

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

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## Turkish-German Relations: Threats, Taboos and Truth

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN – As the croupier at the roulette table says, “les jeux sont fait.” The die is cast. In the wake of the German



Bundestag President Norbert Lammert

Bundestag’s resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide, the hysterical reaction from Erdogan and his co-thinkers has

raised the stakes in a risky gamble with political counterparts in Europe, a game that Ankara, contrary to its delusions of grandeur, has no chance of winning.

Bundestag President Norbert Lammert (CDU) was not mincing words when he responded to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s intimidating threats against members of the parliament for its resolution on the Armenian Genocide. “That a democratically elected state president in the 21st century,” he said on June 9, “could link his criticism of democratically elected members of the German Bundestag with doubts as to their Turkish heritage, and designate their blood as impure, is something I would not have deemed possible.” He categorically rejected Erdogan’s insinuation that parliamentarians of Turkish background were

“mouthpieces for terrorists” and underlined that “anyone who tries to exert

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## Bill Mandating Holocaust, Genocide Instruction Advances in R.I. Senate

By Alisha A. Pina

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (*Providence Journal*) – Two education bills – one teaching students about the Holocaust and other genocides and the other regarding suspensions and the collection of discipline data – are on their way to the state House of Representatives.

The bill on teaching about the Holocaust and several genocides was approved unanimously by the Senate, 36 to 0. It mandates in middle school or high school the teaching of the Holocaust and other genocides in, but not limited to, Armenia, Cambodia, Iraq, Rwanda and Darfur.

Seven states – California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York, New Jersey

and Pennsylvania – have similar legislation. A current law in Rhode Island only encourages the awareness education.

If approved, teaching is required to begin in the 2017-18 school year. The House passed a duplicate bill in early May.

A coalition made up of members of the Armenian community, Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence, Rhode Island State Council of Churches, the Jewish Alliance of Greater Rhode Island and the Sandra Bornstein Holocaust Education Center have been meeting since last fall to research and draft the legislation.

The lead sponsor of the bill is Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Providence) who said: “When we look at what’s going on globally, the impact of war and strife, it’s important to place them in a larger historical context, so

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## Michigan Governor Signs Bill on Teaching Armenian Genocide

LANSING, Mich. – Michigan students will now learn more about genocides such as the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide in social studies classes under legislation signed on June 14 by Gov. Rick Snyder.

“Our next generation of leaders needs to have the wherewithal to recognize and help prevent widespread harm to their fellow men and women,” Snyder said. “Teaching the students of Michigan about genocide is important because we should remember and learn about these terrible events in our past while continuing to work toward creating a more tolerant society.”

House Bill 4493, sponsored by state Rep. Clint Kesto, requires that all social studies curriculum for grades 8-12 in school districts and public school academies include instruction on genocide. This includes, but is not limited to, the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide. It is now Public Act 170 of 2016.

In his signing letter, Snyder also stressed: “There is a delicate balance we need to be mindful of when we consider requiring that certain subjects be included in our statewide education system. The recommendations of local school boards, teachers, other professional educators and parents need to be considered when developing a curriculum.”

The education bill was initiated by the late Edgar Hagopian, who died in 2011. The Hagopian family continued the campaign over the years, with the help of the Knights of Vartan and then through a committee comprising members of the Armenian National Committee and the Armenian Democratic Liberal party.

In addition, John Jamian, the Michigan chair of the Armenian Assembly, was instrumental in pushing forward the measure.

Its success was achieved through sustained and coordinated community effort.



Gov. Rick Snyder

## 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 calendars can be sent to editor@mirrorspectator.com.

### Armenia Named UN General Assembly Vice-President

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The United Nations elected Armenia as a vice president of the General Assembly through a secret ballot.

In addition to Armenia, 20 other nation states have been named vice presidents.

Armenia was elected from amongst the Eastern European countries. Among the Western European countries Belgium and Germany were elected. Five permanent members of the UN Security Council China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the US are included among the 21 Vice-Presidents.

### Armenian Catholic Archbishop: Pope Travel to Armenia to Promote Unity

ROME (Public Radio of Armenia) – From June 24 to 26, Pope Francis will visit Armenia.

The Pope spoke about the first genocide of the 20th century, which befell Armenian people. During his trip, he is expected to visit the Yerevan memorial dedicated to the 1.5 million victims who perished.

“The Armenian nation, the entire Armenian people is preparing to welcome the Pope on this special occasion and show their gratitude for having taken into account and commemorate, as he did the centennial of the Armenian genocide,” Monsignor Boutros Marayati, Armenian Catholic Archbishop of Aleppo (Syria), said in an interview with Rome Reports TV.

In April 2015, Pope Francis presided over a mass in St. Peter’s to honor the victims of the Genocide. His words infuriated Turkey and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, filed a complaint.

“The Holy Father will come to Armenia as a pilgrim, as a pastor, as a promoter of unity because he will visit an ancient Apostolic Church. He will also come as an apostle of peace because he will pray for Armenia to be in a place of peace with its neighbors,” the archbishop said.

## President Obama’s Mule and The Second Amendment

By Edmond Y. Azadian  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

DETROIT – A new day, a new mass murder, this time at a gay nightclub in Orlando. A total of 49 killed and 53 wounded, with the killer identified as a US citizen of Afghani ancestry, Omar Mateen.

**OPINION**  
Before Orlando there was San Bernardino and before that Newtown and ... we have lost track already of the count, because it has become so common that we have come to accept mass shootings as a fact of life in this civilized country.

Investigations may eventually reveal the motives of the killer and whether or not he was affiliated with any international terror group, which of course is no consolation to the victims’ families nor any assurance to the survivors. The killer was questioned twice by the FBI and released. However, when he acquired lethal weapons two days before

the carnage, no red flags were raised.

Whether the trigger was Omar’s personal hatred toward gays because he could not come to terms with his homosexual tendencies or his allegiance to ISIS is immaterial. The heart of the problem is the availability and abundance of guns for anyone to lay their hands on and commit carnage. And all this is protected by the Second Amendment of the US Constitution.

All laws evolve and change in time with the development of society. But not the Second Amendment, which was adopted on December 15, 1791, as part of the first 10 amendments contained in the Bill of Rights.

The Second Amendment was based partially on the right to keep and bear arms in English common law.

In 1876, the Supreme Court ruled that “the right to bear arms is not granted by the constitution; neither is it in any manner dependent upon that instrument for its existence.”

In *United States v. Miller* (1939), the Supreme Court ruled that the federal government and the states could limit the ownership of any weapon types not having “reasonable relationship to the preservation or efficiency of a well-regulated militia.”

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Armenia Condemns 'Horrific' Shooting

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – President Serzh Sargsyan on Monday joined world leaders in strongly condemning the weekend shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida which left 50 people dead and dozens of others wounded.

Sargsyan sent his condolences to U.S. President Barack Obama in connection with the worst mass shooting in US history, which he described as “horrific.”

In a statement on the letter to Obama, Sargsyan's press office said: “The president of the republic strongly condemned this outrageous instance of intolerance and stressed that this tragedy that befell the friendly American people once again proved that even in the 21st century all manifestations of hatred ... remain an extremely serious challenge facing humankind.”

It is “everyone's collective duty and mission” to confront that challenge, Sargsyan wrote.

## Yazidi Union Welcomes Draft Law Condemning Genocide

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Yazidi Union of Armenia said it welcomes the draft law condemning the genocide committed against the Yazidi people by ISIS in northern Iraq which is going to be discussed in the National Assembly.

“We welcome this initiative. It is an important step. All facts exist of what had happened with Yazidis of Iraq, what inhuman attitude was shown against them. It is a genocide, and the world must condemn it,” Chairman of the Yazidi Union of Armenia Aziz Tamoyan said during an interview.

He expressed the hope that other states also will follow Armenia's example.

He said they expect the involvement of the Yazidi specialists, in particular, lawyer Hasan Tamoyan, who is compiling data on the genocide.

Aziz Tamoyan said this week that the inhumane attitude towards Yazidis still continues. Recently, the extremists burned 19 Yazidi women.

The leader of the Prosperous Armenia party Naira Zahrabyan made a proposal to the Armenian Parliament to condemn the genocide committed against the Yazidi people by the ISIS terrorist group in the Northern Iraq.

Heritage party's Tevan Poghosyan also joined this initiative.

## Greek Ambassador Says Armenia Will Become Tourism Center

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The event “Window to Greece” was held in Yerevan this past week. The event was meant to introduce Greek culture and history to the Armenian people and foster Armenian-Greek relations.

The head of the Tourism Department of the Ministry of Economy of Armenia Mekhak Apresyan mentioned that the event aims at fostering cooperation in the sphere of tourism between Armenia and Greece.

“There are a lot of key factors for developing tourism between Armenia and Greece. This does not pursue only economic goals,” Apresyan said, adding that in addition to boosting economies in both countries, it will also reinforce friendship between the two peoples.

He added that there are positive tendencies regarding visits to Armenia from Greece, but it is not so significant considering absolute numbers.

Ambassador of Greece to Armenia Ioannis Taghis said at the event, “Greece is a very popular touristic country and it accepts visitors from various countries. I am glad that Armenians have started to visit Greece quite often. Armenia and Greece are very beautiful countries and I have no doubt that Armenia will soon turn into a touristic state as well. I am convinced that Armenians will enjoy their visit to Greece,” the ambassador said.

Taghis said he thought Armenian monasteries would be of great interest for Greek tourists.



YEREVAN – On the occasion of Andranik Margaryan's birthday, President Serzh Sargsyan, along with President of NKR Bako Sahakyan and other top officials from Armenia, on June 12 visited Komitas Pantheon and paid tribute to the memory of Andranik Margaryan, a statesman and political figure. Above, Sargsyan and Sahakyan place flowers on his tomb.

## Russia Unhappy With Armenian Statue

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Russia criticized Armenia on June 10 for erecting a statue in Yerevan of an Armenian nationalist statesman who fought against the Bolsheviks and later collaborated with Nazi Germany.

A Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said Garegin Nzhdeh's statue is “not compatible with the memory of heroes” of World War II, among them many Armenians. The ruling Republican Party of Armenia dismissed the criticism.

Born in the Russian Empire in 1886, Nzhdeh became an Armenian nationalist militant at a young age and spent several years in Russian prisons as a result. He was pardoned by the Russian authorities before commanding one of the Armenian volunteer units that fought the Ottoman Turkish army alongside Russian troops during World War I.

Nzhdeh went on to become one of the prominent military leaders of an independent Armenian republic formed in 1918 following the Bolshevik revolution. In late 1920, he mounted armed resistance against the republic's takeover by Bolshevik Russia in Zangezur, a mountainous region in what is now southeastern Armenia. Nzhdeh and his supporters ended the resistance and fled to neighboring Persia in July 1921 after receiving assurances that the region will not be incorporated into Soviet Azerbaijan.

Nzhdeh was one of several exiled Armenian leaders who pledged allegiance to Nazi Germany in 1942 with the stated aim of saving Soviet Armenia from a possible Turkish invasion after what they expected to be a Soviet defeat by the Third Reich. Their “Armenian national council” cobbled together several battalions mainly comprising Armenian prisoners of war from the Red Army. The so-called Armenian Legion never played a major role in the Wehrmacht's military operations, however.

Nzhdeh surrendered to advancing Red Army divisions in Bulgaria in 1944 after reportedly offering Josef Stalin to mobilize Armenians for a Soviet assault on Turkey. In 1948, a Soviet court sentenced him to 25 years in prison on charges that mainly stemmed from his “counterrevolutionary” activities in 1920-1921, rather than collaboration with Nazi Germany. He died in a Soviet prison in 1955.

Nzhdeh was rehabilitated in Armenia after the republic's last Communist government was removed from power in 1990. The first post-Communist Armenian government named a square and metro station in Yerevan after him in the following years.

Nzhdeh is widely credited with preserving Armenian control over Zangezur, a strategic region bordering Iran. He is also revered by many in the country as the founder of a new brand of Armenian nationalism that emerged

Hundreds of thousands of Armenians were drafted to the Red Army and nearly half of them died during the war. The most famous of them, notably Marshal Ivan Bagramian and Admiral Ivan Isakov, still have streets in Armenia bearing their names and are regularly honored by the Armenian authorities.

Just five days before the erection of Nzhdeh's statue, the authorities unveiled a statue of another Soviet Armenian marshal, Hamazasp



The new Garegin Nzhdeh statue in Yerevan

in the 1930s.

His ideology put the emphasis on armed self-defense, military organization and self-reliance. The ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) has espoused it throughout its existence.

The HHK, which is headed by President Serzh Sargsyan, was instrumental in the Yerevan municipality's decision to place Nzhdeh's statue in the city center. The statue was unveiled on May 28 in the presence of Sargsyan and other senior officials.

“We cannot understand why that statue was placed,” Maria Zakharova, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, told a news briefing in Moscow.

Zakharova said that the Russian government is strongly opposed to “any revival, glorification or other manifestations of Nazism, neo-Nazism and extremism.” She also pointed to the “immortal feat of the Armenian people” during World War II.

Babajanian, in the Armenian capital. Sargsyan attended that ceremony as well.

While criticizing Nzhdeh's statue, Zakharova stressed that May 9, which marks the anniversary of the Soviet defeat of Nazi Germany, remains a public holiday in Armenia. This is “the main indicator of official Yerevan's position on preserving the historical truth about the Great Patriotic War,” she said.

The Armenian ruling party was quick to reject the Russian criticism. “Garegin Nzhdeh is one of the greatest heroes of the Armenian nation,” HHK spokesman Eduard Sharmazanov told 168.am. He said Nzhdeh's activities were always aimed at “the liberation, salvation and independence of the Armenian people.”

Sharmazanov also downplayed the nationalist leader's links with the Wehrmacht. He said the Soviet Union itself signed a nonaggression pact with Nazi Germany in 1939.



## ARMENIA

## Czech President Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) – On June 7, Czech Republic Miloš Zeman arrived in Armenia for a state visit.

After a private meeting between the two presidents, the meeting continued in an expanded format with the participation of the official delegations of the two countries. At the conclusion of the negotiations, Presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Milos Zeman signed a Joint Declaration on the Friendly Relations, Partnership, and Enhanced Cooperation.

The two recapped the results of the meeting in the Declaration which they made at the joint press conference for the representatives of the mass media.

Within the framework of his state visit, Zeman also visited the Genocide Memorial where he laid a wreath and paid tribute to the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide. Zeman also planted a fir tree at the Memory Park of the Tsitsernakaberd Complex, and wrote in the Book of Guests of the Genocide Museum-Institute.

Zeman also met with the head of the Media-Shangal Yazidi national union NGO Amo Sharoyan. Sharoyan said he expressed his gratitude to the Czech President for the humanitarian aid rendered to Yazidis. “The meeting went on in a cordial atmosphere of mutual trust”, Sharoyan said. In his words Zeman promised to focus on the issues of Yazidi genocide recognition, emancipation of captive Yazidi women and children, and support the Yazidis of Shingal in obtaining autonomy and ensuring security. Sharoyan asked the President when visiting Armenia once again after the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Czech Parliament to meet again with the representatives of the Yazidi community. Zeman accepted the kind request.

Zeman held top level meetings with President of the National Assembly Galust Sahakyan and Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan.

A delegation led by Zeman visited Yerevan Brandy Company during their visit to Armenia. The delegation members were introduced the history and the manufacturing process of the Armenian “Ararat” brandy. Zeman was also introduced the history of the “Barrel of Peace” which was established in 2001 in honor of the visit of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. It is called peace, since it will be opened only when

the Karabakh conflict will be resolved. The Czech President left his signature on the factory’s memory book. One of the oldest brandies from the “Ararat” exclusive collection was given as a gift to the Czech President.

A state reception was held at the Presidential Palace in honor of Zeman.

In accordance with the protocol, at state dinner the presidents of the two countries raised toasts, in which they reflected on the results of the Czech President’s state visit to Armenia, prospects of development of interstate relations, issues on the bilateral agenda, which encompasses different areas, historical ties of the two nations, as well as to the important role of the Armenian community of the Czech Republic in the strengthening of friendship of the two countries and peoples.

“It is well known that steady and lasting relations rest on mutual respect and traditions of friendship of the nations which is acquired also through the development and strengthening of the humanitarian, cultural, and educational ties. In this context, I am glad to note that the Armenian Studies at the Karlovy University have been reinstated. I am confident it will allow Czech youth to learn about the Armenian culture as well as to better familiarize with the Armenian nation and our traditions. In the words of the famous Czech pedagogue and humanist Jan Amos Comenius “The School is manufactory of the humanity.” The Armenian people are deeply cognizant of the wisdom of these words because through the centuries of our existence our people risked their lives to save precious manuscripts, to teach and to advance our future generations. I hope that Armenian students in their turn will have the opportunity to learn Czech language.

The desire to learn Czech language and culture is conditioned by the fact that here, in Armenia we know and love the great sons of the Czech nation – Hašek, Kafka, Dvorák, Smetana and others whose immortal creation continue to amaze and educate new generations. Thus, not surprisingly for the Armenians, the Czech Republic and especially Prague have always been one of the most admired tourist destinations,” said President Serzh Sargsyan in his toast.

At the conclusion of his speech, President Sargsyan quoted from Milan Kundera,



President Serge Sargsyan and Czech President Milos Zeman

“Friendship is indispensable to man for the proper function of his memory. Remembering our past, carrying it with us always, may be the necessary requirement for maintaining, as they say, the wholeness of the self.” The President of Armenia underscored that these great words can be attributed also to the friendship and memories of the Armenian and Czech peoples which make the strongest foundation for solid relations.

In response, the President of the Czech Republic Miloš Zeman raised a toast for the happy future of Armenia and noted that he would like to ponder over the issue which bonds together Armenian and Czechs.

“Today, after lunch, a young Czech journalist, who doesn’t have sufficient life experience, asked me where the bottom line of genocides must be drawn. I told him, “My young fellow, I will give you one example: In Europe, during the World War, in concentration camps, in gas chambers and other place 6 million Jews had been killed but thousands, may be ten thousands had survived. Do you mean to say it wasn’t genocide? Only because some thousands survived? The same is true for the Armenian Genocide. There are people who would say, “Some had survived, so it was not genocide. It is nonsense. I mean that we are united through

our destiny because had the Nazi Germany won in the World War, my nation would have been condemned to genocide,” said Zeman and underscored that those who deny the Genocide are the same people who deny the Holocaust.

He stressed that individuals who stick to denial are cowards. “Mr. President, I have never been a nice politician. They are simply cowards. I am speaking about human rights: for some, the most important right is the right to protest against the government. They have made demonstrations against me too, against other politicians – it is normal. However it is not the most important of human rights. The most important right is the right to live. And all those who deny that right have no right to speak about other human rights. I raise my toast for the right to live,” said Zeman at the state reception at the Presidential Palace.

