nearly all made for family or friends but each resolutely specific in purpose and presentation.

"Some of them were very simple, but others were extremely sophisticated," says Megerdichian. "His range was extraordinary."

And yet, after Abraham's passing at 59, from a heart attack, the miniatures were tucked away out of sight.

"When he died, everyone in the family picked a piece and took it, and all the other pieces went into a box he'd made that morbidly looked like a casket," Megerdichian recalls. "And it was locked up and put away in this box he'd made with a little tag on it that just says, 'My Created Objects,' in Armenian. Just like that – he was prolific but very casual."

It wasn't until 2013, when family friends asked about the status of the pieces, that Megerdichian began digging around, ultimately uncovering a treasure trove.

"That there were hundreds of pieces floored me," says Megerdichian. "How many bona fide see GOLD, page 17



Two *khachkars*, now destroyed, in the Julfa cemetery (photo Argam Ayvazyan archive)

## Restoring What Has Been Destroyed: Digital Julfa

WATERTOWN – Armenians have not only lost lives but also irreplaceable cultural artifacts as a result of acts of violence over the centuries. Now, there may be a way to recreate some of this lost heritage, at least in the digital realm. Prof. Harold Short is part of a research team attempting to restore some of the Armenian past, starting with the cemetery of *khachkars* or cross-stones in Julfa systematically destroyed by

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

Azerbaijanis. Short was in Watertown recently, and provided some insights into the project, officially called the Julfa Cemetery Digital Repatriation Project.

He said that the project was initiated by co-director Dr. Judith Crispin, an Australian musician, photographer and intellectual. While she was running the Manning Clark House, a center in Canberra, Australia, bequeathed by the family of Clark for exhibitions and cultural events, she came to learn from Armenians about the Armenian Genocide and the recent destruction of the Julfa cemetery. At its peak this cemetery contained over 10,000 medieval *khachkars* on the banks of the Arax River between Iran and Nakhichevan. By 1998, there were some 2,000 left standing prior to the coordinated Azerbaijani campaign of destruction. UNESCO has included the *khachkars* on its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Incensed at this loss, and stunned by the beauty of the demolished *khachkars*, Crispin met with Armenian researcher Vicken Babkenian and the Armenian bishop in Sidney, and sought their support for attempting to use modern technology to restore the cemetery in a virtual but realistic manner. She looked for an academic home for the project to work with the Manning Clark House. The Australian Catholic University thought it very worthwhile. The vice chancellor of that university asked Short at this point to join in as a digital humanities specialist. The university's Institute for Social Justice and the Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry served as host structures for the projects.

see JULFA, page 16



Professor Harold Short

## 'The Promise' To Appear in Cinemas in December

LOS ANGELES – Through the initiative of late American-Armenian philanthropist Kirk Kirkorian, the film "The Promise," about the Armenian Genocide, will appear in cinemas in December 2016, according to *Asbarez*. Golden Globe winner Oscar Isaac and Academy Award winner Christian Bale were announced as its leads last June when Survivor Pictures, founded by late-billionaire Kirk Kerkorian revealed the long-rumored film project.

According to early reports, Bale will play Chris, who is in love with both a woman and the danger of being in a combat zone during World War I. Isaac will play Michael, who is in love with the same woman but conflicted by old-world traditions and his heart.

George, who was nominated for a best director Oscar for "Hotel Rwanda," co-wrote "The Promise" with another Academy Award nominated screenwriter, Robin Swicord. In March 2013, George was a guest of the Armenian State Pedagogical University, where the Irish filmmaker compared the Armenian Genocide to the 1994 Rwandan Genocide.

The film, which also stars Charlotte Le Bon, James Cromwell, Marwan Kenzari, Jean Reno, Shohreh Aghdashloo and Angela Sarafyan, among others, completed shooting in Europe last fall and is in post-production. After shooting was completed on the film, Survival Pictures co-manager and a producer of the film, Eric Esrailian told *Asbarez* in an email that "Kirk will be proud," referring to Kerkorian. He exclaimed: "That makes all of the hard work even more special."

## Movie Night at Fresno's Armenian Cultural Conservancy

FRESNO – On Monday, June 20, the Heritage Fresno Project for an Armenian Cultural Conservancy hosted its fourth in a monthly series of "Armenian Movie Nights," featuring films with Armenian content.

The first four of these "Armenian Movie Nights" featured the documentary films of the late Dr. J. Michael Hagopian. On Monday evening, Hagopian's film, "The California Armenians" was followed by an excellent presentation by Dr. Matthew Ari Jendian, professor and chair of the Sociology Department and founder of the Humanics Program at Fresno State.

More than a hundred Fresnoans filled the Public Room at the Woodward Park Library to enjoy both the movie and Jendian's presentation. Jendian described the proposition demonstrated in his book *Becoming American, Remaining Ethnic* (LFB Scholarly Publishing, 2008) that successful integration into American life of immigrants and their descendants does not require the total abandonment of prior ethnic identity, language, religion, music and food.

"Rather than viewing assimilation as only substitutive, we need to recognize that assimilation can be an additive process. After all, one is not required to forget how to speak Armenian or Spanish in order to learn English," Jendian stated.

The next "Armenian Movie Night" is scheduled on Tuesday, August 23, at 7 p.m. at Woodward Park Library. Light refreshments will be served at 6:30 p.m.



