

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

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## Members of Congress Request Assistance for Armenia, Karabagh

WASHINGTON – This week, 33 Members of Congress sent a letter to the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Chairwoman Kay Granger (R-TX) and Ranking Member Nita Lowey (D-NY) in support of continued US assistance in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 budget for the Republics of Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh, the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of Georgia, and at-risk minorities in the Middle East, reports the Armenian Assembly of America.

“Continued US support in the region is critically important,” the letter read.

Members of Congress requested at least \$5 million for humanitarian and development programs in Nagorno Karabagh, appropriating no less than \$40 million in overall economic aid (including Economic Support Fund, International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement, and Global Health Programs) for Armenia, suspending all military aid to Azerbaijan, allocating at least 10 percent of aid given to Georgia towards funding sustainable job-creation programs in Samtskhe-Javakheti, enhancing Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, and reinstating Karabagh in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group peace process as a full negotiating partner.

“The Assembly applauds the initiative supported by over 30 Members of Congress and their efforts to ensure the well-being of Armenia and Artsakh. I look forward to working with Congressional

see ASSISTANCE, page 16

## Armenian President Sargisian To Visit Boston March 28-31

By **Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN – President of the Republic of Armenia Serge Sargisian is making an official visit to Boston with several cabinet ministers and other Armenian officials from March 28 to 31. Aside from participating in events at Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and Tufts University, he will be visiting several Armenian institutions. Two ceremonial events, at the Massachusetts State House and at the Armenian Heritage Park, are completely open to the public and free.

The visit is being coordinated by the Massachusetts Armenian Centennial Committee. The three co-chairmen remain Anthony Barsamian, James M. Kalustian and Ara Nazarian.

Kalustian declared, “It is a great honor for our community to have the president come and visit. This is the oldest Armenian community in America, and one of the best organized and integrated.” He explained that the president was originally scheduled to come to the opening of the Armenian Heritage park some four years ago, but was unable to do so due to

see VISIT, page 16



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Armenia Condemns Terrorism in any Form

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – President Serge Sargisian sent a condolence letter to Prime Minister Charles Michel of Belgium on March 22, after with the explosions in the Brussels airport and subway, which claimed the lives of dozens of innocents.

“At this difficult time, I express my condolences and support to you, the friendly people of Belgium and the victims’ families and wish courage and patience. Armenia strongly condemns terrorism in any form and is committed to bringing its contribution to the international fight against this evil.”

Similarly, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia Galust Sahakyan sent a condolence letter to President of the Belgian Senate Christine Defraigne and Presidents of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives Siegfried Bracke.

“I am deeply shocked by the horrible terror acts that occurred in Brussels. We harshly condemn these terrible acts that claimed lives of numerous people. I think the civilized society must struggle against this evil with consolidated efforts prohibiting the spread of intolerance and extremism. I express our condolence and solidarity to the relatives of the victims on behalf of me and the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, wishing them patience and fortitude, and speedy recovery to the injured.”

### Archdiocese of Boston To Hold its First-Ever Armenian Genocide Commemoration

BOSTON – Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley said last week that the Archdiocese of Boston will hold its first commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, the latest Catholic Church effort to acknowledge the events that killed 1.5 million a century ago.

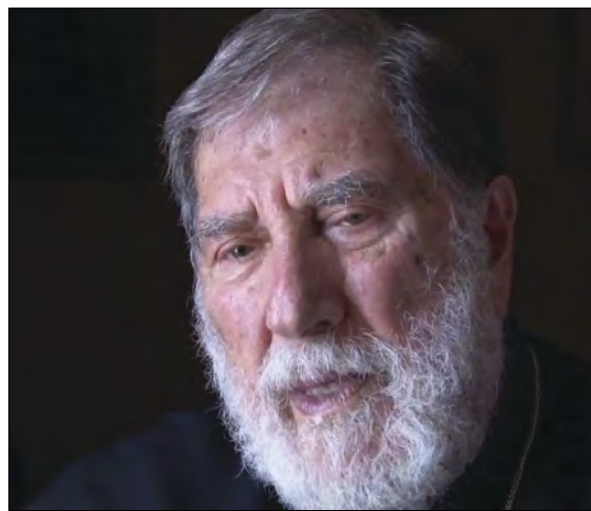
O’Malley is set to preside over a 4 p.m. prayer service April 23 at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in the South End.

In a statement, O’Malley referred to an acknowledgment last year by Pope Francis that the World War I-era deaths at the hands of Ottoman Turks were the first genocide of the 20th century, a statement that angered the Turkish government.

O’Malley also expressed solidarity with Christians who are suffering around the world.

“Pope Francis made clear that the church acknowledges the suffering of so many who lost their lives in witness to their faith and that, tragically, such witness continues through the persecution of Christians taking place throughout the world today,” O’Malley said.

“Building on our bond as Christians, the Archdiocese of Boston joins with our Armenian brothers and sisters to make this remembrance in common prayer to our Lord,” O’Malley added.



## Archbishop Yeghishe Gizirian Dies

NEW YORK – Archbishop Yeghishe Gizirian, the former Primate of the United Kingdom, and a long-serving pastor among the churches of the Eastern Diocese. He lived to find himself the eldest clergyman of episcopal rank in the Armenian Church, and was a true spiritual father to his people. He passed away peacefully in his sleep in the early hours of Friday, March 18, at the age of 90.

Archbishop Gizirian answered the call of our Lord as a young man, inspired by the examples of holiness he saw among such great figures as Catholicos Karekin Hovsepian, Patriarch Shnork Kaloustian, and Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan. In turn, the archbishop became an example of holiness to subsequent generations, through his faithful, humble, loving service to God.

His preaching conveyed authority; yet his personal example was one of humility and quiet grace. He was a leader of great inner strength and conviction; yet his greatest strength was the tender compassion he showed to all – a quality that made him beloved wherever he served.

As a teacher, a pastor to many parishes in the Eastern Diocese, and as Diocesan Primate of the United Kingdom, Archbishop Yeghishe Gizirian touched the lives of countless people.

see YEGHISHHE, page 15

## An Inheritance of Pain and Secrets

By **Alin K. Gregorian**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

mark this bitter anniversary not only with documentaries, but through art. The Armenian Genocide has served as a backdrop for many movies, books or paintings this past year and even now.

One novel that has received rave reviews and seen huge sales has been *Orhan's Inheritance* by Aline Ohanesian.

See NOVEL, page 11

LOS ANGELES – Since 2015, the year marking the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, the floodgates have opened to



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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Moody's Downgrades Armenia's Government Bond Rating

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Moody's Investors Service on Friday, March 18 downgraded Armenia's long-term issuer and senior unsecured debt ratings to B1 from Ba3. Concurrently, Moody's has changed the outlook to stable from negative, the agency said. The key drivers for the downgrade to B1 are Armenia's increasing external vulnerabilities stemming from declining remittances from Russia that have not yet bottomed out; an uncertain outlook for foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows that collapsed in 2015; and an elevated susceptibility to renewed pressures on the local currency and the country's foreign exchange reserves;

Armenia's worsening fiscal and government debt metrics and the expectation that Armenia's general-government-debt-to-GDP ratio will rise above 50 percent in 2017 under the baseline assumption of a growing economy.

In the same action, Moody's has also lowered Armenia's long-term foreign-currency deposit ceilings to B2 from B1 and the long-term local-currency bond and deposit ceilings to Ba2 from Ba1. At the same time, the long-term and short-term foreign-currency bond ceiling and the short-term foreign-currency deposit ceilings remain unchanged at Ba2/NP and NP, respectively.

Upward pressures could be exerted on Armenia's issuer and government bond ratings following a reduction in Armenia's high degree of external vulnerability and/or the prospects that Armenia's government-debt-to-GDP ratio will show a firm downward trajectory over the medium term, Moody's says. A reduction in Armenia's external vulnerability could be triggered, for instance, by a faster-than-expected economic stabilization of Russia, Armenia's largest single export market destination, and the related positive spillovers to the Armenian economy, it says. Also, a decrease in geopolitical risks could lead to upward pressures on Armenia's sovereign bond rating.

## Armenians Host Iranians During Nowruz

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – During the days of the Iranian New Year, called Nowruz, the flow of Iranians to Armenia drastically increases. In an interview with "Armenpress" Head of the Department of Tourism Development Policy of the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia Mekhak Apresyan had difficulty to indicate numbers, but mentioned that since 2013 rise in tourist inflow from Iran has been registered. Naturally, the inflow accelerates with these March days.

"Visits from Iran to Armenia are active during the entire year, not only during these days, but these days are much more active as it is their holiday," Apresyan said, adding that in 2015 the visits rose by 24 percent or 140,000 against 2014.

## Number of Tourists to Artsakh Grows

STEPANAKERT (Armenpress) – In recent years the number of foreign tourists to Artsakh has grown 30-40-percent annually, Deputy Economy Minister of Artsakh Sergey Shahverdyan said at a press conference this week.

"We recorded such a growth until 2014, but in 2014 the growth declined a little. We recorded 13-percent rise in foreign tourists in 2015. Tourists visit Artsakh from mainly from the US, Europe, Russia and Muslim countries," Shahverdyan said.

The Ministry of Economy makes use of different platforms to foster tourism, including exhibitions, information technologies, social networks, as well as a film about Artsakh's tourism capacities.

He stated that the culture of ethnic minorities having once lived in Artsakh is the cultural heritage of Artsakh.

"Its best demonstration is the preservation of Mosques in Shushi and Aghdam. Tourists visiting Artsakh note that, unlike in Azerbaijan, cultural values are preserved in Artsakh," Shahverdyan said.

# Land and Culture Organization Launches Meghri Restoration Project

PASADENA, Calif. – On March 11-13, the international body of the Land and Culture Organization (LCO)/ Organisation Terre et Culture (OTC) held their general assembly meeting in Lyon, France to discuss current and upcoming Armenian historical restoration projects. The most recently com-

preservation mission, the organization is researching and documenting Armenian national monuments and properties confiscated by the Turkish state and may be found online at [www.collectif2015.org](http://www.collectif2015.org).

The Board determined to launch a new campaign in the city of Meghri, Armenia. LCO will be renovating the

in such a way as to resemble Persian architecture. The walls were painted by artists from the family of Naghash Hovnatanian, a renowned artist from the period whose works are also within the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

LCO will launch the first phase of the project during the summer campaign of 2016. Volunteers will be clearing Sourp Hovannes Mkrtich's grounds and participate in archaeological excavations with Armenian archaeologists. The workday packed with physical labor is just one part of the LCO/OTC experience. Volunteers live in a very modest home and spend non-working hours bonding with local residents, while enjoying local activities and their surroundings. In addition, during off-hours volunteers go on excursions of Armenian historical sites.

Meghri, one of the most fascinating and remote cities in Armenia, is situated in the southern most tip overlooking the Iranian border on the Araks River. This tranquil quaint city with a population of 4,500 is in a fertile valley where they grow Armenia's national symbol the pomegranate, as well as figs, walnut, and persimmons. Today, as Armenia's southern gateway, it maintains its strategic and economic significance as a town located at the crossroads of the South Caucasus; Armenia, Nagorno Karabagh, Iran and Russia.

LCO is accepting volunteers for the Summer 2016 Campaign. To learn more about LCO or join in our summer volunteer program, visit [www.lcousa.org](http://www.lcousa.org).



Outside the Sourp Hovannes Mkrtich Church

pleted LCO/OTC project was the seventh-century Tchitckhanavank monastery in the northern Lori region of Armenia. After a culmination of five-years of work by LCO/OTC volunteers, local artisans, archeologists, and architects, the site was consecrated in August 2015 and renamed Sourp Khatch (Holy Cross). As part of its Armenian historical

17th-century Sourp Hovannes Mkrtich (St. John the Baptist) basilica church there. This historical site is in severe disrepair and has a unique Armenian style. The ornamental motifs of the interior frescoes are influenced by Persian decorative designs, which were probably done intentionally to prevent vandalism. Even the depicted structures were built

## Mer Doon Marks 10th Anniversary

ECHMIADZIN, Armenia – On November 11, 2006, Mer Doon opened its doors to seven young girls with tremendous hope and potential who had outgrown the orphanage system. Now celebrating its 10th year of service to disadvantaged girls, Mer Doon is more vibrant and relevant than ever. It remains the only NGO in Armenia that provides a home for homeless girls, ages 18-24, who have nowhere else to go.

To kick off the 10th anniversary celebration, Mer Doon has launched a new website at [www.Mer-Doon.com](http://www.Mer-Doon.com).

Since 2006, Mer Doon has cared for more than 45 young girls by providing higher education, vital skills to transition to adulthood, and a loving and compassionate family environment, making them full members of society as well as honest and independent citizens of Armenia. For many of these young women, Mer Doon has been the first family they have ever known.

Commenting on this milestone, Chairman Stephen Ashkian stated, "Longevity is often quite correctly associated with integrity. A track record of proven service demonstrates that you have gained the community's trust, and have tested, achievable results. We are celebrating this milestone to underscore our consistent leadership in the social service sector in Armenia."

"We warmly welcome Armenians around the world to join us in celebrating Mer Doon's success and ask that they reinvest in our mission to strengthen our outreach efforts," Ashkian concluded.

In honor of its 10th anniversary, Mer Doon has set an anniversary fundraising goal of \$250,000. These funds will



Some of the young women at Mer Doon along with staff

(in part) support a building project slated for completion this summer. The plans are to renovate the basement of Mer Doon's residence in order to provide classrooms, an arts & crafts atelier, and much needed storage. With these new facilities, Mer Doon will have additional space in its main quarters to meet the overwhelming demand to assist more vulnerable teens.

Throughout the year, the US- and Armenia-based Boards of Directors will be organizing many commemorative activities and events. At the same time, Mer Doon is forming an Advisory Board of distinguished Armenians who embrace the group's mission, and believe that good, kind people should always support a good cause.

Special programs began in January with a new speaker's program. Since the start of the year, numerous guests have come to Mer Doon with important messages about human trafficking, psychology, law, empowerment, art & design, and family and women's rights.

In May, the US-based Board of Directors will host a golf tournament fundraiser in New England. In the fall, a conference about global human and sex trafficking is being planned in

Southern California. In Armenia, many exciting plans are underway, including a 10th anniversary video, a celebration in the Echmiadzin municipality, an arts & crafts exhibition in Yerevan, and meetings with different media outlets.

The history of Mer Doon started with Julie and Clement Ashkian, who began their pioneering work in Armenia after the 1988 earthquake, which left thousands of Armenian children without parents. They actively led the Children of Armenia Sponsorship Program and helped 18,000 children. Recognizing that conditions were grave in the orphanages as well, the late Julie Ashkian and Tigranuhi Karapetyan founded Mer Doon in 2006. They saw that once leaving the orphanages at age 18, young girls were at risk of the many evils on the streets with no family to guide or shelter them. From the beginning, the mission of the organization has been to educate and nurture, and to keep these very vulnerable girls, who have outgrown the orphanage system, away from trafficking and violence.

Mer Doon is located in Echmiadzin. Visitors are always welcome. Tax-deductible donations can be made by going to [www.Mer-Doon.com](http://www.Mer-Doon.com).



## INTERNATIONAL

## Armenian President Visits Greece, Cyprus

ATHENS (Combined Sources) – Armenian President Serge Sargisian paid a visit starting March 16 to Cyprus and Greece, cementing closer ties.

One of his stops in Nicosia, Cyprus was at the University of Cyprus. He spoke there about Armenia's unique model of communicating with the world. (see related Editorial, page 13.)

"Having strategic and ally relations with Russia, Armenia is developing mutually beneficial partnership with dozens of western, Asia-Pacific and Latin-American states," Sargisian said, as quoted by his press office.

He added that the fact that Turkey does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus is inconceivable, while reiterating Yerevan's steady support for a Cyprus solution.

"We are seeking a peaceful resolution both for the Cyprus issue, as well as for the conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh, he noted, during an event at the University of Cyprus, where he spoke on the "political agenda of Armenia ahead of the 25th anniversary of Independence," he said.

He added that a Cyprus settlement is feasible, if other forces stop raising obstacles in the process.

He emphasized that following the same logic, Armenia combines its membership to the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization with efficient NATO programs and, being a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the country continues to consistently expand the agenda of its long-term cooperation with the European Union.