## Ophelya Hambardzumyan Funeral Ceremony Takes Place in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – A funeral ceremony for renowned singer Ophelya Hambardzumyan took place on June 15 at St. Hovhannes Church in the Kond neighborhood.

Fans said their final farewells the next day at the Aram Khachatryan Concert Hall.

The special governmental commission appointed to organize Ophelya Hambardzumyan’s funeral, chaired by Armenia’s Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan, announced that final ceremonies were conducted on June 16 at Komitas Park and the Pantheon.

A prominent singer, Hambardzumyan passed away at the age of 91 on June 13.

Hambardzumyan was born in Yerevan on January 9, 1925. From a young age, she was recognized for her beautiful voice. She underwent vocal training at the Romanos Melikyan Musical College. In 1944, she became a solo-singer for the Ensemble of Folk Instruments of the Radio of Armenia, where she dedicated her efforts to the ensemble headed by Aram Merangulyan. Her repertoire includes classical Armenian music, minstrel, and folk songs. She is especially recognized for her interpretations of Sayat-Nova’s songs, including Fahrads Mirats and Yis Kanchum em Lalanin.

She also performed the music of Fahrads, Jivani, and Sheram.

In 1959, she was awarded the title People’s Artist of the USSR. In 2011 Hambardzumyan was awarded the Mesrop Mashtots Medal. Hambardzumyan toured extensively throughout the world, performing in various countries such as Lebanon, Syria, France, the US, Egypt and many CIS countries.



Ophelya Hambardzumyan

## Just Dilijan It! Summer Program Begins in Dilijan

DILIJAN, Armenia – Just Dilijan It! summer education programs today announced the arrival of the first participants of the summer program which will be held in June and July on the United World College (UWC) Dilijan international school campus in Dilijan, Armenia. This year’s participants are from Armenia, Belgium, Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain, Kazakhstan, Russia and the United States. The summer programs are organized by the Scholae Mundi Foundation, whose founders also established the UWC Dilijan international school.

Just Dilijan It! are innovative educational programs for children and adolescents between the ages of 10 to 17 and based on pioneering techniques of open dialogue between teachers and participants, and full engagement in the creative process,” said Just Dilijan It! Program Director Oleg Dremov.

“Within our experimental multidisciplinary programs, we bring back the lost culture of the metaphorical ‘space’ where children from different social and political backgrounds are encouraged to express and share their interests freely,” explains the project manager, Andrey Khodzhikeyan.

The innovative workshops and programs include the following. “Sherlock Holmes and the Guardians of the Planet,” directed by Alina Kolovska, ecologist, chemist, biologist and head of the Center for Resource Conservation in Moscow, who will teach the children to explore the ecosystem and find out what makes it work. Children will also create animated cartoons about ecology, develop environmental quests around Dilijan for tourists, and study the flora and fauna of the region.

“The Ancient Greek Theatre,” directed by historian and cultural commentator, and co-

founder of the Art Weekend children’s education project Galina Yuzefovich, art and design teacher Natalia Shevchenko, and founder and director of Yerevan’s “Small” Theatre Vahan Badalyan, will give the children the opportunity to create a production based on all the traditions of the ancient theatre. The final production will be performed on a public stage for the participants as well as the greater Dilijan residents.

“The City and its Citizens,” directed by Petr Mazaev head of the Moscow Laboratory of Cultural Projects and author Linor Goralik, will encourage the children to explore Dilijan and create projects for the development of the city, which at the end of the camp will be judged by the local residents of Dilijan.

Khodzhikeyan hopes that by the conclusion of the camp, the children can also offer creative ideas to enhance the Dilijan Development Fund, which recently launched a project to modernize the Aghstev River embankment as another Dilijan attraction. The development program hopes to create a public space on the banks of the picturesque river where residents and visitors can take strolls, enjoy bike rides and recreational sports and where local artisans can offer street art.

Additional workshops include the following.

“Sports Academy” will culminate in a number of sporting contests, including competitions in football (soccer), swimming, circus arts, sports dancing, frisbee and chess. Chess classes will be directed by Sophia Repina, a leading coach from the Moscow School of Olympic Reserve, who has trained more than 10 world champions in different age groups.

The “I Design the World” workshop, jointly organized with the TUMO Center for

Technology and Design, is devoted to graphic design and animation and will provide children with advanced knowledge and skills in digital technologies and the arts under the guidance of leading professionals. The program includes master classes with Alexey Kotenochkin, an animator best known for the famous Russian cartoon “Nu Pogodi!” (“Just You Wait!”).

All the teens aged 14 to 17 who will choose the UWC Summer Academy program will receive training in leadership and project management in social entrepreneurship. The program is organized in cooperation with the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization and supported by the Initiative for the Development of Armenia (IDeA) foundation within its Program of Development of the Regions of Armenia, which provides 10 grants to talented students from the Aragatsotn, Ararat, Armavir, Vayots Dzor, Gegharkunik, Kotayk, Lori, Syunik, Tavush and Shirak regions of Armenia, as well as from the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic, to take part in the program.

Special master classes will be provided by Ilya Kolmanovsky, a biologist, journalist, science evangelist and head of the biology lab at the Polytechnic Museum in Moscow.

In addition to the workshops, Just Dilijan It! participants will also enjoy educational trips and excursions to various historic sites in Armenia.

Summer educational programs in Dilijan began in 2013. Now in their third year, the project has been renamed to Just Dilijan It!, offering new and more expanded offerings. Workshops will be taught in the English and Russian languages. For more information and registration details visit <http://justdilijanit.com/>



## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## More Deaths in Syria

ALEPPO, Syria (Kantsasar) — On June 9, armed opposition groups in Bostan Pasha bombarded the Suleymaniye, Seyrafi, and Nor Kiugh areas. Six were killed and 20 wounded in the artisan center of Suleymaniye.

In the late afternoon of June 8, the Suleymaniye district was bombarded by opposition groups. A rocket fell on the roof of a building facing the Gulbenkian School. Ninth grader Arakel Terzian was lightly wounded and taken to the hospital.

Gandzasar weekly reported that Raffi Pchakchyan died on June 10 in the Aleppo mortar explosion.

## Azerbaijani, Armenian Leaders to Meet In St. Petersburg This Month

MOSCHOW (RFE/RL) — Russia says President Vladimir Putin is due to host talks in St. Petersburg on June 20 between the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia about the conflict over the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Kremlin aide Yury Ushakov said on June 14 that by organizing the meeting between Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and his Armenian counterpart, Serzh Sargsyan, Russia was “continuing its mission as a mediator” in the conflict.

Sargsyan and Aliyev last met in Vienna in May, after a truce in early April halted four days of fierce fighting in and around Nagorno-Karabagh.

## Brussels Flemish Parliament Hosts Artsakh President

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Artsakh Republic President Bako Sahakyan met with a group of parliamentarians of the Brussels Flemish Parliament led by their speaker Jan Peumans on June 9.

As the press service of the Artsakh president's office reports, issues related to deepening ties between the Artsakh and Flemish parliaments were on the agenda of the meeting.

Sahakyan noted that Artsakh pays special attention to cooperation with entities of different states, considering it a pivotal and efficient means of developing bilateral relationships.

## Erdogan Takes Revenge On Bundestag for Armenian Genocide Vote

ISTANBUL (Armenpress) — The leaders of the ruling Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP), headed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, have started to take provocative measures as a response to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the German Bundestag. Since June 13, Koran readings are delivered at 2 p.m. every day at the Hagia Sophia museum. Hagia Sophia originally was a Greek Orthodox Christian patriarchal basilica. It was later turned into an imperial mosque, after the Ottoman conquest, but now is a museum (Ayasofya Müzesi) in Istanbul, Turkey.

From the date of its construction in AD 537 until 1453, it served as an Orthodox cathedral and seat of the Patriarch of Constantinople except between 1204 and 1261, when it was converted by the Fourth Crusaders to a Roman Catholic cathedral under the Latin Empire of Constantinople. The building was a mosque from May 29, 1453 until 1931. It was then secularized and opened as a museum on February 1, 1935.

The Koran readings are broadcast by the Turkish governmental TRT Diyanet TV channel. The largest Greek political party, “New Democracy,” has issued a statement on the incident, as follows: “The decision of the Turkish side to read the Koran at Hagia Sophia turns it into a mosque again. It is a provocative step that is a demonstration of disrespect towards Orthodox Christians.” The Greek Foreign Ministry has also condemned the Turkish authorities for the incident, saying that the decision is Turkey's revenge on the Bundestag for the Armenian Genocide vote.

## Armenian Church Helps Restore Jesus' Tomb in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM (BBC) — A team of experts has begun restoring the ancient tomb in Jerusalem where Christians believe Jesus was buried, in the first such works for 200 years.

The renovation in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre aims to reinforce and conserve the structure.

Rivalry between the three denominations that run the church has delayed work.

But clerics from the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Armenian churches have put aside their differences, recognizing the need to begin repairs.

The work will focus on the Edicule, the ancient chamber housing Jesus's tomb which Christians say stands above the spot where Jesus's body was anointed, wrapped in cloth and buried.

The last restoration work to take place there was in 1810 after a fire.

The Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Armenian authorities are responsible for running different parts of the church but share responsibility for the shrine.

Relations between them can be tense — in 2008, an argument between Greek Orthodox and Armenian monks escalated into a brawl — but they have decided to act



Renovating Jesus' Tomb in Jerusalem

jointly after Israel's antiquities authority last year said the church was unsafe and Israeli police briefly closed it.

“We equally decided the required renovation was necessary to be done, so we agreed upon it,” said Samuel Aghoyan, the top Armenian Church official there.

The scientific coordinator for the repairs, Antonia Moropoulou, said the tomb was stable but warped and needed attention after many years of exposure to water, humidity and candle smoke.

“The structure also needed to be

protected from the risk of earthquake damage,” she said.

Work is expected to take between eight and 12 months and during that time pilgrims will be able to continue visiting the site, church officials said.

Each denomination is contributing funds for the \$3.3m (£2.3m) project. In addition, King Abdullah of Jordan has made a personal donation.

Jordan controlled Jerusalem's Old City, where the church is located, until the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and continues to play a role in safeguarding Muslim and Christian holy sites there.

## Amal Clooney to Represent ISIS Survivor Nadia Murad and Victims of Yazidi Genocide

NEW YORK (Armenpress) — In a triumphant win for the thousands of Yazidi women who have been enslaved by the Islamic State, Amal Clooney has confirmed that she will represent victims of the Yazidi genocide, including ISIS survivor and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Nadia Murad, according to the New York Times. “The European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the US government and the UK House of Commons have all recognized that there is a genocide being perpetrated by IS against the Yazidis in Iraq,” Clooney said in a statement to Women in the World. “How can it be that the most serious crimes known to humanity are being carried out before our eyes but are not being prosecuted by the International Criminal Court in The Hague?” Clooney, a barrister at Doughty Street Chambers specializing in international law and human rights law, will act as their counsel to achieve accountability for the genocide, sexual enslavement and trafficking of Yazidi girls and women by the Islamic State in Iraq. They plan to seek an International Criminal Court investigation and prosecution of the crimes committed against Nadia Murad and the Yazidi community.

Women in the World recently interviewed 23-year-old activist Nadia Murad, who was one of the thousands of Yazidi women abducted by ISIS. Murad was enslaved and raped by more than 12 ISIS fighters over a period of three months. Since her escape, Murad has been a courageous voice for women who have been impacted by ISIS's control, and she has been a tireless crusader to end the ongoing genocide.

Recently, ISIS reportedly burned 19 Yazidi women to death for refusing to have sex with fighters. Murad told Women in the World that she was “devastated” by the alleged event, but she was not surprised. “These tyrants have shown us nothing but horror,” Murad said. “The fate of most of 3,500 Yazidi women and girls who remain in captivity is known and probably most will face

a similar fate if the world does not act now. This is why I ask the world to act and act fast. The longer IS stays in power, the deeper our wound becomes.”

After months of traveling around the globe and imploring political leaders to help her cause, Murad told Women in the World that Clooney has given her confidence. “Amal and George received me at their home and opened for me their hearts,” said Murad. “They listened passionately to my story, and Amal gifted me by representing my case. Amal gave me renewed hope by being my voice.”

Murad also called Clooney “an incredible, passionate woman,” who embraced her story and her pain. “She did not talk to me as a well-known world figure that people would love to take a photo with, she talked to me as a sister and guardian. She has immense power that made me proud of being a woman.” Murad views Clooney as a formidable legal force. “It is important to establish justice, and Amal being a life-long defender of justice, it was a natural bond between her and I to be established. We are both defenders of justice, and peace seekers through justice,” Murad said. “The final goal for us all is accountability to perpetrators of genocide, and justice for victims like myself.”

Clooney also represents Yazda, a non-profit organization that has been helping the Yazidi community since the genocide began during ISIS's attacks in August of 2014. The raids led to the deaths of an estimated 5,000 civilians, the enslavement of more than 2,000 women and girls, and the displacement of 400,000 people from the Yazidi homelands in Sinjar, the Ninevah plain, and Syria. “We know that thousands of Yazidi civilians have been killed and that thousands of Yazidi women have been enslaved by a terrorist organization, IS, that has publicly proclaimed its genocidal intent,” Clooney said. “We know that systematic rapes have taken place, and that they are still taking place. And yet no one is being held to account. It is time that we see IS commanders in the

dock in The Hague, and I am honored to have been asked to represent Nadia and the Yazidi community in their quest for legal accountability.”

“Daesh took my family, my future, my life. But what I have in my heart, and what I've always had, is justice,” Murad told Women in the World in an interview earlier this year. “All of the women and girls who are in their hands have justice on their side.” And now, they have one of the world's most powerful lawyers on their side, too.

## Erdogan Cuts US Trip Short without Attending Ali Funeral

NEW YORK (Dogan) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan cut short a trip on June 9 to the United States, where he had gone to attend the funeral of Muhammad Ali.

According to information from presidential sources, however, Erdogan and other government representatives, decided to depart for Turkey without participating in the full funeral ceremony in Louisville, Kentucky.

Erdogan reportedly attempted to put a piece of cloth from the Kaaba on Ali's coffin during the funeral prayers but was refused permission to do so.

But according to another report, the president and Diyanet head Mehmet Görmez were rejected when they asked to read a piece from the Quran, which led the president to cut his program short.

Meanwhile, a short quarrel also erupted between U.S. secret service officials and Turkish presidential body guards, reportedly because a secret service official wanted to stand in the same place as presidential bodyguards as Erdogan was getting into his car.

Before arriving in the U.S., funeral organizers had removed Erdogan from the list of speakers on the grounds that there would not be sufficient time.



# Turkish-German Relations: Threats, Taboos and Truth

GERMANY, from page 1

pressure on single parliamentarians must know: He is attacking the entire parliament." He added, "We will correspondingly react with all lawful possibilities that are available to us." Lammert said the leaders of all parliamentary parties had asked him to speak out, "to voice our collective position once again, unequivocally."

This time, Chancellor Angela Merkel, who had been absent during the genocide vote, was on hand, and applauded demonstratively along with government and parliament members to signal her endorsement.

In tandem, European Parliament President Martin Schulz, who is a member of Merkel's coalition partner party the SPD, issued his rebuke with comparable forcefulness. In a letter addressed to Erdogan that same day, he repudiated the Turkish leader for having accused freely elected parliamentarians of terrorist sympathies for having expressed their views. "Such an act constitutes a complete breach of taboo, which I condemn in the strongest possible terms." He went on: "As the president of a multi-national, multi-ethnic and multi-faith parliament, allow me to make the following point: the freedom of MPs to carry out their mandate as they see fit is a fundamental pillar of our European democracies." The issue was not only institutional but also personal. Schulz wrote, "A string of the German Bundestag MPs you have personally attacked, but also Turkish parliamentarians affected by measures which you support, are among longstanding colleagues of mine; some of them are very close to me personally. I feel obliged to protect these colleagues wherever I can."

## Protection from Threats

The reference to protection was not metaphorical. Quite aware of the causal link that may obtain between threatening words and deeds of violence, the Bundestag members targeted by Erdogan's ire have taken threats seriously. And the government and security agencies have responded with concrete measures. As Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière told the *Frankfurter Sonntags Zeitung* on June 12, "The threats against parliamentarians of Turkish background are unacceptable," adding that Lammert had "found the right words for it." De Maizière said security measures would be adjusted correspondingly. "Most of the 3.5 million people of Turkish background in Germany – I want to stress – are good neighbors and an important part of our society," he said. "The criminals and extremists are individual cases."

To take it seriously means to adopt enhanced security measures, like police protection at home and the office, and, if necessary, personal bodyguards. The German Foreign Ministry, according to a *Spiegel* report, advised against travel to Turkey, due to the heated atmosphere, which might have security implications for them. For those Bundestag members who have dual citizenship, the danger is very real; if they do go to Turkey, they may be arrested at the airport and charged with "insulting the Turkish nation," according to the infamous Article 301 of the penal code. Conviction could lead to a sentence of six months to two years. The mayor of Ankara, who had sent out photos on the internet of the 11 German parliamentarians of Turkish descent, had also stated, "The traitors should be deprived of citizenship."

The decision to upgrade security for those threatened came after a meeting of some Bundestag members from all parties with representatives of the BKA (Federal Criminal Police Office), Berlin police and Bundestag police. They described harassment and threats

they had received, from hate mail, insults shouted on the street or from cars driving by. Through "social" media some women MPs were told to seek employment in a warehouse, others suggested prominent MPs should take a vacation in Buchenwald concentration camp, and similar rot. Some MPs had avoided returning to their election districts over the weekend to keep a low profile. Women MPs had received warnings from neighbors to watch out for their children, some avoided playgrounds or favorite ice cream parlors; family members, whether in Germany or relatives in Turkey, were also bombarded with abusive attack. Cem Özdemir, Green Party leader and initiator of the recent genocide vote, was ostracized by a Turkish homeland club of his father's, according to *Spiegel* online. Özdemir reported getting messages saying "At some point your German friends may forget it, but we won't." Or, more bluntly, "We can find you wherever you are." Citing the judgments of friends of Hrant Dink in Turkey, Özdemir said, "One has to take this damn seriously. So – take it seriously, but don't let yourself be intimidated."

## And Turkish Groups in Germany?

If official Ankara responded to the Armenian resolution with threats, slander and preparations for a "plan of action," Turkish social and political groups in Germany had to take a stand. Lammert noted that the Turkish Society in Germany and the Berlin-Brandenburg Turkish Federation had criticized the attacks on MPs as unacceptable. "I would hope," he said, "that also other Turkish organizations in Germany, some of them very big, would also take a stand for the MPs and for our democracy – with similarly clear and unambiguous declarations as they have issued often very quickly and very loudly, in other instances."