# Restoring What Has Been Destroyed: Digital Julfa

JULFA, from page 15

Short, with an educational background in the humanities and mathematics, computing and systems, was head of the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College, London, until his retirement in September 2010, and has collaborated in a large number of multidisciplinary projects. He is responsible, he said, for the technical side of things, and managing the people doing the work, while Crispin will coordinate the historical and cultural research necessary. This is an interdisciplinary project, with archaeologists, historians, photographers, theologians and sound and digital humanities technical specialists just some of the experts required.

Short explained what sources materials exist for the cemetery. He said, "What makes it possible to think in the terms we are thinking is the collection of 2,000 photographs of Argam Ayvazyan." Over a period of several decades, at considerable risk to his own safety, Ayvazyan systematically took photographs of the cemetery in the Soviet period out of concern for its neglect and damage. There are also photographs taken by other people from the 1920s on, some of which are of very high quality. Short said that there are enough to permit working out the positions of the *khachkars* relative to each other.

An exploratory trip in 2013 to Armenia obtained a great deal of information and images, and led, among other things, to a richly illustrated electronic book, *Recovering a Lost Armenian Cemetery: A Pilot Project* by Manning Clark House. During a 2014 trip to Armenia Crispin and a group of collaborators also learned of approximately 40 extant *khachkars* taken to Armenia, Georgia and Iran from Julfa over the years. A third field trip this spring allowed the latter to be photographed, and 3-D scans were taken. A lot of materials in libraries in Armenia and elsewhere exist which will help identify the individuals commemorated in the *khachkars*.

The photographs and other information that are being collected are being digitized. Short said, "As we work, the archive will grow, and eventually the archive will be held somewhere between the Australian Catholic University and the State Library of New South Wales, the first public library of Australia which is doing important work in digitizing its own collections."

Ayvazyan's collection of photographs have been purchased by the Australian Catholic University. Short said that Ayvazyan "was very anxious for this to happen. He was concerned about their security in Armenia."

The State Library has begun talking to the Armenian community in Australia, as one of the library's responsibilities is to create collections of interest to the community. Consequently, an Armenian community state archive will also be created in the library and the high quality scanner bought by the Australian Catholic University for the *khachkar* project will eventually be given to the library after the project is finished. The archive will be available both physically and digitally in several places so that other people can work on the collections.

Short said that there were a number of specific outcomes they hope to accomplish concerning the *khachkars*. Two permanent installations would be created, one at Yerevan's Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, and one near Sydney, in Chatswood, a small city where many Armenians live. Suitable large spaces have been identified for the installations.

Short said, "Our primary objective is an immersive three-dimensional experience so that people, as far as possible, feel that they are in the cemetery. We would be happy for the permanent installations to be wherever people would like them. We would also like to create a touring version, which probably would be in a dome."

Short said that they want to set the installations up so that you can choose what part of the cemetery you want to be in, the time of the day and the season of the year. If you look at a particular *khachkar*, you will be able to press a button and find out about its symbolism, and the individual for whom it was made. Perhaps even religious rituals could be performed that would have originally been carried out. A partial version hopefully would also be created for



The Julfa cemetery already in the process of destruction (photo Argam Ayvazyan archive)

the Internet, something like a virtual world, where at least some of the above could be done.

Short said, "Electroacoustics is the single most innovative thing that we do. As far as we know, no other existing 3-D reconstruction has attempted to incorporate acoustics." Some recordings were done on the Armenia-Nakhichevan border. Sound was recorded during this year's field trip while photographs were taken as close as possible to the Arax River near Agarak.

Armenian clerics in Armenia have provided helpful information about the kinds of music that might have been originally performed in the cemetery. Short said, "The idea is that part of the permanent installation will have the sounds as authentic as we can make them."

The idea of the Julfa recreation was not based on one particular model. There are other similar projects such as the 3-D light projects of the immense Bamiyan Buddha stone statues destroyed by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Bits and pieces were taken from similar existing projects for the Julfa one.

The 3-D visualization specialist for the Julfa project initially worked at King's College on the recreation of a number of theaters that no longer exist, including that of Pompey the Great in Rome. Such reconstructions led to the formulation of the London Charter in 2006 about how to document the process to make completely clear what is historical and what is not in the reconstruction. Short pointed out that the Julfa project will follow the same guidelines.

The name "digital repatriation project" comes from a range of projects, many of them Australian, where aboriginal materials, some quite sensitive and some fragile, had to be carefully controlled for preservation purposes. Short said, "It is a way of enabling the community which has the most direct interest in them to enjoy and experience them through digital means."

The project initially found funding from the Australian Catholic University. It provided some salaries for over a year, and gave contracts to four people for 12 months, including Crispin, Short, and a 3D visualization specialist. It purchased a high quality scanner and the Ayvazyan photographs.

The university has a space in Rome where it runs seminars. There are two planned for September 2016, one of which will be for the Julfa project. Consequently, speakers have been invited to talk about various aspects of the project, while the 3D specialist is preparing a demonstration with the scans already taken.

The goal is to display somewhere between 12 and 20 of the extant *khachkars* for an immersive experience in a geodesic dome. If this cannot be done by September, it will be presented in Rome a bit later in the year. The decision will be made by mid-July, Short said, and the exhibition may later be brought to several cities in the US, such as Boston, New York and Los Angeles, if appropriate arrangements can be made.