On relations with Nicosia, Sargisian noted that Armenians do not forget that Cyprus was the first country to bring up the recognition of the Armenian genocide in the UN General Assembly, and was the first European country to acknowledge it.

Bilateral ties are becoming deeper in various sectors, the President went on,

underlining in particular the potential in education and military cooperation.

He also referred to the economic potential, through membership in the Eurasia Economic Union and the opening of Iran's market.

Sargisian also referred to the turbu-

The two leaders attended the opening of a *khachkar* (cross-stone) in Nicosia symbolizing Armenian-Cypriot friendship.

Earlier, President Sargisian visited Greece, where he also met with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras.



President Serge Sargisian, left, with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras

lence in the Middle East and said that it was sad to see the descendants of Armenian refugees in Syria and other countries to be obliged to become refugees themselves.

The event was also addressed by Vartkes Mahdessian, the representative of the Armenians in the House of Representatives, as well as by the Rector of the University of Cyprus, Constantinos Christofides.

He spoke at the University following official meetings with Cypriot leadership, including President Nicos Anastasiades.

During the meetings issues pertaining to bilateral relations, regional and international affairs were addressed.

The Greek leader, in particular, assessed as promising the development of the trilateral Iran-Greece-Armenia cooperation, "considering warm and friendly relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Islamic Republic of Iran," the Armenian president's press office reported.

During their meeting the two leaders discussed issues of interstate relations both in bilateral and multilateral formats. In the framework of the international and regional organizations, the presidents touched on the development of mutual cooperation on a number of important issues, inter-parliamentary ties, process of acknowledging and condemning the Armenian Genocide, as well as the talks over the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

Sargisian and Pavlopoulos also discussed the issues of the international agenda, presented their positions, touched on the Armenian-EU relations and the role of friendly Greece in their development. They conferred on the crisis in the Middle East, specifically the consequences of the migrant crisis, which has become a serious challenge for the Greek government.

(Reports from Public Radio of Armenia, PanArmenian.net and *Famagusta Gazette* were used in compiling this story.)

### Armenian Church and School to Be Renovated in Homs

HOMS, Syria (PanARMENIAN.Net) – St. Mesrob Church and Sahakyan National College in Syria's Homs will be renovated this summer, Primate of the Diocese of Damascus, Bishop Armash Nalbandian said at a meeting with Armenian families in Homs, Arevk reports.

Pacing around the church that had been damaged in shelling, Nalbandian and the community members discussed issues concerning the full restoration of the church and the school.

Since November 2011, St. Mesrob Church and the Sahakyan College have been taken over by terrorists. The militants have been using the Armenian institutions as gathering places; the basement hall was turned into a hospital, the teachers' lounge into a mosque, and the church into a dormitory, the newspaper says.

## US Confirms Crimes Committed By ISIS Are Genocide

WASHINGTON – This week, Secretary of State John Kerry stated that ISIS (Daesh) is "responsible for genocide," against groups in Syria and Iraq, including Yezidis, Christians and Shia Muslims. The recognition was prompted by H. Con. Res. 75, which includes Armenians as one of the Christian groups persecuted by ISIS.

"We know that in areas under its control, Daesh has made a systematic effort to destroy the cultural heritage of ancient communities – destroying Armenian, Syrian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches..." Kerry stated.

In his statement, Kerry also invoked one of the criteria of genocide as defined by the 1948 UN Convention. "One element of genocide is the intent to destroy an ethnic or religious group, in whole or in part. We know that Daesh has given some of its victims a choice between abandoning their faith or being killed, and that for many is a choice between one kind of death and another," Kerry said.

"Confronted with harrowing reports of similar crimes and atrocities, US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau in 1915 alerted the State Department and the world to the horrors taking place in the Ottoman Empire, stating that a 'campaign of race extermination' was underway against the Armenian people, and urged action to stop the slaughter," observed Armenian Assembly of America Executive Director Bryan Ardouny.

"Today, Secretary Kerry responded to the unspeakable crimes carried out by ISIS. 'Naming these crimes is important. But what is essential is to stop them,' Kerry stated. His statement recalls Morgenthau's warning and the need to act. As President Obama has said, 'America deserves a leader who speaks truthfully about the Armenian Genocide and responds forcefully to all genocides.' We therefore call upon the Obama administration to also unequivocally affirm the Armenian Genocide," Ardouny continued.

House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) stated: "This morning, Secretary Kerry declared ISIS is committing genocide against Christians and religious minorities...now that our government is recognizing this crisis, it needs to do more to stop it. I hope the president will seize this opportunity to present a very clear strategy to defeat this enemy."

Earlier this week, the Assembly welcomed passage in the U.S. House of Representatives of H. Con. Res. 75, a resolution condemning ISIS atrocities and stated in part: "Whereas the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and associated extremists are committing egregious atrocities against ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq and Syria, including Christians (including Assyrian Chaldean Syriac, Armenian, and Melkite communities, among others), Yezidis, Turkmen, Shabak, Sabaeen Mandeans, and Kaka'i, among others."

## International News

### Turkey Boosts Efforts to Further Deny Armenian Genocide

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Turkish Historical Society (TTK) compiles data, articles and "other works" to further deny the Armenian Genocide, Daily Sabah reports.

TTK started compiling all articles on the issue written in Turkey and throughout the world to publish books on the genocide. The organization plans to send the books to libraries across the country as well as international historians.

Speaking to Habertürk daily, TTK President Refik Turan said articles included "indisputable scientific facts."

In April 2014, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was prime minister at the time, offered condolences for "the Armenian deaths" that occurred in 1915 – a first for a Turkish leader.

### Catholicosate Files Another Sis Lawsuit in Turkish Court

PanARMENIAN.Net – The Great House of Cilicia which had in April 2015 filed a lawsuit in Turkey's Constitutional Court over regaining ownership of its historic headquarters in Sis, has submitted another application demanding the examination of the lawsuit.

Submitted some two weeks ago by the Catholicosate's lawyer Cem Sofuoglu, the application urges the Turkish court to review the matter at the earliest possible convenience, as the lawsuit that was submitted 10 months ago, hasn't been examined yet, Ermenihaber.am reports citing Haberturk.com.

According to Sofuoglu, the lawsuit only seeks to recover the property, "with no intention to discuss the events of the past."

"We are not going to bargain with Turkey over the issue," the Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia, Aram I said, in turn. "We just want to return the property that belonged to us for over 800 years. If Turkey wants to move closer to the Armenian people, this is the most appropriate moment."

The historic headquarters includes the Catholicosate, the monastery and cathedral of St. Sophia, a major Armenian Christian holy site located in Sis (currently Kozan), in south-central Turkey.

This site was confiscated by the Turkish Government following the Genocide of 1915 in which an estimated 1.5 million Armenians were killed or deported by the Ottoman Empire.

Filing the lawsuit at the Turkish court, the Catholicos has thus set a precedent for the descendants of the martyrs to reclaim their family belongings.

### March in Tehran to Head To Turkish Embassy

TEHRAN, Iran (Armenpress) – The Armenian community plans to organize a protest rally in Tehran, on April 24, Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day, head of Public Relations of Tehran Armenian Diocese Gaspar Amirkhanyan said.

"The march will begin from the National Prelacy. Here is the monument dedicated to the Armenian Genocide victims. We will lay flowers there, pay tribute, then a mass will take place at the church, followed by a march to the Turkish Embassy in Iran, where we will present our message," Amirkhanyan said.

According to him, various events are planned this year in an attempt to attract Iranian intellectuals and politicians of various levels.

"The Armenian Genocide recognition has always been a priority for the Armenian-Iranian community. During the year, regular work is done in that direction. Works are published in Iranian, which refer to the Armenian Genocide on a regular basis. Active work is being done regarding information, but I think it is still insufficient. Deputy Speaker of the Iranian Parliament condemned the Armenian Genocide during the 100th anniversary events, which is a great achievement for the community," Amirkhanyan said.

# Community News

## AMAA Participates In Unprecedented Cooperation for Martuni Village, Armenia

PARAMUS, N.J. – On the occasion of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian Missionary Association of Armenia took the initiative to coordinate the formation of a consortium of six NGOs (AMA-Armenia, Development Principles, “Shen” Charity NGO, World Vision Armenia, COAF Kids, Fund for Armenia Relief) to join efforts in support of Martuni Village, in Armenia.

The village, located in the northeastern part of the Gegharkunik Region, on the southern shores of Lake Sevan, was founded in 1921 and its first inhabitants were Genocide survivors, mostly from Van, Alashkert, Kars and Sasun who had emigrated. The village is 132 kilometers from Yerevan.

On March 4, these organizations and two new partners, Teach for Armenia and the Armenia Round Table of the World Council of Churches (WCC), visited Martuni to evaluate and review the work of the past year which included:

Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) financed the renovation of the health post of the Martuni community.

World Vision presented their newly formed Engineering Club and its newly acquired Robotics lab of the school.

“Shen” NGO showed the new village website ([www.martunigyugh.am](http://www.martunigyugh.am)) which presents the history of the village, current conditions and a project which was also financed by Shen; the installation of water pipes providing drinking water for most of the villagers.

AMA-Armenia helped the villagers acquire 2 brand new tractors and 10 gasoline powered harvesters. These will help villagers harvest hay to feed their cattle during the winter months and also cultivate their lands.

FAR presented scholarships to Martuni Village high school students.



Students in Martuni

Development Principles granted 13 pregnant cows to low-income families within the community.

AMA-Armenia partnered with Teach for Armenia to send a well-trained teacher to teach IT courses and help students develop leadership skills.

The Partners also visited the computer lab which was provided by the WCC Armenian Round Table.

Representatives of each organization also met with community members and discussed various projects. The community members were very appreciative for all the help provided to them and expressed their suggestions and thoughts. All the villagers were excited and encouraged about the work that is being rendered by this consortium.

The mission of this partnership is to help increase the standard of living in Martuni and eventually help other villages. This cooperation of different Armenian organizations is an example of how synergy multiplies the efforts of each individual organization.



On November 21, the AGBU Central Office in New York held the organization's very first Spinathon.

## \$3.2 million Raised in Support of AGBU Humanitarian Emergency Relief Fund for Syrian Armenians

NEW YORK – The past six months have brought an unprecedented wave of support for Syrian Armenians on the part of the global AGBU community. Since 2012, AGBU has raised \$3.2 million in support of the AGBU Humanitarian Emergency Relief Fund for Syrian Armenians living both in Syria and restarting their lives abroad.

Donations have helped distribute food and aid; provide medical services and equipment; offer educational and children's programs; and deliver displacement support. Thanks to the generosity of AGBU members and friends, emergency aid has been provided to more than 3,000 families in Syria, including food packages of cereal, cooking oil, dry meat, eggs, milk and baby formula; close to 400 patients have been treated and more than 50 major medical procedures performed for wounded Armenians; tuition reimbursement scholarships have been given to close to 400 Syrian Armenian students studying in Armenia and full scholarships offered to Syrian Armenian students studying at AGBU schools in Lebanon and Montreal.

At the heart of the AGBU relief efforts is the #ICareICan campaign, which has encouraged the idea that even the smallest initiative can make a big difference.

see RELIEF, page 5



In the fall of 2015, the AGBU Alex Manoogian School's program to welcome Syrian Armenian refugees received unprecedented coverage in Canadian and international media.

## Detroit Community Hosts Forum on Crisis in Middle East and Impact On Armenians

DETROIT – On the wintry evening of March 5, 2016, about seventy-five people gathered for an educational forum at the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School, in Southfield, Michigan. The format allowed for three panelists to make presentations, followed by moderators selecting written questions from the audience for the panelists.

Paul Kulhanjian opened the program and acknowledged other members of the committee that helped facilitate the event – David Terzibashian, Pam Coultis, and Hagop Alexanian. Kulhanjian introduced Ani Bogkian Kasparian, Coordinator for the Armenian Research Center, University of Michigan-Dearborn, as the MC for the program.

Kasparian introduced the first panelist, Dr. Ara Sanjian, Associate Professor of History and Director of the Armenian Research Center of the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

Sanjian received his PhD from the University of London and is the author of *Turkey and Her Arab Neighbors, 1953-1958*, and many scholarly articles.

His slide presentation (which included color-coded maps) focused on the “Impact on Armenians in the Arab East.” He provided background information about the “Arab Spring” which began in Tunisia when Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year old street vendor set himself on fire on December 17, 2010. This act became a catalyst for the Tunisian Revolution. Protests moved from Tunisia to Egypt and to other Arab countries, including Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria.

In Bahrain, Syria and Yemen initial demands for reform eventually turned into communal strife among the countries' Sunni and Shi'ite elites and their outside backers. Religious differences are not the primary cause of the conflict. The important thing in the region now is the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The former is trying to extend its influences through the Shi'ite in Bahrain, Yemen, and Lebanon, and it is an ally of Syria (ruled by the Alawite al-Asad family) since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The Saudis are using the Sunni/Arab card when trying to keep Iranian influence out of all these countries, by supporting the Sunni regimes in Bahrain and Yemen, and by getting rid of the Asad regime in Syria.

According to Sanjian, possible near-future scenarios in Iraq and Syria include the following:

Existing inter-state borders will remain on paper, but the actual countries will become fragmented into federations or confederations along religious and/or ethnic lines

Existing states will formally become fragmented along religious and/or ethnic lines

Sunni Arabs will impose their rule across the Middle Eastern region over reluctant religious and/or ethnic minorities

More than one-half of the Armenians in Syria are now outside the country, while some Armenians have relocated inside Syria, particularly to the coastal region. Lebanon and Armenia provide the most immediate destinations for Armenians leaving Syria, although long-term migration is sought eventually to Canada, Australia, and Northern Europe. The Armenian community in Lebanon is not in panic, since the country is relatively calm, even if politically paralyzed.

Kasparian then introduced the second panelist - Edmond Azadian, who is director of publications for Baikar and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* (also senior editorial columnist). He has authored several books and edited more than 21 books.

see DETROIT, page 7



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# \$3.2 million Raised in for Emergency Relief Fund for Syrian Armenians

RELIEF, from page 4

"These types of grassroots campaigns are not only essential to raising funds, but also to helping raise awareness of AGBU's relief efforts in support of the tens of thousands of Armenians impacted by the devastation in Syria. We're so grateful to see that the #ICareICan campaign has galvanized people of all ages and sparked countless acts of kindness and generosity," said Karen Papazian, director of development and outreach at the AGBU Central Office.

The #ICareICan campaign, begun on AGBU's social media platforms, has galvanized AGBU members and chapters worldwide to do their part in contributing to the fund in their own ways. All participants in the campaign are asked to take a picture holding a sign that reads #ICareICan and post it on their personal Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram pages with a message explaining what they have done for the cause. Pledges have ranged from donating money normally spent on coffee to organizing a community fundraising event.

The spirit of giving embodied in the #ICareICan campaign led AGBU chapters to hold fundraising events that bring the community together in support of the cause. One example is AGBU Sofia's November 28th charity ball at the Sheraton Sofia Balkan Hotel. The event, all the proceeds of which went to the AGBU Humanitarian Emergency Relief Fund for Syrian Armenians, was attended by many notable guests, including Vice Foreign Minister of Bulgaria Hristo Angelichin; Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Bulgaria Arsen Shoyan; Ambassador of Syria to Bulgaria Nadra Sayaf; and many AGBU Sofia supporters. The evening raised money by auctioning the paintings of Bulgarian Armenian artists, including those of the late Edmond Demirdjian, Onnik Karanfilian, Luisa Medzikian and Arshak Nersisyan, and selling the jewelry of Jacklin Hugasyan.

AGBU schools have also taken the #ICareICan message to heart. In fall 2015, the AGBU Alex Manoogian School's program to welcome Syrian Armenian refugees received unprecedented coverage in Canadian and international media. The

school is one of the few in Quebec to have a hands-on program to integrate Syrian Armenian refugee children and devise an educational model to help them succeed academically through training in French and English alongside their native Armenian.

The media attention from France24, Radio-Canada, *Journal de Montréal*, Radio de Québec, *Journal de Québec*, Huffington Post, and *Journal Métro* led many non-Armenians to donate their time and money to help the program's mission, which was lauded, mostly notably, by Quebec's Minister of Education in the provincial National Assembly. "Our classes are filled with Syrian children who are suffering from post-traumatic stress. But that hasn't prevented many among them from later becoming the first in their class. The best remedy for their pain is education," said Principal Sébastien Stasse.