Cem Özdemir appealed to these organizations to go on the record. "One does not have to find the [genocide] resolution good: I am ready to answer questions from people. But Turkish organizations have to denounce death threats unambiguously. Here there is no room for two opinions." Addressing these groups' desires for social integration, he said: "Those who want to be taken seriously here, those who want to have religion classes in our schools, they cannot stand on the ground of our Constitution only on their tiptoes."

DITIB, the biggest umbrella group of Muslims in Germany, expressed its "loss of trust" in those MPs with Turkish roots. Representative Zekeriya Altug was quoted by *Zeit* online saying that if its members formerly had felt represented by these MPs, that was no longer the case. But at the same time, DITIB General Secretary Bekir Alboga denounced the slanders and threats of violence as "illegitimate means to deal with differences of opinion and conflicts in a democratic society." DITIB had cancelled an invitation to Lammert and two MPs to a Ramadan Iftar (fast breaking) during Ramadan, after having received threats.

Then there are those of Turkish background in Germany who have another idea. Turkish-German businessman Remzi Aru launched an initiative days after the Genocide resolution, for the creation of a new Turkish party here. Qualifying the resolution as a massive discrimination against those of Turkish heritage, and warning that all should "beware the beginnings!" he announced that "As of today, there is no German party that a person with Turkish roots can vote for. We are forced to found our own party," as a result. This, he said, would "not be for Turks, not for Muslims, but for all people in Germany in whom this Germany awakens worst memories." The party program draft which is circulating says it stands for a "self-conscious, traditional, but also open, multi-racial, multi-national Germany, which nurtures a healthy patriotism and national pride, instead of falling from one extreme into the other." It calls on Germany to play an equilibrating role in the world, instead of "playing schoolmarm to other countries." Aru has presented himself officially in German talk shows as a supporter and representative of Erdogan's policies.

## What European Membership?

What meager success a self-styled party for the Turkish (or Muslim) minority in Germany

might reap will be seen when and if the project ever takes off. Whether the proponents know it or not, a significantly large proportion of Germans of Turkish descent have taken this citizenship after having fled here from political persecution, received political asylum and then a German passport. It would be wildly arrogant and just plain wrong to assume that most ethnic Turks or other Muslims in Germany would line up with Erdogan.

Far more relevant is the question, where does Turkey end up as a member of the European club? In short: nowhere. The greatest collateral damage that Erdogan's hysterical outbursts have wrought will be tallied in Brussels. Martin Schulz spoke as president of the European Parliament. He had also said that, when MPs have to witness how "the highest organs of another state" question the guarantees for them as well as journalists and others to act free from repression, "that will not in the long run be without consequence for international relations." The German Foreign Ministry, in discussion with a diplomat summoned from the Turkish embassy, had made clear that the affair was "not compatible" with close German-Turkish relations.

Without recourse to such diplomatic niceties, it can be said without hesitation, that the Mafioso-style theatrics played out by Erdogan have taken Turkey's bid for European Union membership from the back burner to the garbage can. In recent discussion about lifting visa restrictions for Turkish citizens – a demand Erdogan made in the context of the refugee deal with the EU – it was specified that to receive this, Turkey had to accommodate EU conditions on terrorism legislation, among other things. In the wake of the recent horrendous terror attacks in Turkey, it is unlikely that the government will acquiesce.

But, that notwithstanding, European eagerness to welcome Turkey in the club has noticeably waned in the wake of the Ankara-Berlin rift. Again, Cem Özdemir was the one to set the record straight. Complaining that there had been a lack of honesty on both sides, he explained that Turkey had been dishonest, in that it had not introduced the required reforms. "It does the opposite: Turkey distances itself daily from the European Union." But also in Germany, he said, the debate is not really honest. "Honesty would mean saying: With

Erdogan, with this policy that Turkey is currently pursuing, there can be no membership." One need little fantasy to imagine that in the 1000-room palace of the Turkish president, there was little understanding, not to mention applause, for Özdemir's pointing to a time "after Erdogan." But, he said what had to be said. And there are few, in Berlin, or Brussels, or elsewhere in Europe who would disagree.

In the last three weeks Turkey's would-be president-for-life has made more political mistakes – too enormous to be dismissed as diplomatic faux pas – than his carefully-orchestrated personality cult can afford. For reasons to be examined in a psychological profile of the man, he is incapable of assessing the impact in the real world of the utterings of his narcissistic, paranoid personality disorder. To wit: among his ravings against Germany after the Armenian Genocide recognition, he accused Germany of hypocrisy: who were they to accuse others of genocide, he raved, when they killed 6 million Jews, murdered Hereros, etc.?

This crossed a line, and one with existential implications for the identity of the German Federal Republic. Chancellor Merkel was quick to respond. She rejected out of hand the insinuation that Germany had failed to come to terms with its past. In the resolution on the Armenian Genocide, she pointed out, it was explicitly stated that Germany recognized the Holocaust as a singularity in history. Germany had officially recognized that there had been no comparable crime in history, and acknowledged its guilt. Not only, she said, had Germany dealt with this past, but it continues and will continue to do so in the future.

As for Erdogan's ravings about German guilt in the Herero massacres, Lammert made clear that it had been addressed and would be on the agenda of the Bundestag again.

Erdogan again had shot himself in the foot. It is not Germany which has declined to face up to its historical past. On the contrary: its years-long critical engagement with the Nazi past, its historical research, its education programs through genocide studies in the curricula, its encouragement of civil society activities, its ongoing process of reconciliation, and so many other aspects, make the German experience exemplary for others. In the specific instance: for Turkey. When will Turkey find the courage to follow suit?

## Oganesson: New Element in Periodic Table to Be Named for Russian Armenian Physicist

MOSCOW (AP) – Soon there will be four new names on the periodic table of the elements, including three that honor Moscow, Japan and Tennessee.

The names are among four recommended last week by an international scientific group. The fourth is named for a Russian scientist.

The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, which rules on chemical element names, presented its proposal for public review. The names had been submitted by the element discoverers.

The four elements, known now by their numbers, completed the seventh row of the periodic table when the chemistry organization verified their discoveries last December.

Tennessee is the second U.S. state to be recognized with an element; California was the first. Element names can come from places, mythology, names of scientists or traits of the element. Other examples: americium, einsteinium and titanium.

Joining more familiar element names such as hydrogen, carbon and lead are:

– oganesson, symbol Og, for element 118. The name honors Russian Armenian physicist Yuri Oganessian.

– moscovium, symbol Mc, for element 115, and tennessine, symbol Ts, for element 117. The discovery team is from the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna, Russia, the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Vanderbilt University in Tennessee, and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California.

Vanderbilt physics professor Joseph

Hamilton, who played a role in the discoveries, proposed naming an element for Tennessee. He had hoped to use the symbol Tn, but it had



Yuri Oganessian

been used in the past and couldn't be reassigned to the new element.

– nihonium, symbol Nh, for element 113. The element was discovered in Japan, and Nihon is one way to say the country's name in Japanese. It's the first element to be discovered in an Asian country.

An official at a Japanese institute involved in the discovery said the name was chosen to recognize government funding for the project. "We wanted to show our research has been supported by the Japanese people," said Kosuke Morita, a research group director at the RIKEN Nishina Center for Accelerator-based Science.

The public comment period will end November 8.

## Clarification

A brief in the June 4, 2016 issue, with the headline "At Least 4 Killed in Aleppo Rocket Attack," misidentified the building.

The building reported as the "Armenian nursing home" is actually the Verjine Gulbenkian Maternity Hospital, managed and owned by the Gullabi Gulbenkian Foundation of New York.

# Community News

## FAR and AESA Create Innovative Internship Program With Armenia

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK – Venture Armenia initiated and organized by the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESA), and the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), will take place July 16 to 27, and will provide a professional experience limited to a group of eight to twelve young Armenian-Americans.

The focus of this project will be networking and forging professional connections in Armenia, for the betterment and further development of the motherland. In addition to the professional advancement, interns will visit some of Armenia's most important cultural and historic places, thus experiencing Armenia in a unique manner.

"The collaboration between AESA and FAR is a very specific function together, involving the objectives, and purpose," said Aram Setian, president emeritus of AESA, New York, New Jersey. The functions include looking at mentoring in the fields of engineering, science, medicine, business, law, education, and other specialty fields.

A number of applicants are currently being interviewed who will be of benefit to themselves, to Armenia, and to the program itself, Setian said, adding that eligible applicants range from the high school level to graduate students.

The function of FAR will be finding the right contacts in Armenia. Each selected intern will receive the exclusive attention of the chosen mentor. All arrangements in Armenia will be undertaken by FAR.

AESA will be responsible for finding and selecting the applicants, explained Setian, who is currently on the AESA Board of Directors, and proudly related that "AESA's strength is mentoring and education. We would like to select applicants who will make the most impact. Once the network is established, it will be a great benefit for themselves, for Armenia and for the future," he stressed.

There are a number of ways that the results of this unique program can be implemented. This professional relationship may result in a job connection in Armenia for six or seven months, with the opening of a business, or in the US. Selected interns may choose to find work in Armenia for six or seven months, and even open a business there, or work in their related fields in the US.

"This initiative has a broader and possibly more ambitious goal than simply providing networking and business opportunities for young professionals, stated FAR Executive Director Garnik Nanagoulian. "We hope and will strive to open up unique possibilities to all young Diasporan Armenians who are looking to develop sustainable links with their peers in Armenia, and with the homeland itself."

Venture Armenia, he stressed, "is for those who would like to discover much more possibilities for themselves in the homeland as professionals, as individuals, and as Armenian Americans."

All interest individuals can contact [www.venturearmenia.com](http://www.venturearmenia.com).



Dr. Vardan Urutyany giving his presentation to the crowd at KGB

## Armenian Wines Win over KGB Crowd at ABN Event

By Aram Arkun  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON – The Armenian Business Network (ABN) sponsored a networking event with a presentation by Dr. Vardan Urutyany on wine-making and agribusiness education in Armenia on June 9 at the Kingston Grille and Bar (KGB) in downtown Boston. The event also included presentations from two organizations fundraising for aid to Armenia and Artsakh – the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada (TCA), and the Memory Dignity Justice Association. As many as 120 people were present.

Karina Demurchyan, a member of the ABN executive council, served as master of ceremonies in the lively, crowded environment. After briefly speaking about ABN, she introduced this writer, Aram Arkun, TCA executive director, who pointed out that Tekeyan's new program is small and transparent. It sends aid directly to victims of the recent fighting in Artsakh and Armenia, including wounded soldiers and the families of soldiers killed during the fighting, through its representative in Yerevan, and it obtains receipts. It will report on the distributions, which are now beginning. It does not charge any administrative costs, which the organization itself absorbs (see the TCA-Boston Facebook site or call 617 924-4455).

Manoog Kaprielian then spoke about the Memory Dignity Justice Association (MDJA), which strives to achieve the three goals embedded in its name concerning the violence against Armenians in Azerbaijan from 1988 to 1990. One of its members, Eduard Fandunyan, recently donated an ambulance and a bus for people with physical disabilities, to Artashk. The Association is raising funds as well as collecting certain items necessary there such as medical supplies or clothing as donations. He said that MDJA will post details for donation drop-off arrangements and financial contributions on its Facebook page. Interested parties can also contact Garen Bagdasarian ([garen1562@gmail.com](mailto:garen1562@gmail.com), tel. 401 569-7305). The shipment is expected to be ready at the end of this June.

Representatives of the government of the Republic of Mountainous Karabagh as well as the association's local contacts will make the final delivery of the shipment. Donations and delivery will be fully transparent and reported.

Urutyany then made his presentation, accompanied by slides. He is the general director of the International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) in Yerevan, established by Texas A&M University in 2005 to run the

see ABN, page 8



Dr. Vardan Urutyany giving his presentation

## Son of Canadian Tycoon Charged With Torturing Girlfriend to Death

By Feliks Garcia

LOS ANGELES (*Times*) – A screenwriter and artist – and son of a prominent Canadian real estate tycoon – was charged with torturing and killing his girlfriend before draining her blood in West Hollywood.

Blake Leibel, 35, pleaded not guilty to the allegations of murder, mayhem, aggravated mayhem, and torture, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office said in a statement. Leibel faces the death penalty if found guilty.

Prosecutors accuse Leibel of killing his girlfriend Iana Kasian, 30, between May 23 and May 26 in their West Hollywood apartment.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said Kasian's mother had contacted authorities on May 26 to conduct a welfare check. When officers arrived to the apartment, they found Leibel barricaded in the apartment with Kasian's body – reportedly mangled.

"Kasian was tortured and mutilated before she was killed and all of her blood was drained from her body," Deputy District Attorney Tannaz Mokayef said.

The *Los Angeles Times* says that Leibel, who is being held without bail, is will undergo a mental competency evaluation

"This is a serious matter," defense attorney Alaleh Kamran told the *Times* in a statement



Iana Kasian

issued by publicist Howard Bragman. "Mr. Leibel's defense team request that the public and the media respect his right to a fair hearing in court."

Before Kasian's death, Leibel was arrested under suspicion of sexual assault, but posted a \$100,000 bail. Prosecutors have not charged him in that case.

An attorney who represented Leibel in past divorce proceedings expressed shock to the *Times* about his client.

"Him being violent is so uncharacteristic of the person I've known for many years," Ronald Richards, a defense attorney who is representing Leibel in his divorce, said. "It's hard to tell which [stressors have] contributed to any mental health issues."

Leibel was the director of an animated version of the 1987 Mel Brooks Star Wars parody, "Spaceballs." He also directed the straight-to-DVD film "Bald," released in 2008.

Leibel's father, Lorne Leibel, is prominent real estate developer in Toronto who also competed in the 1976 Olympic sailing team. He stayed an avid racer of both boats and cars, and referred to himself as the "Ferrari Man," according to the *Toronto Star*.

Prosecutors have yet to announce whether they will actively seek the death penalty for Leibel. If not, he will face life in prison without the possibility of parole.

The trial was set to start on June 14.



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Armenia IT Forum in Silicon Valley Identifies Opportunities For Armenian Technology Companies

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif. – Leading members of the Armenian diaspora and those interested in technology companies and startups in Armenia convened on June 10 at the Armenia IT Forum at Synopsys in Mountain View.

The daylong gathering provided an opportunity to network, share ideas and identify investment opportunities in Armenia with CEOs, venture capitalists, academics, and entrepreneurs. The Forum was organized within the framework of the ArmTech Congress and held under the high patronage of the prime minister of Armenia.

Between 2008 and 2013 Armenia saw a 22-percent growth in its technology sector year-over-year, and continues to foster startups and talent through education initiatives as well as recently adopted legislation designed to make launching and growing a startup, incubator, accelerator, or research organization much easier.

Sponsors of the event include Microsoft, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, IBM, the Union of Information and Technology Enterprises, the Union of Employers of Information and Communication Technologies, and PicsArt, a photo app company with 65 million active users founded by two Armenian entrepreneurs. Organizers include the Government of the Republic of Armenia, ArmTech Congress, CEED, World Bank Group, Synopsys, and the Enterprise Incubator Foundation (EIF).

The four panel discussions at the Forum will address critical issues including:



Members of Armenia's IT team visiting the US

The IT Industry in Armenia: Recent Developments and Success Stories and Building an Ecosystem for Global Startups and Connecting to Global Markets.

"This year the forum will focus on the

progress and successes of our organizations and startups, especially in the US market," said Bagrat Yengibaryan PhD, director of the EIF.

"The goal of the Forum is to let the world know Armenia is open for business," said

Peter Righi, CEED Global Director. "Armenia is no longer just an outsourcing market. It's a growing hub of innovation with world-class IT talent and it's critical to show what the Armenian government and private sector has done to grow the sector and prepare companies to plug in to the global marketplace. Today gives us the venue to showcase some of the talented people at the forefront of this trend."

More information on the Armenia IT Forum including a full program and list of speakers can be found at <http://itforum.eif.am/>

The Enterprise Incubator Foundation (EIF) is one of the largest technology business incubators and consulting companies in the region, operating in Yerevan, Armenia. Established in 2002 within the framework of the World Bank's "Enterprise Incubator" project, the EIF is called to support the development of information and communication technology sector in Armenia through creating a productive environment for innovation, technological advancement and company growth.

CEED Global was founded under SEAF (Small Enterprise Assistance Funds) to provide the tools and knowledge to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in emerging markets. Using a peer-to-peer model where entrepreneurs share their experiences and help others overcome challenges, CEED facilitates the connections needed to gain access to capital and grow business in countries around the world.

## Ethics Probe Halts Congressional Travel to Turkey; Free Trips Overall Have Slowed

By Will Tucker

WASHINGTON (OpenSecrets.org) – House lawmakers and their staffers used to make about 150 stops there a year on their privately sponsored jaunts around the world. Then came a massive ethics investigation, and they all stopped taking those free trips to Turkey – cold.

Not a single House member or staffer has disclosed a privately sponsored trip to Turkey since the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) in October 2015 released documents connected to the largest ethics investigation since the days of disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff. OpenSecrets Blog collected the data from the Clerk of the House, which keeps records on privately sponsored trips filed to the House Ethics Committee.

Last year, the OCE found that a network of Turkic-American nonprofit groups based in the US lied about the true source of funding for a

junket to Baku, Azerbaijan in 2013; the trip took 10 members of Congress to the small Eurasian city with money from Azerbaijan's state oil company, where they attended a conference put on by the company to tout its natural gas interests. The lawmakers said they had no idea their trip to the ostentatious energy conference was paid for by a foreign government that employed lobbyists in Washington, D.C.

After investigating the Turkic non-profits further, the OCE called into question the true source of funding not just for the Azerbaijan junket but for more than 109 trips to Turkey in previous years. It appeared the groups, in some instances, simply didn't have the money necessary to pay for the expensive trips they organized for members and staffers.

But when the probe was kicked over to the Ethics Committee – the panel of lawmakers who investigate their peers, and sometimes takes referrals from the OCE, which is a quasi-independent outfit – the committee dropped the matter, clearing the members

involved of wrongdoing. While the panel sent some documents relating to the sponsoring organizations over to the Justice Department for possible further action, Justice has been silent about whether it is pursuing an investigation.

The chairman of the Ethics Committee, Rep. Charlie Dent (R-Pa.), had traveled on the Turkic groups' dime himself, as had another member of the panel, Rep. Yvette Clarke (D-N.Y.).

Before OCE's investigation into the case of the Turkic non-profits, lawmakers were taking more and more trips paid for not by the U.S. or foreign governments, but by private organizations and nonprofits. Many of these trips were domestic – policy conferences are often cited as reasons for the travel – but many were international voyages during which members and staff stayed in luxurious hotels, saw famous sites and got cozy with nonprofits funded by special interests.

This year, privately sponsored travel for members of Congress has slowed down slightly overall, dropping almost to 2011 levels after having

increased from that year through 2015.

