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## A Special Day In the German Bundestag

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN – Will the German Bundestag ever make up its mind about the genocide? This is the question raised last October when the news broke that the government coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats (CDU-CSU/SPD) had agreed to put the issue on the back burner for an undetermined period of time. The reason, clearly, was Berlin's concerns not to endanger negotiations with Turkey regarding the refugee crisis that is destabilizing German politics and threatening the European Union with internal strife if not dissolution. My view at the time (*Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, "Recognition, Realpolitik and the Ravages of War" October 22) was that the genocide resolution could wait, if necessary, but that it was urgent for German political leaders, eager to fight the root cause of the refugee crisis, to acknowledge the nefarious role played by Erdogan's Turkey in the Syrian war. I argued that, however vital in managing refugee flows, Turkey was itself part of the problem, by virtue of its support for the so-called Islamic State. Unless that issue came to the fore, hopes to deal with

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Green Party leader Cem Özdemir (left) seals the promise with a handshake with CDU Parliamentary Faction Leader Volker Kauder

## A Granddaughter's Journey

By Alin K. Gregorian  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

LOS ANGELES – Dawn Anahid MacKeen grew up in Los Angeles, the granddaughter of survivors of the Armenian Genocide. She is also an investigative journalist. Combing her vocation with her passion seemed like a natural thing.

That is how the idea for her new book, *The Hundred Year Walk, An Armenian Odyssey*, was born.

"I wanted to look at [the Genocide] from a reporter's perspective," she said during a recent interview from her home in Los Angeles.

MacKeen was thrilled to find out that her grandfather, Stepan Miskjian had kept meticulous journals.

"I grew up with the story of my grandfather. But I only knew part of it," she said.

The family believes, MacKeen said, that he did not write his journals during the Genocide, as he was barely surviving from one day to the next. Instead, they think he started in 1930.

Some of his journals, he said, were published in the 1960s in Armenian.

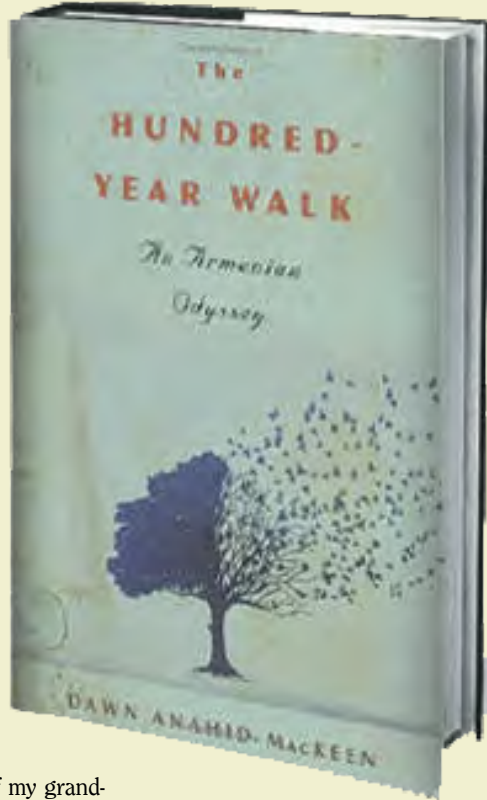
In the past decade, MacKeen began the effort to collect all of them and have them all put into order and then translated.

MacKeen, who is Scottish on her father's side, grew up in the Los Angeles suburb of Los Feliz. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of California at Berkeley and her master's from Northwestern.

She worked at several prestigious news outlets, including *Salon*, *Newsday* and *SmartMoney*.

"I knew I had to do something. I had been investigating assisted living facilities for eight or nine months," she

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Dawn Anahid MacKeen



## Online Petition Seeks Release of Sevan Nisanyan

VIENNA – A petition on change.org seeks the release of Sevan Nisanyan, the Turkish-Armenian journalist who has been held in a maximum-security prison since 2014. He was arrested on charges of violating zoning and building codes, charges which do not merit the harsh sentence. He has been a vocal and longtime critic of the regime.

Almost 12,000 have signed it so far. (See related editorial on page 14.)

The petition, which is reproduced below, is being sent to Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu:

Sevan Nisanyan (60), a prominent Turkish intellectual of Armenian origin, was handed a cumulative jail sentence of 16 years and 7 months after he made the fatal mistake of using mocking language about Muhammed, the prophet of

Islam, in a blog entry in September 2012. He has been held in a maximum-security Turkish prison since January 2, 2014. He



Sevan Nisanyan

will not be eligible for parole until 2024.

Nisanyan is a man of multiple achievements. A graduate of Yale (BA 1979) and

Columbia (MA 1983), he taught linguistic history at Istanbul's Bilgi University. His *Etymological Dictionary of Modern Turkish* (first ed. 2002, currently in 3rd ed.) is the main work of reference in its field. He has also written frequently on cultural and historical topics – erudite, witty and often provocative studies of the Turkish national psyche. His targets have included Atatürk and Islam, two "untouchables" of Turkish public discourse.

Nisanyan is also known for Sirince, an ancient hill village in the South Aegean, where he has lived with his family since 1992. A self-taught architect, Nisanyan led the effort to preserve and renovate the village, using traditional techniques and forms. Along with Ali Nesin, a prominent mathematician, and others, he founded a series of unconventional academic institutions in Sirince, including a mathematics institute, a philosophical academy and a theater school. His work received awards, and was nominated for the

see PETITION, page 3

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### 300 Year-Old Armenian Church in Turkey Is for Sale

BURSA (Anadolu Agency) – A 300 year-old Armenian Church in northwestern Turkey has been put up for sale for \$1.5 million on an online shopping platform.

Having sustained severe damage in recent decades, the church in the northwestern province of Bursa was put up for sale online by a real estate agent on behalf of its owner, who lives abroad.

The church, registered by the Bursa General Directorate of Foundations in 1986, is located near the Green Tomb and the Emir Sultan Tomb in the Setbasi neighborhood.

The posting on [www.sahibinden.com](http://www.sahibinden.com) is titled "Church for sale, unique and suitable for every use."

The real estate agent who placed the ad, Tayfun Ozenginler, told Anadolu Agency that Bursa has many historic churches due to the Armenian and Greek communities.

"The area where the church is situated was once inhabited by Armenians," Ozenginler said.

"This particular building has been used for many different purposes since the exchange of population law [between Turkey and Greece]," Ozenginler said, adding that he has already received a number of enquiries about the advert.

### President Creates Coalition with ARF

YEREVAN (AFP) – Armenian President Serge Sargisian on February 24 invited the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, or Dashnaksutyun, to join his government, in a controversial power-sharing deal highlighting a stalemate in efforts to normalize ties with arch-foe Ankara.

The ARF three ministerial posts and appointed two regional governors, according to the memorandum it signed with Sargisian's ruling Republican Party (HHK).

In a decree signed by Sargisian, Dashnaksutyun's Avik Minasyan was named economy minister. Davit Lokyan and Levon Mkrtchyan were appointed ministers of education and of the local administration respectively.

Dashnaksutyun, a socialist party which currently holds five seats in Armenia's 131-member parliament, also advocates territorial claims to Turkey.

Dashnaksutyun went over to the opposition in 2009 after Armenia and Turkey signed an agreement to normalize relations.

The Zurich protocols, which would have led to the opening up of the border between the two neighbors, have since languished without ratification.

In February 2015, Sargisian recalled the protocols – brokered by the United States, France and Russia – from parliament, citing the "absence of political will" on the Turkish side.

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Armenia, Switzerland Sign Visa Facilitation Agreement

GENEVA (Armenpress) – Armenian Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian met with the head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Didier Burkhalter, on February 29, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Nalbandian expressed satisfaction over the dynamically developing Armenian-Swiss relations while Burkhalter mentioned that Switzerland attaches importance to strengthening friendly relations with Armenia.

The two discussed a range of bilateral issues, including economic and cultural cooperation, parliamentary ties and the reinforcement of cooperation within international organizations.

At the end of the meeting they signed an agreement on visa facilitation between Armenia and Switzerland.

## Armenian Films at Socially Relevant Festival

YEREVAN (ArmeniaNow) – Five Armenian films are going to be screened in New York next month as part of a film festival promoting awareness to social problems and attempting to offer positive solutions through the art of cinema.

The SR-Socially Relevant Film Festival New York was founded in 2013 by Nora Armani, a well-known Armenian American actress and producer. The 2016 edition of the festival will take place on March 14-20.

Among the films brought to New York from different countries this year will also be five by Armenian directors, including “Eclipse” by Ara Yernjaky, “My Son, Where is the Euphrates?” by Ruben Pashinyan, “How to Pass (from Jiliz to Jiliz)” by Marine Kocharyan and Sona Kocharyan, “I Already Know” by Anna Bayatyan and “The Girl on the Moon” by Aren Malakyan.

The films raise various social problems, from vulnerability of children to wars and conflicts and living with memories of the genocide to lives divided by frontiers, social stigmas and coping with challenges imposed by disability.

## Sumgait Tragedy Was State-Organized: Ashot Melkonyan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Many years have passed since Sumgait pogrom but the international community has not completely perceived the truth, therefore Armenian side’s fight, related to propaganda of the mentioned issue, needs to be continued, Director of the History Institute of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences Ashot Melkonyan said during the presentation of Bakur Karapetyan’s book, *The Sumgait Diary*.

“There are forces today, which believe Azerbaijani falsification on the Khojaly events and forget the anti-Armenian policy and massacres against Armenians organized by Azerbaijani and their ancestors Caucasus Tatars not in the recent past,” he said.

He said it is regrettable that the world often forgets about massacres and destructions against Armenians in Baku, 1905, destructions and massacres against local Armenians in Shusha, 1920 and mass murder of 30,000 Armenians in Baku, 1918.

“The Sumgait pogrom was a new genocide and it fully complies with the criteria set out in the UN Convention on Genocide, as the massacres against Armenians, regardless of the number of victims, was made on the basis of their nationality,” he said. Drawing parallels between 1988 Sumgait massacres and 1905 February’s Baku massacres of Armenians during the Armenian-Tatar conflict, he said that in both cases there were the same provocations. As it happened in 1905, Azerbaijani authorities also pre-organized everything in the February of 1988, prepared the murderers.

Karapetyan in his speech blamed the tragedy on the Kremlin. Mikhail Gorbachev was aware of organized massacres and deliberately took no steps to prevent it, he said.

# Helping Armenia One Village at a Time

YEREVAN – Villages in Armenia are often neglected and lack basic necessities. The mountainous village of Vahagni in the Lori region is no exception. At one time this village had a population of more than 3,000. Today that number has fallen below 1,000. Due to lack of employment opportunities, many have already left the village for cities in Armenia like Vanadzor and Yerevan, or immigrated to Russia, Europe and the US.

This past summer a group of seven volunteers went from the US at their own expense and traveled to Vahagni, Armenia on a specific mission: to redesign a small house for a new use as a kindergarten. The trip was organized by Dorcas Aid America, a not-for-profit organization affiliated with Dorcas International based in Holland.

The future kindergarten had been purchased in 2014. Skilled local men in Vahagni worked diligently for nearly one year to make structural improvements (change the roofline, accommodate a new sunny multipurpose room, install a bathroom, level the outdoor area and build a fence). When the team from the US arrived in July 2015, there was still plenty of work to be done to complete the renovation work (electrical wiring, plumbing, hanging cabinets, painting and refinishing the floors, painting the exterior walls).

The public was invited for an official opening. Thirty kindergarten children from the village, along with their parents, gathered for the festive dedication and to hear the team members express their appreciation for the opportunity to serve. The mayor’s representative read a proclamation letter with the message that this was their kindergarten and it needed the support and involvement of the entire community. Finally, the children gathered in a circle holding hands while two of them had the honor of cutting the ribbon in front of the kindergarten door.