Yerevan State University and the Armenian

Church, especially the Armenian Apostolic Church of Holy Resurrection in Chatswood, Sydney, have been very supportive of the project, and the former will receive some of the projected funding for its assistance.

The Gulbenkian Foundation funded the pilot work done, such as the visit to Armenia and the most recent field trip this year. There have been several other benefactors. Additional funding will be necessary to continue the project after a year. Salaries will be necessary for people doing post-graduate work primarily in Armenia and Sydney. Quite a lot of the contextual research will have to be done in Armenia.

The total budget, Short estimates, is about \$6 million (US). Major grants from government bodies and corporations in the US and the United Kingdom are being sought but this will not be enough. Short said, "My own sense is that we have two projects together – the reconstruction of the cemetery, and [the collection of] the contextual material to make sense of the cemetery." It is an expensive project, which, Short feels, in the end may require an Armenian philanthropist who understands the importance of both parts. For more information, see <https://julfaproject.wordpress.com/>.



## Administrative Director Position

Manoogian Manor, Livonia, MI

The Manoogian Manor is currently taking resumes for the position of Administrative Director to head up our premier assisted care program. Founded by Alex and Marie Manoogian, we are a fully licensed non-profit 90 bed facility, providing assisted living and personal care services to seniors. With our recent multi-million dollar renovation we are an industry leader known for our outstanding resident care programs. Potential candidates should have extensive experience in the industry. An Assisted Living Administrator's License will be required. Knowledge of the Armenian language is a plus. Interested candidates should email resumé with cover letter to: Manoogian Manor, Attn: Gregory Jamian at [jamiang@americaremedical.com](mailto:jamiang@americaremedical.com)





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## CALENDAR

## MASSACHUSETTS

**JULY 19 — ALMA's Final Inning Sports Raffle Party And Drawing.** The concluding celebration and raffle drawing for the Armenian Museum's 11th Annual Sports Raffle Fundraiser will be held in the Adele & Haig Der Manuelian Galleries at 6:00 PM. The Grand Prize for this year's Raffle is a Fenway Park Luxury Box for the winner and 21 guests. To purchase tickets, call 617-926-2562 x4.

**JULY 31 — Sunday, St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, Annual Church Picnic,** 12 pm to 5 p.m., Camp Haiastan, 722 Summer St., Franklin.

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

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

**SEPTEMBER 11 — Trinity Family Festival,** 12-5 pm, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Delicious Armenian food with take-out available; Armenian music for your listening and dancing pleasure; fun activities for children. Blessing of the Madagh, raffle drawing and more. Save the date; details to follow. For further information, contact the church office, 617.354.0632, or email [office@htaac.org](mailto:office@htaac.org).

**SEPTEMBER 18 — Sunday Afternoon at the Park.** For families and friends. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway. Boston. 2-4 p.m. All are invited.

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

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

**OCTOBER 22 — Armenian Friends of America presents**



**The Armenian Museum of America is selling raffle tickets for its annual Sports Raffle Fundraiser. The Final Inning Sports Raffle Party and Drawing will take place on July 19 at the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries at 6 p.m. The grand prize for this year's raffle is a Fenway Park luxury box (such as the one pictured above) for the winner and 21 guests. To purchase tickets, call 617-926-2562, ext. 4.**

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

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

**NOVEMBER 3 — K. George and Carolann S. Najarian, M.D. Lecture on Human Rights at Faneuil Hall, 7:30 p.m. Doors open at 6:45 p.m., "Justice & Equality: My Life as an Activist."** Speaker: Harry Belafonte, Activist & Entertainer. Reception follows at Bostonian Hotel. All are invited; free and open to the public. Further information: [ArmenianHeritagePark.org](http://ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

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

**NOVEMBER 19 — Armenian Women's Welfare Association will hold its 40th annual luncheon/auction.** Oakley Country Club, 410 Belmont St., Watertown. Details to follow.

**DECEMBER 18 — Candlelit Labyrinth Peace Walk,** Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. 5-6:30 p.m. All are invited.

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

## RHODE ISLAND

**JULY 16 — 6 p.m. — 12 a.m. — A HYE SUMMER NIGHT # 10** sponsored by the Ladies' Guild, Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church and the Providence ARS "Ani" Chapter. The dinner dance will be held at the Alpine Country Club, 251 Pippin Orchard Road, Cranston, RI featuring Hachig Kazarian, John Berberian, Ken Kalajian, Jason Naroian and vocals, Khatchig Jingirian from CA. The dinner-dance is \$55. Dance only after 8:00pm is \$35. Students dance only \$30. ID required. Buy your tickets early. R.S.V.P. by June 30, 2016. Call Joyce Yeremian at 401- 354-8770, [joycey41@cox.net](mailto:joycey41@cox.net) or Joyce Bagdasarian at 401- 434-4467.

## 14 Ounces of Love, One Ounce of Metal

GOLD, from page 15

metal artists are there out there who have that many pieces?"

Emboldened by rediscovering Abraham's extensive collection, Megerdichian decided it was time to bring the miniatures out of storage and into the public eye.

"It's become a work of love. Keeping his memory alive, both for me and other people, is really a joy. . . . It's very rewarding, because my sons never met him. This is my way of introducing my own sons to their grandfather."

"On a lark, I grabbed this elaborate little violin he'd made and took it to an open house at the Charles River Museum of Industry," he explains.