The slowdown comes after a coalition of ethics watchdog groups in Washington, spurred by the OCE's report, called for House Speaker Paul Ryan to place a moratorium on the practice.

"These trips have become a tool for special interests, foreign governments, and foreign business interests to try to gain access and influence to our elected leaders while obfuscating the source of funding for the trips," a letter



Ethics probe halts congressional travel to Turkey; free trips overall have slowed

## Mirror Spectator Seeks Summer Intern

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is seeking an intern for a six-week program this summer (mid-July through August). The intern will receive a \$150 weekly stipend provided through the Armenian Students' Association of America's Internship Program.

The intern should be in college or graduate school. If interested, please contact Aram Arkun at [tcadirector.com](http://tcadirector.com) or call 617 924-4420.

to Ryan signed by four groups in November reads.

Ryan didn't respond, but some lawmakers and sponsors may have gotten the message.

"These trips to Turkey got terrible press and deservedly so," said Meredith McGehee, policy director at the Campaign Legal Center, one of the groups that signed the letter. "Because the press coverage of the Turkey trips and the legitimate questions raised about the way they were funded, members are appropriately gun shy."



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Armenian Wines Win over KGB Crowd at ABN Event

ABN, from page 6

Agribusiness Teaching Center (ATC) previously created in 2000 as part of the Armenian National Agrarian University (ANAU). ATC offers undergraduate and graduate programs, including the Master of Agribusiness program from ANAU, and a graduate certificate from Texas A&M University. In 2015, it had 127 students.

Urutyun's focus, however, was about wine as part of agribusiness in Armenia. It is one of the most important exports of the Republic of Armenia along with the rest of agribusiness.

About one-third of the population of Armenia is involved in agriculture and it produces 26 percent of the gross domestic product, according to Urutyun. Agriculture is important for national security as well as the economy, as it provides a livelihood for people in the villages near the borders of Armenia.

The wine sector has recently been growing well, especially exports. The discovery of the oldest winery of the world, 6,100 years old, in the Areni caves has stimulated world interest in Armenian wines. The number of wineries has increased so that today there are 35 in Armenia.

It is not only wine exportation that has increased. Wine consumption per capita has been rising in Armenia with the creation of new wine bars and restaurants serving wine. Consumption in Armenia per capita per year today is 8.8 liters, up from 1.4 in 2010, while imported wines are decreasing in quantity.

There are some 400 native varieties of grapes in Armenia but only 70 have been preserved, and

They also brought the first wine made by three students from EVN, who happened to all be women. It took the students approximately 8 months to make the wine and about 6 months to do the necessary paperwork so that the wine would be ready by their June 1 graduation.

In the old days, Soviet winemakers did not use advanced technology. Back then, Armenia focused on cognac. ICARE created the EVN Wine Academy two years ago in cooperation with Semina Consulting. It offers an 18-month enology program taught in English with instructors from the German Geisenheim university. The first graduation took place this June, and the 14 graduates all already have been placed in jobs. One is Mariam Saghatlyan, the founder and manager of the first specialized wine shop and bar in Yerevan, In Vino.

EVN has a Wine Laboratory which is the only educational wine laboratory in the Caucasus region. Contributions from the German Development Corporation (GIZ) and the Boston area couple Judith Saryan and Victor Zarougian made it possible.

Urutyun said that ICARE and ANAU could draw upon 15 years of general experience to make EVN Wine Academy successful. It all began in 2000 with ATC. The United States Department of Agriculture and Texas A&M helped make the organization more mature and in 2014 USAID and Virginia Tech began assisting it. Virginia Tech, Penn State and the University of Florida are helping add more educational programs. In 2015, Geisenheim University in Germany decided to support the wine academy. It is the top European wine research and education institute. EVN offers short courses and a professional certificate program in enology and wine business jointly with Geisenheim.

Many ICARE ATC graduates have become professors in US and other Western universities or have jobs in corporations. One, Armen Harutyunyan, is the deputy minister of agriculture today in Armenia. It has approximately 92 percent job placement of the 455 graduates of the ATC undergraduate and master's programs. It continues to collaborate with Texas A&M University, which gives certificates to its graduates. Their salaries are two to three times higher than the industry sector average.

With a student-centered environment, Urutyun stated that the curriculum is in the Western style, with highly qualified instructors and extracurricular activities, while the programs are industry-driven. Urutyun said, "We are very closely tied with the industry." Aside from economics and finance, leadership and other "soft" skills are stressed to build emotional intelligence. Students are given opportunities to meet with CEOs.

Boston area Armenians Judith Saryan and Victor Zarougian were present in the audience. Urutyun pointed them out and explained that in addition to the aforementioned wine laboratory, they supported the establishment of the largest solar panel system in Armenia at ICARE. This saved much money as well as helped the environment.



Armenian Business Network's Karina Demurchyan introduces Dr. Vardan Urutyun.

After the event, Zarougian said that he was so impressed by the work done by Urutyun and ATC that even without meeting the latter in person, after doing some research, he decided to help in the creation of the solar panel system. He was amazed that up until that time, 2011 or 2012, there was no such system in all of Armenia despite the advantage of having great sunlight to power it. Now, the technology has begun to proliferate.

Zarougian and his wife supported the EVN laboratory a year ago because they felt it would be a useful spur to the Armenian economy. Zarougian said, "This is one of the sectors that has a very, very bright future. It is a sustainable and self-dependent field." The soil and climate are favorable for growing grapes, and now better quality wines are being created, Zarougian said.

He added that in addition to the direct benefits for the Armenian economy through job creation, the creation of wine bars and other outlets for wine consumption might lead to a more attractive environment for tourism. Interestingly, there may also be domestic health and societal benefits. The increased domestic consumption of

wine seems to be replacing vodka drinking to a certain extent.

Ralph Yirikian and Viva Cell helped establish a video conference facility for ICARE so that executives in the US and elsewhere can teach students in Armenia. Internally there is fundraising in Armenia to get a modernized computer lab.

Among its other projects, ICARE runs the Agribusiness Research Center, which gets funding from various private and governmental American and European agencies and organizations to conduct research and rural development projects.

To ensure its long-term success and viability, ICARE is building an endowment fund and soliciting support from the Armenian diaspora for this and a fund to sponsor student tuition (for more information, see [www.icare.am](http://www.icare.am)).

Institutional Sustainability Campaign @ <https://www.ICARE.am/donate/index.php>  
Dimitri Petrosian and Shahrokh Reza of Kingston Grille and Bar sponsored the ABN event, with the support of their staff, while Ara Sarkissian procured the Armenian wine provided for the tasting.



Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada Executive Director Aram Arkun speaking on the new Tekeyan program of aid to Artsakh soldiers wounded in the recent fighting and the families of slain soldiers

of these, 12 are being cultivated. Urutyun brought several types of Armenian wines, both red and white, and offered them for tasting to the guests. They included Zorah, Karas, ArmAs, Vanardi and Zara. Urutyun was assisted by Arthur Grigoryan, the development director of ICARE.

## AAF delivered \$5 Million of Aid to Armenia and Artsakh in April, May

GLENDALE – The Armenia Artsakh Fund (AAF) sent \$5 million of humanitarian assistance to Armenia and Artsakh on board nine air shipments and five sea containers during April and May 2016.

The AAF acquired \$4 million of medicines and other humanitarian materials from Direct Relief International (\$2.8 million), AmeriCares (\$697,000) and Catholic Medical Mission Board (\$540,000).

Other organizations which contributed valuable goods during this period were: Armenian American Medical Association of Boston/KCI USA Inc. (\$717,000); MAP International (\$152,000); and Tufenkian Foundation (\$5,000).

Harut Sassounian, president of Armenia Artsakh Fund, expressed his appreciation to Ara Abrahamian, president of the World Armenian Congress, for contributing \$22,000 to airlift urgently-needed medicines to Artsakh

in the aftermath of Azerbaijan's attack in early April.

The AAF shipments in April and May included much needed medicines for treatment of oncology, cardio vascular, gastrointestinal mental disorders cases as well as medicines and medical supplies to treat war injuries.

Since December 1, 2015, AAF delivered to Armenia and Artsakh a total of \$14.1 million worth of humanitarian aid on board 14 air shipments and 23 sea containers.

"The Armenia Artsakh Fund is regularly offered millions of dollars worth of life-saving medicines and medical supplies. We would welcome your generous donations to be able to continue delivering this valuable assistance to all medical centers in Armenia and Artsakh," Sassounian stated.

For more information, contact the AAF office at 1101 North Pacific Ave., Suite 204, Glendale, CA 91202 or email: [sassoun@pacbell.net](mailto:sassoun@pacbell.net).

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## St. James Armenian Church Celebrates Sunday School Graduation

WATERTOWN – Last Sunday, 16 young adults graduated from Sunday School at St. James Church in Watertown, MA. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, the students renewed their baptismal vows and received diplomas.

Rev. Arakel Aljalian, parish pastor, directed his sermon to the graduates, congratulating them on their accomplishments and encouraging them to continue their involvement in the Armenian Church.

A reception followed the ceremony, with remarks by Sunday School superintendent Marsha Alabachian and student remarks from valedictorian Nareg Kalaydjian and salutatorians Alec Maserejian and Lydia Thompson.

The teachers of the graduating class this year were Emily Diloyan, Melissa Giragosian and Matthew Reppucci.



The Sunday School graduates with Fr. Arakel Aljalian

## Armenian Assembly Condemns Orlando Mass Murder

WASHINGTON – The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) released the following statement in response to the mass shooting by an ISIS supporter on Sunday, June 12 in Orlando:

“The Armenian Assembly of America and all Armenian Americans mourn the victims of the Orlando massacre, the deadliest in United States history. We pray for the victims, their families, and friends. The Assembly condemns the barbaric acts that occurred and the pervasive intolerance, hatred, and inhumanity represented by the perpetrator and those who think like him.

“A few months ago, Secretary of State John Kerry declared that ISIS is ‘responsible for genocide’ in Syria and Iraq, including Armenians as one of the groups under attack. As Armenians, we know the fear of being targeted and killed, as we were by the Ottoman Turks during the Armenian Genocide in 1915, Azerbaijan starting in the late 1980s, and again by ISIS today. As we face these depraved acts of terror, the imperative of rising above and achieving victory over the perpetrators and their enablers is clear. While our heads are bowed in respect for the painful human loss, we will always stand in solidarity with Orlando.”

## AGBU Expands Education Innovation Platform to Improve English Proficiency in Armenia

NEW YORK – The Armenian General Benevolent Association (AGBU) announces the addition of ANI to its AGBU Education Innovation platform. The program – founded in September 2015 by Australian Armenian siblings Ray and Meline Nazloomian – joins English-speakers in the diaspora with English-learners in Armenia to help improve English proficiency in the country. Seeing their program grow exponentially in its first year, the Nazloomians chose to partner with AGBU to help further grow and develop ANI.

This partnership is the latest initiative to reach the program’s goal of connecting students in Armenia with native English speakers across the globe.

ANI connects coaches and students for a free, once-a-week, 30-minute to 45-minute, one-on-one Skype session, during which students have the opportunity to practice and improve their English outside the classroom. The curriculum is broken into 12-week blocks and students and coaches can continue their work together for as many blocks as they choose. “We were startled by the fact that only 4 percent of Armenians in Armenia could speak English fluently. Knowing how important speaking English is in an increasingly globalized world, we were interested in leveraging modern technology to mobilize the over nine million Armenians in the diaspora to improve English proficiency in Armenia. Our vision is that by 2020, 100 percent of Armenian students can speak English fluently,” said Ray Nazloomian.

By April 2016, the program included 60 students from across Armenia and 60 coaches from Australia, Canada, Europe, the Middle East and the United States. ANI also has a rich connection with the AGBU New York Summer Internship Program (NYSIP), with co-founder Meline and many of the current coaches being NYSIP alumni. Now with the support of AGBU, the program is in the process of increasing its number of coaches and students. AGBU Armenian Virtual College (AVC) has already begun work in Armenia to encourage more students to participate in the program.

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### Donations

Nayiri Berberian of Watertown donated \$10 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* in memory of Mary Takessian and another \$10 in memory of Robert Markarian, the late editor of *Hairenik* newspaper.



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Innovative New Gevorkian Seminary Dean Visits US

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN – Very Rev. Fr. Garegin Hambarzumyan, dean of the Gevorkian Seminary of the Mother See of Holy Ecmiadzin, visited the United States last month to attend the annual Diocesan Assembly and Clergy Conference in Cleveland as a representative of Ecmiadzin. While in the Boston area, he served as a guest celebrant and homilist on May 15 at Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The educated and well-spoken young priest spoke with the *Mirror* about his background and plans for the seminary.

He was born in 1986 in the city of Kapan, Armenia, but he and his family left to Russia, where he began his schooling. They returned eventually at the end of the 1990s, and he continued his education in Armenia. At that time, he said, “my family was not very church-going, but was very pious, in the Soviet way.” He learned journalism in one of the afterschool children’s centers run by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and the Armenian Church, and was in the youth group.

There was a soup kitchen run by the two organizations, and when the Divine Liturgy was celebrated for the mostly elderly clients, he participated as an acolyte. He said, “I found that this service brought me the greatest happiness, for I obtained experience in two things, in prayer life and in the service that grew out of prayer life. Some weeks the elderly could not come to the soup kitchen so I would bring them food to their homes ... I learned what prayer is, and the service that arises from prayer, which is the embodiment or crystallization of prayer in our daily life.”

As he learned more, one day a cleric came and asked whether he might want to attend seminary. He was about to graduate high school and initially was planning to study journalism at Yerevan State University, but he felt his calling was through the church. Six years of study, from 2002 to 2008, at the Gevorkian Seminary, where he was ordained a deacon at the end of 2006.

On July 17, 2009, he was ordained a celibate priest by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), and he went to Great Britain to continue his studies from 2010 to 2015 at Sheffield University. He also studied and occasionally lectured at Oxford University. He earned a Doctor of Theology degree. In addition to Armenian and Russian, he knows Classical Greek, Hebrew and a

little Latin. He speaks English fluently, and knows a smattering of French.

The topic of Hambarzumyan’s doctoral study was the Old Testament Wisdom of Sirach (the Book of Sirak) in the Armenian Biblical tradition. He said, “It contains the most profound spiritual feelings and experiences, but is also a very practical book.” He said that it talks of the three qualities, love, wisdom and awe of God, which can lead man to perfect happiness, and summarizes the relations of man to man and man to God.

Hambarzumyan said it was paradoxical that when he went abroad, to Great Britain, he began to better appreciate Armenian culture and theology. He said, “I began to find the values and profundity of Armenian theology, and how much it has to be worshipped. It is like Ecmiadzin a luminous altar.” He added that the Armenian school of theology had much yet to give to the world though it may not have developed that much in the most recent era.

He liked the connection to scholarship and Christianity that he could have while in Great Britain, and in particular the punctuality and discipline that the English showed in connection with work, which Armenians may not always evince. He hoped that Armenians can combine their good souls and good work with this discipline.

Another important value he saw in the West is that clergymen must not be afraid to talk with the people and show that they are ready to help. He liked how ordinary people could find ways of helping philanthropic institutions in the West.

While he studied, he also served as a visiting pastor at St. Yeghishe Armenian Church of London and the Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Manchester, and established a mission parish at Oxford University. In November 2014, he was appointed as Assistant Director of the Department of Christian Education in the Mother See, and in September 2015, appointed Dean of the Gevorkian Seminary. Two months later, in November, he successfully defended his thesis and was granted the rank of *vartabed* by Bishop Vahan Hovhannessian.

Last month was Fr. Hambarzumyan’s first visit to the United States. He said, “I was very impressed. I know that the Eastern Diocese is a great example from the point of view of organization. It is very organized. This is something to be studied for us, especially for us young clerics.” As Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, the Primate of the Diocese, is his spiritual father, Hambarzumyan declared, “I am happy now to be in his diocese and to benefit from his hospitality and grace.” He thought that his time in the US would help him in understanding the local needs that clergy who will be prepared in



Dean of the Gevorkian Seminary Fr. Garegin Hambarzumyan

the seminary must meet. He said, “I know what I need to prepare students for if they are going to serve in Armenia, but I did not know about conditions here. One month of course was not enough, but I still was able to get an idea of what preparations students will need to succeed in America.”

The seminary already provides, he said, preparation for being a priest in a variety of environments, and information is taught about the Armenian diaspora and the histories of various dioceses. Most importantly, he said, “We teach that you must be ready to listen, to easily adjust to new environments and not be narrow-minded. You must be ready for new possibilities, have meetings, and then make decisions in a flexible way.”

Languages are important for adjusting to new environments. Russian, English, Old Greek, and Hebrew are required languages for students, as well as Classical Armenian. A one-year class in Western Armenian is mandatory for all students. This was decided two or three years ago, prior to Hambarzumyan’s assumption of office. German or French (beginning this September) are optional.

At present, there are 12 or 13 graduates of the Gevorkian Seminary working in the US. Hambarzumyan said, “I learned from the *kahanas* [married priests] from Armenia that people are skeptical about priests from Armenia until they get

to know them. Now it is good, and even others want them. I am happy that they have succeeded and are loved in their new communities.” He said that the seminary was always ready to send more clergymen if arrangements are made through the Catholicos of All Armenians. Furthermore, he said, “I am happy that in recent years we have enjoyed closer relations with St. Nersess Seminary in New York. There are only a few students there but they have the opportunity to serve or study at the Gevorkian Seminary too. This is good for US natives.”

At the Diocesan Clergy Conference, the visiting dean spoke to the American clergy about his seminary, and at the Diocesan Assembly he read the blessing of the Catholicos of All Armenians. He said that being at these meetings “gave me great hope that it is not just clergy but the people who are greatly involved. Few churches are like the Armenian Church where laymen play such a great role in church life. Of course there may be disputes and issues, but all this is to make the Diocese stronger and to serve the dissemination of the Word of God.”

Hambarzumyan realized about the clergymen serving in the US that “The Armenian remains Armenian. The *kahana* represents simple human values – modesty, wisdom, the ability to listen, and most important of all, his faith – so that he can inspire. The clergyman must be charismatic, showing others how he loves God and inspiring them to behave in the same Christian way in their lives.”

Hambarzumyan explained the workings of the Gevorkian Seminary. It is the main seminary for the Church of Armenia. There is also a pre-seminary high school in Harich and a four-year seminary in Sevan which sends its graduates to the Gevorkian.

The Gevorkian Seminary consists of two sections. The first, the primary section, contains 92 students for those 21 years old and younger. A second section prepares people who have decided to enter the priesthood later in life. They often are already married and have gotten an education. They get three years of training and then may be ordained. This year 26 people graduated from the two sections: 20 from the seminary, as deacons and six from the priestly ministry program. Annually 40-50 people are admitted to both the Gevorkian and the Sevan institutions.