The structure was complete and the long-awaited hope of having a kindergarten in Vahagni was to become a reality. Until now, Vahagni had only one school for students above age five; the thirty children from ages 3 to 5 had no opportunity for preschool education. The team had a new challenge before them: how to finance the operation of this kindergarten. The annual cost was estimated to be \$12,000 which included salaries of four staff, utility expenses, school supplies and also food for the



Volunteers working to construct new buildings in the village

children. As previously agreed, Dorcas was willing to pay only for the purchase and the renovation of the property, for which we are thankful. Funds would be needed to operate the school.

Upon their return from Armenia, four of the volunteers made a commitment to support this kindergarten and similar projects in villages in Armenia. These volunteers had already participated in projects like this one and, in every case, achieved their goal. The earlier projects included renovating a med-

ical clinic and a church, opening a bakery and helping individuals open small businesses which created additional employment opportunities. Recently these four volunteers formally committed themselves to the welfare of village people in Armenia by forming the non-profit organization Armenian Village Aid, Inc. (AVA).

AVA was incorporated in November 2015 and immediately started to create awareness about the desperate condition of villages in Armenia. Through raising funds from their own efforts and donations from concerned individ-



Children in a new school

kindergarten will not resolve the migration of villagers, but it does give hope. Efforts such as this kindergarten sends a clear message to those who are the future generation: the children of the villages are not forgotten or neglected, but are loved and worth the effort. We therefore kindly ask those who are concerned with the future of our free homeland to extend their support, even with humble gifts. Because AVA has no overhead expenses, every penny invested will bring a great return.

To join the group and support its mission, email us at [armvilaid@gmail.com](mailto:armvilaid@gmail.com).

ical clinic and a church, opening a bakery and helping individuals open small businesses which created additional employment opportunities. Recently these four volunteers formally committed themselves to the welfare of village people in Armenia by forming the non-profit organization Armenian Village Aid, Inc. (AVA).

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## EU Rep. Visits Armenia for Talks on Karabagh, Syria

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – President Serge Sargsian on March 1 received Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European

Sargsian hailed the launching of negotiation on a new Armenia-EU legal framework and voiced hope that the parties would successfully complete the important process.

Sargsian referred to the large-scale reforms in Armenia, including the constitutional changes adopted last December. The President stressed that our country is resolute to continue the reforms in different spheres and values EU’s financial and expert assistance.

During the meeting reference was made to the negotiations on the settlement of the Karabagh conflict underway within the framework of the

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

Mogherini reiterated EU’s support for the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group and the three core principles that lie in the basis of the talks – non-use of force or the threat of force, the right of peoples to self-determination and territorial integrity.

Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian said at a joint press conference with

Summing up the results of the visit, Nalbandian said Yerevan and Brussels share the opinion that the maintenance of the status quo is in no one’s interest.

“The non-constructive steps targeted at aggravating the situation, the attempts to distort the negotiation process, the refusal to create a mechanism of investigation of border incidents and the belligerent rhetoric contribute

to the maintenance of the status quo,” Nalbandian stated.

Nalbandian said the establishment of a strong partnership with EU benefits not only the two parties, but also the region as a whole.

Impressed by her first visit to Armenia, she said, “Armenia has provided refuge to about 20 thousand Syrian refugees, thus being the third in Europe with the number of migrants hosted,” the Minister said and added that “Armenia appreciates the possible EU assistance in that direction.”

The implementation of the agreement on Iran’ nuclear program was also on the agenda of the talks, Nalbandian said. To conclude with, the Armenian Foreign Minister stressed that “the Armenia-EU relations are on a high level and the perspectives are promising.”





## INTERNATIONAL

# Armenia Condemns Crimes Against Humanity in the Middle East

GENEVA (ArmRadio) – Eduard Nalbandian, Foreign Minister of Armenia, made the following statement given at the 31st Session of the UN Human Rights Council on February 29, follows.

Ten years of successful experience of the Council is by itself an achievement but it is also a major responsibility. The experiences of recent years prove that human rights, peace and security are interrelated.

Rights Council has played a key role in international efforts aimed at genocide prevention. There is a growing consensus in the international community that prevention will be effective if it is accompanied by the fight against impunity, against the denigration and denial of the committed genocides.

Armenia continuously works on the concept of genocide prevention, and regularly presents to the Human Rights Council appropriate resolutions.

mediators for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. Armenia fully shares this approach because, without free and full exercise of this right, a whole range of human rights are unattainable and lasting peace endangered. We do agree with the view, expressed in the UN, that self-determination is an expression of democracy, and its implementation is essential to the establishment of a peaceful international order.

According to the Geneva Conventions civilians may under no circumstances be the object of attack and must be protected. Armenia strongly condemns the continued attacks of Azerbaijani military forces against civilians and civilian objects along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border and the line of contact with Nagorno-Karabakh. It is yet another gross violation of the international humanitarian law by Baku. It requires immediate reaction from the international organizations.

Mr. President, I would like to add a few words about Armenia's human rights commitments and new developments within human rights agenda.

Armenia continues its efforts aimed at consolidating democratic institutions, strengthening the rule of law, national mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights and sustains strong partnership with the international organizations. We actively work with all UN human rights mechanisms, including special procedures and treaty bodies.

Constitutional reform in Armenia that the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe characterized as of "extremely high quality" and "in line with international standards," was approved by the nation-wide referendum last December. It is another important step also aimed at advancing many of the mentioned goals.

In 2015, Armenia passed through the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In November last year, a government-civil society dialogue was held, during which the process of implementation of the UPR recommendations was discussed. The government of Armenia is planning to submit a mid-term progress report which will be continuation of the best practices of work within the UPR process and gives us more opportunities to assess the current situation and rightly planning further actions. The successful implementation of recommendations stemming from the UPR and other UN human rights mechanisms will further strengthen Armenia's human rights records and strengthen the rule of law and democracy.

Thank you.



Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian

Today the world is facing unprecedented threats and challenges. We are facing the rise of hatred, xenophobia and racial discrimination, facing situations, where the right to life is under serious threat, as war and other acts of mass violence continue to take the lives of thousands of innocent human beings around the world.

Armenia condemns the atrocities, the crimes against humanity perpetrated in the Middle East, by "Daesh," Al-Nusra and other terrorist groups, which constitute a threat to the existence of religious and ethnic minorities in the region, including the Armenians who have been for centuries a genuine component of the cultural diversity of the Middle East.

About 20,000 refugees sought protection in Armenia due to the conflict, on per capita basis making our country as the third largest recipient of Syrian refugees in Europe. We welcome the initiative to convene a high-level meeting on global responsibility-sharing through pathways for admission of Syrian refugees which will take place at the end of March, here in Geneva.

During its existence, the Human

In March last year the Human Rights Council, upon the initiative of Armenia, unanimously adopted a resolution on the Prevention of Genocide. I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all countries who cosponsored and supported this resolution. In its follow up to this initiative Armenia continued its efforts within the UN General Assembly by introducing a resolution on designating the 9th of December as the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the International Covenants on Human Rights. The first article of these Covenants proclaims: "All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." It is well known that the UN Charter underlines the respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples as a purpose of this organization.

This right is among the basic principles presented by the international

## Online Petition Seeks Release of Sevan Nisanyan

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prestigious Aga Khan Award for architecture. (See related editorial, Page 14.)

In recent years Nisanyan wrote often about the rising Islamic threat to liberties. On September 22, 2012, in response to a proposed government bill to tighten blasphemy laws, he wrote that mockery of "an ages old Arab leader who made political, financial and sexual profit by claiming contact with Deity" must come under the protection of free speech. His statement was vilified by several close associates of Mr. Erdogan, then prime minister. He was demonized in the pro-government press. Demonstrations in the southeastern city of Batman called for his death. In

May 2013 he was sentenced to 15 months of jail under art. 216 of the Turkish Penal Code, which regulates "insulting religious sensibilities" - the third time that this article was invoked in recent years, and the first time ever that it was applied to a member of a non-Muslim minority.

This case, however, was allowed to languish at the Court of Appeals, where it seems likely to remain for a long time. Instead, the high court took up more than a dozen cases involving minor legal infractions in connection with Nisanyan's building activities in Sirince, and handed down drastic sentences for each case. These sentences now add up to 16-plus years, and yet more may be the come.

For anyone familiar with the workings of the Turkish legal system, it is obvious that the construction charges are a smokescreen, and Nisanyan is punished for his political and religious impertinence, made graver by the fact that he is an ethnic Armenian. Nisanyan is currently the only person in Turkey who is actually in jail under Law 2863, art. 65, which governs "unlicensed construction in a historical heritage site" and this, in a country where over half of all construction is estimated to be illegal, and the presidential palace, completed in 2014, was itself built without license on a listed heritage site.

Visit [www.change.org/p/free-sevan-nisanyan](http://www.change.org/p/free-sevan-nisanyan) to sign.

## International News

### Argentine-Armenians Rally at Azerbaijan Embassy

BUENOS AIRES (Agencia Prensa Armenia) – During the night of February 26 a rally and demonstration was held outside the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Argentina to commemorate the 28th anniversary of the beginning of the massacres of Armenians in Sumgait, Baku and Kirovabad.

The demonstration was organized by the Armenian Youth Federation of South America (AYF) and Armenian General Athletic Union and Scouts (Homenetmen). "The massacres of Sumgait, Baku and Kirovabad were the continuation of the plan of ethnic cleansing that began during the Armenian Genocide," said Axel Costanian, member of AYF. "The denial and violation of human rights matrix on which both states were built remain today," said Costanian in his speech.

"Today, Turkey and Azerbaijan fill their jails with journalists and activists. Azerbaijan threatens to resume war against the Republics of Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh. Turkey supports the Islamic State and hinder the peace process in Syria. Azerbaijan uses blacklists to prosecute those who challenge the authorities. Turkey harasses intellectuals with the infamous article 301 of the penal code, the same they used to condemn Hrant Dink. And we can not forget the persecution of Kurdish people, especially the Peoples' Democratic Party," concluded Costanian.

### Khachkar Dedicated to Genocide Unveiled in France

AIX-EN-PROVENCE, France (PanArmenian.net) – A khachkar (cross stone) commemorating the Armenian Genocide was unveiled, blessed and consecrated at the central park of Aix-en-Provence, a city-commune in the south of France.

The event was organized by the Aix-en-Provence city hall, the local Armenian community, and Hays Club, with the support of Armenia's Embassy in France and the Consulate General in Marseilles.

Armenia's ambassador to France Vigen Chitechyan, Consul Samvel Lalayan, Bouches-du-Rhône vice prefect Serge Gouteyron, Aix-en-Provence mayor Maryse Joissains-Masini, representatives of regional and municipal bodies participated in the ceremony.

According to the mayor of Aix-en-Provence, the khachkar aims to pay tribute to the memory of the Genocide victims and raise awareness of the atrocities perpetrated against Armenians in 1915.

Also addressing the attendees was president of Hays Club Michele Der-Kevorkian, while Ambassador Chitechyan hailed local authorities and the Armenian community for sparing no effort to have the khachkar unveiled. The event was extensively covered by local media outlets.

### Four Armenian Businessmen Ranked Billionaires by Forbes

NEW YORK (Armenpress) – Four Armenian businessmen were included in Forbes' 30th annual ranking of the world's billionaires in the March 21 issue of Forbes magazine. The owner and founder of FC Krasnodar Sergey Galitsky (Arutyunyan) ranks 219th with 5.7 billion dollars of wealth. The owner of the Tashir Group Samvel Karapetyan occupies the 549th place. Argentinian-Armenian businessman Eduardo Eurnekian is 810th with 2.2 billion dollars, while the chief executive officer of Rosgosstrakh Insurance Company Danil Khachaturov ranks 1,275th in the rankings with 1.4 billion dollars.

Bill Gates was once again on top as the world's richest person; the technology guru has topped the list for 17 of the last 22 years, with a current net worth of \$75 billion, down from \$79.2 billion in 2015.

According to Forbes, 1,810 billionaires (down from 1,826 in 2015) made the list, with an average net worth of \$3.58 billion (down \$280 million from \$3.86 billion in 2015).





# A Special Day in the German Bundestag

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the refugee crisis merely through negotiations would be in vain.