He asked to speak with the director, who he says was visibly impressed with the piece and made plans to see the rest of Megerdichian's collection. Though unexpected circumstances led that museum to eventually pass on an exhibit it had arranged, the encounter assured Megerdichian that his father's work was worthy of display.

Soon after, he approached the director of the Attleboro Area Industrial Museum, who was equally taken with the miniatures, agreeing to exhibit select pieces. Other successful meetings soon followed with the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, RI, the Providence Children's Museum, and the Museum of Science in Boston.

"The artwork speaks for itself," says Megerdichian. "It's very unusual, even though the subject matter is very commonplace. There's a story behind this. This stuff was made

by a real person, with a career and a life, and that's what's so interesting about it to so many people."

Carleton Legg, executive director at the Attleboro Area Industrial Museum, was particularly taken with the functionality of many pieces. "They're everyday pieces," he explains. "But they're so intricate and realistic that it brings a smile to your face."

When Megerdichian first approached the museum about the pieces, now-retired director George Shelton and other board members were enthusiastic, Legg recalls. Out of the 50 pieces originally put on display, 25 are now part of a permanent exhibit.

"They've been a massive success for the museum," adds Legg. "The craftsmanship and detail are incredible, and the more people see it, the more they recognize their prized, precious nature."

For Megerdichian, introducing the world to his father's art meant revisiting grief along with happy memories.

"It's become a work of love," he says. "Keeping his memory alive, both for me and other people, is really a joy. But it's hard sometimes. He's been gone 33 years and this is opening it all up again. I missed all those 33 years. We could have done stuff together."

The most thrilling part of exhibiting the miniatures, he says, has been watching his own sons grow to understand Abraham as both an ancestor and an artist.

"It's very rewarding, because my sons never met him," he explains. "This is my way of introducing my own sons to their grandfather.



Robert Megerdichian with one of his tiny sculptures (Boston Globe photo)

Armenians are very big on memory; people die, but they don't just go away."

In showing the next generation of Megerdichians the detail and diversity of their grandfather's miniatures, he hopes to impart in them an appreciation for Abraham's creative

spirit and generous heart.

"This is my way of bringing him back," says Megerdichian. "It's his legacy. . . . My sons never saw the stuff before, but now they're finding this grandfather they never knew through his art."



## COMMENTARY

# Mirror Spectator



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## COMMENTARY

## Armenia in the Limelight of World Politics

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Turkey and Azerbaijan have cornered Armenia in its international relations. They have blockaded the country and have been trying to stifle it by isolating it in regional development projects, including pipelines. Georgia, which nominally is an ally and a fellow Christian country, is in full cooperation with these two enemy countries; railway systems, oil and gas pipelines are being developed in the region, bypassing Armenia.

The West has its own perspectives on these subjects; take for example, in the US. For many years, both during the Bush and Obama administrations, Article 907 of the Freedom Support Act, punishing Azerbaijan for its hostile actions against Armenia, has been suspended by the president's office, not because Azerbaijan has been behaving any better, but because it is viewed within the context of Russian containment. Thus, Armenia's isolation becomes part of the collateral damage even when it is not intended, because it is a strategic ally of Russia and a friend of Iran.

Conversely, Iran and Russia do not view Armenia as a victim of the West's policies against them. Although they keep their friendly relations, they do not and possibly cannot compensate Armenia for the punitive measures it suffers as fallout from the two countries' complicated ties with the West.

In short, Armenia is being marginalized in its international relations, which has a direct bearing on its economy and the well being of the ordinary citizens there.

Yerevan certainly cannot cope single-handedly with this large geo-strategic game.

Although Armenia has persisted against all odds and the blockade did not yet achieve fully what was intended by Ankara and Baku, it has taken a significant toll by choking its economic development and forcing a mass exodus of its population. As a result of this blockade, it may one day soon face a country without any people.

To counter its strategic isolation, Armenia has been engaged in its public relations plans by claiming its place in the arena of international relations and promoting issues of major national interest.

Along with the successful activities of the Genocide centennial, world media attention was focused on Armenia when the Kardashians sisters visited there, George Clooney went there to hand out the Aurora Prize in April, and now, the recent visit by Pope Francis.

Both the centennial commemoration and the Pope's visit were organized and choreographed on a superb level which created maximal emotional and symbolic impacts.

Besides, the Pope's visit did not remain within the parameters of a public relations stunt but instead it was amplified to become a historic and political watershed because of the Pontiff advocating courageously the issue of the Armenian Genocide.

His Holiness' pronouncement of the Armenian tragedy as the first genocide of the 20th century last year invariably impacted German political thinking which was debating the issue in the parliament for an entire year.

After Pope Francis' pronouncement, politicians who were shunning the use of the term Genocide in the official chambers of power realized they could call a spade a spade.

Despite Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's threats, nei-

ther the German government nor the Pope backed down. The Pope courageously stood by his position, reiterating once again his statement and enshrining it also in the document signed by the heads of the two churches at the conclusion of the pontifical visit last weekend.

Pope Francis' visit could have had a broader impact on an international level had the news media not played down the visit.

When the Pope visits any corner of the world, no matter how remote or how close, the cameras of major media outlets are there to capture his every move. But his visit to Armenia did not enjoy that level of coverage in the first place because of the political impact the visit could generate, with the genocide issue on the radar. George Orwell is dead; his Big Brother is alive and well, but not in the now defunct Soviet Union, but here in the West, at the headquarters of major news outlets.