At present, the dean explained, graduates from Gevorkian work in a department in Ecmiadzin as a deacon. Some marry and then apply for priesthood, and others decide to be a celibate priest. Examinations must be taken and if a committee decides that the candidate is ready, he can be ordained from six months after graduation up to ten years later. Then the individual may be sent to a diocese to serve as a deacon or a university for further study of theology and related topics. Many are sent abroad to universities in Russia, Austria, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Hambarzumyan has great ambitions for the seminary. He is planning to establish a PhD program at the seminary. Right now it can only give bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Biblical Studies, Dogmatics, Church History and Pastoral Theology are the four fields of advanced training. The new program will add two to three years more study. A nine-person committee with the Catholicos of All Armenians as its president, will create this, and the specialists already exist. Hambarzumyan thinks that as early as 2017 or 2018, the first doctoral student will be accepted into Gevorkian.

Of course, Hambarzumyan pointed out, there will always be students who decide not to go into the priesthood after graduation, but hopefully they will bring something positive that they have learned at the seminary into other realms of life. Two examples are Aksel Bakunts and Avetik Isahakian, who studied there and went on to become famous authors.

The new seminary dean has already introduced several other innovations. He established a digital or electronic magazine published every two weeks and sent to various organizations and clergymen throughout the world. It is also on the Facebook page of the seminary. Among other things, it serves as a tool to help seminarians learn how to express their thoughts.

He also began to organize pilgrimages throughout the year for students. Each individual class goes to a remote village in Armenia to do Bible studies. Often a famous person is invited, perhaps an author or an artist, to speak on various themes ranging from bioethics to art. Issues concerning modern society and priests are discussed.



The Armenian Museum of America board members and raffle volunteers, including veteran sportscaster Bob Lobel, second from right

## Final Inning Party at Armenian Museum

WATERTOWN – The Armenian Museum of America will hold a Final Inning Party on Tuesday, July 19, to celebrate the completion of its 11th Sports Raffle Fundraiser.

This year’s raffle participants have a chance to win the Grand Prize of a 22-seat luxury box at Fenway to see the Red Sox take on the Royals for the August 28th afternoon game. Other prizes include a number of other Red Sox ticket packages, as well as tickets for Patriots, Bruins, and Celtics games.

Individual tickets are \$100 apiece and \$300 for five tickets.

This year, every participant who purchases five tickets will also be entered into a special drawing to win an NFL football signed by Patriot greats Tom Brady and Randy Moss.

The annual fundraiser allows the Armenian Museum to continue its mission of both preserving Armenian culture and promote an awareness and appreciation for the Armenian heritage by educating the public through free concerts, lectures, events, exhibitions and programs.

To purchase your tickets today or for more information about the Sports Raffle, call the museum.



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# How Two Determined Scientists Built a World-Class Lab out of Radio Shack Parts

By Annalee Newitz

HONOLULU (Ars Technica) – Hope Jahren’s memoir about becoming a biogeoscientist – someone who studies the deep geological history of plant life on Earth – is the year’s biggest surprise bestseller. Humbly titled *Lab Girl*, it’s the story of how Jahren escaped a working class town to become a young scientist in the high-tech labs of UC Berkeley and Georgia Tech. It’s also a fascinating introduction to the ways plants survive, even though they can never flee from danger. But most of all, it’s a crazy adventure about two broke geeks, Jahren and her lab technician Bill Hagopian, who somehow scrape together enough cash and spare parts to build lab instruments unlike anything the scientific world had ever seen. You won’t be able to put this book down, and that’s a quality one rarely finds in a nonfiction book about science.

## Radio Shack lab

Jahren and Hagopian met when she was a graduate student helping to run a class where he was an undergrad learning about field work. Out of all the students in the class, Hagopian’s work was the most meticulous—but he also sprinkled his lab notes with weird jokes that only Jahren found amusing. They became fast friends, and when she got her first job as an assistant professor at Georgia Tech, she offered him a job as lab technician. Paying Hagopian a near-poverty-level salary took up most of her grant money from the National Science Foundation. So the two spent several years living on cheap pizza, Ensure, and candy bars, saving all their money to build up the Jahren Lab. Their goal is to simulate atmospheres from Earth’s past and then grow plants inside those atmospheres to understand how life forms survive dramatic changes in the molecular composition of the air they breathe. This is obviously relevant to the current carbon loading in our atmosphere, but it also helps scientists understand what our planet was like hundreds of millions of years ago, when carbon and oxygen levels were quite different from those today.

In *Lab Girl*, Jahren describes her early years perfecting a technique to blow glass bubbles full of alien atmospheres, while Hagopian lives out of his van and designs sophisticated growth chambers. Without much money, the two are left scrounging up parts to use in their lab from the recycling bins of other labs—and from Radio Shack, of course.

Jahren said, “When we can’t get a controller from a catalogue, we go to Radio Shack. We love Radio Shack. Being able to jerry-rig things is super satisfying.” Getting to scientific conferences to present their work was even more challenging. In one memorable scene, Jahren and Hagopian “borrow” the lab van from Georgia Tech and drive across the country to San Francisco for the annual meeting of the American Geophysical Union. They had so little money that all their meals for several days came from an icebox full of lunch meat. It all backfired when one of their graduate students crashed the van and the slightly rancid contents of the icebox flew everywhere. Still, Jahren managed to clean up and make it to San Francisco in time—only to be yelled at by one of her colleagues that her hypotheses are just plain wrong.

Two Fullbrights and several other prestigious awards later, Jahren is sanguine about the memory. But we can still feel her anger and how these setbacks only made her more committed, pushing her to prove that we can use carbon isotope analysis on plant fossils to reverse engineer previous atmospheres on Earth. There’s a strong emotional, personal element to *Lab Girl* that reminds us how scientists feel just as passionately about their research as artists do about their creations.

Today, Jahren and Hagopian are just as DIY with their instrumentation as ever,

though the Jahren Lab in Honolulu is funded at a much more comfortable level. Jahren told Ars that they still buy a lot of their equipment from Radio Shack and Home Depot and that they learn a lot about how to build their greenhouses from YouTube videos aimed at pot growers. “Our growth chambers are plexiglass boxes about as big as a bookshelf, and we can control the greenhouse gas levels, light, and

what they do have. What is it? The fact that we’re so enamored of that question is telling. At the heart of that is this age-old dilemma of how do you co-exist with something and exploit it at the same time. You do it by de-animating it; you say it’s a thing. But it’s not a thing. It’s alive. That ambiguity is never going to go away, even if I break all the rules and say things like plants “remember,” “know,” and

## Working-class science

By the end of *Lab Girl*, we understand how important Jahren and Hagopian’s work has been to biogeoscience—but we also follow the progress of their unusual friendship. At one point, Jahren wonders whether they are soulmates or siblings. Their nonsexual but intimate friendship defies categorization, and it provides a template for the kinds of relationships that men and women will ideally start forming more often as gender balance in the sciences evens out. But it isn’t just their cross-gender friendship that Jahren wants to celebrate. Hagopian, she says, is like a lot of people who work in the sciences, “geniuses with instrumentation in tech, [but who] don’t want to be professors and give talks.” She hopes that these “true heroes” can be celebrated in a more public way and their contributions recognized as being key to scientific progress. “I needed a whole book to explain the heroism of someone unusual,” she said.

Jahren also worries that we’re “starving science to a breaking point.” As she reveals in her book, there are many talented scientists who never get the opportunity to do science full time. Her hope is that we can use institutions like the National Science Foundation (NSF) to fund more basic research and that her book can show people what it’s really like to try doing science when there is almost no funding available. “You could double the funding of the NSF and still not be anywhere near wasting a nickel,” she said. “Their funding requests are not lavish.”

After reading *Lab Girl*, you’re likely to look at the world of science in a whole new way. But it’s also a job, and a tough one, because there’s less and less money to go around. Jahren may have escaped her working-class town, but as a scientist she’ll never fully escape from the anxiety of poverty. She and Hagopian have built their lab and lives with the assumption that they are only one paycheck away from having to go back to that van full of cheap lunch meat. Their discoveries may be changing how we understand the world, but the world will have to change to keep those discoveries coming.



Hope Jahren and Bill Hagopian in their lab, where they created many one-of-a-kind instruments to study plants and the deep geological history of Earth’s atmosphere.

humidity on the order of moment-to-moment fluctuations,” she said. “It’s not easy when you’ve got a living organism in there that’s actively making feedback. They’re in there at positive pressure, and the atmosphere turns over about every ten minutes or so.” She laughed about going to grow shops where “we’re the most innocent thing they’ve seen in days.” But “they have good advice on making things grow inside,” using everything from little pieces of tupperware to vaporizers. And the results are excellent. “We can put in the greenhouse gases or scrub them out,” Jahren said proudly. “And we’re the only lab that can do that to this degree.”

One of the ways that Jahren interweaves her scientific story with her personal one is by including chapters about plant life cycles that provide a counterpoint to her own. When she’s growing up, we learn how seeds function; when she has a baby, we learn about how plants reproduce. As a result, we’re forced to see how dramatically different plants are from us—as well as the unexpected ways they exhibit signs of consciousness that’s a distant echo to our own. Though scientists fear anthropomorphizing plants, making them seem inaccurately human-like, Jahren says she decided to break that rule “unapologetically.” Without some anthropomorphizing, “you revert to scientific language and you’re just talking to other scientists.” Plus, she asked, “Where is the word that describes a plant doing something like remembering? A plant does call up data acquired in the past and invoke it in the present. Where is the word for that? There’s this infuriating gap between human language and scientific language.”

She added that plants may have some form of consciousness: There is scientific evidence that they take in information about the world and that their biologic activities are contingent upon that information in real time. Now isn’t that what our consciousness breaks down into really? So I think if you look up the words in the dictionary and you compare it to scientific evidence, by strict definition yes they do have consciousness. Do they do it the same way we do it? No. Do they have a brain, spinal cord, and sensory nerve endings? No, no, no. Science is in the baby stages of figuring out

“choose”. All those are words that we reserve for animated entities toward which we acknowledge an ethical responsibility. That’s why that question is so sticky.

Jahren suggests we always remember this “sticky” question, especially because we depend on plants for everything from building materials to fuel. She urges her readers to plant a tree and consider what balance we want to strike between “co-existing” and “exploiting” plants.



## UC Irvine Dean Meets Primate

NEW YORK – Georges Van Den Abbeele, the humanities dean at University of California Irvine, visited the Diocesan Center in New York on Friday, June 3. Dr. Van Den Abbeele spoke with Diocesan Primate Archbishop Khajag Barsamian about the university’s Armenian Studies program and its recently launched research exchange with the American University of Armenia.

Barsamian noted the rich opportunities such programs provide for the exchange of ideas. He thanked Van Den Abbeele for visiting the Diocesan Center.

# Arts & Living

## The Magic Of Music



By Kim Kashkashian

*"Without music there can't be any dreams, and without dreams there can't be any fairy tales, and without fairy tales*

*there can't be any courage, and without courage no one would be able to bear any sorrows."* - Fredrick Bachman, from 'My Grandmother asked Me'

Musicians grow into their full potential by working towards technical and physical mastery of their instrument or voice. Once we spend countless hours alone in a practice room, we may then have the freedom and means to express our imaginative, artistic vision. An entire life can be spent refining these skills and honing our fantasy. But when our efforts revolve only in this circle of practice, practice, practice, we are missing a most important component - the audience! Only our listeners complete the circle and give our work its ultimate meaning and potency.

To embrace the world around us; to be exquisitely aware of the context in which we live and work - this is vital to our well-being and to the integrity of our artistic choices as well. No artists can work in a vacuum, but must be part of the larger community surrounding us. We are citizens. This is our context. This is our audience, these are the people we meet and touch through our music.

We see increasingly that in the U.S. that broader context includes many people our society has failed. Often, the basic needs of shelter and nutrition are not met, and the pursuit of happiness, education and culture only can be approached after these basic needs are ensured. The ways in which music moves us, regardless of musical genre, shows just how important it is.

As musicians, then, each of us must search for a way to make a positive contribution. We know the power of artistic expression, and we know that music is essential to life, growth and our well-being, but do we really know how to share this gift of music? The major concert halls provide one such model, yet developing alternate models is vital.

Young artists take music to shelters and prisons, hospitals and farmer's markets. We are working to re-integrate music into the lives of everyday people. We hear "classical music is dead" repeatedly, but if you look around you will see it is alive and well, integral to the lives of more and more people, and popping up everywhere!

Music for Food, of which I am artistic coordinator, is such a new model for sharing music. We began in Boston seven years ago, and now have chapters in New York City, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Chicago and LA! Our goal is to turn the ineffable beauty of music into the concrete nourishment of food needed by one in seven Americans.

Our musicians volunteer their talents and energy, our audiences respond by donating food to local pantries serving the community, and paths are woven together in new ways.

Music for Food is inclusive: musicians anywhere can create MFF events and help build trust and communication see MUSIC, page 16



Viken Arman

## Armenian DJs Are Bringing Traditional Sounds into Underground Dance Music

LOS ANGELES (*LA Weekly*)— Sometime after 2 a.m., there is a guy getting down in the middle of the crowd inside a downtown loft. He's moving as wildly as one can without losing the beat. A brief flash of light against his bare arm reveals a large portrait tattoo of Saint Vartan, the fifth-century warrior whose image remains a powerful symbol of the Armenian people. Others in the room

By Liz Ohanesian

wave their hands in circular motions, a nod to traditional Armenian dance, even as their feet move to a modern beat.

They're dancing to Viken Arman, a French producer making his L.A. debut. He occasionally plays a melodica to mimic the sound of a duduk, the ancient wind instrument native to Armenia but best known to modern audiences for its use in film and TV scores such as those for *Gladiator* and *Game of Thrones*.

"It's my first love, traditional Armenian music," Arman says prior to the gig. "I grew up with this music. It's a big source of inspiration."

Hours before his set, Arman is hanging out at the party space with members of the promotion team SBCLTR (pronounced "subculture"), which put together the event. Everyone present, myself included, is part of the Armenian diaspora, heirs of an ancient culture that endured even when, for much of the 20th century, there was no nation tying its people together. Arman is from Paris. SBCLTR co-founders Patrik Khachatourian and Roni Mehrabian were born in Iran and raised in L.A. Fellow SBCLTR member Michael Batmanian was born in Virginia to parents from Lebanon but raised in California.

Despite the fact that Arman had only met the promoters that day, the camaraderie between them is apparent. "I feel like it's home," Arman says.

Their words bounce off each other as they swap feelings on music, culture and clubs. Khachatourian paraphrases a quote from author William Saroyan, himself of Armenian descent: "For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia."

Saroyan's "New Armenia" is alive in this room, and it's brewing internationally in dance music.

Arman's set wasn't part of some highbrow cultural event, nor was it attended just by people from L.A.'s sizable Armenian community. It was a hip, downtown dance night, with a lineup filled out by DJs who pull crowds from the underground party

see DJ, page 14

## Jordan Reportedly Bans Band with Gay Frontman From Performing

By Anastasia Tsioulcas

BEIRUT (NPR) — A popular and groundbreaking alt-rock band from Lebanon called Mashrou' Leila was scheduled to play a big show in Amman, Jordan Friday, June 10.

Instead, their show was cancelled by the government — and the band says they have been told they can never perform again in the country, because of the group's politics, religious beliefs and "endorsement of gender equality and sexual freedom."

Mashrou' Leila had been slated to play at the famous Roman amphitheater in Amman, where they have previously performed three times, as well as elsewhere across the country.

In a lengthy note posted on Facebook in both Arabic and English, the band alleges that the actual reason for the permission to be withdrawn is different:

"We have been unofficially informed that the reason behind this sudden change of heart, few days before the concert day, is the intervention of some authorities. Our understanding is that said authorities have pressured certain political figures and triggered a chain of events that ultimately ended with our authorization being withdrawn.

"We also have been unofficially informed that we will never be allowed to play again anywhere in Jordan due to our political and religious beliefs and endorsement of gender equality and sexual freedom."

The lead singer of Mashrou' Leila, Hamed Sinno, is openly gay, and the band has addressed gay rights as well as politics and corruption in both its songs and many of its interviews. In an interview last year with the CBC show "Q," Sinno said that a show they did in a predominantly Christian town in Lebanon called Zouk Mikael was protested by people who believed that "homosexuals shouldn't be allowed to set foot on Christian soil." Sinno attributed that attitude to "broader fundamentalisms in the region."

According to a report on the Jordanian news site jo24.net published June 7, at least one public supporter of the ban is a member of parliament named Bassam al-Batoush, who has called for the group to be banned due to their "controversial" material that references sex, homosexuality, "calls for revolution" and promotes "Satanic" ideas.

The governor of Amman district, Khalid Abu Zeid, told the Associated Press that the band's songs "contradict" Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Initially, the AP reports, officials from Jordan's Antiquities Department rescinded permission because such a show would "contradict the 'authenticity' of the ancient venue."

Mashrou' Leila violinist Haig Papazian has posted pictures of one of their previous three shows at the amphitheater on Twitter.

As the band also noted on Facebook, Sanno's mother is from Jordan, and the members say that the country is "a formative part of his identity and writing, and a place we have always considered our second home."

The Facebook note concludes, "We urge the Kingdom to choose fighting alongside us, not against us, during this ongoing battle for a culture of freedom against the regressive powers of thought control and cultural coercion."

The U.S. State Department's 2015 human rights report on Jordan includes this assessment: "While consensual same-sex sexual conduct is not illegal, societal discrimination against LGBTI persons was prevalent, and LGBTI persons were targets of abuse. Activists reported discrimination in housing,

see BAN, page 13



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# 'Digging Into The Future: Armenia Wins Telly Awards' Highest Cultural Honor

NEW YORK — "Travelscope's" archaeology special, "Digging Into The Future: Armenia," won a Silver Telly Award in the Cultural Programming category. The show also received a 2016 Emmy nomination for directing.

Directed and Hosted and by Joseph Rosendo, "Digging Into The Future" was produced by the Emmy-winning team behind the PBS series, "Joseph Rosendo's Travelscope."

Rosendo joined archaeologists from UCLA's Cotsen Institute of Archaeology on a journey through Armenia. During this adventure he crisscrossed Armenia to ancient sites where some of the world's oldest artifacts have been discovered. In keeping with the show's focus on cultural connections, Rosendo talked to the locals in roadside fruit stands, riverside wine stalls and bustling markets. He was welcomed into their homes to witness traditional artisans at work and join in religious and communal celebrations that inspire, enlighten and reveal the Armenian heart and soul.

"After producing nine seasons of 'Joseph Rosendo's Travelscope,' it's particularly gratifying that 'Digging Into the Future' has received this recognition," states Rosendo. "Winning the



Joseph Rosendo in Armenia

Silver Telly for Digging in the Cultural category confirms our belief that no matter the subject featuring people and their culture touches the hearts and minds of our viewers."