Last week, the question was raised again and in a forceful manner, when the opposition Green Party forced debate on a resolution in the Bundestag, demanding recognition of the genocide. The lengthy discussion that followed Green Party leader Cem Özdemir's presentation ended in a highly unusual fashion: Özdemir withdrew the resolution on condition the government parties pledged to reach a vote on the issue by April 24 of the current year, a condition they accepted and sealed with a handshake. What had happened?

## Parliamentary Democracy and Realpolitik

The resolution the Green Party hoped to put to a vote was a text based on an earlier all-party resolution, which the Green party had revised last fall in collaboration with experts from the coalition parties, CDU-CSU and SPD. In presenting the motion, Özdemir recalled that all parties had agreed on April 25, 2015 that what the Ottoman Turkish government had perpetrated against the Armenians was genocide. He also recalled that a hundred years ago the German parliamentarians had debated the issue, and then, as now, Realpolitik had won the day; Imperial Germany, an ally to Ottoman Turkey in the war, had explicitly admitted it would do all to keep its alliance, even if that meant the elimination of the Armenians. Özdemir said that the current government, in its plea to postpone the issue so as not to anger Erdogan, was guilty of "cynical Realpolitik," and criticized it for allowing a foreign government to set the agenda in Berlin. For this reason, his party was presenting the resolution as its own initiative and calling for a vote. In closing, he quoted a letter sent him by Archbishop Karekin Bekjian, Primate, Diocese of the Armenian Church in Germany, who wrote that the aim was truth and recognition; the church leader pointed to the discussion process ongoing in Turkish civil society and urged German legislators to send a signal supporting this. Recognition of the genocide would signify the beginning of a democratic process.

In the energetic debate that followed, speakers for both coalition and opposition parties intervened, all announcing that their factions would not vote for this resolution. The reasons were several. For the opposition Linkspartei (The Left), an abstention would be in order for two reasons related to the content of the resolution; Ulla Jelpke, speaking for the faction, explained that, first, although using the word "Genocide" in its title, it watered down the concept in the body of the text; secondly, the role of Germany, though mentioned, was not adequately characterized as an accessory to genocide.

The speakers from the coalition parties focused instead on the timing of the Green Party's initiative, pointing to upcoming elections in three federal states on March 13, and suggesting there were opportunistic motives behind the move. More critical, they pointed to the extraordinary European Union-Turkey meeting on refugees scheduled in Brussels for March 7. No one questioned whether or not it was genocide in 1915, and Claus Brähmig (CDU-CSU) was not the only one to repeatedly refer to the consensus achieved by all parties last April. It was rather, he argued, a question of timing. A party colleague suggested the Greens wanted to damage diplomatic relations with Turkey just ten days prior to the EU-Turkey meeting. Then, he concluded his intervention asserting that they would present the genocide resolution this semester, i.e. by summer.

Dietmar Nietan (SPD) again stressed the significance of the consensus reached last April, calling it a "moment of glory" for the Bundestag, and lamented the fact that the current debate was considerably less glorious, due to the spirit of disunity. He too argued against the vote on grounds the moment was not opportune. This prompted a question interjected by a Green Party deputy: "If today is not the right moment, then when is the right moment for the SPD?" To which Nietan replied, "It would be wrong not to reach a decision by April 24, 2016." If there were no majority for a vote today, he said, no one in Turkey should think that a postponement meant the issue were a dead letter. He elaborated that there were no objections as to content or to the need to acknowledge German co-responsibility. In fact, he urged wide publication in several languages of the wartime archive material of the German Foreign Ministry documenting what the Germans knew and did or did not do during the genocide. (Such documentation is actually already available on the Internet at Wolfgang Gust's [www.armenocide.net](http://www.armenocide.net).) Nietan stressed that Germany must do everything possible to avoid "sweeping the truth under the rug."

Speaking for the CDU-CSU, Johann Wadepful introduced the idea of a compromise. Stating full agreement with Nietan, he took a further step, declaring his own "mea culpa" for the fact that the resolution last year had not been put to a vote. But, he went on, there was "no less appropriate moment" than the present to force a vote. "Can't we sit down together and discuss this?" he asked, appealing to the Greens to jointly deliberate to reach a consensus for a vote in the foreseeable future. Concretely, he asked the Green Party to wait, adding, "We are extending our hand to you, take it."

In a surprise move to most, Özdemir took him up on the offer, saying, if he were serious, and would include in a resolution

the German role, as well as commitment to promote improvement of relations between Armenians and Turks, then he "should say so – no tricks!"

Wadepful answered, in his own name and that of his party colleagues and Nietan, reiterating that it was an honest offer; the resolution should be withdrawn on the understanding that a joint resolution would come up for a vote by April. Özdemir rose, walked over to the head of the CDU-CSU parliamentary faction Volker Kauder and demonstratively shook his hand to seal the agreement. He said it was a matter of substance, not timing. If all factions agreed to explicitly state in a resolution 1) that it was genocide, 2) that Germany was co-responsible and 3) that Germany should intervene to improve Armenian-Turkish relations, then, "if that is a promise, we withdraw our resolution." As he noted, the pledge was being made before the eyes of representatives of Christian communities, the Armenians, Arameans, Greeks, Syrians as well as German Catholics and Protestants, who were observing the debate from the visitors' gallery. (Although Özdemir did not mention this, Chancellor Angela Merkel was also personally present during the debate – and was seen conversing with Kauder at the conclusion.)

In response to this handshake, as much a surprise to parliamentary protocol as a traditional gesture of trust, the entire Bundestag broke out in applause. For journalist Peter Carstens, commenting in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on February 28, it was a rare demonstration of functional debate: "None of them had in the past months of increasingly poisonous strife over refugees and Europe experienced anything of the sort... it radiated just a brief feeling of happiness about this terribly laborious government form we live in, which is, though, better than all others."

## Principled Agreement or Rotten Compromise?

It would be easy to cry sell-out and accuse the German legislators of capitulating. Perhaps that was the reaction of some hardliners. But that might be a hasty judgement. As Özdemir himself acknowledged, no solution to the refugee crisis can be found without negotiating with Erdogan and helping Turkey deal with the millions of Syrians who have found refuge there. But, he said, one had to deal with an autocratic leader with more self-consciousness.

Perhaps the debate has sent such a message to Ankara. First, the Greens did succeed in forcing debate on the issue. Secondly, no one equivocated on the question of genocide and all confirmed that a consensus would be attainable. Nietan's warning, that no one in Turkey should view the postponement as the end of the matter, places pressure on the Erdogan govern-

ment, without jeopardizing negotiations on the refugee crisis. The Bundestag has in effect pledged that it will vote up a resolution recognizing the genocide by the end of April, and that cannot be music to Erdogan's ears.

Just how critical the refugee crisis is may not be apparent to readers outside of Europe. The Merkel government has been struggling against immense pressure from abroad and within its own coalition ranks, to find a humanitarian solution to the suffering of millions of people fleeing war and terrorism. Many countries have closed their borders or refused to take in a proportionally appropriate number of refugees, and this includes the United States, a land once known for its open immigration policy. The US, with a population of over 300 million, had taken in 2,290 Syrian refugees by the end of last November, equivalent to 0.0005 percent of the 4.2 million refugees overall, according to *TIME* magazine on November 30, 2015. In comparison, Germany, with a population of 81 million, took in 1.1 million in 2015 alone. (Again, for comparative purposes, Turkey with 75 million people has received 2.2 million Syrian refugees, Lebanon 1.1 million, or a fourth of the whole population of 4.5 million, Jordan 630,000 (officially) or 10 percent of its population. These figures are conservative and refer only to officially registered persons.)

As should be obvious, ending the war in Syria is a precondition for solving the crisis and the temporary ceasefire has raised hopes that diplomacy may shift the current war dynamics. Both behind the scenes and in the public domain – especially the press – pressure has been mounting on Turkey to end its de facto support for ISIS. That includes NATO warnings against Turkish attacks on Kurdish anti-terror troops. The court decision to release *Cumhuriyet* editor Can Dündar and Ankara bureau head Erdem Gül, after three months in prison, is a political signal from inside Turkey to the world at large: the two had been imprisoned on espionage charges because they had published photos and facts showing Turkish supplies of weapons to the ISIS terrorists. In short, the truth is seeping out. The court decision to release them pending trial was violently contested by Erdogan.

Viewed in this broader political context, the extraordinary session in the Bundestag last week might be read differently. Perhaps journalist Carstens is right in considering the compromise a win-win outcome, "a compromise that made them all into winners, above all, parliamentary democracy." Included among the eventual winners are those rightly demanding genocide recognition.

(The author can be reached at [mirak.weissbach@googlemail](mailto:mirak.weissbach@googlemail))

## Armenian Opposition Remembers Victims of Post-Election Clashes

By Gohard Abrahamyan

YEREVAN (ArmeniaNow) – Eight years have passed since what many in Armenia believe was a "lost spring" with opposition parties commemorating the deadly post-election clashes of March 1-2, 2008 and still demanding justice.

After the 2008 presidential election supporters of ex-president Levon Ter-Petrosian, who disputed Serge Sargsian's win, staged nonstop street protests that were broken up by police and security forces on the first day of spring. Eight civilians and two security

personnel were killed in the clashes. So far, no one has been held responsible for killings on that day.

This year, the opposition Armenian National Congress (ANC), the People's Party of Armenia (PPA) and the New Armenia Public Salvation Front are holding a joint rally in Yerevan's Liberty Square and a march in commemoration of the March 1 victims.

ANC parliamentary faction secretary Aram Manukyan says they intend to present their political program later on. "This time, it is not yet the stage for us to present a political program, we've tried not to mix it with the commemoration day," he said.

And ANC parliamentary leader Levon

Zurabyan believes their united action "will show to the authorities that the Armenian people has not come to terms with the crime and will continue to demand its disclosure."

"This traditional march is a way towards the restoration of justice, people's right to life, freedom, democracy," Zurabyan emphasized.

New Armenia representative Andrias Ghukasyan, meanwhile, said that after the commemoration march they will continue the protest action to make their voice heard by the international community, considering that on this day a chief foreign policy and security official of the European Union will be visiting Armenia.

Meanwhile, six political parties (the ANC, the PPA, New Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party, the Union for National Self-Determination, the "Hayastan" people's initiative) issued a statement on the eve of the anniversary, stating that in their conviction the cover-up of the crime leads to its repetition. "We are going to consistently work towards the disclosure of the March 1 crimes so that all those who issued orders, organized and executed [the killings] be brought to justice..." they said.

In their statement the opposition parties also called for the release of jailed New Armenia activist Gevorg Safaryan and "all other political prisoners."



# Community News

## Fresno State Armenian Studies Program to Hold Two-Day International Conference

*'Empire, Politics, and War: The Armenian Genocide'*

FRESNO – The Armenian Studies Program is holding a major international conference on “Empire, Politics, and War: The Armenian Genocide within the Context of the Ottoman Empire” to be held on Friday, March 18 and Saturday, March 19, 2016. The conference will bring an international group of scholars to explore new facets of the Armenian Genocide.

The conference is co-sponsored by the Society for Armenian Studies, the College of Arts & Humanities of California State University, Fresno, with the support of the Thomas A. Kouymjian Family Foundation, the Leon S. Peters Foundation, and the M. Victoria Kazan Fund for Armenian Studies.

Conference organizers Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Armenian Studies Program Coordinator, and Ümit Kurt, Kazan Visiting Scholar at Fresno State, expect the conference to attract great interest among both scholars and the public.



Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian



Ümit Kurt

On Friday, March 18, the conference will begin at 7:30PM with welcoming addresses from Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, Dean of the College of Arts & Humanities and Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, director of the Armenian Studies Program. Dr. Stephan Astourian, director of the Armenian Studies Program at the University of California, Berkeley,

will follow with a keynote address “Armenian Genocide Studies: Development as a Field, Historiographical Appraisal, and the Road Ahead.”

The conference will take place on Friday, March 18, in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room 191, on the Fresno State campus. An hors d'oeuvres reception will take place from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the University Business Center Gallery, just prior to the conference.