The AGBU community has also shown its creativity in organizing events for Syrian relief. On November 21, the AGBU Central Office in New York held a spinathon. Thirty-three spinners joined the event and appealed to their friends and family to sponsor them to participate in a spin class at a downtown gym. Together they raised more than \$75,000. The New York spinners were joined by counterparts in Los Angeles and Montreal. The New York spinathon inspired YP London to organize two events in February, donating all the proceeds to the Syrian relief.

New York spinner Maral Jebejian, who individually raised \$15,550, knows firsthand the desperate need for support to the Armenians of Syria: "When the opportunity presented itself to help Syrian Armenians, my reaction was immediate and visceral. I already knew the seriousness of the situation in Syria, not only through reading the news, but through a personal connection to the country. My uncle lost his home, was wounded by shrapnel fire and only escaped death by chance. My cousin was faced with the impossible decision to leave her family and her dying mother behind in an attempt to save herself and her future. My husband's cousin, whose son is in the army, also faces the uncertainty of what will become of his son. And these are just

the tragic stories I know about personally. I'm certain that there are thousands more. It is absolutely necessary for those of us who are more fortunate to reach out and help. I had the support of my friends and my family who cheered me on, and it felt great to be able to help and give back in some way." Since November, similar events have been planned by AGBU members around the world.

Many AGBU members have used their expertise to raise money for relief efforts. Nancy Nalbandian, a jewelry designer who donated the money she earned selling her jewelry at a Christmas bazaar, drew on her own past as motivation: "My father, Leon Garabed Nalbandian, was a refugee orphan and a Syrian Muslim family took him in at a point in his long and difficult

in Toronto. Canada has been in the spotlight with the resettlement of over 20,000 refugees from Syria, among them many Armenians. The Armenian community in Canada, most in Toronto and Montreal, has quickly mobilized resources to sponsor hundreds of Armenian families. Sponsorship of refugees entails commitments from temporary housing to providing basic assistance with paperwork, job search and a range of settlement issues.

YP Toronto was quick in identifying the resources it could make available to Syrian Armenians already in Canada. Utilizing its professional networks and in cooperation with a number of Toronto-based organizations, YP Toronto helped organize the first in a series of job fairs, which attracted a number of potential



Nora Janoyan Balikian in San Diego held a holiday brunch with #ICareICan as its theme.

journey. I felt finally able to do something for others through my jewelry business," said Nalbandian. Luba Libarikian of the handmade baby accessories company Born on Bowery, the Homeland Development Initiative of Berd Bears, Aghasi Aghabalyan of the design boutique Gugoco, and Joseph Basralian, author of *Mr Baboosian's Van*, also donated their proceeds to the AGBU Emergency Humanitarian Relief Fund for Syrian Armenians through the AGBU Bookstore.

Other members have held luncheons or celebrations and encouraged the guests to donate to the cause. In December, Nora Janoyan Balikian in San Diego held a holiday brunch with #ICareICan as its theme. In lieu of gifts, Balikian asked her friends to donate to the fund and collected \$11,000. "Considering how blessed we all are, and thinking about making a difference in the lives of Syrian children, I decided to join the #ICareICan campaign and ask my friends to help me raise funds for this worthy and important cause," said Balikian.

On February 10, artist and hair stylist Vartan Geudelekian held a fundraising event, Art at Vartali, at his salon in New York. The cocktail reception, attended by members of the Armenian community as well as many members the wider New York community, served as the site for the opening night of Vartali's abstract art exhibit. The sale of his paintings, of which all the proceeds were donated, raised \$20,000 for the AGBU Humanitarian Emergency Relief Fund for Syrian Armenians.

The relief efforts have also helped Syrian Armenians restart their lives abroad. On January 27, the AGBU Young Professionals of Toronto (YP Toronto) organized a job fair for over 200 Syrian Armenian refugees at the AGBU Centre

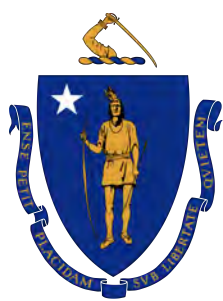
agencies and employers. These initiatives were designed not only to connect prospective job-seekers with employers but also to create an intimate, informal space where refugees, through small onsite workshops, can receive practical advice on resumes, cover letters and the effective use of professional networking sites. Ancillary services, such as banking advice and opening new accounts, are also provided.

Many other worthy fundraisers have been and continue to be organized around the world and every amount collected has a direct and positive impact. \$100 pays for a family's electricity bill for four months; \$350 buys winter coats for ten children; \$900 feeds fifteen families of four for two weeks; \$2,700 supplies clean drinking water to ten families for six months; \$6,000 provides milk to 20 children for a year; \$8,000 covers tuition costs for one student at the AGBU school in Montreal; and \$12,000 funds scholarships for ten students continuing their university education in Armenia. "The single most important way people can help out," says Nerses Nersoyan, chairman of the AGBU Syria District, "is by making a financial donation, as it is difficult to bring any other items or resources into Aleppo or any other city because of the ongoing war. All of the donations will be used in the best way possible to help those most in need."

AGBU encourages all members and friends to do their part to ease the suffering of Syrian Armenians by organizing fundraising events, such as brunches, walk-a-thons, online campaign or spinathons. Email [giving@agbu.org](mailto:giving@agbu.org) and AGBU will help with the logistics.

For more information about the AGBU Emergency Humanitarian Relief Fund for Syrian Armenians and to donate, visit <http://www.agbu.org/syriarelie/>.

## Commemorate the 101st Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide at the Massachusetts State House



starts at 10:30 am

12 noon reception in the Great Hall

With a proclamation from the Governor of Massachusetts

Prominent keynote speaker

Massachusetts officials

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And musical program

April 22, 2016

Details forthcoming.

Organized by the State House Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee, Boston

## Merrimack Valley Plans Observance April 23

LOWELL, Mass. — The Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee of Merrimack Valley will join with the Armenian National Committee of Merrimack Valley in jointly sponsoring its 101st observance.

The combined event will take place Saturday, April 23, beginning at 10 a.m. with a procession along downtown Lowell to City Hall where events will take place.

Participants are asked to gather at 9:30 a.m. at the corner of Merrimack and John Streets as a color guard from the Lowell Armenian-Americans leads the march.

A proclamation will be issued by the mayor with remarks from government and state officials. A flag-raising ceremony will be conducted by the youth.

A light luncheon and cultural program will follow at the historic Masonic center, across from City Hall. Children from the various church schools will combine their talents.

"Please join us and let your voices be heard for genocide recognition and justice and to celebrate our priceless Armenian heritage that will be so beautifully expressed in the youthful voices of our children," said Sossy Jeknavorian, AGCCMV chairman.



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# AIWA-SF Sponsors Adolescent Girls Development Programs

By **Gaiane Khachatryan**

SAN FRANCISCO – The Armenian International Women's Association San Francisco Chapter (AIWA-SF) supports the self-development of teenage girls in Armenia through its sustainable programs focused on comprehensive health education, as well as leadership skills development.

The eighth-grade girls at School #155 excitedly took part in a series of workshops led by public health specialist Ani Jilozian. Topics ranged from biological processes, including anatomy and physiology, menstruation, puberty and safeguarding against STIs and unwanted pregnancies, to the more psychological aspects of sexuality, such as building healthy relationships, informed consent, communication with partners, and issues related to gender inequality and violence in relationships.

In reflecting on the program, Ani noted, "Teaching sexual education is a rewarding experience, especially when you have the pleasure to interact with girls who have a deep love of learning and an interest in the subject matter. Over the last few months, I've had the distinct pleasure of getting to know the girls at School #155, watching them interact with one another, and guiding them to learn about their bodies and

relationships with others."

In general, studies show that adolescents who take part in comprehensive sexual education programs delay sexual initiation, are more likely to engage in safe behavior, are less likely to enter violent relationships, and hold healthier views on gender roles and expectations.

The girls participating in the sessions made positive remarks about the program. One participant noted, "For me, the most interesting classes were the ones on gender-based violence, gender inequality, and STIs and family planning." Another remarked, "I gained a new understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships." In reflecting on how the workshops played a role in their personal development, one participant expressed, "I received answers to personal questions, and I feel confident that I will be able to establish a healthy relationship with my future partner."

Given the interactive format of the workshops, the girls felt that they could express themselves and be heard, which helped them both in forging closer friendships with their classmates as well as improving on their self-esteem.

Parallel to the Comprehensive Health Education Program, the Leadership Program for Teens, run by Elvira Meliksetyan at the Women's Resource Center in Armenia, had a great resonance in School # 155. "I observed several ses-



Girls at a discussion in Armenia

sions during the program," said Ms. Petrosian, the vice principal of the school. "The school administration is very pleased that AIWA-SF has created this unique opportunity for our girls. We trust that the girls will take in everything that is offered

during the sessions, and they will become active citizens of our society in the future."

To donate to this initiative and others please send contributions to: AIWA-SF 15559 Union Ave. #227 Los Gatos, CA 95032.

## In His Spare Time, Immigrant Noubar Afeyan Has Started 38 Companies in America

By **Stuart Anderson**

BOSTON (*Forbes*) – Noubar Afeyan was born to Armenian parents in Lebanon. At the age of 13, he immigrated with his family to Canada and attended college there. Noubar was accepted to a Ph.D. program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), at the time the only school with an advanced program in biochemical engineering.

After earning his PhD at the age of 24, Noubar started his first company. "I was naïve to think I could start a company with so little experience," he told me in an interview. But it worked out. For 10 years, Noubar Afeyan headed PerSeptive Biosystems, which became the number two company in the bio-instrumentation field before it was acquired by Perkin Elmer/Amersham Corporation in 1998. While CEO of PerSeptive Biosystems he founded or cofounded five more companies.

Recent research from the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) reported on the strong entrepreneurial drive of many immigrants, examining the impact of immigrants on the current universe of "billion dollar" startups. The impact is significant. "Immigrants have started more than half (44 of 87) of America's startup companies valued at \$1 billion or more and are key members of management or product development teams in over 70 percent (62 of 87) of these companies," according to the NFAP study. These billion dollar startups with at least one immigrant founder have created an average of more than 700 jobs per company.

In 1999, Noubar evaluated the way his startups were formed – and startups in general – and thought perhaps the often disjointed, "trial and error" approach typical of startups could be reduced to something more systematic and organized. That's when he founded Flagship Ventures, which develops new companies through its in-house division VentureLabs. It also invests in startups.

VentureLabs, which Noubar oversees as senior managing partner and CEO of Flagship Ventures, takes a unique approach. It conducts its own research and forms new companies after the research has started to bear fruit. Using this approach, Flagship Ventures and VentureLabs have launched dozens of startup companies, primarily in the life sciences and sustainability.

"We spend a lot of time at Flagship Ventures identifying problems and coming up with solutions that produce intellectual property that can be used to create innovations and ultimately new approaches and new companies," he said. Noubar has over 100 patents to his name.

Moderna Therapeutics, which Noubar cofounded and helps lead as chairman, may be Flagship Ventures' most successful startup. Founded in 2009, the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based company is already valued at \$3 billion and employs over 300 people.

Breakthroughs in using messenger RNA or mRNA have fueled growth and raised expectations for Moderna Therapeutics. CNBC named the company "number one" on its 2015 Disruptor 50 list. "Instead of making protein medicines in factories very far away, what we are trying to do is to inject you with messenger RNA so that your own body will make the protein" said Stéphane Bancel, Moderna's French-born president and CEO, in a 2015 CNBC interview.

In January 2016, Moderna announced it had become a clinical stage company when it launched its first human trial, a Phase I study to treat patients with infectious diseases with investigational mRNA therapeutics in Europe. The ultimate goal is to treat patients with "infectious diseases, rare diseases, cancer and cardiovascular diseases."

Noubar Afeyan explains the promise of messenger RNA by comparing it to the more controversial concept of changing an individual's DNA. He notes changes to DNA can be essentially permanent, like hardware. By contrast, messenger RNA is more like software: it can be used to perform a task and then can be programmed to disappear.

Moderna Therapeutics is a company with the potential to benefit the health of millions of people. The irony is it may never have come into being if Noubar Afeyan had not been accepted to MIT. Afeyan says what he liked about the atmosphere at MIT as an international student is that the school was merit-based. "Nobody felt they had an advantage over you just because they were born in the United States and you weren't. It was a very good environment and remains so."

Afeyan said he believes being an immigrant and an entrepreneur are complementary. "What keeps you from innovating is being comfortable," he said. "If you're an immigrant, then you're used to being out of your comfort zone."

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Detroit Community Hosts Forum on Crisis in Middle East and Impact on Armenians

DETROIT, from page 4

“Armenia in the Midst of Turmoil” was the subject of Azadian’s presentation. He traced Armenia’s history from World War I when Armenia lost an opportunity to have a port in either Alexandretta (Iskenderun) or Trabzon – resulting in Armenia being a landlocked country – to the present.

When Armenia was absorbed into the Soviet Union, its geographic limitations were minimized – until Armenia gained its independence. For the last 25 years, Armenia has faced war for Karabagh and the earthquake while being blockaded by neighboring Turkey and Azerbaijan, resulting in ongoing depopulation.

These neighbors and Georgia have effectively choked Armenia by designing energy pipelines and railways to bypass Armenia.

Armenia was courting the European Union – until the emergence of the new cold war with Russia seeking to ascend to its former status as a superpower – resulting in Armenia being “pulled” into Moscow centered Customs Union. According to Azadian, Russian Base No. 102 (outside Yerevan) with its recent buildup and military exercises have proven beyond doubt that Armenia will be the last one to benefit from this alliance.

He also discussed an interesting development that took place on December 23, 2015 in Moscow where a meeting took place between pro-Kurdish Democratic party leader Salahettin Demirtas and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov about a plan to “reshape” Turkey by creating the Anatolian Confederate Republic.

Meanwhile, in the background, various treaties are being challenged, abrogated, possibly annulled. Some Armenians believe that Putin will return Ararat to Armenia. As long as the Karabagh issue is not settled with Azerbaijan, there will not be an improvement in the relationship between Armenia and Turkey.

Kasparian introduced the third speaker, Vahe

Sahakyan, who is a Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. His talk focused on the “Impact of the Syrian Armenians in Armenia” since 2012.

Sahakyan’s talk began by discussing the change in policies in Armenia, and then how it



From left, Ed Haroutunian, Alice Nigoghosian, Ani Kasparian

affects the integration of Syrian Armenians.

According to the Ministry of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia, about 20,000 Syrian Armenians have entered Armenia since 2012, of whom 16,000 have stayed in Armenia. Sahakyan mentioned that Armenia is not open to all Syrian refugees, but more importantly, the Republic of Armenia does not view Syrian Armenians as refugees as stated at a workshop on February 24 by Hranush Hakobyan, the Minister of Diaspora. Three years ago, the minister stated “The Syrian Armenians cannot be called refugees in their homeland.” This explains why Armenia has not accepted Syrian refugees who are not of Armenian descent.

The government’s view is that Syrian Armenians are repatriates rather than refugees. According to the standards of the UN 1951 Convention on Refugees and the Republic of Armenia’s law on Refugees and Asylum, how-

ever, the Syrian Armenians could be regarded as refugees because they are unable to return to their residences due to the conflict, violence and aggression in Syria.

Sahakyan stated that the current influx of Armenians was in fact the third massive influx of ethnic Armenians. The first



From left, Dr. Vahe Sahakyan, Edmond Azadian, Dr. Ara Sanjian

occurred in 1988-1992 when Armenians fled Azerbaijan; the second occurred in 2003-2004, when Armenians fled Iraq. These were recognized as refugees. In July 2012, the government of Armenia authorized the consulates in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq to issue citizenship and passports to people of Armenian descent free of charge.

Sahakyan explained that granting refugee status to Syrian Armenians would be an extra burden to the government. Its preemptive decision to provide citizenship to the Syrian Armenians overrides the possibility of their becoming refugees.

Because the vast majority of Syrian Armenians lack refugee documents, and have been granted Armenian citizenship, they should be treated the same as other citizens of Armenia. Sahakyan’s view is that they have to be treated differently because “they are actually refugees.”