He also announced that, "In order to expand the show's initial reach, the one-hour special will air as two half-hour episodes in Season 9 of "Joseph Rosendo's Travelscope" scheduled for release this November on PBS throughout the United States and Canada.

The Travelscope Team thanked the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and the Kazanjian Foundation for their support of the initial national broadcast of "Digging Into the Future: Armenia."

The Telly Awards honor the finest film and video productions, groundbreaking web commercials, videos and films, and outstanding local, regional, and cable TV commercials and programs - receiving nearly 12,000 entries from all 50 states and numerous countries. Since 1979, their mission has been to strengthen the visual arts community by inspiring, promoting and supporting creativity.

In addition to three 2016 Telly Awards, "Joseph Rosendo's Travelscope" has been previously honored with 34 Tellys. "Travelscope" has also won four National Emmys and received 14 Emmy nominations.

## Jordan Reportedly Bans Band With Gay Frontman

BAN, from page 12  
employment, education, and access to public services. Some LGBTI individuals reported reluctance to engage the legal system due to fear their sexual orientation or gender identity would either provoke hostile reactions from police or disadvantage them in court. Activists reported that most LGBTI individuals were closeted and fearful of their sexual identity being disclosed."

The five-member band was founded at the American University of Beirut in 2008 and has released three albums. Their name translates as

both Leila Project and Night Project; Leila is a Juliet-like figure in Arabic literature. A rapturous review from London's *Guardian* last November said that they "charge the stage with electricity, sensuality and a dazzling aura of resistance."

Mashrou' Leila's latest video, for the song *AOEDE*, which was released earlier this month, opens with a young woman recounting a story of police brutality.

The band is heading to the US and Canada on tour, with dates scheduled in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Washington, D.C. and Vancouver. Visit <http://www.mashrouleila.com/>

GUILLAUME SOUVANT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Hamed Sinno (R) and Haig Papazian of the Lebanese alternative rock band Mashrou' Leila performing in Bourges, France in 2015.

## Varter's Oriental Rugs SIDEWALK SALE

One Day Only

June 18th 2016 10 am-7 pm

We are having our first ever liquidation sidewalk sale. We have thousands of rugs to choose from. These rugs range from new to old, antique to semi antique. Prices are 60% to 80% off. Some of these rugs are well below cost. We have something for everyone's needs in style, color and size including hard to find rare color and sizes. This is a one-day sale so if you were ever thinking about buying a rug this is the perfect time.

Besides having a huge selection of hand-made oriental rugs, we are experts of antique rug repair and hand hashing of all types of oriental rugs including hand-made, machine made, tufted, braided, hooked rugs, rag rugs and flat weaves of all kinds.

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## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Tekeyan of New York and New Jersey Organizes Social Gathering

PIERMONT, N.Y. — The executive of the Tekeyan Cultural Association chapter of Greater New York together with the TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group committee organized a spring family gathering at Cornetta's Seafood Restaurant on the afternoon of Sunday, June 12. It was an opportunity for people to get to know the actors and support staff of the Megerdchian Theatrical Group after their recent performances in

Armenia. Tekeyan's benefactors were also present. They continue to encourage Tekeyan's extensive activities in New York and New Jersey.

Lernik Hovhannisyian, a deputy of the parliament of the Republic of Mountainous Karabagh (Artsakh) visiting the United States, joined the group. He was accompanied by the Armenian-American activist Antranig Kasparian. Hagop Vartivarian intro-

duced Hovhannisyian, who spoke briefly about conditions in Artsakh after the four days of battles in April of this year. Hovhannisyian spoke highly of the fighting spirit of the Artaskh armed forces, and praised the moral and financial assistance of

Armenians abroad.

The newly elected chair of the TCA chapter, Hilda Hartounian, and the chairman of the theatrical committee, Harout Chatmajian, welcomed the guests and spoke of the activities of their respective executives.



Some of the actors of the Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group at Cornetta's Seafood Restaurant



At Cornetta's Seafood Restaurant, from the left, Hagop Vartivarian, Hilda Adil, Dr. Hagop J. Gulekjian, Vicki Shoghag Hovanessian, Artemis Nazarian, Nazar Nazarian, Dr. Raffy Hovanessian, Ani Hovanessian, Henri Dimidjian and Nora Markarian



From left, Harout Chatmajian, Artsakh MP Lernik Hovhannisyian, Hagop Vartivarian, Hilda Kuredjian Hartounian, and Antranig Kasparian

## Armenian DJs Are Bringing Traditional Sounds into Underground Dance Music

DJ, from page 12

As dance music becomes more globally minded, more DJs are mixing traditional sounds with modern beats — and interest in the traditional sounds of Armenia, in particular, is growing.

"I didn't realize that it was blowing up until I was on tour a couple months ago," says Glendale-based David "Davi" Khanjian, a DJ/producer who has released tracks through labels including Rebellion, a subsidiary of Damian Lazarus' Crosstown Rebels, and Anjunadeep. "I went to Toronto a month ago; the opening DJ, who is not even Armenian, was playing *Dle Yaman*, a traditional Armenian song with a heartbreaking melody. "It's very exciting. I'm very happy to hear it."

Khanjian is from Yerevan, although he spent some of his youth in Beirut as well. A decade ago, after finishing his studies at Yerevan's Komitas State Conservatory, he moved to the United States and embarked on his electronic-music career. But learning Armenian folk music was a mandatory part of his conservatory education, and it stuck with him.

"The reason I think it's in my music today is because it's in me," Khanjian says. "Not only is it in my blood, but I remember studying all of those songs. Sometimes I randomly remember them in my head, melodies and

stuff." The influence has peppered such Davi tracks as "Gates of Babylon" and "Metanoia," the latter of which samples Armenian vocals.

Khanjian credits Burning Man, where he has played, with helping to popularize this new Armenian dance-music wave. Berge "Goldcap" Sahakian, another L.A.-based proponent of the fusion style, agrees. "Burning Man is a great place for experimentation and acceptance," he says. "It's kind of the mecca for experimenting with new sounds, trying things out, seeing what works."

Away from Black Rock City, the free-spirited influence of the annual festival has affected a larger party scene. Sahakian, who will be playing the Lightning in a Bottle festival later this month, says "Burning Man-style crowd" has become shorthand for saying, "Play whatever you want."

It's not just underground parties and Burner events. Armenian-influenced dance music also is infiltrating the club scene. On a recent night at downtown's Pattern Bar, another L.A.-based Armenian DJ, Armen Miran, weaves the mournful sounds of Armenia into a set that somehow manages to be uplifting. That juxtaposition is popular in this small, chic watering hole; there's a crowd surrounding the 28-year-old DJ/producer as he plays near the bar, and the room quickly fills as the clock ticks closer to midnight.

Miran has been a resident DJ at Pattern Bar for about four months and has lived in the United States for only a year. Born and raised in Tehran, he spent some time in Yerevan, where he studied music theory at Komitas, before joining his family in the United States. When we meet at his studio in La Crescenta, he speaks in a mix of English and Armenian, with a friend on hand to interpret when necessary.

His influences run the gamut from Pink Floyd to Depeche Mode to Armenian folk music. All that collides in his track "Marta (Duduk Mix)." It's melancholy and energetic with slightly psychedelic flourishes, and features a duduk, whose plaintive sound peppers both his DJ sets and productions. He appreciates the emotions that it conveys and the way it symbolizes Armenian culture.

In 2008, UNESCO added the duduk to the "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." The organization dates the roots of the instrument back to the first century BCE rule of Tigran the Great. Sahakian, also a resident at Pattern Bar, describes the duduk as "the lifeblood of our people."

So closely is the instrument tied to Armenia that it can be nearly impossible to separate it from a now century-old trauma. In its deep, forlorn cry is the memory of the death march into the Syrian desert, the rapes

and murders that marked the Armenian Genocide. It's a sound of loss and survival. "That instrument holds a lot of pain and a lot of suffering," Sahakian says.

Sahakian's parents, who immigrated to the United States from Iraq, settled in the San Fernando Valley and raised their son on traditional Armenian music and Arabic pop music. By his preteens, he'd rebelled and gravitated toward classic rock. "But it all comes back full circle because, after that point of rebellion and exploring my own tastes, I came back and heard Armenian and Arabic music with new ears," he says.

Now, in addition to playing at Pattern Bar, Sahakian tours and plays festivals. "I like people to walk away with something stirred up inside them, some sort of emotion, a moment where they're taken back, a moment where it can be real for a second," he says.

In the music of a distant past, Sahakian and others have been able to foster a sense of understanding in the present day. "There's this familiarity [to] it, but people don't understand why," Sahakian says. "It's because everything is rooted from this music. If you trace it all the way back, you can always trace it back to Middle Eastern styles of music. Middle Eastern and African styles of music. That's why I think people can relate to it, even though it's not their background. It's just universal."

## Amid Chaos and Conflict, Yo-Yo Ma Makes Music His Peace Offering

NEW YORK (Take Part) – “So this is my cello. Have you ever seen one before?” Yo-Yo Ma asks in the opening of the documentary “The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble.”

At first, his question appears playfully sarcastic. Ma is one of the most celebrated living classical musicians, and he and his cello are identifiable to many. But the film opens up to showcase a diverse crowd of musicians and their less recognizable instruments – from a *kamancheh* to a *pipa* – demonstrating just how diverse instruments from around the globe can be.

“The Music of Strangers,” which arrived in theaters June 10, explores the Silk Road Ensemble, Ma’s global collective of musical virtuosos working to bridge cultures and foster peace.

“We want to be the light that dispels fear from society,” Ma told TakePart of the group.

“[The ensemble] works together in a way that makes for unified voices that are led by different leaders within the group at different times,” Ma said. Including players from various backgrounds has given the Silk Road Ensemble flexibility to work in far-flung communities and share its work with a broader audience. Since Ma established the group in 2000, the Silk Road Ensemble has recorded six albums and played in 33 countries.

“We tend to take culture for granted,” director Morgan Neville (“20 Feet From Stardom,” “Best of Enemies”) told TakePart. “Seeing other cultures where people who are artists pay a great price...reminds us that culture is in fact just as essential to who we are as our politics or religion or economics.”

The film profiles four ensemble members. Pipa player Wu Man wrestles to belong in both China and America as she works to preserve Chinese folk music; Galician bagpipe player Cristina Pato faces criticism from her community for her progressive style; the political climate in Iran has driven out Kayhan Kalhor, an expert at the *kamancheh* (also known as the Persian spiked fiddle); and Syrian clarinetist Kinan Azmeh struggles to compose music as civil war ravages his home country.

“Can a piece of music stop a bullet? Can it feed somebody who is hungry?” Azmeh asks in the film, adding that the war forced him to question the importance of art altogether.

But as the film follows Azmeh to the Zaatar refugee camp in Jordan, which is home to roughly 80,000 Syrian refugees, the power of music becomes clear. We see it as he improvises silly songs with a group of giggling girls, organizes a drum circle, and distributes instruments to refugee children—any one of whom could become the next rising flutist of his or her generation.

“The things the arts give us are the things we actually want,” Neville said. “The idea to be creative, collaborative, and inventive—these are all skills we want for our modern society.”

The Music of Strangers was recently dubbed



Celloist Yo-Yo Ma plays in the National Gallery of Art’s East Building after participating in a panel discussion on the role of art in diplomacy on April 20, 2015.

in Arabic and is being shown in refugee camps in Jordan. Just this week, Wu Man, the pipa player, along with Kevork Mourad, a Syrian-Armenian visual artist also featured in the film, visited a camp to teach creative arts workshops and share the film.

More than just an educational tool, Ma hopes the film will encourage viewers to see migrants not as “the enemy or the ones taking over jobs but actually people who could be highly educated and could contribute to society.”

“What we hope to encourage through the film, by creating an empathetic environment, [is that] people will think, ‘Hey, wait a minute. These are not foreigners.’” Ma said. “It’s not the ‘music of strangers.’ This is actually our music. This is our home.”

## AMAA Centennial Kick-Off to Honor Child and Orphan Care Committee

By Phillis Hamo

GLENDALE — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) has announced that its Centennial Kick-Off Celebration will pay tribute to a major supporting group, the AMAA Child and Orphan Care Committee, at a Banquet planned for October 8, at the Jonathan Club in Los Angeles. According to Banquet Co-Chairs Jack Muncherian and Gary Phillips, the



The banquet co-chairs, Jack Muncherian and Gary Phillips, flank the master of ceremonies, Paul Kalemkarian

third-floor ballroom of the historic downtown club has been reserved for the event which will honor the creative and hard-working West Coast Child and Orphan Care Committee, an organization celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Paul Kalemkarian has accepted the role of master of ceremonies.

In the aftermath of the devastating Armenia earthquake of 1988, the AMAA rushed in to help. Many children were killed or injured, many were left orphans, and some were taken abroad for treatment. In 1991, the same year that Armenian Independence was declared, the Orphan and Care Committee was established. This Committee has concentrated on changing children’s lives and giving them hope for a better future “one child at a time.”

With poverty an issue, families in Armenia cannot always care for their own, resulting in children who live in extreme poverty (even though one or both parents may still be alive). That is when AMAA Child and Orphan Care Support steps in.

The AMAA, founded in 1918 in Worcester, has been headquartered in Paramus, NJ since 1972 and has extended its spiritual, educational, social services, and child care ministries to 24 countries around the world.



## Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

### Baked Swiss Mushroom Chicken with Garlic and Cherry Tomatoes

#### INGREDIENTS

1 pint red or yellow cherry tomatoes (or half and half)  
6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts  
2 cups fresh mushrooms, halved  
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese (more to taste)  
1/2 cup white onions, diced  
8 garlic cloves, cut in half  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil  
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice  
1 teaspoon ground thyme or sage  
1/2 teaspoon lemon zest, finely chopped  
Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper  
Dash of paprika or smoked paprika  
3-4 tablespoons olive oil  
1/2 cup dry white wine (optional)  
Chopped flat-leaf parsley, spring onions, or cilantro as garnish

#### PREPARATION

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9 X 13 glass baking dish with cooking spray. Wash the cherry tomatoes and assemble all ingredients.

Arrange the chicken breasts in the baking dish. Scatter the cherry tomatoes and garlic around the chicken breasts. Sprinkle with the chopped onions, basil, lemon juice, thyme or sage, lemon zest, salt and pepper (to taste), and top with the shredded cheese.

Drizzle with olive oil, add a dash of paprika, and bake, uncovered, for 45 minutes to one hour or until the chicken is tender and the tomatoes burst. Check occasionally and baste the chicken with pan juices. About 20 minutes before removing from the oven, scatter the mushrooms on top and around the chicken and baste again.

Serve the chicken, garlic, mushrooms, and cherry tomatoes over hot rice pilaf or choice of pasta, and top with juices from the pan. Garnish with chopped parsley, spring onions, or cilantro, and serve with spicy or Dijon mustard on the side.

Note: If desired, add the white wine to the pan 10 minutes before taking the chicken out of the oven to serve.

Serves 6.

Christine’s recipes have been published in the Fresno Bee, Sunset and Cooking Light Magazines, and at <http://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/>. For Christine’s recipes that have been published in Sunset and Cooking Light Magazines, go to: <http://www.myrecipes.com/search/site/Datian>



**WATERTOWN — Humanics Scholars from California State University, Fresno were in Boston attending a conference on non-profit organization management (including fundraising, volunteer management, and programming.) They visited Project SAVE Archives to learn more about the organization, and to share some of their expertise. Above, some of the visitors can be seen with Ruth Thomasian, Project SAVE founder and executive director.**



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## CALENDAR

## MASSACHUSETTS

**JUNE 18 — Talk by Robert Mirak: "Genocide Survivors, Community Builders:** The family of John and Artemis Mirak," Date: Saturday, 1:30 p.m. Old Schwamb Mill, 17 Mill Lane, Arlington. Information: info@oldschwambmill.org, 781-643-0554. This is the story of two Armenian orphans uprooted from their homes in the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide and their lives in the new world, where they became an example of courage and achievement in both their Armenian and non-Armenian communities.

**JUNE 19 — "Armenian Beauty" Concert. The Armenian Museum of America (ALMA)** and the Composer's Union of Armenia will host a concert titled "Armenian Beauty" in the Adele & Haig Der Manuelian Galleries at 2 p.m. The concert will feature composer/pianist Hayk Arsenyan in his premier Boston performance. A reception will follow the program and this event is free and open to the public. For more information, call 617-926-2562 ext. 4 or email info@armenianmuseum.org.

**JUNE 20 — The Gregory Hintlian Memorial Golf Tournament** sponsored by Holy Trinity Armenian Church at the Marlborough Country Club, Marlborough; 9:30 a.m., registration; 11 a.m., "Shot Gun." Join us for a day of golf - player's fee: \$175 (includes hospitality, lunch, dinner, green & cart fees, prizes and gifts) - or just dinner and a social evening (\$50 per person). Limited to 128 players. Tournament and tee sponsorships available. RSVP deadline, June 13. To register or for further information, log onto <http://www.htaac.org/calendar/event/203/>, contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632, or email office@htaac.org.

**JUNE 21 — Zumba Dance Party! 7 to 9 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church,** Charles and Nevert Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. All ages and ability levels are invited to attend an exciting and fun evening with Zumba Dance Leader, Armine Hovannissian. Zumba is Latin inspired fitness dance incorporated with international rhythms. A portion of the evening's proceeds will go towards aid for Artsakh. Donation is \$15 per person; refreshments will be served. RSVP to Cathy Minassian, cminassian@hotmail.com or call 617.947.1795. Sponsored by The Women of Holy Trinity.

**JUNE 25 — Armenian Food fair, sponsored by St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church** of Merrimack Valley, 158 Main St., North Andover, MA, 11 am.-7pm; losh and chicken kebab; kheyima; vegetarian plate; pastries; dine in or take out. Further information, Sossy Jeknavorian, (978) 256-2538 or Ann Apovian, (978) 521-2245.

**JUNE 25 — The Armenian Church Of Our Saviour is presenting a new edition of ARMENIANS GOT TALENT!** Saturday, 6 pm, in its Cultural Center at 34 Boynton Street, Worcester. The talent show features parishioners of all ages performing various musical and dance numbers with fun for the whole family. Following the program there is a buffet with a variety of Armenian foods. Tickets are \$10.00 for adults and teens and \$5.00 for children under 12. For reservations and additional information, call 508-320-1232 or 508-835-9277. No Tickets will be sold at the door.