Following the keynote address, three panelists will address various aspects of the Armenian Genocide: Varak Ketsamian (University of Chicago-Center for Middle Eastern Studies) “The Hunchakian Party and the Assassination Attempts against Maksudzade Simon Efendi and Khoren Ashkian”; Anna Aleksanyan (Clark University, Holocaust and Genocide Studies Center) “From Adana to Bolis: Zabel Yesayan’s Letters to Tigran Yesayan in 1909;” and Dr. Yektan Turkyilmaz (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin) “War and Genocide: Rethinking WWI and the Path to the Armenian Catastrophe.”

The conference will reconvene at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 19, with a session chaired by Dr. Sergio La Porta, Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies at Fresno State. The session will take place in the Whitten Room of the Fresno State Smittcamp Alumni House (Matoian Way on the Fresno State campus-enter at Shaw and Maple) and will be divided into two parts.

Part I will feature presentations by Yasar Tolga Cora (University of Chicago) “An Armenian Officer in the Ottoman Army during see FRESNO, page 8



Fun on the high seas

## Armenian Heritage Cruise XIX Sails Seas Armenian Style

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. – Once again the Armenian Heritage cruise XIX sailed from Fort Lauderdale on January 9-17, 2016. Armenians from all over the world boarded the Royal Caribbean’s Navigator of the Seas cruise ship. Eight hundred guests from 16 countries and 29 states within the US experienced a week of special events in Armenian style.

By Barbara Haroutunian

This was a week of leaving the hustle and bustle of life on hold to enjoy a week filled with beautiful sites, attending cultural programs, meeting new people, listening and dancing to music, eating good food and having fun in a profoundly unique Armenian way.

Each guest received an AHC tote bag and a card holder, as a gift from ACAA and Travel Group International. All guests were given a special AHC cabin key card; this card granted each guest entry into all the Armenian activities for the week.

Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan, Prelate of the Eastern US Prelacy, conducted Armenian Morning Services on the ship.

For those guests who needed a little help on the dance floor, Margo Kaftajian taught Armenian Dances. Guests could register for Backgammon and Belote Tournaments under the direction of Antranik Boudakian. Armenian Singles enjoyed social gatherings, dances and disco each night into the late hours. There was a special table set up for Armenian Heritage Tour 2016 with Maro Asatoorian, the ACAA liaison, for a fully escorted tour to Armenia and Karabagh from September 9-23, 2016.

The days we were at sea were spent pool side enjoying the beautiful tropical weather. Of course our week was not complete without the enjoyment of dancing to the rhythm of Armenian music, featuring Elie Berberian and his musicians from Montreal, and The All Star Armenian Traditional Band with Richard Berberian, Mal Barsamian, Steve Vosbikian, Jim Kzirian and Chris Marashlian.

The first night there was a Welcome Reception where Maria Tavitian and Margo Kaftajian welcomed all the guests and introduced the AHC Ambassadors who were responsible for all the different functions and highlighted the week’s activities.

Wednesday evening there was an Armenian Heritage Cruise Cocktail Party sponsored by Travel Group International and the ACAA Armenian Heritage Cruise.

Early Friday morning Barbara Haroutunian and her committee organized the Armenian Festival Day Pool Party. Prizes were awarded for the best Armenian see CRUISE, page 9



Sightseeing

## AIWA Panel at the United Nations to Examine Programs, Methodologies for Gender Equality

NEW YORK – Once again this year, the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA) will sponsor a panel at the United Nations in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which will take place this year from March 14 to 24.

Celebrating its 60th anniversary, the CSW has established its priority theme in 2016 as “Women’s empowerment and its link to sustainable development.” The review theme is “The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.”

As a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) at the United Nations since 1994, AIWA will participate in the NGO CSW Forum, which annually attracts thousands of individuals from all over the world to discuss issues pertaining to women and girls, to network, and to share strategies and effective practices.

The AIWA panel will take place on Monday, March 14, at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center (Room 1), 365 Fifth Ave., and is open to the public.

Currently humanitarian needs in all areas, including those affecting women, are enormous, while the means to meet these needs are limited. The importance of allocating resources carefully in order to maximize benefits is obvious.

The problem then arises of evaluating programs and policies in order to determine the most efficient use of resources. AIWA’s panel thus will consider the “Development of Programs and Evaluation Methodologies Designed to Achieve Gender Equality.”

Specifically participants in the panel will describe the development, implementation, assessment, and institutionalization of programs, movements, and projects in order to maximize their impact, with a focus on real examples, data, and diverse research approaches.

Dr. Susan Raymond, executive vice president for Research, Evaluation, and Strategic Planning for Changing Our World, will be the moderator of the panel. Raymond created the first technology and public policy program at the New York Academy of Sciences and has been a project officer at the World Bank and a senior consultant to the US Agency for International Development. She has published extensively in the areas of philanthropy, economics, health care, and corporate responsibility.

The panel consists of:

- Dr. Shakeh Kaftarian, president of Kaftarian & Associates, a consulting firm offering empowerment evaluation services to national and international organizations. She has held positions as a research and evaluation scientist at the National Institutes of Health and has served as Senior Advisor at the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. Her interests include community coalition building, substance abuse prevention programming, and women’s health research.

- Maro Matosian, director of the Women’s Support Center (WSC) in Yerevan, Armenia, an organization that was founded five years ago through the support of the Tufenkian Foundation, USAID and AIWA. Beginning as a hotline and walk-in service, WSC has opened a full-time shelter and developed a comprehensive program to meet the immediate and rehabilitative needs of victims of domestic violence. It also works to inform and educate the public, empower women, and seek judicial reform that would include domestic violence as a specific crime in the penal code.

- Judy Norsigian, co-founder and for many years executive director of Our Bodies Ourselves as well as an author and editor of the see AIWA, page 7





## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Richard Hagopian, Sergio La Porta to Be Honored by Knights at Banquet

FRESNO – The Knights of Vartan announce that the Men of the Year banquet will be held on Saturday, April 16, at Pardini's Banquet Hall.

This year the Knights of Vartan, in conjunction with the Daughters of Vartan, are honoring two outstanding leaders in the Armenian community. Richard Hagopian will be recognized for his contributions to Armenian culture through art and music. Hagopian is a master oud player, and is considered the finest in the world. Also being honored is Dr. Sergio La Porta for his contributions to Armenian culture through education and scholarship. La Porta is a professor of Armenian Studies at CSU Fresno and, among other accomplishments, spearheaded Fresno's Armenian Genocide Centennial Committee. The social hour will begin at 6:30 p.m., followed by a fine meal, and dessert, at 7:30 p.m.

Pianist Kevin Memley will entertain diners, followed by more lively entertainment by DJ Diko Chekian.

For tickets and more information, including sponsorships, contact Dr. Dennis or Rita Shamlian.



Prof. Sergio La Porta, Richard Hagopian



## OBITUARY

### George S. Yacoubian, Sr. Dies

BROOMALL, Penn. – George S. Yacoubian, Sr., 79, of Broomall died on February 29, at his home, surrounded by his family, after a lengthy struggle with pancreatic cancer.

Born in 1936 in Philadelphia to Armenian Genocide survivors, he was a graduate of Lansdowne-Aldan High School, Class of 1955, the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science, Class of 1959, and also served in the Army Reserves.

He married Claire Margaret Yacoubian in 1967, had two children, George S. Yacoubian, Jr. and Kim A. Yacoubian, and built a successful life for himself and his family, residing in Broomall for 46 years.

After managing Ithan Pharmacy in Villanova for several years, he realized his dream to purchase his own pharmacy and operated

Coulson's Pharmacy in Havertown from 1976 to 1999. Seeing his employees and customers as extended family, he worked tirelessly six days a week at the "store" to provide excellent service and care.

He donated his time and resources throughout his lifetime, leaving a legacy of philanthropic and leadership activities within the community.

Demonstrating his passion for his Armenian culture, he held numerous executive positions in Armenian organizations. A member of the Knights of Vartan for 36 years, George was elected Grand Commander of the organization in 2002. He served as the Philadelphia Branch President for the Armenian Students' Association, as well as Central Executive Committee President, and, for 27 years, a member of the Board of Trustees, including four terms as Chairman. He was Philadelphia AGBU Chairman for 19 years, a Fellow Trustee of the Armenian Assembly, the founding Treasurer of the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR), and an ongoing contributor to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* publication.

George also dedicated his time serving as president of the Haverford Township Club of Rotary International, and volunteering for

Meals on Wheels with his wife.

Reserved and unpretentious, George was dutiful in his role as a family man – a devoted son, husband, father, grandfather, brother, and uncle. A steadfast provider for his family and community, he shared his success freely with others and was financially generous to a fault, helping many to realize their dreams. He loved history, politics, the beach, traveling, playing backgammon, and was a voracious reader and writer. A man of few words and simple pleasures, he was happiest, and will fondly be remembered, smoking his cigar sitting in the sun while working on a crossword puzzle (in pen) and listening to the ball game on AM radio.

He is survived by his wife Margaret, of 48 years; son George; daughter Kim; daughter-in-law Erica; and grandchildren Liliana, Sophie, and Tessa.

The funeral was held on March 3, with a funeral service at St. Sahag & St. Mesrob Armenian Church, Wynnewood, and burial at Arlington Cemetery, Drexel Hill.

In lieu of flowers to the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR), c/o George S. Yacoubian, Jr., 150 N. Radnor Chester Road, F200, Radnor, PA 19087, [www.soar-us.org](http://www.soar-us.org), or the Armenian Sisters Academy, 440 Upper Gulph Road, Radnor, PA 19087.



### Sister Hripsime (Née Marie) Tcheftelian

RADNOR, Penn. – The Armenian Sisters Academy of Radnor mourns the passing of one of its founders, Sister Hripsime Tcheftelian. She died on February 9, at age 90, surrounded by



her loving Sisters and family members.

At an early age, Sister Hripsime became a Sister of the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception. She responded to any assignment with a smile and the simple "Yes, I will."

Born in Jounieh, Lebanon on October 17, 1926, to Arshalouys and Bedros Chiftelian, Sister Hripsime left Beirut in 1943 for the Mother House in Rome. Upon completing her religious training, she became a member of the Order in 1946. Later, she found herself back in

Beirut at the Hripsimiantz Varjarian where she would remain for 13 years, teaching religion, French and mathematics. During the course of her stay, Sister Hripsime worked at the Bzommar Vank Orphanage for one year as the director.

In 1963, Sister Hripsime departed for the United States. She was among the first three Sisters to accept the assignment and challenge to start a school in the Philadelphia area. After studying English and mastering the language at Cabrini College, Sister Hripsime, along with Sister Arousiag and Sister Valentine, founded the Armenian Sisters Academy.

For 14 years, she committed her life to educating Armenian-American children. Much to the Philadelphia community's dismay, Sister was called to Rome to be assigned as Mistress of Novices to train the postulants and novices for religious life. After four years, she returned to the United States to establish a new school in the Los Angeles area where she remained for nine years.

Elected as Vicar General, Sister Hripsime returned to Rome and served in that capacity until 2006. At the same time, she resumed her role as Mistress of Novices. In 2007, she came back to Philadelphia where she was a beacon of hope, love, and inspiration to all who knew her.

Sister Hripsime was a shining example of peace and love to so many. Her constant smile, love of God and prayerful presence remind us that all things are possible with God's help.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Bryn Mawr Woman Pens Tale of Armenian Life in Turkey

By Linda Stein

BRYN MAWR, Penn. (*Mainline*) – As a child Virginia Gavian Rivers listened to tales about Armenian life in Turkey from her father, who came to the U.S. to escape the Bolshevik Revolution and an “aunt,” who fled here after the two-year slaughter of Armenians in Turkey that began in 1915.

Now, Rivers, an 80-year-old resident of Beaumont at Bryn Mawr, has penned her first novel centered on family stories but also buttressed by research from original sources including those gleaned at the Library of Congress and the British Museum, Armenia House in London and travels to Turkey and the Republic of Armenia.