The most that the major news networks did was to focus on the controversies that were generated by the Pontiff's remarks.

The Pope once again placed the burning issue of the Armenian Genocide on the world forum, he launched a peace initiative by promising on his homeward trip that he would tell in Azerbaijan whatever he witnessed in Armenia. His release of the dove at the Shrine of Khor Virab, next to Catholicos Karekin II near the Turkish border, toward Mount Ararat, was more than a historic gesture. He has been credited with the rapprochement between two bitter enemies, namely the US and Cuba, which brought down the last vestige of the Cold War.

The major networks ignored completely the momentous events of the Pope's visit, only to capitalize on the reactions of official Turkey.

The Associated Press, Reuters and other news outlets highlighted Turkey's reaction, which came through the Deputy Prime Minister Nurettin Canikli, who characterized the Pope's statement as "greatly unfortunate" and went on, adding that "the goal is to squeeze Turkey in the corner. ... It is possible to see all the reflections and traces of Crusader mentality in the actions of the Papacy and the Pope."

However, the Vatican did not mince words when responding to the Turkish accusation. According to the Vatican Radio, the focus of Pope Francis' is to reach the "spirit of dialogue." On behalf of the Vatican, Father Federico Lombardi said, "The Pope is on no crusade. He is not trying to organize wars or build walls, he wants to build bridges. ... He has no words against the Turkish people."

Erdogan's bullying had intimidated many world leaders – including political leaders in the US – to avoid using the world genocide. Pope Francis' courage broke the ice. Many leaders are finding that it is something doable. Even outgoing British Prime Minister David Cameron, who had been, ironically, crusading for Turkey's admission to the European Union, finally realized that under Erdogan, Turkey, was veering toward despotism. Incidentally, Brexit was caused, among several other factors, because of the influx of Turks into Europe through dropping the visa requirement and also eventual membership of Turkey in the EU, which scared the British voters.

The Pope is back in the Vatican. His white dove is still flying, hopefully, to come back with an olive branch.

What remains behind is Armenian ingenuity to use occasions from the sublime to the most mundane – Pope Francis and the Kardashians – to place Armenia back in the international political limelight.

## The German Village Helping Yazidi Women Raped by ISIL

By Renate van der Zee

Berfin (not her real name) was 14 when Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) fighters attacked her village. They killed most of the men and separated the married women from the young girls, who were taken away and forced into sexual slavery.

"ISIL fighters locked us up in an empty house in some village. We were nine young girls," she recalls.

"In the evening more fighters came to that house. One of them wrote our names on pieces of paper and dropped them in a bowl. Each fighter took a piece of paper out of the bowl and the girl whose name was on it, was

his."

She looks down as she speaks, fidgets and barely pauses for breath. Her short black hair is held back by a thin hairband. She wears a hooded sweater with teddy bears on it.

"The man who took out the piece of paper with my name was 53 years old and had a long, grey beard," Berfin, who is now 16, continues.

"He took me to his house and said: 'Now you are going to wash yourself.' When I resisted, he cut my clothes open with a knife and pushed me into the shower. He took me to a room where there was a laptop showing a porn film. In that room he tied me to the bed and raped me."

This was just the beginning of Berfin's ordeal.

She was imprisoned by ISIL for nine

months. In that time she was raped and abused by Afghan, Syrian and British ISIL fighters who afterwards sold her on, on one occasion for \$6, she says.

In April last year, Berfin was rescued by a network that frees Yazidi women from ISIL captivity.

She now lives in a village in southern Germany, where the peaceful streets are lined with blossoming trees.

About 30 other Yazidi women and children who escaped from ISIL are here. They are part of a unique humanitarian project.

In October 2014, two months after ISIL invaded the district of Sinjar in Iraq, massacred Yazidi men and captured 7,000 Yazidi women and girls, the German state of Baden-Württemberg took a decision: it

*continued on next page*



## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Pope Listens to His Heart, not Handlers, On Genocide during Armenia Pilgrimage

While Armenians throughout the world were overjoyed with the landmark “pilgrimage” of His Holiness Pope Francis to the first Christian state, most people were unaware of the behind the scenes deliberations on the Armenian Genocide issue in the Vatican prior to his visit.

The Pope’s dual roles as Pontiff of the Catholic Church and head of the Vatican State occasionally create problems within and outside the walls of the Holy See, which is what happened during the Pope’s visit to Armenia last week.

After lengthy preparations and internal discussions, the Pope arrived in Armenia on June 24 ready to deliver a series of sermons and remarks over the course of his three-day visit. Surprisingly, none of his prepared speeches contained the words Armenian Genocide, but there were plenty of references to “tragedy, slaughter, terrible trial, and immense suffering.” His homilies repeatedly used the Armenian term “Meds Yeghern” (Great Crime) which was wrongly translated by the Vatican as “Great Evil.” The first indication of a

change in terminology came prior to the Pope’s pastoral visit in a video address to the Armenian people, which did not mention the Armenian Genocide. Later on, during his visit to the Armenian Genocide Monument, the Pontiff did not write the words Armenian Genocide in the guest book, copying the text from a pre-prepared note card!

There may have been two reasons why the words Armenian Genocide had been avoided:

1) Since Pope Francis had already gone on record using the term “Armenian Genocide” during last April’s Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica, Vatican officials had decided to deliver a new message of “peace and reconciliation.”