Syrian Armenians face challenges in integrating successfully in Armenian society. They need assistance in four areas: housing, employment, access to health care and education. Along with other citizens of Armenia, Syrian Armenians have free access to primary health care facilities and public schools. Students in higher education institutions in Armenia may

receive tuition scholarships from the AGBU and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Not surprisingly, housing continues to be a problem. The plan to construct a district for Syrian Armenians in Ashtarak (about 15 miles from Yerevan) that would accommodate only 2000 people lacks the funding to be completed.

There are no reliable statistics about the numbers of Syrian Armenians who are employed, self-employed, or unemployed. There are about 300 small businesses owned by Syrian Armenians – contributing to the economic diversity in Yerevan – especially in the area of food service. However, these small businesses attract mostly Syrian Armenians.

While job or business opportunities are possible, the major problem is low wages. The unemployment rate is 17 percent; the poverty rate is about 33 percent. Even if employed, Syrian Armenians are not able to make enough money to support their families. This is one of the reasons they prefer to leave Armenia for third countries.

Sahakyan concluded his talk by stating that the Syrian Armenians came to Armenia with an idealized image of a homeland. Their great expectations were met with disappointment – when their homeland was unable to embrace them and meet their needs. Much remains to be accomplished.

A brief question-and-answer session was moderated by Edward Haroutunian and Alice Nigoghosian. Haroutunian is active in the State Bar of Michigan and is a current member of the State Bar of Board of Commissioners.

Nigoghosian, formerly associate director of Wayne State University Press, now produces books as Book Publishing Consultants LLC.

An afterglow with the participants followed this informative program.

This program was sponsored by the Detroit United Committee - Armenian Assembly, ADL-Ramgavar Party, AGBU, Armenian Research Center—University of Michigan-Dearborn, CSAI, Detroit Armenian Women’s Club, Daughters of Vartan-Zabel Otyag Chapter, Knights of Vartan-Nareg Shavarshan Lodge, Tekeyan Cultural Association, Wayne State University Society of Armenian Students.

This summary of highlights from the program was prepared by Alice Nigoghosian.

The video titled “Armenians and the Crisis in the Middle East” can be viewed via YouTube.

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## Mark Kolligian to Speak at St. James Men’s Club

WATERTOWN – On Monday, April 4, Mark Kolligian, former vice president for customer experience at CVS Health will be the speaker at the St. James Men’s Club. He will speak about “Healthcare In the 21st Century.”



Mark Kolligian

Kolligian is a recently retired executive with more than 25 years of experience in customer relations. He started his career as a full-service market research supplier, managing a diverse group of clients, including Avery Dennison, BASF, Bose, Boston Edison, Converse, Chrysler, Citizens Bank, Farberware, Fleet Bank, IBM, John Hancock, King Arthur Flour, Liberty Mutual Insurance, Marshalls, Mass Mutual Life Insurance Company, Ocean Spray, Prince Spaghetti, Smartfood Popcorn, Star Market, Store 24, Very Fine, and WearGuard among others.

At CVS Health he managed a team of more than 200 professionals executing the functions of Customer Relations, Customer Analytics, and Market Research for the retail, clinic and PBM divisions. He also served as a strategic advisor

to senior management and directed the strategic planning process for the retail division. During his tenure at CVS Health, he was awarded three Chairman’s Awards for outstanding performance.

Kolligian has been cited in many publications, including: Market Research Matters by Robert Duboff and Jim Spaeth, Understanding The Consumer in Drugstore News, articles about public attitudes toward homelessness in the *Boston Globe*, the economic impact of energy shortages in the *Boston Herald*, market research’s contributions to retail mergers and acquisitions in the Research Conference Report, and he is a noted Who’s Who in shopper insights by Shopper Marketing’s Path to Purchase Institute. He has also spoken at major conferences on the topic of consumer insights, including at the New England Market Research Association and the national Advertising Research Foundation.

He now lives in Franklin with his wife Nancy. His daughter is a Roger Williams graduate and is currently working at Arnold Advertising. His son is a graduate of Quinnipiac University’s School of Business and is a finance analyst at Converse. Mark is passionate about music, woodworking and helping others. He currently serves on the board of directors at Old Colony Habitat for Humanity and is also a board member for the CVS Health Charity Classic and the Armenian Museum of America.

The social hour starts with Mezza, at 6:15 PM followed by a complete dinner at 7 p.m. The dinner meeting will be at the St. James Armenian Church, Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center - Keljik Hall, Watertown. Ladies are welcome.



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Ani Catering And Café Entices with Armenian and Middle Eastern Cuisine

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. — Lately more and more restaurants in the Boston area seem to be offer-

college in Syria and worked for nine years in Saudi Arabia in sales of electronics before coming to the United States in 1988. He worked again in electronics in New York for three years before starting a food distribution company, specializing in Middle Eastern ingredients. He stopped the distribution business in 1995 and worked in a different field of sales until 2005, but continued catering part-time on weekends.

In 2006, Hovannes Janessian turned the catering business into a fulltime one, and moved to the present location in Belmont. His wife still helps when needed. Ani and Hovannes Janessian developed the recipes. Customers asked for takeout and so in May 2012 Hovannes Janessian expanded the business, while in October 2014 he was able to turn part of his store into a sit-down restaurant.

There are 16 seats inside, and 8 more outside during the summer. The interior of the restaurant has pictures of Yerevan, Aleppo and various Middle Eastern and Greek

Eastern food, so it is in great demand. Ani Catering and Café has participated in the Watertown-Belmont Chamber of Commerce annual food festival, garnering more exposure.

Customers now come from as far afield as Concord, Lexington and Wellesley, while the catering business ranges over all of eastern Massachusetts, even going into neighboring Rhode Island occasionally. Events for up to 600 people have been catered, including both corporate and family or social occasions indoors and out. Ani Catering has a trailer with a portable grill, so onsite cooking can easily be arranged. Advice for event planners can be



Hovannes Janessian, founder of Ani Catering and Café



Eggplant pomegranate salad, Ani's kebab



ingredients. Hovannes exclaimed, "If it was up to me, I would even eat it with ice cream!"

Hovannes categorized his food as endowed in general with full, robust flavor.

Chicken and lamb kebab are among Ani's other popular dishes, as is a salad made of pomegranate juice and eggplant. One unusual item is catered five or six times a year primarily for show on special occasions like weddings: a whole lamb is cooked in the store oven and its belly stuffed. It is taken to the event and guests can pull off desired pieces of meat.

Desserts include paklava, katayif and moushabak as well as apple and strawberry pie and cookies. New items are periodically brought onto the menu, and Hovannes's travels to Armenia and the Middle East often lead to new culinary



The dining room at Ani Catering and Café

ing shawarma and other Middle Eastern foods, but Ani Catering and Café in Belmont has a combination of spices in its mix that make its chicken shawarma different from the others. It has become the top-selling menu item for the business — and a weekly addiction for this journalist. Ani's range of Syrian and Armenian dishes and its warm and welcoming staff have made it a mainstay for many non-Armenians as well as Armenians living in Belmont and surrounding towns.

Ani was established in 1993 as a part-time catering company by Hovannes Janessian together with his wife the eponymous Ani. Janessian, born in Aleppo, studied economics in

cities, along with a television slide show of functions catered by the business in the past. The apricot and red colored walls are covered with a painted stylized Mt. Ararat.

Son Ari has always helped in the catering business, but he began to work fulltime with the takeout business. His father proudly said, "We owe the success of the takeout business to his efforts and outgoing personality." Aside from father and son, there are two more full-time employees, and one part-time driver for evening deliveries. The business is open at present from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Hovannes Janessian said that people in the area are familiar with Armenian and Middle

provided concerning photographers, music and entertainment.

Hovannes Janessian explained that "freshness is our secret. We use only natural ingredients, with no preservatives or processed food." They replace the chicken stacked on the spit or vertical rod for shawarma three times a day, so it is always fresh, while falafel is fried only after it has been ordered. The garlic sauce or "toun" is always in demand. It is only made of pure

approaches.

With Ani Catering and Café so successful, Hovannes Janessian now is planning a second restaurant and takeout place in a different town in the region. He declared that as he and his family are a part of the Armenian community, Ani supports all organizations that need its help, whether through food, donations or volunteer work.

Ani is located at 687 Belmont St., Belmont.



Ani's famous chicken shawarma on a spit

## HMADS Gala Dinner Dance: The Tradition of Celebration Continues...

BAYSIDE, N.Y. — When Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School (HMADS) first opened its doors to the Armenian community as "Hye Bardez" in 1967, little did its founders realize the impact it would have on generations to follow. For nearly 50 years, HMADS has upheld a tradition of excellence in elementary education while inspiring a love and appreciation for Armenian heritage, language and culture.

Surpassing the mandated New York State education standards, HMADS cultivates in its students a love of learning, a thirst for knowledge, a spirit of unity, and strength of character. Several years post-graduation, many of the alumni maintain a strong desire and responsibility to give back to the school, either monetarily or through service. They distinguish themselves with academic and professional honors, and as active and respected members of the Armenian community. It brings the school community great pride and joy to witness the return of many older alumni to HMADS as parents and members of the PTO, School Board, and Friends

fundraising committee. This ensures the school's legacy will carry on for years to come.

The preservation of HMADS and its mission is the main goal of a dedicated group of supporters known as "Friends of HMADS." The Friends committee has coordinated and promoted fundraising activities since 1994, with extraordinary support from the greater Armenian community. Time and time again, this unwavering generosity has amazed us, allowing HMADS to maintain its high academic standards, while keeping the tuition affordable for families. Chaired by school board treasurer Hovannes Malikyan, the Friends committee meets frequently to plan social and cultural programs and events, including the most anticipated one of the year: the annual Gala Dinner Dance.

This year's gala will be held on Saturday, May 21, at the North Hills Country Club in Manhasset. This most significant fundraiser for the school will bring together a vast group of HMADS supporters and friends. The evening's festivities will begin at 7:30 p.m. with a cocktail hour, followed by a multi-course

dinner served at 9 p.m. Talented international singer Harout Bedrossian and his band from Toronto will provide the evening's entertainment.

For further information on the Gala Dinner Dance call the school office.

— Arpi Arukian, Class of 1992



The Friends of HMADS group



# Arts & Living

## Joseph Bohigian Curates Composer's Voice Concert

NEW YORK – Composer Joseph Bohigian is curating a concert for the Composer's Voice Concert Series featuring music by Stony Brook composers on Thursday, April 21 at 7:30 p.m. at The Firehouse Space in Brooklyn. The concert will feature music by Stony Brook University faculty, students, and alumni representing the unique and diverse musical voices that have come out of the Stony Brook Department of Music.

A current master's student at Stony Brook, Joseph Bohigian is an Armenian-American composer, percussionist and pianist whose music has been heard around the world in Germany, Portugal, Armenia, Brazil and across the US. Of his time at Stony Brook, Bohigian states that the school is "very open and encouraging to composers of various styles, as reflected in its composition faculty and students. With this concert, I hope to highlight this diversity in the works of my accomplished colleagues and teachers by bringing their music to new audiences in New York."

The April 21 concert will feature works by Stony Brook University faculty members Matthew Barnson and Daria Semegen, current students Bohigian, Alan Hankers and Andrew Conklin, and alumni Robert Voisey, Ryan Carter, João Pedro Oliveira and Philip Schuessler. These composers' works have been performed around the world at such prestigious venues as Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, ISCM World Music Days, Wigmore Hall and Aram Khachaturian Museum Hall by such ensembles as the Arditti Quartet, Cleveland Chamber Symphony, International Contemporary Ensemble and JACK Quartet.

The concert will feature performances by sTem (Meagan Amelia Brus, Eric Umble, and Sophia Subbaya Vastek), Fly String Quartet (Jaram Kim, Andrew Minguez, Alison Rowe, and Brendan Shea), soprano Beth Griffith, clar-



Joseph Bohigian

inetist Ford Fourquran, pianists Shiau-uen Ding, Yumi Suehiro and Niloufar Nourbakhsh, and percussionists Joseph Bohigian, Ross Aftel and Brian Smith.

The Composer's Voice Concert Series is an opportunity for contemporary composers to express their aesthetic and personal voice. Founded in 2001 by Robert Voisey, himself a Stony Brook alumnus, Composer's Voice has presented hundreds of concerts in New York City. The series has premiered thousands of works from living composers from around the world. Works are chosen from a wide range of contemporary composers of different styles, aesthetics, and genre. The works are performed by dedicated musicians devoted to new music. Performances are recorded and archived to further promote new music, performers, and composers. Audio, video, scores, and programs can be found on the Composer's Voice website. [www.ComposersVoice.com](http://www.ComposersVoice.com)

The Firehouse Space is located at 246 Frost St, Brooklyn.



Students with their new instruments

## Let The Trumpets Sound!

YEREVAN – "The world is changing, and so are human values. Only music remains a constant spiritual island." These wise words are those of Diana Hovhannisyan, director of the Anahit Tsitsikian Music School, in Yerevan. In a message to readers of the school's home page (<http://anahitmusicsschool.com/>), she points to the responsibility of parents and teachers in guaranteeing that the younger generation preserve "timeless human values," and emphasizes the crucial role that musical education plays in this process. Music shapes the cognitive powers of a child, as well as its moral attitudes. Instead of wasting time and energy on senseless TV programs or video games, a child who learns to play a musical instrument develops intellectual rigor, learns to define goals and acquire the power of concentration to achieve them. The aim of her school, she writes, is "to foster the young generation's spiritual development" through musical education. Whether or not a child may become a professional musician in the future, he or she "will inevitably become part of the world of music, keen to behold everything that is beautiful, devoted to things that are harmonious, kind, and timeless. He/she will learn to think, feel and live touched by the truly exquisite magic of Music."

Founded in 1987, the music school, N. 21, was named after the well-known violinist, Anahit Tsitsikian in 2007. Among its graduates are prize-winning students, many of whom have continued their studies in Armenia and abroad. In 2014, the U.S. Embassy's organization Helping Hands and the Fuller Center for Housing see TRUMPETS, page 11



Students with their new instruments

## Aileen Agopian Lectures on Contemporary Middle Eastern Art

By Hagop Vartivarian

NEW YORK – Considering the times we are living through, an unusually interesting evening lecture took place on March 8 dedicated to contemporary art in the Middle East, especially Arab, Persian and Islamic art. It had greater significance because it took place in the heart of Manhattan, at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

The hall originally allocated for the lecture on March 8 turned out to be too small for the audience and therefore, prior to the start time of 7 p.m., the program was transferred to a larger hall.

Dr. Anny Bakalian welcomed the guests and introduced the lecturer. The latter has more than 20 years of experience in the world of international art, having worked at great art shows and auction houses, especially at the White Cube Gallery of London, where she lived while a student, and Phillips in New York. In 2011 she joined the auction firm Sotheby's as a senior specialist of contemporary international art, and of Middle Eastern and North African contemporary art in particular. She became vice president of the firm's contemporary art division. In 2015 she opened her own firm, Agopian, dedicated to world art.

Agopian took an interesting and successful path in her profession. Her first collaboration was with the artist Mona Hatoum, a Lebanese of Palestinian background who innovated by drawing her works with parts of her own body instead of with brushes and pencils. Agopian always worked to encourage female artists, and had as her social focus the promotion of equality and reciprocal respect as part of the social mentality of the peoples of the Middle East. She succeeded in equally valuing and evaluating males and females as artists. Consequently, Hatoum's works received international recognition.

Agopian's great love and dedication to her work comes from her parents, and in particular, from her mother, Vicki Shoghag Hovanessian, who has more than half a century of experience in Chicago, Yerevan and New York in organizing art exhibitions, and promoting contemporary art. Agopian was surrounded by art from childhood. It was with her mother's encouragement that in 1995 in London, she recognized the value of the works of Damien Hirst, then relatively unknown, and that led to her future specialization.

She became recognized as a promoter of works of art and a specialist in international art in New York and London, and, simultaneously, and perhaps more interestingly, in the Middle East, especially in Kuwait, Beirut and Doha (Qatar). Sotheby's wanted to expand its auction markets. Agopian focused on this, and unexpectedly found a very great reception. Very soon the Al-Thani royal family of Qatar at the Doha art exhibition and the Sharjah Biennial made purchases worth millions of dollars of choice European, and, in particular, French Impressionist art works, sometimes breaking all prior records of such sales. In this way, Agopian opened up a new market beginning in 2006 for international contemporary art in the Middle East.