Rivers majored in psychology at Bryn Mawr College and was studying for a doctorate and working for a drug company when she decided she’d rather write than do research. She became a reporter, then a columnist for *The Main Line Times* in the 1960s. The editor at that time, Gil Spencer, “took a real chance on me,” she said.

She remembers her days as a reporter fondly. “I still recall attending the first Barnes Foundation (then in Lower Merion) hearings before a three judge panel (en banc) in Norristown, where Pennsylvania Attorney General Anne Alpern argued that the tax-free status of the Barnes obligated public access to the art,” said Rivers. The trustees contended that the art was for an educational program and that limited public access was sufficient. The case settled when they worked out an agreement for more, albeit limited, public access.

She also remembered attending and writing about arguments before the Lower Merion Zoning Hearing Board about the Frank Lloyd Wright house in Ardmore. The owners wanted

to rebuild a section that had burned in the 1940s.

And Rivers and the paper won an award for a series of articles about a fight over a public park on River Road in Gladwyne, where there were many shacks that had been people’s homes for “some years.”

Someone at a public hearing on that issue quoted from Dr. Seuss, “People are people, No matter how small,” Rivers said.

And as a columnist Rivers wrote for the paper about family life. She also did freelance editing while her children were young, then worked in the marketing department at Girard Bank then Mellon Bank.

In 1988, she left the bank to begin work on her recently published book: *Prelude to Genocide: Incident in Erzerum*.

“My husband, Richard, said, ‘Sure. Do what you want,’” she said. Little did she know the process would take her 25 years. During that time, she volunteered, including for the Lower Merion/Narberth League of Women Voters and also traveled with her husband, a lawyer.

“I love doing research at libraries and hunting for sources,” said Rivers. Some of the documents she perused included letters from missionaries who traveled to the areas of Turkey and Russia where Armenians lived and papers from British diplomats and the U.S. State Department.

While Armenian accounts say more than 1.5 million Armenians died in the genocide of 1915-1917, a genocide the Turkish government denies, Rivers’ book, takes readers back to an earlier massacre of Armenians by Turks in 1895. The fictionalized account tells of a Muslim family rescuing their Christian Armenian neighbors, and mirrors her grandparents’ experiences. The vivid first-person narrative draws a reader in and the details of the characters’ daily existence bring the sometimes harrowing story to life.

When she was a girl, Rivers’ dad, Sarkis



**DETROIT — On February 27, Armenian Assembly State Director John Jamian, right, attended an “Armenians for Congressman Dave Trott” reception. Jamian has known Trott, at left, since 1992, when Jamian was Trott’s State Representative in the Michigan Legislature. Jamian said, “Dave is an exceptional Congressman because in his first term he joined the Armenian Congressional Caucus, then took it upon himself to travel to Armenia to observe the 100th Anniversary of the Genocide.” Jamian is an active member of the Tekeyan Cultural Association.**

Petros Kavafian, who was born in 1899 in Kars, then part of Russia, would often talk about his life in the old country. One anecdote is that her grandmother, Marjan Kavafian, who escaped Turkish violence by traveling to Russia as cargo, nailed into a wooden box.

Her father, “a colorful person” immigrated to America, fleeing the upheaval that came with the communist revolution in 1917, and married her mother, Ruth Wood. Both earned graduate degrees but went to the Soviet Union to learn poultry farming on a collective farm. Her pregnant mother returned to the U.S., where Rivers was born.

Her aunt, Zevart Kolligian (her father’s second cousin), fled Armenian areas in Turkey with her family during the 1915 genocide, ending up in Greece. There she was introduced to an Armenian American man who was on his way back to his homeland to find a bride.

“After a week of courtship she went to the U.S. with him,” said Rivers.

After her parents moved from Boston to Brooklyn, NY, that “aunt” learned at church there was a newly arrived Armenian man whose last name was her maiden name and she sought out Rivers’ dad. The families became dear friends.

Rivers plans to write her next book about her father’s life, she confided.

Rivers raised her three children in Bryn Mawr but later retired with her husband to their weekend house at Eagles Mere in the Endless Mountains area north of the Poconos. On the recommendation of a friend, the couple moved to the Beaumont in 2013, but sadly, Richard Rivers died shortly afterward. Rivers also has three grandchildren. The youngest, Garen, was adopted from Yerevan, the capital of Armenia.

Lately, Rivers has been giving lectures about her book at Armenian churches in the Philadelphia area and plans to travel to Armenian communities in New York, Boston, Washington, D.C., and Glendale, Calif., to give talks about it.

*Prelude to Genocide* (Archway Publishing) \$42.95 hardcover; \$23.99 paperback; and \$3.99 e-book.



Taleen Babayan

## New Head of Development for Eastern Diocese

NEW YORK – The Eastern Diocese announced this week that Taleen Babayan has formally joined the Diocesan staff, to head its development effort. As manager of the Department of Development, Babayan’s responsibilities will involve organizing the Annual Appeal and other fundraising projects of the Eastern Diocese, and supporting the capital campaign.

Babayan holds a master’s degree in journalism from Columbia University, and a bachelor’s in history and international relations from Tufts University. Most recently, she worked at the Michael J. Fox Foundation, and authored and staged two Armenian themed plays, which were performed across the United States. She has also worked as a program manager at the Diocese’s Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center.

## AIWA Panel at the United Nations to Examine Programs, Methodologies for Gender Equality

AIWA, from page 5  
organization’s landmark book on sexuality and reproductive health. An internationally renowned speaker and author on a range of women’s health concerns, her areas of focus include women and health care reform, abortion and contraception, childbirth (especially the role of midwifery), genetics and reproductive technologies, and drug and device safety.

• Alexandra Pittman, Founder of AVP Global Consulting, which specializes in research and evaluation for human rights, women’s rights, and social justice organizations, networks, and

movements. Recently she has been examining the roles of NGOs in advancing women’s rights and feminist movements, for example by working with peace-building and women’s rights organizations in Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as designing and implementing a participatory evaluation process with Moroccan activists.

This year AIWA is marking 25 years of promoting and enriching the social, economic and personal advancement of Armenian women worldwide. A celebration will be held on the weekend of September 30 to October 2 at the Charles Hotel in Cambridge, Mass.

## 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  
Joint Senate/House Resolution recipients  
And musical program

April 22, 2016

Details forthcoming.

Organized by the State House Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee, Boston





## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada Topic of Conference Co-Sponsored by Zoryan, McGill

TORONTO & MONTRÉAL, Canada – The International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (A Division of the Zoryan Institute) and the McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism are pleased to announce their upcoming conference “From Truth to Reconciliation: Towards a Just Future for the Indigenous Peoples of Canada” to be held at the Faculty of Law at McGill University on March 8-9.

This conference will examine the urgent moral and legal challenges raised by the findings and recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and consider how Canada can come to terms with its colonial past and present in order to move towards a just future. The potential for reconciliation will be considered from the perspectives of three key relationships: with our shared historical truth; our relationship with the land; and the nation-to-nation relationship.

Keynote speeches will be delivered by Dr. Phil Fontaine, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, and Douglas White, former Chief of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

This conference brings together prominent Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and activists to promote innovative thinking and cross-cultural dialogue. In hosting this conference, the International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies and the McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism seek both to educate the public in understanding the contemporary reality of Indigenous people in light of a legacy of “cultural genocide” and to consider how moving from denial to historical truth contributes to a culture of human rights and reconciliation.

The Zoryan Institute and its subsidiary, the International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, is the first non-profit, international center devoted to the research and documentation of contemporary issues with a focus on Genocide, Diaspora and Homeland.

The McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2015, aims to deepen transdisciplinary collaboration on the complex social, ethical, political and philosophical dimensions of human rights. From its inception, it has concerned itself with the place of Indigenous law in the Canadian and international legal orders, as well as the recognition of the equal dignity of Indigenous people.

For more information contact the Zoryan Institute, [admin@genocidestudies.org](mailto:admin@genocidestudies.org).

## Fresno State Armenian Studies Program to Hold Two-Day Conference

FRESNO, from page 5  
the Genocide: Memoirs of Kalusd Surmenian” and Dr. Khatchig Mouradian (Clark University) “Concentration Camps during the Armenian Genocide: Power, Collaboration, and Resistance.”

Following a coffee break the conference will conclude with two more papers by Ümit Kurt (Clark University) “Survival Struggles of Aintab Deportees in Salamiyya: Testimonial Accounts of Genocide Survivors Krikor Bogharian and Der Nerses Tavukjian” and Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian (Armenian Studies Program, California State University, Fresno) “A Survivor’s Memoir: Siranoosh My Child.”

All sessions and the reception are free and open to the public.

For more information about the conference visit [www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies](http://www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies).



**DETROIT – The Michigan House of Representatives earlier this month voted and passed, with overwhelming support, House Bill 4493, mandating Armenian Genocide education in Michigan schools. State Rep. Klint Kesto led the sponsorship of this important piece of legislation. Above, Kesto is pictured with Armenian activists.**



# Sponsor A Teacher

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Since its inception in 2001, TCA's Sponsor a Teacher program has raised over \$563,000 and reached out to 5,627 teachers and school workers in Armenia & Karabagh.



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Harvard to Host Conference on Armenian, Jewish Armed Resistance to Genocide

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Four scholars and researchers will speak at “From Musa Dagh to the Warsaw Ghetto: Armenian and Jewish Armed Resistance to Genocide,” on Thursday, March 31, at 8 p.m. at Harvard University, Science Center Auditorium D, 1 Oxford St.

The featured speakers are Eric Bogosian, actor, playwright and author of *Operation Nemesis: The Assassination Plot That Avenged the Armenian Genocide*; Dr. Deborah Dwork, Rose Professor of Holocaust History and Director, Strassler Family Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Clark University; Dr. Dikran Kaligian, managing editor, *Armenian Review*, and author of *Armenian Organization and Ideology Under Ottoman Rule, 1908-1914*; and Dr. James R. Russell, Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University. Marc A. Mamigonian, Director of Academic Affairs at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), will serve as moderator.

This special symposium is 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

War II. The same situation obtains for the study of the Armenian Genocide of 1915: as well as

to their own, even drawing inspiration during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising from *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, Franz Werfel’s novel

about a desperate act of Armenian self-defense a generation before.

Although there are many affinities between Armenians and Jews there are also historical and present geo-political factors that divide them. The conference is intended not only to shed light on the modern historical affinities, but to bring students, faculty, and community members into a positive dialogue about the future. The resistance of under-armed

and outnumbered civilians to the overwhelming force of totalitarian states with genocidal ideologies also raises important questions about the relation of the individual to the system; the nature of the rule of law, and of international relations; strategies for overcoming conformity, passivity, and fear; and the parameters of human moral responsibility. All of these are as immediate now as they were in the two fateful conflicts of the past century.

For more information about this program contact NAASR.



Photos showing Jewish and Armenian resisters

Research. The event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served during an intermission.

Prof. Salo Baron famously bemoaned what he called the “lachrymose” approach to Jewish history — a focus on powerlessness, homelessness, victimhood, and catastrophe. As the study of the Holocaust has developed we know that the image of the Jews of Europe as sheep to the slaughter is at best inaccurate. There were many instances of organized resistance (ghetto fighters and forest partisans), and of retaliation (the killing of SS prisoners) at the end of World

exploring the events and commemorating the martyrs, we now know much more than before about self-defense (at Van, for instance) and retribution (Operation Nemesis).

The Armenian Genocide was a precursor to the Holocaust: the Nazis admired both the Ottoman “final solution” of the Armenian Question and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s subsequent corporate nationalist régime, which completed that process and retroactively cleansed the historical record. In the interwar years and during the Holocaust, Jews knew of the Armenians’ fate and compared it

## Armenian Heritage Cruise XIX Sails Seas Armenian Style

CRUISE, from page 5

Along with face painting, Margo Kaftajian’s dance class encouraged everyone to get on the dance floor and dance.

Our destinations were Labadee, Haiti, Royal Caribbean’s private island, where we spent the day swimming at a beautiful beach and enjoying a barbecue provided by Royal Caribbean. Next stop was San Juan, Puerto Rico, a popular cruise port in the Caribbean.