**On Saturday, June 18, businessman and author Robert Mirak will give a talk titled "Genocide Survivors, Community Builders: The Family of John and Artemis Mirak." The program will take place at 1.30 p.m. at the Old Schwamb Mill, 17 Mill Lane, Arlington, Mass. Mirak will speak about his parents, both orphaned during the Armenian Genocide, who eventually found their way to the US and became pillars of the community.**

**JUNE 27 — Knights of Vartan Arshavir Lodge No. 2 invites everyone** to the 36th annual Armenian-American High School Graduates Night, Monday, 7 p.m. Armenian Church of Our Saviour Church Hall, 87 Salisbury St., Worcester. A City Proclamation By Mayor Joseph Petty, Recognition Of Graduates And Gifts Presentation with Guest Speaker: Anthony Barsamian, Attorney and Massachusetts Council Of Churches President. Admission is free. Buffet. Limited seating. Reservations required. Contact Charles Sharigian at 774-261-0108 OR chazz2404@yahoo.com. Call 508-752-5892 or 1-508-962-1031 with information on an Armenian-Armenian High School 2016 graduate for an invitation to be honored at Recognition Night.

**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.

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

**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 22 — Armenian Friends of America presents Hye Kef 5,** a 5-hour dance, 7 p.m. to midnight with buffet; Andover Windham, 123 Old River Road, featuring musicians Onnik and Ara Dinkjian, Johnny Berberian, Mal Barsamian, Jason Naroian and Paul Mooradian, with proceeds benefiting area churches. Advance tickets before Sept. 1 @ \$55, call either John Arzigan, (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

**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 or Joyce Bagdasarian at 401-434-4467.

## The Magic of Music

MUSIC, from page 12

between an actively responding audience and the community. We come together as musicians and as concerned citizens and use the technical mastery we have to address a large problem in our community. We address our whole context and use what we know to make the world a better place.

At New England Conservatory, our students carry on the artistic and service-oriented principles embodied in Music for Food by visiting food pantry sites with their instruments, talking with and playing for the

clients, and sharing in the joy of music. It empowers musicians to see the immediate impact music can have on people's lives, and it brings some of the artistic and cultural nourishment we all need to those our society has failed. Music gives power to life! And Music for Food is one way to return dreams and courage to the lives of those who have lost it.

## About Kim Kashkashian

A staunch proponent of contemporary music, Kashkashian has developed creative relationships with György Kurtág, Krzysztof Penderecki, Alfred Schnittke, Giya Kancheli and Arvo Pärt and premiered commissioned works by Peter Eötvös, Betty Olivero, Ken Ueno, Thomas Larcher, Lera Auerbach and Tigran

Mansurian. She has ongoing duo partnerships with pianist Robert Levin, percussionist Robyn Schulkowsky, and the trio Tre Voce.

As soloist, Kashkashian has appeared with the orchestras of Berlin, London, Vienna, Milan, New York and Cleveland in collaboration with Eschenbach, Mehta, Welser-Moest, Kocsis, Dennis Russel Davies Blomstedt Robertson and Holliger. Recital appearances include the great halls of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Frankfurt, Berlin, Paris, Athens and Tokyo. Her association with the prestigious ECM label since 1985 has resulted in a rich discography which includes the complete sonatas of Hindemith and Brahms, an album of Argentinian songs, the concertos of Schnittke, Bartók, Penderecki and Kurtág, as

well as the Bach viola da gamba sonatas, recorded with Keith Jarrett. Kashkashian is a founding member of Music for Food, an initiative by musicians to fight hunger in their home communities. To learn more, visit [musicforfoodboston.org](http://musicforfoodboston.org).

Winner of the 2013 Grammy Award for Best Classical Instrumental Solo Album for her recording "Kurtág/Ligeti Music for Viola," Kim Kashkashian is recognized internationally as a unique voice on the viola. In 2014, Kashkashian was awarded the George Peabody Medal for outstanding contributions to music in America, as well as the prestigious Golden Bow award of Switzerland. She lives in Boston, where she coaches chamber music and viola at New England Conservatory.



## COMMENTARY

# Archbishop Atesian Serving the Wrong Master

By Edmond Y. Azadian

On June 2, the German Bundestag passed the Armenian Genocide resolution, which was long in the making. The passage of the bill was very dramatic, given the tense relations between Germany and Turkey. The German parliament not only came to recognize a historic truth, but also acknowledged Germany's role in perpetrating the Genocide.

Additionally, it sent a powerful message to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that he cannot bully Europe with impunity.

Thus, one of the major forces in Europe acknowledged the truth about the Armenian Genocide, paving the way for others to follow.

Given the political intensity of the moment, the Bundestag vote received extensive coverage around the world. It received a lot of ink in the *New York Times* editorial columns and in many major news sources, which seldom give proper attention to the murder of one and a half million Armenians.

Understandably, Armenians around the world were jubilant as official Turkey was gnashing its teeth. Since Erdogan's options are limited, Turkey's response has been measured thus far. Instead of escalating the confrontation with a powerful country like Germany, Erdogan has turned his rancor toward the Armenian citizens who work in Turkey to support their families back home. He has been threatening to deport them, like before him threatened another Prime Minister, Tansu Ciller. Those migrant workers have been living in Turkey as political pawns.

As Armenians were celebrating the German vote and political courage with the rest of the civilized world, one dissenting and jarring voice was heard from Istanbul, that of Archbishop Aram Atesian, who has hijacked the patriarchal throne through chicanery and who has been acting as his "master's voice" in the Armenian community.

Atesian is not the patriarch. He is the vicar general, since the elected patriarch, Archbishop Mutafian, is incapacitated as a result of an incurable disease.

Atesian has manipulated the Council of Clergy, whose members depend on him for their living, and has appointed himself vicar general, a position which is serving the political agenda of the Turkish state, while providing handsome dividends to Atesian. Any scoundrel in that position would sell his soul and his community to extend his tenure in that illegal office.

Thus Atesian sent a letter to President

Erdogan stating that "the decision that the Bundestag took about the events happening during the tragic times of World War I caused regret in our nation [or community]. As the Turkish Armenian community, we submit our regret to your dignified office as an expression of our heartfelt and sincere feelings."

Never mind that the Armenian community in Turkey was elated by the German vote, Atesian continues in his ill-begotten mis- sive: "As we stated on a number of occasions, using this tragedy that traumatized the Armenian nation in international politics causes sorrow and pain. This resolution and similar resolutions hit us hard. Unfortunately, the historical pain of the Armenian nation is considered a tool for accusing and punishing the Turkish state and nation."

Only a slave-minded person would stoop so low as to write this humiliating letter, when even courageous Turks abroad have stood up to applaud the Bundestag resolution.

Eleven members of the German parliament who are of Turkish descent voted for the resolution, which had been spearheaded by Green Party leader Cem Ozdemir, putting their lives in harm's way for their beliefs.

Incidentally, when the residents of Turkey are well and truly free and have access to real history, as opposed to the self-aggrandizing ersatz stories manufactured by the states, they will stand for recognition of the truth as these eleven emancipated Turks have demonstrated. That was exactly what Hrant Dink was betting on: Turkey's democratization to promote the recognition of the Genocide. But with Erdogan leading his nation back to the dark ages, that possibility seems further than it has for a long time.

There was an instant uproar against Atesian's letter in the

Turkish- Armenian community as well as around the world. There were even voices raised in Armenia's parliament. Prosperous Armenia Party leader Naira Zohrabyan stated: "This is state and national treason by a high-ranking priest with no precedent in the history of Armenia." And then she called to urge the Catholicos of All Armenians in Echmiadzin to defrock Atesian.

But it takes more courage to raise a voice against such statements in Turkey itself. One voice was loud – that of *Agos* weekly. In a column, they responded to Atesian's letter. Included in the comment was: "The Armenian Genocide, as a crime against humanity, is a concern for all humanity. ... Indeed, the oppression that led you to write this letter causes sorrow and pain. Also, the sub- and supra-identities of the Armenian community in Turkey are not harmed by this resolution, but by your words. ... "God bestow upon you common sense, intelligence and comprehension."

At the conclusion of the *Agos* statement, it said, "We also pray to God to give you a dignified attitude, which you obviously lack, since you said that 'you pray to God to make the state dignitaries who work for the good of the people, succeed in their services at a time when tens of people are being killed every day in a civil war.'"

Indeed, the reference is to the slaughter that the Erdogan government has been carrying out in Kurdish regions, for which the Armenian cleric is wishing him "success."

To add insult to injury, opposition leader Devlet Bahceli has pitched in the conversation. The head of the National Movement Party (MHP), which was founded by Ataturk, stated during a discussion among a group of parliamentarians: "The deportation decision in 1915 was absolutely correct. It should be done again if the circumstances were the same."

Before Bahceli, a former defense minister, had asked in Brussels: "Would we have the same territory of present-day Turkey had we not deported Greeks and Armenians?"

Official Turkey remains unrepentant as well as bent on committing genocide again, should the opportunity arise. Europe has

been and should be vigilant to keep the leadership of the country out of Europe, as the leaders continue to consider genocide a viable option in dealing with problems. Today's war against the Kurdish people illustrates that mindset.

When Turkish leaders do not hide their hostile intentions toward a minority, they need people like Atesian to perform their dirty work in the Armenian community. He has been placed on the patriarchal throne

to damage the Armenian community interests, while enhancing his own bank account.

Through an international outcry, the Aghtamar Church in Van was restored as a museum and once a year, was the site of an Armenian liturgy. No longer. The churches in Diyarbakir and other area that were opened, enticing hidden Armenians to return to their roots, have been either taken back again or remain unused. Atesian refuses to send clergy to those churches to baptize children and to marry couples. He has ignored appeals from those who want to reclaim their Armenian heritage and has forced them to join the Assyrian churches. He has disbanded the committee at the patriarchate tasked with the pursuit of confiscated community properties. Quite the contrary, he announced not too long ago that the patriarchate cannot manage any more properties if the government were to release them. That is just what Erdogan wants to hear.

Recently, there was an uproar in the Istanbul Armenian community, when it was learned that Atesian has acquired a luxurious home worth \$550,000 in the Sisli section of the city. He has found that very normal "compared to the size of the estates of other clergy."

There is also a valuable community property in Baikoz, whose ownership and status is known only to Atesian. The community has been asking questions about it, to no avail.

When Armenian families return to Turkey to claim their inherited properties, Atesian charges a commission to complete the paperwork at the patriarchate and he finds that also to be par for the course as well.

see ATESIAN, page 18



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## COMMENTARY

# If a US Court Acknowledges the Armenian Genocide, the Government Must Follow Suit

By Robert Fisk

Incirlik is America's forward air base in Turkey, take-off point for the US air battle against Isis. But in less than two months, a group of Armenians, all descendants of the 1915 genocide of one-and-a-half-million Christians massacred by Ottoman Turkey, will claim in a US court that the land on which America's jets take off to bomb Syrian and Iraqi targets belongs to them, and must be returned to their families.

As an increasing number of European nations acknowledge the most appalling crime against humanity of the First World War as a genocide, which the US Government still refuses to accept for fear of upsetting Turkey, the ghosts of the dead, it seems, are returning to haunt even America's latest Middle East war.

This is no arcane historical legal argument but a potentially deeply embarrassing political case, in which three named Armenians who are full US citizens will, in a California court, assert their rights to land under and around Incirlik, seven miles from Adana, where around 1,500 members of the 39th US Air Base Wing are based in Nato's southern command.

The Pentagon's own war-speak propaganda describes how Incirlik is "a strategic location... close to many of the world's trouble spots", where US personnel help "protect US and Nato interests in the southern region by providing a responsive [sic] staging and operation air base, ready to project integrated, forward-based air power" with "excellent facilities."

Unfortunately for the Americans, in that other war a century ago, the very lands below these "excellent facilities" – and their two runways and aircraft shelters – belonged to the doomed Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. They included farms, houses and a village church and school, summer homes to the

Armenian Christians who lived in the nearby city of Adana and grew fig tree plantations at Incirlik, whose very name in Turkish means the place of figs.

Almost all these Armenians were exterminated in the Genocide by the Ottoman Turkish Government, not long after the Allied landings at Gallipoli, victims of the first industrial holocaust of the 20th century. They were slaughtered with knives and thrown into mass graves, shot down by militia firing squads, tied together and hurled into rivers, their women gang-raped and their children burned alive, hundreds of thousands dying on death marches into what is now northern Syria.

Their suffering is now acknowledged as a genocide by more than 20 nations, including Russia, France and now Germany. The US, fearful of losing the Incirlik air base and other military facilities by angering Turkey, is one of the few advanced Western nations that still refuses to acknowledge the Genocide – itself accepted as a historical fact by hundreds of international and even Turkish historians, but sadly not by the Turkish Government, which provided the Nazis with the inspiration for the Jewish Holocaust of the Second World War.

The August hearing at the 9th Circuit Court of California will involve three named Armenian descendants of genocide victims and survivors – Alex Bakalian, Anais Haroutounian and Rita Mahdessian – who are formally asking for the return of 122 acres of land in and around the Incirlik air base.

Another 13 Armenians may also be added to the complaint, which would then cover the entire territory of the air base whose "sparsely populated terrain and uncongested airspace," to use the Pentagon's words, is now home to the 728th US Air Mobility Squadron.

Their transport aircraft carry 70 per cent of all cargo entering Afghanistan, where American troops continue training missions in their war against the Taliban.

The base is also home to Turkish fighter squadrons in their ferocious bombing campaign against Kurdish rebels. It provides housing for at least 2,000 Turkish and US service family members. Thus the American hospital, dental clinic, chapel and Starbucks and Pizza Hut outlets on the base have been erected – unknown, no doubt, to almost all the Americans who work there – on the wreckage of one of the 20th century's most terrible war crimes, land for which the US Government has paid millions of dollars in rent since the 1950s.

The original lawsuit, referred to in court as Bakalian versus the Republic of Turkey, was filed in December 2010 in the Central District Court of California by the three named descendants of Armenian victims who claimed that the defendants confiscated and then profited from land at Incirlik illegally seized during the genocide.

The case was officially brought against the Turkish Government-owned Central Bank of Turkey and TC Ziraat Bankasi, a state-owned agricultural bank. The Turkish state never appeared before the court, although the Armenians' lawyers say they were "validly served with the complaint."

At first, the two banks asserted "sovereign immunity" and asked the court to dismiss the lawsuit. In the First World War, the Ottomans appointed their national banks as holders of abandoned Armenian property – holders, of course, who for the most part had already been murdered.

But according to independent Armenian-American researcher Missak Kelechian, who has investigated the history of the Armenian-owned land and is helping Vartkes Yeghiayan and Kathryn Boyd, lawyers representing the three plaintiffs – he has already researched the deaths of Armenian orphans in Turkish hands in Beirut during the First World War – the case could force American courts to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide in law.

For, in March 2013, the district court determined that the banks could be held to answer for the expropriation of property of Ottoman and Turkish nationals when this action was associated with human rights abuses, including genocide.

"Following long-established rules of immunity recognized by all nations, US law abrogates the immunity from legal action in US courts traditionally afforded to foreign states in a few limited and specific situations," Yeghiayan says.

"The district court found that the Foreign Service Immunities Act denies immunity to the Turkish banks in this case because the banks are doing business in the United States and therefore the lawsuit falls within one of the sovereign immunity exceptions. But the district court ruled that the case must still be dismissed because it involves a political question."

Bakalian, Haroutounian and Mahdessian, however, appealed to the 9th Circuit Court of California and the case was transferred from the district court; the next hearing is scheduled for August this year.

Lawyers for the three Armenians have seized on US Secretary of State John Kerry's recent remarks – that the acts committed by Isis against Christians, Yazidis and Shi'ite groups constituted genocide, which "must [still] be brought to light by an independent investigation and through formal legal determination made by a competent court or tribunal". They say their three clients have always believed their case should be judged on its legal, not political, merits.

There can be little doubt, however, that this far distant and historically based case contains an explosive political message: if the Armenian genocide is acknowledged by a US law court, it can only be a matter of time before the government in Washington is forced to use the very same word for the mass killings of 1915.

(Robert Fisk is the Middle East correspondent for the *Independent* newspaper in the UK.)

## Turkish Human Rights Group Deplores Attacks by Turkey Against German People

On June 8, 2016, The Committee Against Racism and Discrimination of the Human Rights Association (HRA) (Istanbul Branch) released a formal letter to the German Federal Republic apologizing for the written and verbal attacks by Turkish authorities after the German Parliamentary decision that recognized the Armenian Genocide on June 2, 2016.

The Human Rights Association (HRA) is a non-governmental and independent voluntary organization. Founded by 98 human rights activists in 1986, the Association today has 28 branches, 4 representation offices, and 10,938 members. The oldest and largest human rights association in Turkey, the HRA's sole and explicit objective is to work for human rights and freedoms.

The Zoryan Institute would like to thank the HRA of Istanbul for taking this courageous stance against racism and human rights abuses, and for their support of the German resolution to recognize the Armenian tragedy of 1915 as "genocide".

Please see below the letter that was addressed to the Consulate General of the German Federal Republic:

8 June 2016

Dear Dr. Georg Birgelen, Consul General of Germany,

As the Human Rights Association, Istanbul Branch, Committee Against Racism and Discrimination, we address you this letter to denounce and express shame for the extremely racist verbal and written attacks by the Turkish authorities, the media, and various nationalist elements of society, against Germany and the German people, following the German

Parliamentary decision that recognizes the Armenian Genocide.

As human rights defenders and activists against racism, we appreciate the fact that the German state has condemned the Holocaust by all means, created places for Holocaust memorialization in all areas of life, variously memorialized the crimes of the Nazi regime, established an educational system that insists on historical truth rather than denialist history, and made these permanent as state policy. On December 7, 1970, German Chancellor Willi Brandt knelt before the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial and apologized to the Jewish people, thereby vividly demonstrating to the world what states must do with regard to crimes against humanity. Without a doubt, Germany was able to arrive at this point as a result of the endless efforts of human rights defenders, thinkers and writers, politicians, and all influential individuals of the public sphere. For we see every single day how difficult it is both for the state and for society to rid themselves of all kinds of racism. It is moreover impossible for a crime against humanity such as genocide to be atoned for, restituted, or redressed; nevertheless, all steps in this direction are conditions of being a society, and being human.

A natural, if belated, consequence of this state policy, the German Parliamentary decision of 2 June 2016 is exemplary in showing the approach that the world must take with regard to crimes against humanity committed by states, in that in its decision to "remember and commemorate the genocide against Armenians and other Christians in the period 1915-16," it has not only recognized the premeditated, systematic genocide perpetrated in Anatolia and Asia Minor, but also clearly stated that Germany was also responsible.

Opposed to this exemplary stance is the attitude in Turkey, which condones the crime. The insults and discourses of racial hatred directed toward Germany, German MPs, and the German people, as well as the actions in which such discourses were used, constitute crimes in the countries that enforce the standards of international law. Even more extreme racist insults and threats against German MPs of Turkish origin lay bare the dire situation in Turkey in terms of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

As human rights defenders in Turkey, we see these attacks by state authorities, the media, and nationalists as evidence that these crimes against humanity can always recur in this coun-

try. We believe that these discourses and actions are attacks on the will of elected representatives, democracy, human rights, and universal law, not only in Germany but in all countries who have taken or will take a stance against the official view in Turkey.