Aileen Agopian

see ART, page 10

## Balakian to Present New Works and Elia Kazan's 'America, America' during Armenian Genocide Month

NEW YORK – Award-winning author and poet Peter Balakian will lead a discussion in honor of the Armenian Genocide commemoration from his new book of essays and poetry, *Ozone Journal*, as well as discuss Elia Kazan's film, "America, America," on Friday, April 8, at the Eastern Diocese in an event hosted by its Development Department.

Balakian's new publications include insightful passages and references to Armenian history and literary culture. In *Vise and Shadows: Essays on the Lyric Imagination, Poetry, Art and Culture*, he dedicates five separate essays to artist Arshile Gorky, writers Yeghishe Charents and Siamanto and filmmaker Elia Kazan.

*Ozone Journal* contains a sequence of poems, including one focusing on the author's memories of excavating the bones of Armenian Genocide victims in the Syrian desert with a crew of television journalists for

the news program, "60 Minutes" in 2009.

The second half of the program will feature a partial film screening of renowned director Elia Kazan's, "America, America," which portrays the Armenian massacres for the first time on the Hollywood screen. Kazan's 1963 Oscar-winning film has been called one of the most daring human rights films in cinema history and which Kazan scholar and film critic Foster Hirsch has called an "American masterpiece." Kazan, himself, singled out "America, America" as his favorite film.

"America, America is Kazan's groundbreaking film that brought the plight of the Armenians and Greeks in Turkey to the big screen," said Balakian, who is the Donald M. and Constance H. Rebar Professor of the Humanities, Professor of English and Director of Creative Writing at Colgate University. "It is time the film is understood for what it is about."

Balakian is the author of seven books of poems and three non-fiction books, including *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*, which won the 2005 Raphael Lemkin Prize and was a *New York Times* Notable Book and a *New York Times* and national bestseller. His memoir, *Black Dog of Fate* won the 1998 PEN/Martha Albrand Prize for the Art of the Memoir, and was a best book of the year for the *New York Times*, the *LA Times* and *Publisher's Weekly*, and was recently issued in a 10th anniversary edition.

This event is free and open to the public and will be held on Friday, April 8 at 7p.m. in the Guild Hall of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), 630 Second Ave.

A reception will follow the discussion and book signing.

For questions please email Taleen Babayan, director of development, at [taleenb@armeniandiocese.org](mailto:taleenb@armeniandiocese.org).



## Aileen Agopian Lectures on Contemporary Middle Eastern Art

ART, from page 9

It was a novelty for the Arab Gulf countries when the world-class art museums of the Louvre in Paris and the Guggenheim in New York signed agreements with various Arab museums. This introduced the Arab people to the classics of contemporary art and brought a new level of quality to culture in those countries. Various exhibitions began to be organized in countries from the United Arab Emirates all the way to Morocco. Through these exhibitions, the opportunity was also created to introduce the works of Indian, Persian and even Armenian artists. Dubai became the center of this world of art. Imagine that the Persian artist Farhad Moshiri's work called "Light" already had begun to be valued at one million dollars in the art market, and the Egyptian artist Mahmoud Sa'id's work created in 1929 at \$2.55 million.

And what can be said, when in February 2015, the royal family of Qatar paid almost \$300 million for Paul Gauguin's Tahitian painting of two women, "Nafea Faa Ipoipo (When Will You Marry?)" breaking all previous international records. The previous record was the sale in 2011 of Paul Cézanne's "The Card Players" at auction for \$250 million. This followed with Jeff

Koons' works for \$20 million, Warhol and Giacometti works for \$100 million, and finally, a Picasso for \$150 million. The list goes on. During a short period of time painters of 25 countries (in particular, from the Americas, large countries of Asia and classical European), dealers of art works and purchasers began to widely participate in the art world of Doha, and this helped create the great success of the Sotheby's auction which Aileen organized there in 2013. The great exhibition halls of the West opened their branches there, and the unique place which Beirut enjoyed before the Lebanese civil war now was in the Arabian Gulf. This, unfortunately, took place at Lebanon's expense, and that of our Armenian artists, like Paul, Asadour, Norigian, Hrayr and Zaven, who were the creators of modern art in the Arab world.

Yet it should be noted that the most expensive canvas sold in this market by Aileen of painters of the Arab world belonged to the Egyptian-Armenian painter Chant Avedisian. It was his work "Icons of the Nile," which was valued at \$1.56 million in 2013 at the Doha Sotheby's auction.

At the same time, the works of modern Middle Eastern artists began to be shown in New York, with pieces by the 90-year-old Persian Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian appearing at the Guggenheim, while the Egyptian Wael Shawky, and the Lebanese Walid Raad at New York's Museum of Modern Art.

Agopian spoke about the cultural awakening in Saudi Arabia, where numerous artists, including women, are appearing. Among them she mentioned Manal Al-Dowayan, who has chiefly been inspired by the daily life and customs of women in her country. When we consider the severe conditions of the kingdom, especially concerning women, this can be considered as a revolution in connection with a movement for the liberation of women. She also mentioned the artist Abdunnasser Gharem, who after serving for twenty years in the Saudi armed forces, dedicated himself to the world of art through his creations.

Despite the battles and war which continue in Iraq, artists there also are participating in this contemporary renaissance of art. Hayv Kahraman is one example. Syria is in a similar position, and has the photographer Hrair Sarkissian who succeeded in showing psychological and historic moments in the torment and turmoil of the daily life of the Syrian people.

She finally focused on the Lebanese artists who without a doubt were the brilliant founders of the cultural life of the Arab world, not only of the fine arts and drawing but also of theater, music, dance and architecture. The 91-year-old artist Etel Adnan, the oldest of the painters, is the standard-bearer for contemporary Arab-American culture. Her works often are exhibited from New York to London. She creates symbolic images of Lebanon's nature with such faithfulness and with harmony of colors. Of course, there is also Walid Raad, the 48-year-old artist,

and the 99-year-old Saloua Raouda Choucair, who in 2013, had her exhibition in London's Tate Modern.

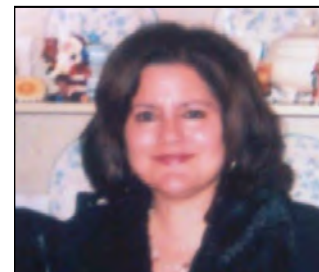
Art history lecturer Prof. David Joselit of CUNY conducted a brief interview, after which attendees had the opportunity to ask questions, which Aileen confidently answered.

Familiar with the psychology of the customers in her field, and well-versed in the developments

of contemporary international art, Agopian was able to hold the attention of her audience through her immediacy.

In that great crowd, we ten Armenians gathered together could only exchange expressions of admiration. We felt proud of the achievements of our new generation in the difficult world of international art.

(Translated from the Armenian)



## Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

### Oriental Bulgur Bowl with Chicken and Vegetables

#### INGREDIENTS

2 cups medium bulgur  
4 cups low-sodium chicken, turkey or beef broth (vegetable broth may also be used)  
A handful of broken or crushed vermicelli, orzo, or egg noodles  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 medium onion, finely chopped  
1 stalk celery (and top greens), finely chopped  
1 cup diced cooked chicken, ham, pork, or turkey  
1/4 cup each sliced carrots and frozen peas  
2 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce  
1/2 tablespoon garlic chili sauce  
2 teaspoons chopped fresh ginger  
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt or sea salt (to taste)  
Black or white pepper, red pepper flakes or paprika (to taste)  
Olive oil or unsalted butter, 3 tablespoons  
Finely chopped green onions, slivered almonds, and fresh mint and basil  
Toasted sesame oil  
4 beaten eggs, scrambled

#### PREPARATION:

In a large pot, sauté the vermicelli or noodles in the butter or olive oil until browned, tossing frequently but do not burn vermicelli, for about 5 minutes. Add the garlic, onions, and celery, toss, and cook for a few minutes longer. Add the bulgur, chicken, ham, pork, or turkey, carrots, peas, soy sauce, garlic chili sauce, ginger, salt, pepper, seasonings, and the broth; mix and bring ingredients to a full boil; mix again and reduce heat to medium low; cover and cook for 20-22 minutes or until all liquid is absorbed.

Let the bulgur sit about 5 minutes before serving. Toss with a fork. Serve in bowls and top each serving with some scrambled eggs; garnish bowls with chopped green onions, almonds, mint and basil; drizzle with toasted sesame seed oil and serve hot.

Serves 4.

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

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

### Meg Ryan's Film Based on Saroyan Novel Featured at Festival

SONOMA, Calif. – Meg Ryan's directorial debut is titled "Ithaca," based on Armenian American William Saroyan's novel *The Human Comedy*. This year at the Sonoma International Film Festival (SIFF) in Northern California, Meg Ryan will be honored with a Sonoma Salute Award at a tribute event on Thursday, March 31. The event will begin with a screening of "Ithaca" at 3:30 p.m.

"Ithaca" centers around the fictional town of Ithaca, Calif. during World War II. It is the story of 14-year-old Homer Macauley, who is determined to be the best and fastest bicycle telegraph messenger. His older brother has gone to war, leaving Homer to look after his widowed mother, his older sister, and his 4-year-old brother. The Human Comedy is based on Saroyan's personal life, growing up in Fresno with his siblings and his mother.

"Ithaca" will be featured at SIFF, which kicks off on March 30 and runs through April 4.



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# An Inheritance of Pain and Secrets

NOVEL, from page 1

The hardcover came out in 2015 and after a tremendous reception, the paperback was published earlier this year.

The book combines the tender story of love-struck teens amidst the background of the Armenian Genocide, uprooting and death, while also telling the contemporary story of a young Turkish man who upon the death of his grandfather, realizes that the family's homestead has been willing to an old Armenian woman in a Los Angeles nursing home.

The story captures the experiences of a well-to-do Armenian family right at the start of the Armenian Genocide. Of course, it is crushing to read how they are going about their lives, not realizing that the end is near.

Ohanesian's book didn't just get reviewed; it got raves in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Review of Books* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, among others.

"The credit goes to my publisher, Algonquin Books, and I suppose to fate or kismet. All publishers send books to these publications. Very few of them get reviewed and even fewer get favorable reviews."

And not only did the book get raves in newspapers, it became a book group favorite and endorsed by many other groups and writers.

The book was a #1 Indie Next Pick for the month of April 2015, a Barnes & Noble Discover Selection, an Amazon Top 100 Book of the Year, and a Library Journal Editor's Pick. The book was also long listed for the prestigious 2015 Center for Fiction First Novel Prize

"I started writing this book in 2007. I had no contacts in the industry and had no idea if it would ever publish. The timing of the release was not intentional. The universe sometimes works in our favor," she said.

"Every storyteller needs an audience. It is why we write. Pretending otherwise would be disingenuous. I am extremely grateful to people and institutions that recommend the book to others because it means more people will know

this story. One of the greatest moments in my life was finding out that the Independent Bookstore Association had chosen it as the #1 pick for April 2015. I love indie booksellers and the idea that they chose my book over all the others was incredible," she said.

"I was walking in the airport in Portland the other day and spotted my book on a shelf right next to Toni Morrison. I gasped audibly. I'm still trying to process all the love this book has received," said the humble Ohanesian.

The writing process is hard, but in one interview, Ohanesian had said that one day she clearly heard the words of Seda, the older Armenian protagonist stuck in a Los Angeles nursing home, and that her character was born.

When asked if this happens regularly, she joked, "Are you asking me if I regularly hear voices? No, I don't normally hear voices! It happened in the very beginning and only once, unfortunately. It was the catalyst that brought me to the writing table. I definitely don't think characters are floating in the ether. Story ideas, emotions, yes. But characters are built over time with a great deal of meditation."

Reading *Orhan's Inheritance*, one would be hard-pressed to guess that this is the first novel for Ohanesian.

She shyly demurred. "I never felt self-assured while writing it. I simply did my best to inhabit the body and psyche of whichever character I happened to be writing about. I never studied writing or literature in school. If I have any training at all it has to do with the fact that I have been a voracious reader and lover of fiction my entire life."

When asked whether the subject and its closeness to her made it harder or easier to write about, she said, "Both. Easier because I felt I knew this land and these people. Its sorrows and joys were part of my DNA. Harder because there wasn't enough psychic distance between me and the story. I doubt I will ever be as emotionally vulnerable as I was while writing this book."

And emotion is certainly present in this book. Ohanesian steers clear of getting cheap tears but deftly brings to life the rich Armenian family whose daughters are caretakers of their family. Their mother, a woman who fancies herself an artist and had hoped to live abroad, is in the depths of a depression after the arrest of her brother. The father is trying to run their textile business but day by day it becomes clearer that the Armenians' fate is not an enviable one. Add to this mix a young Turkish boy and his father who work for this family and you have a microcosm of the fate of the Armenians.

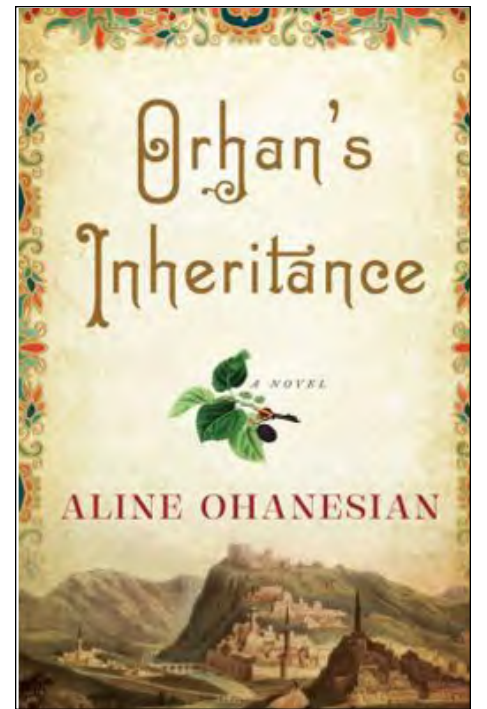
Ohanesian is a descendent of Genocide survivors. She was born in Kuwait to Armenian parents who had come from Lebanon and Syria. "I came to Los Angeles at the age of 4 and have lived here ever since," she said in a recent interview.

"My maternal great-grandmother, Elizabeth Arslanian, was a survivor. I knew her as a child and she was the one who first told me about the genocide. My paternal grandparents were also survivors. They met as orphans in Lebanon," she noted.

One of the striking things about the book is that the characters are not black and white; the delicacy of the teens' love or the violence of their separation and different fates come through with a light touch.

"I relate in different ways to different characters. The difficulty of writing from a character's perspective has very little to do with their gender or race. It has more to do with who they are on the inside, their values, their soul," she said. "It was easier to write from Orhan's perspective than it was his father's. Orhan is a kind decent person and an artist/ photographer. It was easier for me to relate to him than his religiously extreme, close-minded father."

Ohanesian said that she admires the works of Turkish authors who tackle the issue of the Armenian Genocide, including Elif Shafak and Orhan Pamuk.



"I admire both those writers tremendously and have read all their works," she said, adding, "I don't think it's my place to compare my writing with theirs."

The story takes place in the Sivas province as well as Istanbul, both of which Ohanesian has visited. She added that her family hails from Adana and Antep, but that she has not gone to those regions yet. "I would definitely go back to Turkey. I'd like to visit the eastern provinces with my sons," she noted.

Currently there are no plans to turn the book into a movie, but Ohanesian said that she is looking for a film agent.

Ohanesian is currently working on her next novel, "a reimagining of one of one of Western Civilization's founding narratives."

She noted that she is also touring with the paperback version of *Orhan's Inheritance*.

*Orhan's Inheritance*, published by Algonquin Books, is available at Amazon and bookstores across the nation.

# Let The Trumpets Sound!

TRUMPETS, from page 9

Armenia renovated the recital hall, where students have the opportunity to perform for family and friends, gaining valuable experience. Although the school had pianos and string instruments, wind instruments were lacking and most students from the local community who attend this school are not able to purchase their own. In response, AYO! (<https://weareayo.org/music-school/>) launched a crowd fundraising drive in late 2014. As AYO! wrote in its project presentation, "The school now has a beautiful performance space" and "tremendously dedicated students and staff. What could be missing? Instruments!"