On the third day we arrived at the island of St. Kitts, an island where the stores and the houses were painted every color of the rainbow, with great scenery and beautiful pink sandy beaches this island became a favorite for everyone.

Each day there were speakers and programs about Armenian subjects:

- Ani Dance Ensemble from Montreal, Canada under the artistic direction of Eva Airapetian. The beautiful Armenian costumes and perfect Armenian folk dance routines brought thunderous cheers from an appreciative audience.

- Dr. John Bilezikian, faculty member of the

college of physicians and surgeons at Columbia University, returned again on Armenian Heritage Cruise XIX and discussed issues with osteoporosis in Armenia.

- Maro Matosian, founder and executive director of the Women’s Support Center in Armenia gave a presentation on the status of women in Armenia, the inequality between sexes, and the comprehensive services to victims of domestic violence.

- Dr. Antranig Kasbarian - a discussion “Armenia at 25 - The Good, The Bad and The Ugly”

- Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan - presented “The 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide”

- Vahanoush Tekian - a discussion “Secrets of the Armenian Alphabet: Hidden Meanings and Messages”

- Armenian Patriotic Songs by Elie Berberian.

- Knights and Daughters of Vartan presentation by Robert Barsam and Sona Manuelian

- ARS Reception and Presentation.

- Armenian Business Networking Hour



Dancers entertained

- Seta Ghazarian - “Armenian Lighthouse Charitable Foundation - Working to help Abused Women in Armenia”

The ACA is a registered non-profit corporation and tax-deductible donations primarily

assist in cultural activities, research on Armenian topics, grants to Armenian newspapers, publications, internships, depository guardian of the original governmental archives of the first Armenian Republic of 1918 and other Historic Armenian National documents.

From all over the United States dedicated individuals have volunteered to work on this fabulous event. Each area of the United States, Canada, and Europe are represented. There is no other event in the world that brings Armenians together for seven full days of fellowship and camaraderie.

The next cruise will take place January 20-29, 2017 with new ports, including Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao.

There will also be one day at Royal Caribbean’s private island of Labadee, Haiti. Our featured singers for dancing pleasure will be Kevork Artinian, Harout Hagopian, Harout Khatchoyan, Joseph Krikorian and comedian Kev Orkian.



Revelers on the ship





# Arts & Living

## Pianist Yelena Beriyeva to Perform at Menotomy Concert

ARLINGTON, Mass. — Renowned pianist Yelena Beriyeva will be the featured artist at the second concert of the 2015-2016 season. Hailed as “the paragon of the concert pianist” by the *LA Examiner* and “a standout performer” by *The Boston Musical Intelligencer*, Georgian-born American pianist Yelena Beriyeva continues to be recognized as one of the finest artists of her generation. In this concert, Beriyeva will be performing the music of Clementi, Mussorgsky as well as that of local composers Pasquale Tassone and Grammy-nominated composer, Hayg Boyadjian.

Beriyeva made her solo debut at the age of 5 with the Tbilisi State Symphony Orchestra. Since then, she has performed extensively as a recitalist, chamber musician, and orchestral soloist in Rep. of Georgia, Armenia, Russia, Ukraine, Venezuela, Canada, and the United States. While pursuing her Master’s Degree at the New England Conservatory, she was no stranger to prestigious Jordan Hall where audiences could hear and watch her perform works by Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Chopin, Barber, Bartok, Berg, Stravinsky, and others.

Beriyeva has been featured as a guest artist at the prestigious Great Romantics Festival of Canada in collaboration with Celebrity Concert Series at the McMaster University, on Sundays with Liz Walker” at WBZ TV Channel 4, as a guest artist in “Sundays Live” of Los Angeles series of concerts in collaboration with LACMA and KCSN 88.5 FM while being broadcasted live online worldwide, as well as on Boston’s WGBH radio while being aired with pianist Alexander Korsantia as piano duo partners. Ms. Beriyeva has also been featured as a guest artist

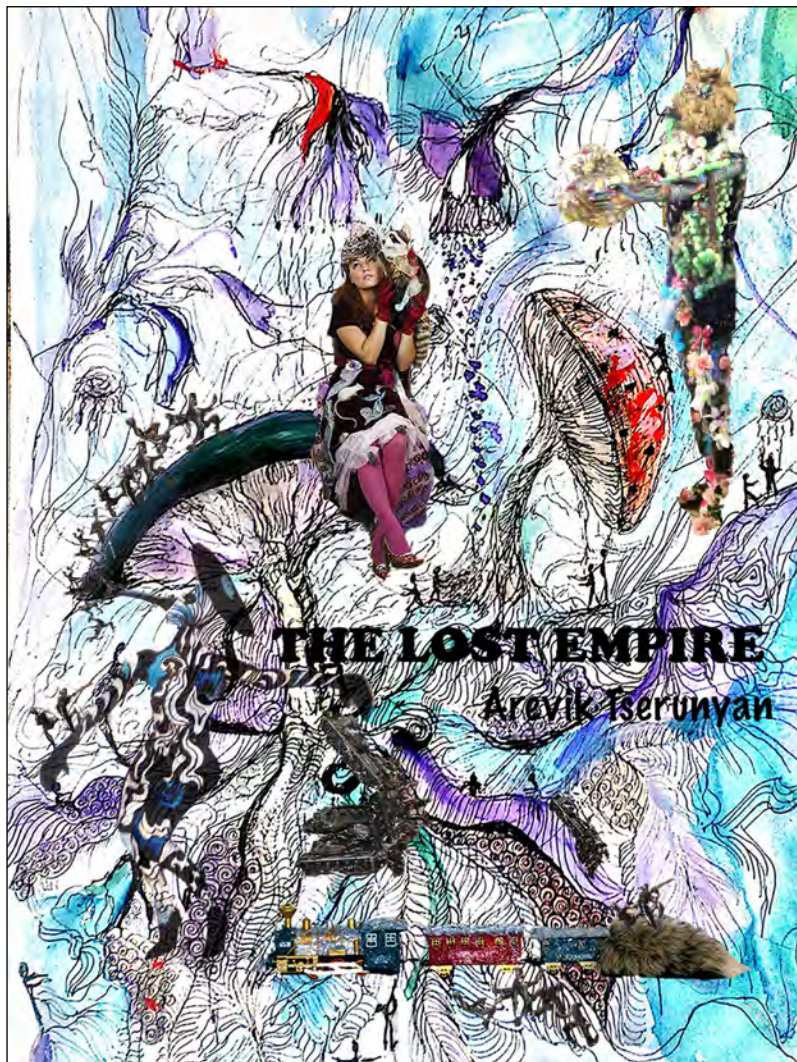


Yelena Beriyeva

at a prestigious Georgian International Festival “From Easter to Ascension” that takes place in Tbilisi, Georgia, every year. Most recently, she was invited to perform Rachmaninov’s 2nd Piano Concerto with the Southern Arizona Symphony Orchestra while being given a 2-day notice.

The concert will take place on Friday, March 11, at 7:30 p.m. at Arlington Town Hall. The Menotomy Concert Series had its first season during 2006-2007 when it coincided with the festivities celebrating the bicentennial of the Town of Arlington. As Arlington officially changed its name from Menotomy in 1807, a concert series with a nostalgic nod to the town’s former name seemed an appropriate gesture. Adam Chapdelaine, the town manager, and Patsy Kraemer were instrumental in supporting this series.

Admission is free and the public is cordially invited. Further information is available at [migidamusica.org](http://migidamusica.org), Pasquale Tassone’s website.



Arevik Tserunyan

## Strange and Wonderful Dimensions at Armenian Museum Exhibit

WATERTOWN — On Sunday, March 13, at 2 p.m., the Armenian Museum of America will host the opening of a new exhibition titled “The Lost Empire: The Show You Haven’t Seen Before,” by Arevik Tserunyan. The opening will include a reception held in the Adele & Haig Der Manuelian Galleries on the third floor of the museum.

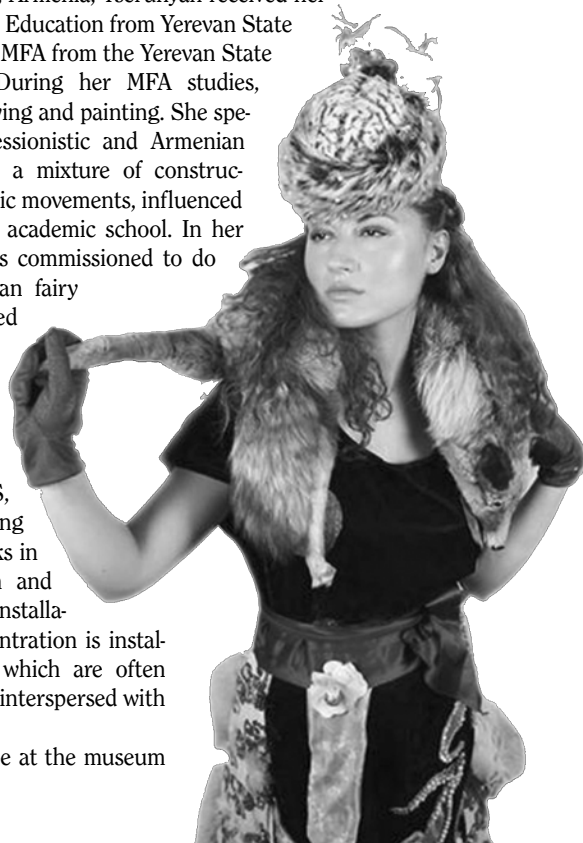
The event is free and open to the public, and light refreshments will be served at the reception.

The exhibition is a sculptural installation accompanied by an intriguing theatrical performance and music. Visitors will discover new dimensions and forms. This is a royal tableau of a fictitious empire, encrusted with sappy and bejeweled materials. This exhibition was created out of an attempt to balance the deeply solemn and weighty history of Armenia and lineages of the past with a sense of the absurd, questioning the importance of these stories. Because of this balance, we look at a royal scene through the lens of a circus, in which individuals struggle for the mirage of nonexistent power.

Born in 1987 in Yerevan, Armenia, Tserunyan received her BA in English, Spanish and Education from Yerevan State Linguistic University and a MFA from the Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts. During her MFA studies, Tserunyan focused on drawing and painting. She specialized in Western Impressionistic and Armenian Post-Impressionistic styles, a mixture of constructivism and post-soviet artistic movements, influenced by the Russian traditional academic school. In her second year there, she was commissioned to do illustrations for a Bulgarian fairy tales collection, published the following year.

In 2013, she enrolled in the master’s program at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. In the US, Tserunyan began exploring other media with new works in collage, sculpture, fashion and exhibits with large-scale installations. Currently, her concentration is installations at various scales, which are often accompanied by narratives interspersed with drawings and illustrations.

The exhibit is going to be at the museum for one week.



## Two New Reference Works on the Armenian Genocide

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

### Kirakossian Publishes Study of Treatment of Armenian Genocide in American Encyclopedias

Many Armenians cannot resist picking up an encyclopedia or reference book to see what it contains, if anything, on Armenia and the Armenians. One of the first topics that an Armenian looks for is material on the Armenian Genocide. Dr. Arman J. Kirakossian has



done a service to those Armenians by his recent work, *The Armenian Genocide in Contemporary American Encyclopedias* (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute of the National Academy of Sciences, 2015).

Kirakossian examines nearly forty encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks and resource guides published in the United States over the last fifteen years. This 183-page book contains an index of individuals names and toponyms, a listing of relevant encyclopedias and entries and a bibliography of works on the Armenian Genocide used in reference works. The author looks at the general definition of genocide and the comparison of the Armenian Genocide with the Holocaust, before discussing the Armenian Question and mass killings prior to World War I, like the Hamidian and 1909 Cilician massacres.

The Armenian Genocide, British and American responses to it, information on individuals connected to the Genocide, the trials after World War I of accused perpetrators, aspects of gendercide, survivor testimony, denial, international recognition are covered in a variety of resource books. One topic, the post-traumatic stress disorder of Armenian Genocide survivors, is briefly noted in a short chapter of one page based on a single encyclopedia’s article.