2) The Pontiff’s foreign policy advisors may have been reluctant to raise the Armenian Genocide issue once again after the Turkish government’s harsh reaction last year and withdrawal of its ambassador from the Vatican for 10 months.

Pope Francis, however, surprised everyone, when he departed from the text of his prepared remarks that had been already distributed to the media, by adding the word genocide to his address at the Presidential Palace in Yerevan on June 24. Here is what Pope Francis actually said while recalling his earlier sermon of April 12, 2015: “The occasion was the commemoration of the centenary of the Metz Yeghern, the ‘Great Evil’ that struck your people and caused the death of a vast multitude of persons. Sadly, that tragedy, that genocide, was the first of the deplorable series of catastrophes of the past century, made possible by twisted racial, ideological or religious aims that darkened the minds of the tormentors even to the point of planning the annihilation of entire peoples.”

Later that day, Father Federico Lombardi, Director of the Holy See’s Press Office, explained why Pope Francis deviated from his prepared text: “The Pope says what he finds

appropriate, and no one decides what the Pontiff should say. The Pope had no reason to avoid the word ‘genocide’ during his trip to Armenia. The reality is clear and we never denied what the reality is.”

The Pontiff’s use of that single word in one speech did not escape the attention of Turkish authorities. Deputy Prime Minister Nurettin Canikli responded by accusing the Pope of having a “Crusader mentality.” Canikli went on to repeat the usual Turkish lies about the Armenian Genocide. Lombardi, the Pontiff’s spokesman, dismissed the Deputy Prime Minister’s criticism, stating that “the Pope is not doing Crusades. He has said no words against the Turkish people.”

Refusing to buckle under Turkish pressure, Pope Francis went on to sign a “Joint Declaration” with Catholicos Karekin II on June 26, 2016, which referenced the Vatican’s earlier acknowledgments of the Armenian Genocide: Pope Francis’s April 12, 2015 sermon and the “Joint Declaration” signed on September 27, 2001 by Pope John Paul II and Catholicos Karekin II. Another “Joint Communiqué” acknowledging the Armenian Genocide was signed on Nov. 29, 2000, by John Paul II and Karekin II.

During his return flight to Rome on June 26, an AFP journalist asked Pope Francis why he added the word genocide to his speech in Yerevan. The Pope explained in detail that genocide is the only word he has grown up with to describe the mass killings of Armenians. The Pope also mentioned his upcoming trip to Azerbaijan and Georgia from September 30 to October 2.

Pope Francis approached his “pilgrimage” to Armenia with utmost honesty and spoke from his heart about the Armenian Genocide, ignoring the political calculations of his advisers and speechwriters. He preferred to conduct himself as a true man of God rather than a crafty politician!

## The German Village Helping Yazidi Women Raped by ISIL

from *previous page*

would bring 1,000 Yazidi women and children who had escaped captivity to Germany on a special visa to receive free treatment. The budget for this program was set at 95 million euros (around \$107 million).

The women and children are housed in 22 villages and cities. In the interests of their safety, the whereabouts of the shelters are kept secret.

“It was a humanitarian decision,” says Michael Blume, head of the Special Quota Project, as it is called. “Our main goal is to offer these women and children, who suffered so much, the chance to build a new future.”

This is the first time that a federal state in Germany has created a humanitarian admissions program.

“It was legally possible, but it was just never done before,” Blume says.

“We think these women would simply not have survived their heavy traumas if they hadn’t come to Germany,” explains Jan Kizilhan, a German-Kurd who is the program’s chief psychologist. He is a professor at the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University in Villingen-Schwenningen and an expert in transcultural psychiatry and traumatology.

### Deciding on Who to Help

Kizilhan, a Yazidi Kurd who emigrated to Germany from Turkey as a child, travelled in 2015 to the refugee camps near the city of Dohuk in northern Iraq, with the near-impossible task of selecting the women who would come to Germany.

He spoke to 1,403 women and girls who had all been forced into sexual slavery by ISIL.

“Every time a woman told me her story, I thought, ‘It can’t get any worse.’ But then another woman came with a story that was even worse,” he says.

“The youngest girl I spoke to was 8 years old. After seeing her father and grandfather being executed, she was raped hundreds of times, five or six times a day, over 14 months. She was sold and resold many times.”

Kizilhan weighed up two main considerations when deciding who should be taken to Germany: the severity of their psychological and physical trauma and how much they would benefit from the treatment offered.

It was decided that for very elderly women, for whom it would be more difficult to build a new life without their relatives, the program would be less beneficial. On average, the selected women are below the age of 20.

“It was very difficult to decide who could come to Germany and who could not,” Kizilhan says.

As there is little help available to the women in their communities or in refugee camps, his task effectively meant choosing who was going to receive treatment and who wasn’t.

“There are only 25 psychologists in northern Iraq,” Blume says. “And most of them are male and Muslim. A heavily traumatized Yazidi woman would never want to be treated by them.”

Those who have come to Germany will all undergo therapy, but the women in the village where Berfin lives are still in the first phase of settling down. Their daily lives revolve around German language lessons and simple activities like buying groceries and learning how to ride a bicycle. The children attend school.

“Before we can start treatment, they first need to stabilize, find a new orientation in their lives and a feeling of safety,” Kizilhan explains.