The Fund for Armenian Relief (<http://farusa.org>) backed the effort and invited the Mirak-Weissbach Foundation ([www.m-w-stiftung.org](http://www.m-w-stiftung.org)), among others, to join. The funds needed for the instruments came together, and in early March it was announced that the school had received a shipment of new wind instruments, including trumpets, flutes, clarinets and saxophones. The only other item missing was furniture: to allow parents and friends to enjoy the concerts in the renovated recital hall, funds were needed to buy 120 chairs. If all goes according to plan, a concert will take place during the commemoration events around April 24th this year. (If it is "standing room only," then not for lack of chairs....)

## Anahid Tsitsikian

**Anahit Tsitsikian (1926–1999) was born in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Russia. After studying under Professor Karp Dombayev at the Yerevan State Conservatory (1946–1950), she won the Stalin Scholarship and completed her graduate course at the Moscow State Conservatory in 1954. While still a child, she started to perform both as a soloist and with symphonic orchestras. Beginning in 1961 she was the principal soloist at the Armenian Philharmonic Hall. She appeared in concerts throughout the Republics of the former Soviet Union and in 27 countries around the world, and produced four vinyl discs under the Melodiya label.**

**Her repertoire featured the music of modern Armenian composers, whose works she often co-authored, edited and premiered. In 1950 she began teaching at the Yerevan State Conservatory where she introduced three new courses: "The History and Theory of Bowed Instruments," "History of Armenian Performing Arts" and a course in music teaching practice. While still a student of the Conservatory, she began her research, and focused on bowing history and Musical Archaeology, of which she was the founder in Armenia. A participant in international scientific conferences, her studies have been published in Armenia and abroad. Her artistic career included performances in over a thousand recitals, recordings of 60 pieces of archived music, and texts of**



**more than 300 articles and scripts for both radio and television. She was a member of many local and international organizations, among them, the Composer's Union of Armenia, the Union of Soviet Composers, the Armenian Theater Union, the Journalists Union, the Women's Committee of the USSR, AOKS (cultural liaison committee of Armenia with foreign countries), the History of World Culture Committee in the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, The World Scientific Association of Historical Archaeology, etc. Anahit Tsitsikian passed away on May 2, 1999 and in that year the "Anahit Cultural Foundation" was established to continue her work and fulfill her dreams. The mission of the foundation is to facilitate the promotion of Armenian music by supporting musicians in their professional education and work, setting up and implementing cultural programs and events, and stimulating the integration of Armenian music within international music.**

(Adapted from [http://anahitmusic-school.com/?page\\_id=213](http://anahitmusic-school.com/?page_id=213))



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## CALENDAR

## CALIFORNIA

**APRIL 15 - DEADLINE.** If you are looking to embark on the educational adventure of a lifetime, then consider the American University of Armenia's Summer Program 2016. The program combines unique academic offerings with the benefits of a safe, welcoming, and exciting environment. Participants will also experience the authentic sights, sounds, and flavors of Armenia through the Discover Armenia Educational Tours. Apply at [im.aua.am](http://im.aua.am) by April 15.

## CONNECTICUT

**APRIL 23, 2016 Annual Armenian Genocide Commemoration. Connecticut State Capitol;** Flag Raising at 11:00 a.m.; Commemoration in the House Chambers at 11:30 a.m. Keynote Speaker, Shant Mardirossian, Chairman Emeritus, Near East Foundation.

## MASSACHUSETTS

**MARCH 13-MAY 21 — Book Tour Schedule for Armenians of the Merrimack Valley.** Authors E. Philip Brown and Tom Vartabedian are embarking on a presentation tour and book signing of their new book.

- **March 31:** Buttonwoods Historical Museum, 7 pm, 240 Water St., Haverhill
- **April 2:** Armenian Museum of America (ALMA), 2 pm, 65 Main St., Watertown, sponsored by ProjectSAVE
- **April 7:** Avak luncheon, St. Gregory Church, 158 Main St., North Andover, noon
- **May 21:** Vermette's Market, 6 Pond St., Amesbury, 10-2, book-signing only

**MARCH 31 — 8:00 p.m.: "From Musa Dagh to the Warsaw Ghetto: Armenian and Jewish Armed Resistance to Genocide,"** with Eric Bogosian, Dr. Deborah Dwork, Dr. Dikran Kaligian, and Dr. James R. Russell. Co-sponsored by the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University, the Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). At Harvard University, Science Center Auditorium D, 1 Oxford Street, Cambridge. Contact 617-489-1610 or [hq@naasr.org](mailto:hq@naasr.org) for more information.

**APRIL 2 — Swing into Spring Dinner-Dance. Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church,** Chelmsford, Kazanjian Ballroom, 180 Old Westford Rd. Chelmsford. Dinner at 6 p.m. followed by non-stop Armenian and Middle East music by the Jason Naroian Ensemble featuring Jason Naroian, dumbeg and vocals; Brian Anisbigian, oud; Ara Jeknavorian, clarinet; and Dave Anisbigian, guitar. Paid in advance tickets (received by March 27) are \$25 for adults, \$10 for children (6-12), and 5 & under, free. At-the-door, \$35 for adults and \$15 for children. For reservations, please contact Maria at [ria.tk@verizon.net](mailto:ria.tk@verizon.net) (617-240-3686).

**APRIL 2 — Back by popular demand — Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston (SNDC)** proudly presents the return of renowned entertainer/comedian/pianist **Kev Orkian** to Boston, with his brand new show "Little Fingers." Saturday, 8 p.m. (doors open at 7:30) in Shaw Auditorium, Watertown High School, 50 Columbia St., Watertown. Reserved seating only. Tickets are available by 617-852-1816. VIP tickets (limited amount available) are \$65 and include reserved priority seating and pre-show private reception with Kev. General show tickets are \$50, includes reserved seating. Visit [www.sayatnova.com](http://www.sayatnova.com) for the seating chart and see attached flyer for more details.

**APRIL 4 — St. James Men's Club, Monday,** featuring as speaker former CVS Health Vice President for customer service Mark Kolligian, whose topic will be "Healthcare in the 21st Century." Losh Kebab and Kheyra Dinner. Social Hour 6:15 p.m., Dinner 7 p.m. \$15 per person. St. James Armenian Church, Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, Keljik Hall, 465 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. Ladies are welcome.

**APRIL 7 — Book Event: Reclaiming Konia: A Tale of Love, Loss and the Armenian Genocide by Heather Martin** book talk and signing, 7:30 p.m., Adele & Haig Der Manuelian Galleries (3rd Floor). Heather Martin will speak about the development of the book, reading her favorite passages, and signing copies. The event is free and open to the public and light refreshments will be served at the reception.

**APRIL 9 — Sayat Nova Dance Company 30th anniversary Alumni Reunion.** Saturday, 7:30 p.m. in Cambridge. Calling all SNDC Alumni and members for an evening of fun and surprises. Come eat, socialize, reminisce.... RSVP by March 20, at [sndc\\_info@sayatnova.com](mailto:sndc_info@sayatnova.com) or call 617-923-4455.

**APRIL 9-10 — Two days of workshops, presentations, community and discovering your Armenian roots.** This conference grew out of the Armenian Genealogy group (*Haygagan Dzakumnapanutyun*) on Facebook. Watertown. Cosponsored by National Association for Armenian Studies and Research; Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Houshamadyan, Armenian Museum of America, Tekeyan Cultural Association, and Hamazkayin-Boston. Various times, Watertown area. To register, visit <http://www.armeniangenealogyconference.com/registration/>

**APRIL 15 — "Conversing with My Sister." Salpi Ghazarian, director of the Institute of Armenian Studies** at the University of Southern California, interviews her sister, author Maral Boyadjian, on Maral's book, *As the Poppies Bloomed*, a family history. 7 p.m. Reception, 8 p.m. At the Armenian Cultural Foundation in Arlington. Sponsored by the Armenian Cultural Foundation, Armenian International Women's Association, and Amaras Art Alliance. Free and open to the public

**APRIL 16 — Centennial Commemoration of the 1916 Consecration of the Sts. Vartanantz Church, Lowell.** Worship Service and Program at the original Sts. Vartanantz Church, 60 Lawrence St., Lowell. Outdoor architectural tour of the original Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church at 60 Lawrence St., Lowell, starting at 5:30 p.m. followed by a prayer service and narrated slide presentation on the formation and early life of the parish at 6:00 p.m. The church is handicap accessible. Reception to follow. Complimentary admission. For further information, please call 978-256-7234, or email [office@stsvartanantz.com](mailto:office@stsvartanantz.com).

**APRIL 17 — Erevan Choral Society Spring Concert, "In Commemoration of Our Sainted Martyrs of 1915."** Sponsored by Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 2:30 p.m., Church Sanctuary, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. The concert is under the direction of Composer Konstantin Petrossian, Music Director and Conductor. Guest Soloists are David Ayriyan (Kamancha) and Gohar Manjelijian (Mezzo Soprano), with Nune Hakobyan on the organ and piano. The Armenian and non-Armenian community is invited to commemorate through music the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide. The concert is a gift to the community.

**APRIL 22 — The annual commemoration of the Armenian Genocide at the Massachusetts State House.** Friday, 10.30 a.m., State House Chamber, Catered Reception at 12 noon in the Great Hall.

**APRIL 23 — Procession and flag raising for 101st anniversary of Armenian Genocide** at Lowell City Hall, 10 a.m., followed by a reception and cultural program by area schoolchildren at nearby Masonic Center. Sponsored by the Armenian National Committee of Merrimack Valley & Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee of Merrimack Valley. For the march, gather at corner of Merrimack & John Streets at 9:30 a.m.

**APRIL 30 — Armenian / American Dance,** Saturday, 7 p.m. - 12 a.m., 1 Market Street, Lawrence, Complimentary Coffee & Dessert, Cash Bar, 50/50 Raffle, Armenian music provided by Jason Naroian Ensemble, American music provided by DJ Kory Sirmaian. Tickets: \$20 in advance; \$25 at the door. Melanee Naroian:(978) 683-0613, Lucy Sirmaian: (978) 683-9121. Sponsored by The Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Women's Guild.

**MAY 5 — "Can Feminists Revive a Nation? Afterlife of Armenians in Post-Genocide Turkey."** Reception and illustrated talk with MIT Professor Lerna Ekmekcioglu on her new book, *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey.* 7:30 p.m. Armenian Museum of America, Watertown. Co-sponsored by the Armenian International Women's Association, National Association for Armenian Studies & Research, and Armenian Museum of America. Info: 617-926-0171 or [info@aivainternational.org](mailto:info@aivainternational.org); 617-489-1610 or [orhq@naasr.org](mailto:orhq@naasr.org).

**MAY 7 — Experience Public Art! during ArtWeek Boston.** Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. At 1 p.m. - World Labyrinth Day: Walk As One At 1 Together with people in cities and towns worldwide, walk the labyrinth at 1pm joining this annual international initiative of The Labyrinth

Society in collaboration with the Labyrinth Guild of New England and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park. For first-time walkers at 12:45pm, an Introduction to walking a labyrinth with Chiara Megighian Zenati, Certified Labyrinth Facilitator. At 1:30 pm - Reception to View The 2016 Configuration of the Abstract Sculpture Welcome: Nanore Barsoumian, Editor, *Armenian Weekly*; Public Art: Lucas Cowan, Public Art Curator, Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy; Personal Perspective: Alin Gregorian, Editor, *Armenian Mirror Spectator*; Tea & Desserts hosted by MEM Tea Imports and Eastern Lamejun Bakers. All are invited.

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

**MAY 14 — Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston continues its 30th anniversary celebrations** with a night of song and dance with beloved singer Arabo Ispiryan, direct from Armenia. Don't miss out on this night of pure Armenian entertainment. Come and celebrate with us as we sing and dance all night with Arabo. Generous appetizers (mezze) will be provided. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. To be held at St. James Armenian Church, Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown. Tickets are available by calling Apo at 339-222-2410 or Hagop at 617-780-6295. VIP table seating at \$100/person (includes 1 free drink/person and a bottle of champagne for the table); Premium table seating at \$75/person (includes a bottle of champagne for the table); General seating: \$65. Please reserve your tickets early.

**MAY 18 — Chefs Party for Our Park!** Benefit for Armenian Heritage Park's Ongoing Care Royal Sonesta Hotel Boston, Cambridge. Celebrate with Boston's Top Chefs, presenting signature dishes inspired by parents, grandparents or mentors for you to taste while you mix, mingle and support a great cause. Advanced Reservations only. To be acknowledged in the Evening Thank You, please respond by May 6. To receive an invitation, please email your name and email address to [info@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:info@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

## ILLINOIS

**APRIL 18 — Award-winning poet and critic Peter Balakian** will give a Center for Advanced Study (CAS)/ MillerCommleecture on "The Armenian Genocide, Poetry of Witness, and Postmemory" at the Spurlock Museum Auditorium at 4 p.m. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The event is free and open to the public and hosted by The Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies. Co-sponsored by: Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Department of English, Department of French and Italian, Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, Department of History, Department of Religion, European Union Center, Program in Comparative and World Literature, Program in Jewish Culture and Society, Spurlock Museum, The Future of Trauma and Memory Studies Reading Group.

## NEW YORK

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

## RHODE ISLAND

**APRIL 16 — Saints Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church, Providence, Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, "Legacy of our Martyrs,"** Saturday at 7 p.m. Concert of Armenian Patriotic Songs Performed by the Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island, 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Fellowship- Egavian Hall, following concert

## COMMENTARY

## COMMENTARY

## Armenia Bonds with Greece and Cyprus Over Common Foes

By Edmond Y. Azadian

As the European Union (EU) bowed down to Turkish demands and brought Turkey's accession talks with the union a step closer, Armenia's President Serge Sargsisian paid official visits to Greece and Cyprus, whose rights were trampled by the other members of the EU. (See related story, page 3.)

It was an opportunity to express solidarity with those two friendly countries and to develop further bilateral relations.

Turkey has occupied 38 percent of Cyprus' territory, established a client state on the northern part of the island and to add insult to injury, refuses to recognize the legitimate government of Cyprus as a sovereign state. And yet, the EU is compromising the sovereign rights of one of its own members, namely Cyprus, to settle the temporary issue of the refugees, which was Ankara's making to begin with.

A Greek representative of the EU Parliament, Gen. Eleftherios Synadinos, has been politically incorrect at one of the sessions, by expressing his outrage on the EU conduct vis-à-vis Turkey, making the following statement in a speech: "Mr. President, the day before yesterday, a summit was held between the European Union and Turkey. The results of this weren't just disappointing but a diplomatic Waterloo for the Union leaders. Twenty-eight Turk-loving leaders with dwarf stature sat and listened to a cruel blackmailer, a common crook, Davutoglu, imposing conditions for surrender and submission ... You have sold yourselves out to the Ottoman Erdogan."

He also spiced his speech with more colorful language, for which the parliament has expelled him as a "racist."

The Greek Parliamentarian had certainly predicted the outcome of his speech, but at least, he made sure that EU members got what they deserved.

Turkey has been bullying Cyprus since its 1974 aggression and the EU is continuing to accommodate the bully. Ankara is trying to have the same principle in both ways. It has occupied Cyprus under the pretext of protecting the Turkish minority there, while fighting tooth and nail in denying the right of self-determination to Armenians in Karabagh.

Although Armenians and Greeks have suffered under the yoke of the Turks and they have experienced the genocidal policy of the same power, they have not developed their policies to their full capacity yet.

The same could be said about the lobbying endeavors in the US and Europe. While Greek and Armenian groups face the same political challenges, they realize that they are against the same dangers and they cooperate occasionally but that cooperation seldom develops into a permanent common cause.

Perhaps that was the reason for Armenia's president visit to the two friendly countries, especially in view of the fact that Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia cooperate permanently to isolate Armenia in the region.

The political moment was also right to take that concrete step;

on the one hand, Armenia being a member of the Eurasian Customs Union is viewed as it serving as a bridge between the EU and that union and on the other hand, Armenia's close relationship with (embargo free) Iran creates a potential for economic development between Armenia, Greece and Iran.

During the Armenian President's visit to Athens, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said that he considered the Iran-Armenia-Greece collaboration to be a prospect that needed to be developed. He added that Greece sees opportunities also in the establishment of cooperation between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union and wishes to contribute to this objective. In addition he expressed his readiness to assist in the development of closer relations between Armenia and the EU.