Basic information on the modern Armenian Diaspora, recreated through the Genocide, is given in a short chapter. The Armenian Genocide in art and literature is covered in the final chapter.

The author is a historian who serves as the ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Austria and Permanent Representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other international organizations in Vienna at present. Among other posts, he has served in the past as the acting foreign minister of Armenia and as the country’s first deputy prime minister. Aside from the present volume, he has published four others in English on Armenian topics.

### Aghbashian Compiles Information on Turkish Intellectuals Recognizing the Armenian Genocide

In the last few decades, in addition to a proliferation of encyclopedias and reference works mentioning the Armenian Genocide, the number of Turkish writers and intellectuals recognizing the latter have increased greatly. Casual readers have encountered at least a few of their names, but even scholars may not be familiar with many of them. Hangers-on Aghbashian has compiled a work, *Turkish Intellectuals Who Have Recognized the Reality of the Armenian Genocide* (Altadena, Calif.: Nor Or see AGHBASHIAN, page 12



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Retracing the Path of the Genocide, History Becomes Contemporary

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN - With a hundred years now having passed after the start of the Armenian Genocide, the immediacy of the event has most obviously faded away. The generation of survivors of the Genocide is nearly all gone now from the earth, and even their children are elderly. Nonetheless, the story of the Genocide and the effect it has had on people's lives still seems to resonate powerfully, and it seems the third generation, the grandchildren of survivors - the last generation in direct contact with these eyewitnesses, is now carrying the torch. The number of new books on the Genocide and its consequences which have been published over the past few years attests to this. Dawn Anahid MacKeen's *The Hundred-Year Walk: An Armenian Odyssey* (Boston, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016) is one of the most recent ones.

Many grandchildren work to get their grandparents' personal stories heard by broader circles. Some translate memoirs into English, while others transform the experiences they heard about into literature or other forms of

art. MacKeen's approach adds a different layer to the original story. She did not stop at just visiting the hometown of her ancestor in Turkey, as many do. Instead, she wanted to retrace as much as possible the actual journey of deportation and escape by traveling to Adabazar in western Turkey, and then going to the Syrian deserts through the same routes as her grandfather.

Her well written book maintains a certain level of suspense for both story lines, which are developed in alternating chapters. Her mother always implored her over the years to use her skills as a reporter to get grandfather Stepan Miskjian's story told, and MacKeen wondered to herself, "Nearly a century later, where was my sense of moral obligation? Doing nothing felt like forgetting, and forgetting genocide seemed almost as heinous as the crime itself, especially in light of Turkey's denials" (p. 7).

MacKeen, who could not read Armenian, did not let the language barrier interfere. Other relatives translated her grandfather's diaries and she and even her mother learned details that never had been spoken about. However, there were still certain gaps, and there were no contemporaries left who could fill them in. Instead, MacKeen visited libraries in Europe before beginning her own odyssey to Turkey and

Syria. She used contemporary Armenian and European newspaper accounts, as well as other memoirs, survivor testimony, history books and collections of archival documents in various languages.

It was only a few months after the assassination of Turkish-Armenian newspaper editor Hrant Dink in January 2007, but this did not daunt MacKeen. She traveled the deportation routes from Adabazar until the Syrian border, occasionally seeing remnants of the former Armenian population, and visiting places mentioned in her grandfather's memoirs. The tension of traveling in a denialist Turkey hostile to Armenians, and then in Syria where the secret police keep close tabs on foreigners, along with the emotional dimension to her trip, reliving the terrors of the Armenian deportees, make the chapters devoted to her journey riveting.

Simultaneously, Miskjian's detailed diaries allow MacKeen to present to her readers the dizzying sequence of acts of brutality and destruction victims and survivors experienced and their states of mind with an immediacy enhanced by her literary skills. Many of the chapters depicting his adventures end in suspense, with the reader left wondering whether he survived that particular tribulation or succeeded in successfully escaping.

The two parallel narratives merge at the end of the book when MacKeen meets the descendants of the sheikh who saved Miskjian's life near Deyr el-Zor. She is able to thank them on behalf of her family. She says that this "has been the transcendent moment of my life" (p. 298). In the epilogue, MacKeen addresses Turkish denial of the events of the Genocide, and ends with her mother's words calling for "total understanding and forgiveness of what has happened."

There are some minor historical errors. For example, the Armenian prelate of Izmit (Nikomedia) Stepannos Hovagimian was not a deacon in 1913 but an archbishop (p. 37). However, in general the book has been carefully prepared with the assistance of various Armenian historians. It is a useful addition to the literature on the Genocide, and the fact that it has been published by a major American publisher means that it will be accessible to a broader audience than just Armenians.

## City Officials Propose Locating Armenian American Museum in Glendale's Arts and Entertainment District

GLENDALE - On February 25, Glendale City Councilman Zareh Sinanyan and City Manager Scott Ochoa formally presented to the Armenian American Museum's Governing Board the option of building the Museum in Glendale's Arts and Entertainment District across from the Central Library.

The Armenian American Museum's Governing Board agreed to consider the option of placing the Museum on the proposed 1.4 acres property on Colorado Street and consult with Armenian American community organizations and representatives regarding the new site.

The Armenian American Museum is conducting environmental and economic studies to determine the feasibility of building the Museum on City owned property across from Glendale Community College. In April 2015, the City and the Armenian Genocide Centennial Committee (AGCC) of Western USA executed an Exclusive Negotiating Agreement to develop the terms of a ground lease of the site proposed for an Armenian American Museum.

The AGCC in August 2015 delegated the authority and responsibility for building the proposed museum to nine Armenian community organizations and institutions. The Governing Board of the Armenian American Museum was established and the work on developing a concept plan and concept design continued.

By December of last year, the Governing Board unveiled a concept design at the City Council meeting and expanded community outreach efforts to inform the public and solicit feedback on the proposal.

"We are very pleased by the outpouring of support for the museum and look forward to engaging the City's Armenian as well as non-Armenian stakeholders in the process of building a world class Museum," remarked Armenian American Museum Governing Board Co-Chair Archbishop Hovnan Derderian.

"The feedback indicates that there is greater support for locating the museum in downtown Glendale. Residents who support the museum have urged the City Council to identify property in the central part of the City where most of the arts and entertainment facilities are located," added Governing Board Co-Chair Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian.

"The City owned property in downtown Glendale was not an available option in 2014," remarked the Armenian American Museum Executive Committee Chairman Berdj Karapetian, who has been spearheading the Museum project since its inception 2 years ago.

Karapetian further added that AGCC considered building the museum in the central part of the City or its Arts and Entertainment District but could not identify an appropriate location in 2014 when it initiated the discussion for a ground lease with City officials.

## Meet French Actor/Director Gerald Papasian

At the screening of his stage Opera Buffa  
*Gariné*

A musical based on Dikran Tchouhadjian's  
"Leblebiji Horhor Agha"

In French with English subtitles

Following the film showing:

A traditional chicken dinner will be served with coffee and dessert.

Mr. Papasian will make a presentation on Dikran Tchouhadjian, the inspiration and research to produce a new version of "Gariné" including his discovery of scores in Paris in French translation while originals have never been found, and a general discussion on the current state of the Armenian Culture in Diaspora. The presentation will be in English.

Cash Bar will also be available.

Sponsored by AGBU New England District Chapter  
Tekeyan Cultural Association  
Amaras Art Alliance

\$35 tickets and info [AmarasOnline.com](http://AmarasOnline.com)  
[tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com), (617) 944-4420 (617) 331-0426

Proceeds benefit the Dikran Tchouhadjian International Institute, a non-profit organisation registered in France and the US, Gerald Papasian Artistic Director

Sunday March 6, 2016  
3 PM

AGBU Center  
247 Mt Auburn Street, Watertown, MA

About Papasian: born in Cairo to a renowned musical family which established the first major music stores in the Near East: "Les Magasins Generaux de Musique Papasian," he is a graduate of the Melkonian Institute, Cyprus and the State Dramatic Arts Institute, Armenia. A cosmopolitan and multilingual professional, he has worked in Armenia, UK, USA and Canada, directing, translating, adapting plays and operas. He lives in Paris where he is founder/director of the Dikran Tchouhadjian International Institute. In France Papasian works primarily with internationally acclaimed stage actress, director and producer Irina Brook; he is a founding member of her company. Under her direction, Papasian performs in Paris and on international tours in several productions including the role of Sancho Panza (best actor nomination) in *Somewhere La Mancha*. He is currently a visiting lecturer at the University of Michigan's Armenian Studies program in Ann Arbor. His translations of Vahan Tekeyan poems were recently published by The Press - California State University Fresno.





## A Granddaughter's Journey

JOURNEY, from page 1

said. "We ended up changing the state law. There were parallels to my grandfather's story. Its focus was on the elderly with dementia and making promises that they were not keeping," she noted, "parallel to the Armenians," who had suffered after false promises by the Ottoman authorities.

The title of the book comes from the fateful decision she made to actually walk the path that her grandfather did, from his town of Adabazar to his march through Deir Zor, all the way through Syria, where he was ultimately saved by an Arab sheik. She was ready for a change at that time, in 2007, as she had already moved back to the West Coast from New York and was searching for something to sink her teeth into.

Little did MacKeen know that her book would not only bring to life this journey from 100 years ago for her, but would capture ordinary life in Syria before the country's devolution into chaos.

As any good reporter knows – and MacKeen is one – gathering information about your subject is the first step. She quizzed all her relatives in the US and France about him.

The next step is to "be there" for the story to get closer to one's subject.

"That was my goal, to see the environment that he was in. The desert was their prison.

The highs and lows in her book are thrilling, as they compare and contrast the life of a man in the Ottoman Empire struggling from one moment to another in order to survive, as well as his American granddaughter who makes this journey, albeit with as many modern comforts as possible. The linking of the two is the centerpiece of the book as MacKeen is able to viscerally experience the memories imparted from her grandfather.

Her grandfather, Stepan Miskjian, had died in 1974 but his words were still there.

"He lived very close to us. We would go to their house and I was always at his knee," she recalled.

Stepan's journey started in the town of Adabazar, in Western Armenia. He was yanked away from his family and survived – against unbelievable odds – imprisonment, starvation, forced labor and a lengthy march through the desert – which ended up in Syria, and ended up in the US.

While the story she traces is one of survival, she insists that to regard Stepan as solely a survivor would be to short-change him.

"My grandfather was very funny and very health conscious," she recalled, with a knack for playing tricks on friends and family.

It is amazing to consider that Stepan Miskjian lived on the verge of death for years, from about 1914 to 1919. The backbreaking labor, the deprivation, the thirst and the mur-

derous heat of the desert all took their toll on him, both physically and mentally. Though he was jovial later in life, he had his struggles. "He would tell her [his daughter, Dawn's mother, Anahid] every year that he was going to die next year. My mom thinks that it was like PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]."

As MacKeen found out, Stepan had a "very strong constitution and will to live."

Stepan, before the hellish time of the Genocide, had had to test his mettle in order to survive. His family went through a change of fortune and he had to leave school and take to the streets eventually as an "emanetji," a sort of courier service for delivering goods for merchants.

Because of this job, in which he was very successful, "he was dealing with a lot of people and adapting, which helped him later on."

"He survived the Deir Zor massacres. It was really important for him to bear witness. So many people asked him that if he survived it, to tell our story. He was a very good storyteller," MacKeen said. "He would just get up and tell stories."

Part of Stepan's story is being rescued by a pious Muslim family in what is now Syria. "This Arab sheik saved my grandfather despite the rhetoric that the Armenians were dangerous people," she said. "I really feel it is important to speak to that."

Sheikh Hammud al-Aekleh, a relatively prosperous landowner with many heads of cattle, took him in after he crossed into Syria and nursed him back to health.

The sheikh himself died in the 1930s at age 70 or so.

Now, she said, "his descents are suffering under war and they need refuge."