“These women suffer from nightmares, flashbacks and panic attacks. They are afraid of people, they find it hard to trust anybody. Some are scared to go outside, many suffer from psychosomatic pains. We really have to give them time to settle down first.”

Mayor Helmut Muller drives through his village to visit a Yazidi mother and her children. He is an energetic man in his 50s and his aim is to help the women to lead independent lives in about two years’ time. He estimates that for some it could take longer.

“The decision to offer shelter to these women in our village has been far-reaching,” he says. “There was so much we needed to organize. In the beginning I spent at least 20 percent of my time on this project.”

He had expected individual women to come, but to his surprise, entire families arrived: mothers with children, the youngest of whom are still babies, who had all been in ISIL captivity.

He says he specifically asked for women from villages, hoping they would be able to identify somewhat with life in his community. “I am convinced of the wholesomeness of village life,” he adds.

The women live in comfortable homes with daffodils and forget-me-nots in the gardens.

“They have been through so much, we want them to live in a beautiful place, not in some impersonal building,” the mayor says.

When Muller announced that the village would shelter a group of refugees, not all the locals were happy about it, he says, mostly because people didn’t know what to expect.

“There was some resistance, but now that the women and children are here, neighbors bring them chocolate and shopkeepers offer them

work experience,” he says.

Still, cultural and language differences have made communication difficult at times.

“These women not only come from a totally different culture, they also come from a different era,” he says. “Things that are normal to us, like bikes and keys, are unknown to them. We have to explain a lot, but they only speak Kurdish.”

Two Turkish Kurdish women from the neighborhood offered to help as volunteers and now have part-time paid jobs as interpreters.

Beritan Demir, 34, a former nurse, is one of the interpreters. Her main role is to accompany the women on visits to the doctor. “To me this is not just a job, I do this with whole my heart,” she says. “I feel so sorry for what these innocent people have been through.”

She says the women are often ill and suffer from all kinds of pain.

“Their health is destroyed during their imprisonment. They suffer from insomnia, they suffer from stomach pains when they eat. They were often given only bread and water – and the mothers gave their food to their children.”

Fifteen-year-old Rana pours tea for the mayor, Demir and social worker Brigitte Neuhaus, who are visiting her family. She has a long braid and a pale face which betrays no emotion as she shares fragments of her story.

“When Daesh attacked our village, they took me and all the other girls with a bus to Mosul. Along the way Daesh fighters got on that bus. Their feet were spattered with blood and they stank. They took photos of the girls and would say things like: ‘I will come to get you later.’ One fighter was very big, he had an enormous black beard. He came to me and took my picture. He said: ‘You are so pretty. You are mine now.’ I was so scared.”

Rana doesn’t say explicitly that she has been raped.

“We know almost for sure that all the girls have been raped,” Demir says later.

“But most of the women find it extremely hard to talk about it. They never use the word ‘rape,’ they say ‘marry.’ They are so ashamed, they just can’t pronounce the word. They are even ashamed for each other.”

Berfin, for example, has never told her mother what happened to her.

“She often asked me about it, but I have always denied it. After everything she’s been through, I don’t want to hurt her even more,” she says.

“Chastity and family honor are extremely important in Yazidi culture,” Kizilhan explains.

“When a Yazidi woman has had sexual intercourse with a non-Yazidi, she traditionally is expelled from the community, whether it was voluntary or not. This 800-year-old rule has

complicated the situation of these women. Some women have been rejected by their families,” he says, adding that some women in the camps in northern Iraq have committed suicide.

The tradition of ostracizing women who have been raped has been the subject of discussions between Kizilhan and the Yazidi spiritual leader, Baba Sheikh. The leader subsequently issued an official declaration that women who have been raped by ISIL have not lost their honor and are still considered part of the community.

Before going to Germany, the women of the Special Quota Project were brought to Lalish, the Yazidi religious center in northern Iraq, where Baba Sheikh blessed them and told them he was proud of them for escaping captivity.

“This was psychologically very important,” Kizilhan explains. “Because it gave them back their identity and self-worth.”

Kizilhan believes that working on the women’s sense of self-worth needs to be a crucial part of their therapy.

“It is important to make them feel they are valuable women. That they haven’t lost their honour because they were raped, but that the ISIL fighters have lost their honor by raping them.”

He emphasizes the importance of taking into account their cultural and religious values.

“If we work from Western values, we won’t be able to reach them. We have to take into account the crucial importance of family honor in their patriarchal culture. That’s why I have given many courses to psychologists, social workers and interpreters who are working with these women.”

### ‘Not a Single Suicide’

Despite their efforts, there are critics.

“Some people said that we should have given the money to Iraq so the women could be treated at home,” Blume says. “But there simply aren’t enough psychologists in northern Iraq to treat all these heavily traumatised women who need intensive therapy.”

The project has also been accused of being idealistic.

“I agree with that,” Blume says. “And we are already seeing results. Some women have jobs now and rent their own apartments. Others are still struggling, that is certainly true. But we haven’t had a single case of suicide, whereas in the camps in Iraq there were many.”

Baden-Württemberg has recently invested one million euros (more than \$11m) in a programme to train psychologists in Dohuk.