It was also revealed that the legal framework of bilateral relations is quite wide. It covers more than 40 agreements of cooperation in the economic, military, cultural, scientific healthcare, communication, tourism and other sectors.

Armenia with its limited resources, never dared to move beyond its immediate neighborhood while other political configurations have been developing in the Middle East which may impact Armenia's plight directly and indirectly. While citing the Armenia-Greece-Iran cooperation format, Tsipras observed that his country has experience in such trilateral cooperation in Greece-Cyprus-Israel and Greece-Cyprus-Egypt formats which he said have worked efficiently.

As the EU and the US back Turkey at the expense of Greece and Cyprus, the latter have been developing their own blocs to counter Turkey's ambitions. The common factor that brings Greece, Cyprus and Israel together is the gas reserves discovered recently under the Mediterranean.

When Cyprus and Israel began exploring the undersea gas deposits, Turkey bullied them with armed intervention. But as its problems with its neighbors got overbearing, Ankara backed down.

During former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi's Islamic government, Turkey had come dangerously close to Egypt. But after the takeover by Gen. Abdulatif Sisi's military regime, Egyptian-Turkish relations can best be described as acrimonious.

Therefore by promoting relations with Cyprus and Greece, Armenia can weave its policies throughout the web of those international relations.

During Mr. Sargsisian's visit to Greece and Cyprus, the topic of the

Genocide was discussed. Armenia thanked both countries for recognizing the Genocide. In addition, special thanks were extended to Cyprus which has also adopted laws criminalizing Genocide denial.

Predictably, Turkey's Foreign Ministry reacted angrily to the statements by President Sargsisian and Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos about the Genocide.

Both in Nicosia and in Athens there were expressions of mutual support for the Karabagh and Cyprus problems.

Armenia's close relations with the two EU members will certainly enhance its foreign policy and liberate the country from its choking isolation.



# Mirror Spectator



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## Armenian General Benevolent Union Continues Its Mission in a New Era

By Hagop Vartivarian

Without a doubt, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) has been a gift of providence for Armenians throughout the past 110 years. It has achieved preeminence over the course of time as a philanthropic organization, and it impartially served the myriad of needs of our people, humanitarian, educational, cultural and youth-oriented.

The AGBU kept pace with the daily life of our people and its homeland over time. Though born simply as a philanthropic organization in the diaspora, it quickly expanded the scope of its mission, especially after the Armenian Genocide, in order to meet the limitless needs of Armenians in exile by opening orphanages, maternity hospitals, schools, poorhouses and dispensaries in nearly all our newly established communities.

Its chief concern remained providing an Armenian upbringing to the new generation.

It opened the Melkonian Educational Institute, where our public figures who would lead Armenian life were formed. On this model, the Union opened in nearly every community its schools, which not only became the furnaces of formation of Armenian culture, but also brought good things to the Armenian nation in general. The educational and Armenian patriotic level of these schools turned into synonyms of success and accomplishment.

see AGBU, page 14



# Remembering April 24: A Personal Odyssey

By Alan Whitehorn

I am the grandson of an orphan of the 1915 Genocide. Several years ago I thought about what I should do as 2015, the 100th memorial year of the Armenian Genocide, approached. As a political historian, how could I contribute in that historic year of remembrance and further educate the world and ourselves about the genocide? Little did I know that instead of writing a few journalistic articles and chapters in academic books about the Armenian Genocide, I would embark on a more challenging odyssey. Early in 2012, I was invited by Holocaust scholar and rabbi professor Steven Jacobs, working with the major American publisher ABC-CLIO, to contribute to a new online genocide encyclopedia which later became the four-volume *Modern Genocide: The Definitive Resource and Document Collection* (2014). I would write entries on the Armenian Genocide for both versions. Soon thereafter, a much more monumental task arose. For the next three years, I edited and wrote entries for a related volume. It was to be the first-ever encyclopedia on the Armenian Genocide with the publication date goal of 2015. *The Armenian Genocide: The Essential Reference Guide* emerged as a 425-page major volume that included seven overview essays, 150 subject entries, a detailed chronological timeline, maps, photographs and an extensive selection of key documents (including portions of the British government's official 1916 report *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, American Ambassador Morgenthau's memoirs and 1915 press reports from *The New York Times*).

## Literary Ark Writers' Workshop and the Global Forum

While working on the encyclopedias, I received an invitation to participate at the Yerevan Literary Ark Festival in April 2015. This was an ideal opportunity to share with other writers our reflections on the centennial of the Armenian Genocide. The Literary Ark Festival took place for 10 days and overlapped with the two-day Global Forum Against the Crime of Genocide that was held at Yerevan's great hall of the Sports and Concerts Center. On the two sides of the plenary hall were various displays about the Armenian Genocide. The National Library mounted a major book display, organizing the sections by country of origin

of publication. It was quite a revelation for me to see so many books, some for the first time.

During a brief break in the Global Forum, President Serge Sargisian visited the book display. I had a few moments to talk with him about my books and gave the president a copy of *Just Poems: Reflections on the Armenian Genocide* along with *Return to Armenia/Veradardz depi Hayastan*. I also showed him the mock-up of the new Armenian Genocide encyclopedia.

## Resurgence of the Diaspora

As I listened to the various speakers during the 10 day Literary Ark seminar, I wondered if the Young Turk dictators of 1915 had projected that virtually none of the elderly and orphaned Armenians would survive. No doubt, the Turkish triumvirate arrogantly believed that the elderly Armenians would surely soon perish and the orphans would rapidly disappear through assimilation. History, however, can unfold in complex and ironic ways. Many Diaspora Armenians, often from mixed marriages, who in their youth might have wished to assimilate and "fit in" to their new society, have in their later years sought to seek out and explore their Armenian identity.

Thus, on the eve of and during the centennial year of 2015, we have witnessed a renaissance of Armenian writings, particularly on genocide-related themes. For example, we can read historical novels by Chris Bohjalian, *Sandcastle Girls*, 2012 and Dana Walrath, *Like Water Like Stone*, 2014. We also note the following journalistic and academic volumes by Meline Toumani, *There Was and There Was Not*, 2014; Eric Bogossian, *Operation Nemesis*, 2015; Vicken Cheterian, *Open Wounds: Armenians, Turks and a Century of Genocide*, 2015; Mathew Karanian, *Historic Armenia After 100 Years*, 2015; Mariam Mesrobian MacCurdy, *Sacred Justice: The Voices and Legacy of Operation Nemesis*, 2015; Armen T. Marsoobian, *Fragments of a Lost Homeland: Remembering Armenia*, 2015; Rubina Peroomian, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature: The Second Generation Responds*, 2015; Ronald Suny, *'They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else': A History of the Armenian Genocide*, 2015; and Alan Whitehorn, ed., *The Armenian Genocide: The Essential Reference Guide*, 2015. The Diaspora literary and academic voices are very much alive and growing.

## From Academic to Poet and Back Again

In teaching university courses on comparative studies of genocide, it is crucial to be able to

explore and develop advanced analytical and theoretical frameworks. After several weeks of teaching such diverse models, inevitably the senior students ask for a summary. After one very long evening class, I tried to pen a one page synopsis. The already compacted and dense draft page was a complex piece of prose, but the early contours of a poem could be seen. As I went into heavy editing, I stripped down the text to its essence. In a minimalist fashion, all unnecessary descriptors and connectives were pruned. What remained was a stark, minimalist poem – one word per line – but which in only a few key words captured the essence of the various phases of genocide. The poem was composed of a series of malevolent verbs. A university course on genocide had given birth to a new poem, the "Verbs of Genocide." It has been several years now since the poem was published in *Return to Armenia/Veradardz depi Hayastan* and elsewhere. It has also been read at Armenian community gatherings and even recorded on YouTube by Armenian Canadian students.

About a year ago, one of my translators told me that a German editor/publisher, who had done significant outreach work on genocide with young students, had used my "Verbs of Genocide" poem in some of his workshops. Jurgen Jankovsky had not only used the poem as a key introductory overview piece in a collection of children's accounts about genocide, but he had chosen to use the poem's two closing lines "Verleugnet...Vergessen?" [Denied...Forgotten?] as the title of the newly edited German volume.

## April 24 and Armenian Families Mourning and Remembering

April 24th is a unique date in the Armenian calendar. Almost all normal commercial activity in Yerevan, the capital city, comes to a complete halt. Much of the downtown traffic is either totally blocked off or dramatically altered to allow the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims to walk kilometers up the steep hill to Tsitsernakaberd, where the Armenian Genocide Memorial monument and flame are located. Whether rain or shine, wave after wave of extended families, entire school classes of students, organized groups of Armenian citizens, foreign student Diaspora delegations, and even some visiting scholars and tourists line up patiently for hours. Slowly the mass of the Armenian nation inches solemnly towards the massive grey stone memorial. Near the end of the procession, each person on the pilgrimage usually acquires a flower, often a tulip, to

lay with loving respect in a circle around the eternal memorial flame.

I am always in awe at the vast wave of the humanity peacefully making its collective homage to those who perished in the 1915 deportations and massacres. On this day, nothing else matters and the Armenian nation is united as one in remembering and seeking long overdue recognition and justice. As a member of the Armenian Diaspora, I am always humbled by this profound moment of solidarity with both our ancestors and with one another.

When I went back to the Armenian Genocide memorial site a day later on April 25 of last year, I was struck by how the long lines remained. Armenians were still waiting patiently. They stretched as far as my eye could see. Twenty-four hours after the official dignitaries had left, the Armenian people were still waiting to show respect. The spirit of "we remember" continued to prevail.

## Remembering Metz mama on April 24th

As I stood on these dark stone steps at Tsitsernakaberd, I was surrounded by hundreds of thousands of mourners from around the world. There was a collective sense of enormous grief amongst Armenians, particularly in that historic 100th memorial year of 2015. Our parents and grandparents had endured so much terrible and unnecessary suffering. However, there was also a feeling of pride that the Armenian people have survived. Not only survived, but throughout the diverse Diaspora and the Republic of Armenia, we have rebuilt our family lives.

A great many of us owe our very existence to those brave few who helped the so many emaciated orphans. On the very special historic day of April 24, I think of my metzmama – my grandmother – and what enormous suffering she endured for so many years in one refugee camp and orphanage after another. But she possessed a remarkable will to survive, a passionate desire to live a life full of love and joy and to raise her own family.

This journey that I travel is very much inspired by her. I owe it to tell her story and that of the so many other countless orphans of the genocide. And so on a wet, windy day, I bow my head at the memorial flame and shed a tear of both sadness and joy. Metz mama, we remember. We remember.

[This article is an abridged and updated version of a chapter in *Literary Ark 2014: Armenia Hosts Literature* (Yerevan, AOKS, 2015).]

## Armenian General Benevolent Union Continues Its Mission in a New Era

AGBU, from page 13

Simultaneously, it opened gathering places, clubs, for these youth who graduated these schools or were in various fields of work. There in an Armenian environment our healthy and idealist youth matured.

Moreover, with the Sovietization of Armenia, the AGBU for 70 years kept alive that spirit of wholesome patriotism in the new generation, and in the masses, so that they would love the homeland and be proud of its scientific, cultural, educational, and, during the days of World War II, military exploits. It encouraged the repatriation of Armenians to Soviet Armenia. It provided its financial support in the initial stage to construction efforts, and later, to repatriation. It informed the Armenians of the diaspora of the cultural ascendancy of our homeland, now already at peace and with secure borders.

It always remained a believer in the unshakable and universal supremacy of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin. It believed in the noble principle of the unity of the Church of Armenia. It exhorted the diasporan Armenian during all the years of the Cold War to be closer to his homeland and Holy Echmiadzin. These would remain constant beacons of hope, insuring that Armenians would remain connected to their people and heritage.

## Stepping toward the 21st Century

At the end of the last century, the AGBU was confronted with new challenges. First, the great earthquake...and the Union reached out to our

suffering people in the disaster zone with all possible financial and human resources, including through foreign humanitarian organizations with which it was in contact. It became the advocate of that noble task, and served as an example to other organizations sharing the same ideology. They collaborated in sending large scale aid.

The AGBU welcomed the birth of the third Republic of Armenia, and rallied all its resources to help assure the prosperity of the homeland and the restoration of Armenian statehood, just as it had assisted Soviet Armenia in the past. It opened new possibilities for the new generations in Armenia in economic, educational, social and cultural spheres on the global level. It was important that the youth of Armenia understand the accomplishments of their great states besides Russia, including their political and financial situations, relations, cultures and languages. The AGBU opened the American university and assisted the French university in Armenia. Our new generation began to achieve in a different manner with different standards. The use of computers and the internet dictated by the modern world quickly also became a part of the daily life of Armenian youth.

The Union continued to show its unreserved love for the Mother See, securing it new benefactors and friends, and turning Echmiadzin into the Armenian Vatican. It fostered a high level of education so that henceforth worthy clerics would enter service and lead our diasporan and homeland dioceses. New publica-

tions, museums, and libraries turned the cathedral into a font of light.

Together with all this, the Union continued its initial mission in the Armenian diaspora. It encouraged our professional youth to join the AGBU and Armenian community life. Unfortunately, our traditional communities, having lost the attractiveness and capacity which they enjoyed in the past, became fragmented and their residents scattered to new shores. Meanwhile new communities were created in various parts of the former Soviet republics. Unfortunately, numerous Armenians also left Armenia to seek their fate in various countries, forming new communities, especially in Europe. These were the new challenges the AGBU faced.

## After the Genocide Centennial, the AGBU Prepares New Programs

In February of this year, the AGBU Central Board presented to Armenians a bold reformulation of its national mission under the name "Advancement and Prosperity." Of course it will take time to be completely developed, but it is clear that new programs will be added to its traditional ones, especially in Armenia.

The participation of the well-known Russian-Armenian philanthropist Ruben Vardanyan will play a distinctive role in this. For the first time in the history of the AGBU, an Armenian living in the homeland will be a part of this supremely Western Armenian organization.

As a member of the Supreme Spiritual Council, Vartanian has already made the

Mother See a subject of his great esteem and support. By joining the AGBU, he will bring his participation now to the work of our great Union. His benevolence already reaches Armenian schools and education.

The present leadership of the AGBU plans to revitalize the traditional structures of the Armenian diaspora, to expanding its mission among professional circles, and to secure new sources of funding in order to be able to confront new challenges.

There are, in addition to the president, Berge Setrakian, important idealist forces in the AGBU Central Board, including Sam Simonian, Vasken Yacoubian, Sarkis Jebejian, Nazareth Festekjian, Dr. Levon Nazarian, Ani Manoukian and Noubar Afeyan, who while preserving the glorious traditions of the Union will try through new programs to reach our new generations. We are confident that our over 1,600-year-old Armenian alphabet and our even older language will again enjoy a place of primacy in these programs. After all, other ancient peoples who have traversed history with us concluded after a 2,000-year experience of diaspora that the uniqueness of a people is preserved through the use of a language which becomes the chief guarantee of the preservation of that people.

We are happy to see the presence of a successful new generation in the supreme body of the AGBU, which is a guarantee of the success of the new mission of the Union.

(Translated from the Armenian)



## COMMENTARY



## My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## How to Get Rich While in Congress And Even After Retirement!

Two weeks ago, I reported that former Rep. Dan Burton had resigned as chairman of the Washington-based Azerbaijan America Alliance because he had not been paid for a year!

It is hard to feel sorry for a man who had eagerly gone to bed with the dictatorial regime of Ilham Aliyev until the money stopped.

For years, many members of Congress have supported all sorts of shady causes and foreign and domestic interest groups to not only reap financial benefits during their tenure in Congress, but more importantly, land a lucrative lobbying job after their retirement from “public service”!

Last week, a reader sent me an old article that had exposed Rep. Dan Burton’s questionable practices during his first 18 years in Congress, not including the last 12 years before his retirement. Titled “The Hypocrisy of Dan Burton,” the article was written by American Prospect Online reporter Lindsay Sobel in December 2001.

Ironically, while Burton was chairing the House

Government Reform Committee, he was doing “plenty of favors for contributors, according to an exhaustive investigation by The Hill and other publications in 1997 and 1998,” Sobel wrote. Burton had done “favors for reputed terrorists, human rights violators, and a despot.” As an example, Sobel cites Burton’s request to “the State Department to give former Zairian dictator Mobutu Sese Seko a visa to visit the United States after receiving thousands of dollars in campaign contributions and honoraria from Mobutu’s Washington lobbyist.... Around the time of the contributions, Burton also made statements on the floor of the House of Representatives praising Mobutu.”