We thus salute the German Parliament on the occasion of its decision and announce to the public opinion in your country that we deem the hatred and hostility against Germany and the German people to be hostility toward democracy and human rights.

Yours sincerely,

Human Rights Association, Istanbul Branch  
Committee Against Racism and Discrimination

### Archbishop Atesian Serving the Wrong Master

ATESIAN, from page 17

Ever since Patriarch Mutafian was incapacitated, the community has been appealing to the government to allow the election of either a co-adjutor patriarch or a new patriarch. Atesian, very cognizant of his unpopularity, has been blocking all such moves. And for the Turkish government, it is quite handy to have a docile agent in place as long as possible.

A few high-ranking members of clergy in Armenia have been asked to comment on Atesian's letter to Erdgoan and they have been very lenient, by stating that he is wearing a "burning straightjacket" and that he may have been forced to commit such treachery.

This is the time for all high-ranking members of the clergy to rise and make their voices heard. Additionally, Atesian should not be accorded any courtesy entitled to a patriarch when he visits other Armenian communities, because he is not patriarch and has hijacked that position to serve the Turkish state at the expense of his people. Silence in view of this man's catastrophic actions can be viewed only as complicity.

The voice of Turkish Armenians is understandably muted, although courageous voice like those of Agos express the genuine sentiments of the community.

If there is no unanimity in condemning such reckless statements, he will continue abusing the patriarchal throne, to the pleasure of Erdogan and his ilk, on whose behalf, he serves himself and harms his constituency.



## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Acting Armenian Patriarch of Turkey: Shameful Tool of Turkish Propaganda

Archbishop Aram Ateshyan, vicar-general of the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey, sent a highly controversial letter last week to President Recep Erdogan, criticizing the German Parliament's decision to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

The acting patriarch's letter created a major controversy among Armenians worldwide, including the Armenian community of Turkey. Some called for his resignation; others, including a member of the Armenian Parliament, demanded that he be defrocked!

While successive Turkish governments have attempted to pressure Archbishop Ateshyan's predecessors to serve as propaganda tool for Ankara, no previous patriarch has written such an offensive letter regarding the Armenian Genocide.

It is not clear whether the acting patriarch wrote last week's letter on his own initiative or it was drafted for him by Turkish officials. Those who personally know Archbishop Ateshyan insist that the letter could not have been written by him because he is not too proficient in the Turkish language. Whatever the case, he did sign and disseminate the letter to

the media, which was published by several Turkish newspapers.

Regrettably, this is not the first time that the acting patriarch has displayed such a bootlicking attitude vis-à-vis the Turkish authorities, intending to secure the support of the government for his hoped for election as patriarch. During a public meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Istanbul last year, Archbishop Ateshyan dared to insult her for criticizing President Erdogan's violations of human rights!

Describing the Armenian Genocide merely as "events that happened during the tragic times of World War I," Archbishop Ateshyan stated in his letter that the Armenian community of Turkey shared the Turkish nation's regret for the German Bundestag's decision. The acting patriarch, speaking on behalf of the Armenian community of Turkey, claimed that the German parliament "has no right" to pronounce judgment "on behalf of the entire German nation." He further added: "it is also questionable to what extent this decision expresses the feelings of German citizens." It is nonsensical for Archbishop Ateshyan to insist that the parliament does not speak for the German people, since it adopted the resolution on the Armenian Genocide with a near unanimous vote!

Also, the acting patriarch blamed the German parliament for "sidestepping the negative role of the Third Reich in a few sentences and pointing to the Ottoman Empire as the sole perpetrator." It is shocking that Archbishop Ateshyan is covering up Turkish denials of the Armenian Genocide and belittling Germany's honest admission of complicity!

Those who try to justify the acting patriarch's anti-Armenian statements, by claiming that one has to live in Turkey to fully appreciate the oppressive nature of Erdogan's regime, should know that many Armenians in Turkey are out-

raged by Archbishop Ateshyan's letter. They wrote dozens of messages on his Facebook page, expressing their disagreement.

The harshest criticism of the acting patriarch came from the editor of Agos, an Armenian newspaper published in Istanbul: "We read your letter ... with sorrow, anger and shame.... Your presentation of the systematic annihilation, by state decision, of its own citizens living on its own lands, using the government's description as 'events that happened during the tragic times of World War I,' is an affront to the ancestors, victims, and survivors in the eyes of the society to which you also belong."

Contrary to the acting patriarch's claim that Armenians are treated as equals with Turks, Agos asserted that "Armenians have been subjected to discrimination, fascism and public threats." The newspaper also countered Archbishop Ateshyan's statement that the German parliament's decision had caused "sorrow and pain," by affirming: "The pressure that forced you to pen this letter is a source of pain and sorrow for us.... The Armenian community's identity is harmed by your words, not as you say, by the Bundestag's decision."

Agos also told the acting patriarch that his letter represented "a specific statement of denialism against your own people. We will shortly see who will 'enthusiastically welcome' your words.... We pray that God bestows upon you good sense, sound judgment and thoughtfulness."

In order not to cause further damage to his people and their sacred cause, I humbly advise Archbishop Ateshyan to refrain from any future political and propagandistic statements. Otherwise, he should seriously consider resigning from his post, since the Armenians of Turkey will never accept him as their chosen patriarch, even if Erdogan supports his election!

## Azeri War Crimes against Nagorno-Karabagh Armenians But Who Really Cares?

By Joachim Hagopian

Compelling evidence is mounting daily of egregious war crimes committed by Azerbaijan's military in the Republic of Nagorno-Karabagh (NK). Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev launched an unprovoked large scale military offensive during the early morning hours of April 2nd attempting to break through the Nagorno-Karabagh Defense Army's contact line in attacks coming from three separate directions using mortars, rocket launchers, tanks, armored personnel carriers, surveillance and kamikaze drones and helicopters. Heavy Azeri shelling of Armenian residential areas destroyed civilian homes in several villages in both the Republic of Nagorno-Karabagh as well as the Republic of Armenia. In NK's Martuni region a 12-year old boy was killed attending school and two other children were seriously injured. Soon after the volleys of mortar fire, the Azerbaijani military overran Armenian villages in the Martakert area and broke into homes in the village of Talish where many homes were damaged or destroyed. Azeri soldiers murdered at point blank gunshot range an elderly husband and wife including their 92-year old family relative, ultimately cutting the married couple's ears off that strongly suggest the presence of Islamic State terrorists. 3000 known Azeris joined ISIS and a number of them are believed to have rushed from the Syrian battlefields returning home to fight on the fresh Nagorno-Karabagh warfront.

An Armenian Yezidi soldier was also beheaded, the all too familiar brutality that's become an Islamic State trademark in its ethnic cleansing of thousands of Yezidi Christians in Iraq. The Yezidi soldier's parents said that when their son's body was returned, they buried him not knowing he had been beheaded. They only learned of his cruel fate after the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) arranged a plan for each side to exchange corpses of dead soldiers that returned their son's severed head. The coffin had to be dug up to bury their son's head with his body on April 9.

Moreover, the retrieved corpses of 18 Armenian soldiers showed signs that they had been mutilated and tortured. After the major fighting broke out from April 2-7, the ICRC acted as mediator for deceased soldiers to be recovered. Officials from the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic's State Commission on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons observed that all 18 bodies of the Armenian soldiers had

been badly mutilated and tortured and issued the following statement:

Those acts, being a flagrant manifestation of inhumanity, run counter to the laws and customs of war and are in grave violation of the international humanitarian law, in particular, the Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field (1949), Geneva Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (1949) and the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I).

The NKR Prosecutor General's Office has charged Azerbaijan with seven criminal cases in violation of international law: "using prohibited methods and means of warfare, targeting of civilians, shelling of populated areas motivated by national, racial or religious hatred or religious fanaticism."

The Yezidi Armenian soldier apparently wasn't the only Armenian in uniform who was decapitated. Chairman of the Foundation Against Violation of the Law Michael Aramyan disclosed that at least two other Armenian soldiers, one from Yerevan and another from Artsakh, "have been subjected to torture and then beheaded." Murder, ill-treatment, torture, humiliation all constitute violations of the Criminal Code.

On April 11 the Armenian Ministry of Defense (MoD) confirmed the Red Cross mediated bodies to be exchanged and that authorities in both Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh are collecting and compiling overwhelming evidence of Azerbaijan's humanitarian crimes of international law. Earlier this week the UN Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs met in Yerevan with Armenia's Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian who also met on Wednesday with OSCE ambassadors stating:

With its aggressive actions Azerbaijan actually tried to refuse from its international commitments of solving the issue in a peaceful way, thus grossly violating the basic principles of international law, the decisions and declarations of a number of OSCE summits and Ministerial Councils, obviously ignoring the statements on the heads of OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing countries on the settlement of the Karabagh issue.

James Warlick, the US co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group had this to say at an April 9 press conference: "We are deeply distressed by our reports of human rights violations. We have seen the photos, we have heard the reports... we are deeply troubled, deeply concerned by

any human rights violations."

Meanwhile every day since the Russian-brokered ceasefire on April 5 repeated violations by Azeri forces are tallied, inflicting more injury and death. As a typical example, on the overnight of April 11-12, both rifle and heavy artillery fire from the Azeri army contact line was observed.

In the meantime as the facts emerge pointing to a premeditated Azeri military offensive with US Empire approval, a diversionary game is devised that desperates, among the world's most corrupt dictators Ilham Aliyev uses to his advantage to diffuse his mounting troubles and unrest at home. A typical wag the dog politician trick to take pressure off by playing the jingoistic game of targeting a foreign enemy for war to manipulatively unite and distract Azeris from their slumping oil economy driving high domestic unemployment.

Part of this devious strategy involves Turkish and Azeri public displays calling for unity amongst all Islamic groups and nations in support of Azerbaijan's "holy war" against NK Armenians "till the end of time," thus fomenting an anti-Armenian crusade spilling over into public protests by Muslims in Paris and Stockholm. Turkish and Azeri nationals chanted "death to Armenians" inspired by a hate filled speech delivered by a prominent Turkish leader in Sweden. Of course there's nothing new in hatred of Armenians but its public expression currently being acted out to fuel the thinly veiled hints from Turkish leadership promoting a religious war against Christian Armenians neatly timed with the Armenian genocide's 101st anniversary underscores a surging information propaganda war. Armenia's Deputy Foreign Minister Savarsh Kocharyan astutely sees what Turkey et al's up to: "Foreign Minister of Turkey in his speech at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation speculated on the Islamic solidarity and made a dangerous attempt to artificially present the Azerbaijani military operations against self-determined Nagorno-Karabagh as a religious conflict."

Luxemburg EU member Frank Engel also recognizes Azerbaijan as the chief villain in the Azeri-Armenian conflict: The only solution is the recognition of the independence of the Nagorno-Karabagh, because today Azerbaijan is the aggressor, and it was the aggressor 24 years ago, and continued to violate the ceasefire on a smaller scale, and Baku glorifies a convicted killer, Ramil Safarov and believes that all Armenians in the region must disappear.

Safarov was the Azeri soldier who in 2004

took an axe and hacked up an Armenian officer who was asleep while both were participating in a NATO "Partners for Peace" program in Hungary. After a short prison spell in Hungary, Aliyev welcomed the axe murderer home as a war hero with a promotion and back pay.

As its closest CSTO ally in the South Caucasus, and the Russian Federation's weakest link in the southern part of the nation, Solovyov maintains that Russia is ill advised to lose Armenia as its most loyal friend in the region.

Interestingly enough, we don't discuss the question of who started it. Why don't we want to see the broadcasts about beheaded Armenian soldiers, about capture and torture of people? I realize that we must consider the interests of both sides, but does it mean that we're no longer interested in the truth? Turkey publicly declared it would support Azerbaijan; did we issue a similar statement with regard to our ally? Let us remember that Azerbaijan fired at Tavush Province of Armenia. That is the territory of Armenia and the CSTO kept silent about that fact.

Putin apparently became incensed upon learning that a wave of Armenians were reacting to Azerbaijan's attacking Nagorno-Karabagh by blaming Russia for arming 85 percent of the enemy's arsenal used to kill Armenians. The Zhoghovurd daily made the claim that wealthy Armenians in the Moscow community were warned against rushing to financially aid their fellow Armenians in Nagorno-Karabagh and as a result have remained passively silent. This underscores Solovyov's criticism above of his own government all the more bold and relevant.

One final development after the Armenians this last week have staked their claims based on undisputable evidence of war crime atrocities committed by the Azerbaijani military, the Baku government is predictably countering such charges with their own accusations that the NKR troops have also tortured fallen Azeri soldiers.

Similar to whitewashed Western Empire lies used to repeatedly justify its reprehensible aggressions around the globe, the Azeris are learning from their master how to pretend they are the real "good guys" while perpetrating their own crimes against humanity.

(Joachim Hagopian is a West Point graduate and former US Army officer. He is a regular contributor to Global Research, Sott.net and LewRockwell.com. This column has been shortened for space purposes.)



# President Obama's Mule and The Second Amendment

GUNS, from page 1

The Second Amendment was adopted when the US was still a frontier country and the Westward Expansion was in full swing. Newcomers to the land were urged to move West to claim land and found townships, costing the lives of many Native Americans in the process. Even 85 years after the adoption of the Second Amendment, US Cavalry Commander John Armstrong Custer was fighting Sioux tribes at Little Bighorn where he was killed in 1876.

During the presidential debates in 2012, when Republican candidate Mitt Romney criticized Democrats for eliminating certain types of weaponry from the US forces, President Barack Obama retorted, "We no longer use any mules in the armed forces."

The Second Amendment is the mule of US laws. It has been reinterpreted, refined and debated intensely. But it is still alive in the 21st century.

Here it would be too presumptuous to bring a legal argument in favor of its abrogation. But as citizens whose lives are affected by it, we can argue with our common sense. It is well said that the law is the last refuge of the scoundrel.

To many gun lovers, the Second Amendment is more a religious stance than a law – a sacred right enshrined in our tenets of liberty.

It is also a sacred cow for the gun lobby and the National Rifle Association (NRA), which spend millions to protect the amendment, making it a lucrative entitlement for arms merchants.

Politicians deal with the issue with kid gloves in order not to upset the powerful gun lobby.

When the Brady Bill was brought to the US Congress in 1993, the gun lobby fought it tooth and nail. The bill got nowhere near prohibiting guns; instead it only mandated federal background checks on firearms purchasers in the US, and imposed a five-day waiting period on gun purchases until the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) was implemented in 1998.

Incidentally, Sen. Bernie Sanders voted against the bill, betraying an inconsistency in his socialist credentials.

What, in fact, the gun lobby meant, was that any person out of a mental asylum must be able to acquire guns. This means that my life and my safety are dependent on the sanity of my armed neighbors. I have no other protection. Our entire society is hostage to the dark motives of lunatics.

The defense of the Second Amendment and consequently the right to own arms should not be politicized as the life of ordinary citizens is affected by it. Nor should it be enshrined in Republican dogma, since

Republicans are also vulnerable to assault by arms. The Brady Bill was named for James Brady, an aide to President Ronald Reagan, who was seriously injured during an assassination attempt on the president in 1981.

Every time a mass murder takes place in the US, gun prices soar sky high. Why? Because the gun lobby uses scare tactics suggesting that the government can adopt bills to restrict gun sales, or President Obama may issue an executive order to limit gun use and confiscate existing guns.

Like any professional salesman, the NRA has catchy slogans to promote its business. One of the slogans is: "Only a good person with a gun can stop a bad person with a gun."

The adage is false, because there is the element of surprise. Any criminal with a gun has the added element of surprise going for him or her.

To disprove the slogan, it is worth finding statistics on how many "good persons" have been successful in self-defense, in that kind of tense situation. Most probably, very few.

The other slogan which is equally false is: "Guns don't kill people; people kill people."

But the availability and abundance of guns empower potential murderers to dominate their victims quickly.

Of course, there is also the argument that if someone is determined to kill a person, he

or she can use any kind of weapon. That may be true but still, the presence of a gun increases the odds for committing a crime.

The rights to gun ownership and freedom of speech have their limitations. The French philosopher Voltaire said, "I will defend your right to free speech to death, but your freedom stops where my nose begins." The freedom to own guns causes nose bleeds for the great majority, yet its defenders persist in their zeal to defend their dangerous game.

The film "Bowling for Columbine" by Michael Moore is an outstanding indictment of the gun lobby. Many statistical data are provided in the documentary and the US is compared to many other countries such as Canada, where gun control is strict, and fewer people fall victim to gun crimes.

The ordinary citizen has the right to argue that if the government has allowed loopholes in the law for me to buy a gun for self-defense, then that government, which taxes my income to the last penny, has abandoned its obligation to protect me. Either I should be entitled to a refund or the government has to allow loopholes in other services, such as in foreign policy. Like the issue of self-defense, the citizen must conduct his or her own foreign policy individually or ask the government not to send taxpayer money and arms to Turkey, to be used for killing Kurds.

All these arguments may look absurd but they are not as absurd as the implication of the Second Amendment.

Gun lobby activists ignore the latter part of the amendment. The thrust of the Second Amendment entitles the individual to bear arms "in a well-regulated militia." The requirement thus intends the citizen to be armed to defend the republic, something they do not have to do anymore since the country already has an army. The gift of life is precious and irreplaceable; guns are replaceable and disposable.

To bring the US up to the standards of Canada or Scandinavian countries, the entire population of the country needs to be disarmed. That is a challenge not only to a militia but also to the entire US armed forces.

Otherwise, we have to wait for the next Orlando, San Bernardino or Columbine.

The gun laws are obsolete as is the use of mules in the US army.

## Bill mandating Holocaust, Genocide instruction Advances in R.I. Senate

MANDATE, from page 1

our children understand the long-term impact of genocides and the Holocaust, so we don't repeat that history."

Sen. Donna M. Nesselbush (D-Pawtucket, North Providence) said her district was recently hit by anti-Semitism: a spray-painted swastika was found outside an Orthodox synagogue in Pawtucket.

"There is no room for that kind of hatred in our communities," Nesselbush said before the vote, "and we will do everything, in addition to this bill, to root it out of our communities."

In addition, the full Senate last week approved a bill that directs school superintendents to annually review data on discipline to determine if a disproportionate number of students, based on their color, ethnicity or disability, are being punished.

The bill states: "Each student, staff member, teacher, and administrator has a right to attend and/or work at a school which is safe and secure, and which is conducive to learning, and which is free from the threat, actual or implied, of physical harm by a disruptive student."

Administrators are to report the findings, if there are any to share, and correct the unequal actions if any are found.

The bills require approval from both chambers and then action by Governor Gina Raimondo before they become law.

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