It’s Wednesday morning and the Yazidi mothers are at their German lesson in the village. Today they are learning how to count in German. One of the women nurses her baby

see RAPE, page 20



## ADL Declaration

DECLARATION, from page 1

Party under one banner as was expressed in two consecutive meetings held in Yerevan, Armenia (2015 and 2016);

Noting with disappointment that the May meeting in Yerevan to elect a "central committee" was a flagrant violation of Party constitution and its by-laws, making the said meeting illegal and not representative;

Noting also that the group organizing the abovementioned meeting had systematically ignored the numerous calls for unity and harmonious all-inclusive action from the Reform and Unity Movement and the Party in Armenia;

The Reform and Unity Movement has taken the following decisions during a meeting held in New Jersey on June 25, 2016:

The Reform and Unity Movement announces to governmental, religious and public institutions, Party rank and file, and the public in general, that as of today, it will unite with the party in Armenia in order to support and complement the party in Armenia;

To this end the Reform and Unity Movement has already initiated this process with due consideration to the legal requirements of the Republic of Armenia and the relevant countries and institutions involved;

Furthermore, the Reform and Unity Movement, jointly with the Ramgavar Party of Armenia is organizing a general and all-inclusive convention in October in Yerevan, Armenia to develop the relevant methodologies, review the by-laws, organize a collective leadership, elect a central committee and set the reforming machinery into motion along a work plan with a set time-line. As an interim immediate step, the Reform and Unity Movement has already established representative offices in Yerevan, Boston and Los Angeles;

The Reform and Unity Movement also announces that it has mobilized the necessary manpower and the resources to republish the Baikar newspaper as the official Party organ;

Furthermore, the Reform and Unity Movement announces that true to its traditional role of promoter of democratic and liberal values, it aims at occupying the central ground of diasporan politics, being the protector of the Mother Church, continuing its cultural mission and acting as the promoter of good governance in Armenia, Artsakh and the Diaspora;

The Reform and Unity Movement reiterates its call to its long established traditional partner organizations and institutions in pursuit of a collaborative effort for a balanced politics both in Armenia and the Diaspora without any preconditions.

Armenian Democratic Liberal Party  
Reform and Unity Central Committee  
New Jersey, June 25, 2016

## The German Village Helping Yazidi Women Raped by ISIL

RAPE, from page 9

and the atmosphere in the classroom is relaxed.

When the teacher goes too fast, the women start to laugh. "No problem," she says. "You are all super students."

She explains afterwards that the mothers are all illiterate.

"That's why learning how to read and write German is extra difficult for them. We have to repeat a lot. But they are very motivated. It is important for their self-esteem and it is a good distraction for them."

One of the women in the German class is 50-year-old Dilan. She wears a purple scarf and has soft, dark eyes.

"I am happy and grateful to be here," she says. "We live in a beautiful house and we are safe now. The people are very kind to us. But our hearts are broken."

Dilan was the first woman to arrive in the village in the autumn of 2015, along with seven of her eight children. She was enslaved by ISIL for nine months. One of her daughters is still in captivity and she doesn't know if her husband is alive. On the wall of her living room there are pictures of family members who have gone missing since ISIL attacked her village. "We are thinking of them day and night."

Having family members in captivity complicates the women's treatment, Kizilhan says.

He explains that the women face three types of trauma. "First there is their personal trauma," he says. Then, he adds, there is the "deep rooted historical trauma" caused by the massacres and persecution the Yazidis have experienced in the past.

The third trauma, he says, is the collective trauma of the Yazidi people.

More than 3,500 women and 1,000 children remain imprisoned by ISIL.

"While they have to deal with their own trauma, these women's minds are constantly occupied by the fate of their family members. While treating these women you have to take into account these extra traumas," he says. "You have to keep in mind that their story is more complex than that of, for example, a war victim."

Berfin attends a daily intensive German language course in a neighbouring city. She also does the shopping and cooks for her family.

"She is a great support for her mother," says Neuhaus, the social worker.

Neuhaus says working with the women has changed her life.

"I have been confronted with cruelties you just can't imagine," she says. "ISIL have systematically destroyed these people. You can compare it to what the Germans did to the Jews."

In spite of their trauma, Rana and the other young girls regularly attend school. They are passionate about football and are often seen playing a game together in the village.

"The women and children visibly have made progress ever since they have been here," Neuhaus says.

"They look better than when they first came to the village. And they have taken up the daily routine remarkably well. In the beginning they didn't cook for themselves. There were women who did nothing but sleep. But now they invite us to tea or to delicious dinners. All the children go to school or kindergarten. I really feel they have come to trust us a little."

"I have gained new insights by working with these women," Kizilhan says.

"What has impressed me most is their resilience. I realise that to make treatment successful, we really need to work with the inner strength they still possess. It's amazing how strong these women are. They really want to survive."

(\*For the safety of the children and women, all the names in this article have been changed, except for those of Dr Jan Kizilhan and Michael Blume. This piece originally was run by *Al Jazeera* on June 23.)

## Iran Negotiates With Armenia over Export of Oil Derivatives to Georgia

TEHRAN (Panorama) – Iranian National Oil Refining and Distribution Company's (NIORDC) Director of CNG Stations, Amir Vakilzadeh, says Georgia can be the main route of Iran's exports to European markets. According to Fars agency report, talks with Armenia and Georgia are underway for export of oil derivatives, which is of the NIORDC's high priority this year.

He said talks with Georgia to this end have been positive and it wants to purchase Iranian oil derivatives.

He said exports on routes is much more expensive than through the sea and via railway is more economical.

He said to find new markets, more destinations are to be covered this year.



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