Burton “also took thousands of dollars in legal contributions from people with business interests in Turkey,” Sobel reported. “Afterwards, he made a statement on the floor of the House of Representatives he had cribbed from a Turkish government official. The statement defended Turkey against well-documented charges that its government committed serious human rights violations against the Kurds. In 1996, Burton made another floor statement that almost exactly echoed materials that Turkey’s lobbying firm gave to members of Congress, according to The Los Angeles Times. Burton calls himself a defender of international human rights. Nevertheless, after receiving contributions from Turkey’s allies, he defended the country’s government on numerous occasions – despite the fact that the United Nations, State Department and numerous human rights groups have made serious allegations against Turkey’s government.”

Sobel also reported Burton’s involvement “in programs put on by the conservative International Freedom Foundation. Later investigations revealed that South Africa’s apartheid government funded the foundation in order to increase support for apartheid overseas, and discredit Nelson

Mandela’s African National Congress. At least two Burton contributors worked in the foundation’s Washington office, according to the Los Angeles Times. Consistent with his work with the foundation, Burton opposed sanctions against South Africa’s apartheid government and openly criticized the African National Congress.”

“In another case, Burton intervened with the Department of Education for a campaign contributor who owns a medical school in the Caribbean, according to Roll Call. Soon after doing the favor, Burton asked his contributor whether his daughter could apply to an affiliated veterinary program.”

Sobel’s research on Burton indicated that he had “run into other kinds of trouble as well. For example, the FBI investigated charges that Burton demanded that a lobbyist for Pakistan raise \$5,000 for his campaign or be barred from Burton’s office. (Burton admitted meeting with the lobbyist, but denied shaking him down.) In addition, The Hill reports that Burton paid his criminal defense lawyer \$25,000 out of his campaign – rather than personal – funds. Also, according to The Hill, Burton took an allegedly illegal contribution from a group founded by five organizations that the State Department identified as Sikh terrorist groups. Burton advocated the group’s cause – an autonomous Sikh homeland in India.”

Regrettably, Burton is not an exception in Washington. There are many others in and out of Congress who are just like him. Therefore, it is imperative to establish an Armenian-American watchdog group that investigates the financial records of all elected officials who consistently vote against Armenian issues and support Azerbaijan and Turkey. These two countries have such odious human rights records that the only reason politicians would support them is to enrich themselves either during their service in Congress or after retiring, and often both!

## Sexual Violence Against Armenian Women: A Weapon of Genocide

ANY WHO TALK and teach about the Armenian Genocide have had real difficulty over the past 100 years naming the systemic abuses against Armenian women for what they are: sexual violence and rape as tools of genocide.

Even ten years ago, when I was working on Facing History and Ourselves’ book *Crimes Against Humanity and Civilization: The Genocide of the Armenians*, crimes of sexual violence and rape were rarely addressed, despite the fact that nearly every account of Armenian women during the genocide included these experiences. I found myself unsure how to tell these stories, despite years of working in education on issues related to genocide.

But much has changed in the last ten years. Increasingly survivors, scholars, and activists are looking for ways to break the silence. At a 2014 United Nations Global Summit on sexual violence in conflict, actress and activist Angelina Jolie explained, “We must send a message across the world that there is no disgrace in being a survivor of sexual violence. The shame is on the aggressor.”

According to genocide scholars John Roth and Carol Rittner, rape has been a used as a weapon of war for centuries, but until recently it was not recognized as a war crime worthy of prosecution or a topic worthy of study. It was not until the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 1996, the first international war crimes trial held since World War II, that the victims and activists finally moved international political will to prosecute rape and other forms of sexual violence as an international war crime. On June 28, 1996 a headline in the *New York Times* read: “U.N. Court, for First Time, Defines Rape as War Crime.” The historic ruling included the indictment of eight Bosnian Serb military and police officers for their connection with the rapes of Muslim women during the war in Bosnia. This historic ruling was a landmark in the efforts to prevent and prosecute sexual violence during war.

Victims of wartime sexual violence have often been discouraged from speaking about the abuse they suffered, fearing shame, stigmatization, and ostracism. However, scholars note that survivor accounts of genocide and mass violence often explicitly speak to sexual abuse; this is particularly true in testimony from the Armenian Genocide. But it is true of sexual assault elsewhere as well: In a 1998 case before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Jean-Paul Akayesu became the first person convicted of rape as a component of genocide. That same year, the Rome Statute was establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC). Increasingly, Armenian American theater and literature have been exploring these themes as well, including recent work such as Chris Bohjalian’s *Sandcastle Girls*, Joyce Van Dyke’s “Daybreak” or Judith Boyajian’s *Women of Ararat*.

Facing History and Ourselves recognizes the difficulty of talking about sexual violence and rape inside and outside of the classroom. Educators, in particular, need to be particularly sensitive about the ways they share these stories with their students who come from a wide variety of backgrounds and life experiences. They will need practice, professional development, and resources to help think through developmentally appropriate strategies for introducing these histories into their curricula.

As part of the revision of our landmark resource *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior*, we worked with Professors Rother and Rittner to produce a mini-documentary, *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War and Genocide*. It is only one part of a larger conversation that is that examines the effect of genocide on women, and when viewed in the context of Facing History’s approach to teaching, can be a useful introduction for classrooms.

Facing history can be hard and uncomfortable. At the same time, that discomfort, if well facilitated, can create opportunities for deep moral and ethical reflection. All of us who care about the history of the Armenian Genocide, and preventing genocide today, have to find a way to name the crimes and recognize the patterns. It is only then that prevention is possible.

(Adam Strom is the Director of Scholarship and Innovation at Facing History and Ourselves. He is the author, editor and producer of numerous digital, print and video resources and publications including *Crimes Against Humanity and Civilization: The Genocide of the Armenians*. The Armenian Museum of America and Facing History and Ourselves are co-sponsoring “Past and Present: Commemorating Women Affected by Genocide” on April 10 at 4:30 p.m. at the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown.)

## Russia Has Sent a Clear Signal to Syria’s Assad

By Loay Mudhoon

There is no question about it: Russian President Vladimir Putin surprised friend and foe alike with his decision to withdraw most of his country’s troops from Syria.

In the Arab world, almost all of Assad’s opponents welcomed the move – above all Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which are the main supporters of the “moderate” Syrian opposition forces. Both countries hope Russia’s step will give a boost to the current Syria talks in Geneva.

In the case of the Assad regime, however, joy at the partial Russian withdrawal seems more subdued. In the past few days, Arabic media have reported multiple times on major differences of opinion between Putin and Assad that occurred shortly before Putin announced the withdrawal plans.

This disagreement between Assad and his protecting power regarding the goals of Russia’s intervention had already made itself felt directly after the recent ceasefire went into force: In interviews with the international press, Syria’s dictator made no bones about his intention to bring the entire country under his control. This candor provoked several Russian diplomats to put him in his place – and to point out the necessity for a political resolution of his country’s conflict.

This incident shows clearly that Russian interests are not entirely congruent with those of Assad. It is true that Putin wanted to save the Assad regime from destruction at the hands of rebels. He also aimed to weaken the Western-backed “moderate” rebels, with the fight against the so-called “Islamic State” playing little or no role in his considerations.

But Putin on no account intended to help his vassals in Damascus win a military victory: This would have drawn the Russian army into

a brutal and expensive war against the Sunni majority population in Syria. A second Afghanistan would massively damage Russia’s economic and political interests.

### Mission accomplished

Putin has now to a great extent achieved his goals: The Assad regime has been stabilized with the help of the Lebanese Hezbollah and various Shiite militia. It has been possible to extend the strategically important military base in Tartus; a second base was even built. And a change of regime along the lines of the NATO intervention in Libya is no longer possible. Russia has thus asserted itself as the pioneer of a new authoritarianism that apparently aims to contain and destabilize democracies.

But there is something still more important: With its bloody intervention, Russia was able to demonstrate to the West, which has remained passive in the Syria conflict, that this former world power, recently disparaged by US politicians as a “regional power,” is firmly back on the stage of international politics. It at any rate seems almost unimaginable that there could be a political resolution of the complex proxy war in Syria that goes against Moscow’s will.

For this reason, Russia’s troop withdrawal is to be seen as a signal to Assad. Putin wants him to enter at last into serious negotiations with the opposition so that the remaining state and above all the territorial unity of Syria is preserved. But so far, Assad doesn’t really seem to be considering sharing power.

In view of the fact that only a transitional Syrian unity government without Assad can pave the way for a political resolution, all Western hopes for an end to the brutal war in Syria are pinned on – of all people – Putin.

But for this outcome to occur, Putin would have to be prepared to drop Assad.

(Loay Mudhoon is a staff writer for the German-based Deutsche Welle agency.)

## Archbishop Yeghishe Gizirian Dies

YEGHISHE, from page 1

During the past few years, Gizirian agreed to share some of his wisdom and life experience in video interviews. At the following links, our faithful can listen to his life story in his own words, and hear his wise thoughts on the meaning of prayer.

The Final Anointing and Burial service took place on Wednesday, March 23, also at St. Vartan Cathedral, 630 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y.). Interment will be at Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale, NY, after which there will be a hokejash at the nearby St. Gregory the Enlightener Armenian Church, 1131 North Street, White Plains.



## Members of Congress Request Assistance for Armenia, Karabagh

ASSISTANCE, from page 1

leaders to promote the important issues outlined in the letter," Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny said. "We live in a dangerous time, as ISIS commits genocide against Christians and other minorities, millions of people have become displaced by violence and civil war, and Azerbaijan threatens a new war in the South Caucasus with its repeated cease-fire violations. With the proposed changes to the FY 2017 Appropriations Budget, the Administration has the opportunity to help resolve some of these critical concerns."

The letter calls for a stronger US stance regarding Azerbaijan's increasing number of hostile acts against Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh. Earlier this month, the Obama Administration released its budget for the upcoming year, maintaining a military parity between Armenia and Azerbaijan at \$1 million for Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and \$600,000 for International Military Education and Training (IMET), a decrease from the previous year. The letter recommends a suspension of US military aid to Azerbaijan "until its government ceases cross-border attacks, ends its threat of renewed war, and agrees to a settlement of regional conflicts through peaceful means." Members of Congress are also requesting supplemental language to strengthen Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act.

The letter points out that Karabagh government officials have been excluded from the peace process since 1998. "Nagorno Karabagh should, in the interests of peace and basic fairness, be permitted to fully participate in all talks regarding its future. The best and most sustainable path to peace requires direct engagement with the people

and government of Nagorno Karabagh, whose fate and future are the subject of ongoing talks," the letter reads.

Last week, Secretary of State John Kerry confirmed that the crimes committed by ISIS constitute genocide against Yazidis, Christians, and other religious minorities, including Armenians. Armenia does not have adequate resources to continue helping refugees escaping from genocide. The administration's proposed budget allocated nearly \$3 billion for migration and refugee assistance, some of which could go towards Armenia's resettlement efforts.

Armenia accepted the third largest amount of refugees in Europe, sheltering nearly 20,000 Syrians. Armenia hosts six Syrian refugees per 1,000 nationals – a ratio much higher than most countries.

"As a host country, Armenia has been absolutely exemplary in terms of the ratio of welcomed Syrian-Armenian refugees to the number of native inhabitants," said United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Representative in Armenia Christoph Bierwirth.

The letter supporting increased assistance to Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh for FY 2017 was signed by Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ); Robert Dold (R-IL); Gus Bilirakis (R-FL); Tony Cardenas (D-CA); David Cicilline (D-RI); Judy Chu (D-CA); Katherine Clark (D-MA); Mike Coffman (R-CO); Jim Costa (D-CA); Joseph Crowley (D-NY); Anna Eshoo (D-CA); Chaka Fattah (D-PA); James Langevin (D-RI); Barbara Lee (D-CA); Daniel Lipinski (D-IL); Zoe Lofgren (D-CA); Stephen Lynch (D-MA); Carolyn Maloney (D-NY); James McGovern (D-MA); Grace Napolitano (D-CA); Collin Peterson (D-MN); Jared Polis (D-CO); Mike Quigley (D-IL); Charles Rangel (D-NY); Linda Sanchez (D-CA); Loretta Sanchez (D-CA); John Sarbanes (D-MD); Jan Schakowsky (D-IL); Adam Schiff (D-CA); Brad Sherman (D-CA); Jackie Speier (D-CA); Dina Titus (D-NV); and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD).

## Armenian President Sargisian to Visit Boston March 28-31

VISIT, from page 1

various unrelated political issues. The prime minister, the last two ambassadors of Armenia and the foreign minister, as well as both catholicoi of the Armenian Church have visited the park already.

The president also has heard the praise of Boston as a unified and vibrant community from the previous several ambassadors of Armenia to the US, according to Kalustian. Consequently, the latter said, visiting this community has been a longstanding desire of the president.

Nazarian added, "This presidential visit celebrates the 25th anniversary of the rebirth of our nation, something not witnessed by our ancestors over the past few hundred years."

Tuesday, March 29, will begin with Sargisian making a brief visit to the Old North Church to express Armenia's appreciation for the kind reception Armenians have been given in the US by the Episcopalian Church. The ecumenical and interfaith community will be invited to this event.

Later the same morning, at 10.30 a.m., a formal wreath-laying ceremony will take place at the Heritage Park, with the presentation of colors and a short program with Massachusetts officials. This ceremony is free and open to the public. Individuals must make their own transportation arrangements.

The president will go on to MIT to meet with scientists, academics and administrators. After this, there is a program with the Luys Education and Endowment Fund for the Armenian World and the Luys scholars, followed by a dinner for scientists hosted by the Ann and Noubar Afeyan Foundation. Dr. Noubar Afeyan said, "MIT represents global excellence in science and engineering, as well as education, and Armenia is aspiring to excel at a global level in these and other fields. Coming and seeing this example, and connecting with Armenians in these fields today is a major step in a positive direction."

On Wednesday, March 30, after a closed event

at Tuft's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, at 12:45 p.m., the president and the new Armenian ambassador to the United States, Grigor Hovhannissian, will be received by Charlie Baker, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and other high-ranking state officials at an official state welcoming ceremony at the Massachusetts State House (24 Beacon Street). This ceremony is open to the general public. In the protocol for the visit of a head of state, the front doors of the State House are opened and the Armenian delegation will pull up to the entrance in their car. The governor will greet the president at the steps of the State House and escort him up the stairway for the Armenian and American pledges of allegiance. Afterwards he will meet with the president in his office.

Later that afternoon, the president will give a major address at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School to academics. He will also be visiting Armenian churches and community institutions during his visit. A leadership reception will take place at Keljik Hall of the Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center at St. James Armenian Church with Armenian American community representatives.

The next morning, the president will stop at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate on the way to the airport to pay his respect to the Kennedy family and Senator Kennedy in particular. The senator helped Armenia open up to the West and was close to the Armenians. Victoria Kennedy, the senator's widow, will give the president a private tour of the institute.

"We are excited to host the president, his chief of staff, new ambassador and cabinet secretaries on their first official visit to Massachusetts. We appreciate the work of Dusty Rhodes and Conventures, Inc., in assisting us with this official visit to the Commonwealth," said Barsamian.



HIS EXCELLENCY  
**SERZH SARGSYAN**  
*President of the Republic of Armenia*

IS VISITING BOSTON!

WELCOME HIM DURING HIS VISIT IN COMMEMORATION  
OF THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
INDEPENDENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA



Photo: Peter Vanderwarker

### CEREMONIAL WREATH LAYING

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2016  
10:30 AM

*Armenian Heritage Park  
Boston, Massachusetts*

This tribute will feature a presentation  
of colors and a short program with  
Massachusetts Officials.

*Free and open to the public*

### OFFICIAL ARRIVAL CEREMONY

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2016  
12:45 PM

*Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts*

Please join in this special viewing event on the  
Massachusetts State House Staircase as  
Elected Officials welcome President Sargysan  
and Ambassador Grigor Hovhannissian.

*Free and open to the public*

For more information, please contact  
[armenian100@conventures.com](mailto:armenian100@conventures.com) or 617-204-4245.