The story of how she finds and meets them is charmingly put in the book. She arrives, with her driver and guide, and assumes that there is a big religious holiday going on, as so many cars and people have gathered. Little did she know that they had all arrived to meet her. She receives a hero's welcome and is treated to a lavish banquet.

"It is their custom. It kind of shows what kind of people there are. It is absolutely heartbreaking" to think the fate that has befallen them.

And they are not the only ones to be displaced. The Armenians who ended up putting down roots in Syria after the Genocide are all displaced yet again. She recalls going to Raqqa, where the Genocide survivors had built a church.

"What happened to these people [again] sickens me," MacKeen said.

"I believe my grandfather's story needed to be told. I am so heartened that people are reading and commenting on what he endured," she said. "especially non-Armenians. I always wanted to educate people through my story."

"I got to know him. It has been such a gift," she said.

Aram Arkun, the assistant editor at the *Mirror-Spectator*, served as a consultant for the book.

(See review by Aram Arkun, page 11)

## Aghbashian Compiles Information on Turkish Intellectuals Recognizing the Armenian Genocide

AGHBASHIAN, from page 10

Publishing Association, 2015), which is an attempt to fill this void.

This 142-page work is not a detailed scholarly work, but rather a collection of brief two-to-four-page biographical essays on over 50 of these Turkish writers. In at least one of the essays, the author adds information obtained through personal contact with the subject.

The book does not explicitly investigate the varying approaches of the intellectuals included in this book to the terminology describing the events of 1915, with some opting not to use the word genocide.

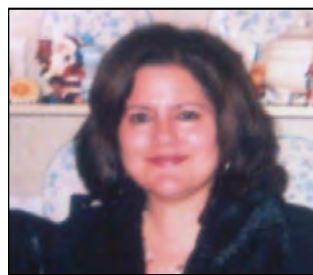
This volume includes a foreword by Dr. Levon Marashlian, professor of history and political science at Glendale Community College, and short messages by Dr. Raffi Balian of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (US Western District Committee), Hagop Mardrossian, editor of *Nor Or* weekly, Vatche Semerdjian, chairman of the Los Angeles chapter of the Tekeyan Cultural Association, and Dr. Ohannes Kulak Avedikian, chairman of the Association of Istanbul Armenians' Cultural Committee. The last two of these remarks are written in Armenian, unlike the rest of the

book. Several of these notes express the hope that this volume may help in combatting the denial of the Armenian Genocide sponsored by the Turkish state and "awaken the masses" in Turkey.

The book includes an excerpt of the United Nations Genocide Convention, a brief biography of Raphael Lemkin, who coined the word genocide, and a list of states, regional governments and prominent international organizations formally recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

Author Hambersom Aghbashian is a native of Baghdad, Iraq. Previously active in the Armenian General Benevolent Union and the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Iraq in Baghdad, and one of the founders and board members of the Iraqi Armenians Benevolent Association in Los Angeles, he is a frequent contributor to the Armenian press.

This book is a first step in providing raw material for the examination of shifting opinions among Turkish intellectuals on the Armenian Genocide. Surveys of published works on the topic by academics like Ann Arbor, Michigan sociology professor Fatma Müge Göçek already exist.



# Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

## Armenian Pilaki Salad with Fresh Herbs

### INGREDIENTS

3-4 cups large white navy beans, cooked and drained  
1 cup fresh tomatoes, seeded and diced  
1/2 cup olive oil  
1 cup diced celery (and tops)  
1 cup diced carrots  
1 cup diced red onion  
1 cup diced zucchini  
1/2 cup sliced green or red bell pepper  
3 cloves fresh garlic, minced  
1 teaspoon light or Kosher salt  
1 teaspoon sugar  
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper  
1/2 teaspoon paprika  
1/2 teaspoon dried dill  
1/4 teaspoon black pepper  
Juice of 2 large lemons or red wine or balsamic vinegar to taste  
Fresh lemon wedges as garnish  
Fresh chopped parsley, basil, oregano, and mint as garnish  
Chopped green and Kalamata olives as garnish  
3-4 boiled eggs, chopped, as garnish

### PREPARATION:

Wash the beans, cover with cold water, and cook on medium heat for 25 minutes or until beans are tender.

Drain beans and place in a large bowl. Add the tomatoes, olive oil, celery, carrots, red onion, zucchini, bell pepper, garlic, salt, sugar, cayenne pepper, paprika, dill, black pepper, and lemon juice or vinegar to taste, toss a few times, and adjust seasonings.

Cover and chill salad. Arrange salad in a serving bowl or on a large platter garnished with lemon wedges, parsley, basil, oregano, mint, green and black olives, and chopped boiled eggs; serve with Armenian bread, string cheese, and lavash. Drizzle salad with a little olive oil, if desired.

Serves 6-8

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>

## Crisis in the Middle East: Impact on Armenians

*an educational forum*

Saturday, March 5, 2016 at 7 pm

AGBU School Multipurpose Room

22001 Northwestern Highway, Southfield MI



Dr. Ara Sanjian

*Armenians in the Arab East*



Mr. Edmond Azadian

*Armenia in the midst of turmoil*



Dr. Vahe Sahakyan

*Impact in Armenia*

*M.C. Ani Boghikian-Kasparian*

— Bring your questions —  
following speaker presentations, a panel discussion with audience participation will be moderated by Edward Haroutunian and Alice Nigoghosian

Join us for this educational forum designed to provide a better understanding of the current crisis in the Middle East, the implications and its impact on Armenians

*Evening will conclude with a "meet the speakers" Afterglow*

Free & Open to the Public  
hosted by The Detroit United Committee





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## CALENDAR

## CALIFORNIA

**MARCH 6 — Author Dawn Anahid Mackeen to sign copies of her book *The Hundred-Year-Walk: An Armenian Odyssey*.** St. Vartan Armenian Church, Sunday, Lecture/Book Presentation at St. Vartan Armenian Church. Sponsored by the AGBU, UC Berkeley Armenian Studies Department, and St. Vartan. 650 Spruce St, Oakland, CA.

**MARCH 16 — Abril Books, Wednesday, Book reading and signing,** Author Dawn Anahid Mackeen *The Hundred-Year-Walk: An Armenian Odyssey*. 415 E. Broadway, Suite 102, Glendale, CA

**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.

## MASSACHUSETTS

**MARCH 6 — Book Launch, commemorating International Women's Day: In the Ruins** by Zabel Yessayan. Sponsored by the Armenian International Women's Association. 2 p.m., Watertown Free Public Library.

**MARCH 6 — Actor and director Gerald Papisian of Paris, France** will speak and present a screening of his production of the musical "Garine" at the AGBU Center, 247 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. Proceeds will support the Dikran Tchouhadjian International Institute. The event is cosponsored by the AGBU New England District Chapter, Amaras Art Alliance, and the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

**MARCH 6 — St. Stephen's Armenian Church in Watertown will host a Lenten Dinner,** sponsored by the St. Stephen's Ladies' Guild. Begins at 1 p.m. in the church hall, 38 Elton Ave. Board Member Raffi Manjikian will speak on the "Cultural Traditions of Armenian Carpets." Donation: \$25. For more information, call Deanne Nahabedian, (781) 891-7249 or the church office at (617) 924-7562.

**MARCH 7 — St. James Armenian Church's Men's Club will host Hourly Panian Boyamian,** principal of St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School, who will speak about her father, Karnig Panian's memoir, *Goodbye Antoura: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide*. Complete Lenten dinner. Social hour and mezza at 6.15 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m. \$15 per person. St. James Armenian Church, Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, Keljik Hall, 465 Mount Auburn St., Watertown.

**MARCH 12 — "Untold Story of an Armenian-American Artist" The Work of Yenovk der Hagopian** — exhibition opening and reception, Adele & Haig Der Manuelian Galleries (3rd Floor), Armenian Museum of America, Watertown. The event is free and open to the public and light refreshments will be served at the reception. Saturday, 2-4 p.m.

**MARCH 13 — Sunday, 2 p.m., the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown will host the opening of a new exhibition titled "The Lost Empire: The Show You Haven't Seen Before,"** by Arevik Tserunyan. The opening will include a reception held in the Adele & Haig Der Manuelian Galleries on the third floor of the museum. The event is free and open to the public, and light refreshments will be served at the reception.

**MARCH 20 — Anniversary dinner hosted by the Merrimack Valley "Arax" ARS Chapter,** 1 p.m., Jaffarian Hall, St. Gregory Church, 158 Main St., North Andover. Luleh kebab dinner and program, speaker Talin Daghljan. Tickets at the door.

**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 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.... Please 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 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 Manjikian (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 — Save the date. 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. Keynote speaker will be announced at a later date.

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

**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.

**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.

**MAY 27 — 65th Annual Armenian Night at the Pops,** Featuring Boston Pops Orchestra, Keith Lockhart, Conductor; presenting Edvard Poghosian, cello. Presented by Friends of Armenian Culture Society. Symphony Hall, 301 Massachusetts Ave., Boston. For tickets and information, visit [facsboston.org](http://facsboston.org)

**SEPTEMBER 10 — Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston 30th Anniversary Gala.** Details to follow.

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

## ILLINOIS

**APRIL 18 — Award-winning poet and critic Peter Balakian** will give a Center for Advanced Study (CAS)/MillerCommlecture 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 HAMPSHIRE

**MARCH 19 — Book-signing and presentation,** 1-4 p.m., Barnes and Noble, Salem, NH by authors E. Philip Brown and Tom Vartabedian will speak about their book, *Armenians of the Merrimack Valley*.

## NEW JERSEY

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

## NEW YORK

**MARCH 10 — Prof. Kim S. Theriault will speak at a lecture titled "Arshile Gorky: Abstraction and Armenian Identity,"** that will take place on Thursday, 7 p.m., at the Guild Hall, the Armenian Diocese, New York City. Theriault's recent book, *Rethinking Arshile Gorky*, was awarded a Society for the Preservation of American Modernists publication grant because it offers insights into the themes of displacement, trauma and memory in his work. Theriault will discuss the intersection of Gorky's Armenian identity with his art. The program is presented by the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, 630 Second Ave.

**March 14 — "Development of Programs and Evaluation Methodologies Designed to Achieve Gender Equality,"** NGO Panel at the Commission on the Status of Women, sponsored by the Armenian International Women's Association. Moderated by Susan Raymond, PhD, Executive Vice President, Changing Our World, with Shakeh Kaftarian, Ph.D., President, Kaftarian & Associates; Maro Matosian, Director, Women's Support Center, Yerevan; Judy Norsigian, Co-Founder/Editor, Our Bodies Ourselves; Alexandra Pittman, Founder, AVP Global Consulting. 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., CUNY Graduate Center, Rm. 1, 365 Fifth Ave. Open to the public free of charge. [Info@aiwainternational.org](mailto:Info@aiwainternational.org).

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





# Mirror Spectator



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EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Marc Mgrditchian

**SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:**  
Edmond Y. Azadian

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

Florence Avakian, Dr. Haroutiun Arzumanyan, Taleen Babayan, Diana Der Hovanesian, Philip Ketchian, Kevork Keushkerian, Harut Sassounian, Hagop Vartivarian, Naomi Zeytoonian

**CORRESPONDENTS:**

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

**Contributing Photographers:**

Jacob Demirdjian and Jirair Hovsepian

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

[www.mirrorspectator.com](http://www.mirrorspectator.com)

E-Mail: [editor@mirrorspectator.com](mailto:editor@mirrorspectator.com)

For advertising: [mirrorads@aol.com](mailto:mirrorads@aol.com)

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

## COMMENTARY

# The (Sham) Case against Sevan Nisanyan

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Jurisprudence in Turkey has not progressed much since the days of the Ottoman Sultans. Armenian literature has a lesser known satirist, called Arantzar who ridiculed the Turkish laws of his day. In one of his stories an Armenian is convicted by a Turkish court for having insulted the beard of a mullah (very much like Sevan Nisanyan's insult of the Prophet). But upon appeal, the merciful judge acquits the offender on the basis of the fact that the very number of hairs on the mullah's beard, which were subject of the offense, had already fallen during the morning after a vigorous combing.

We wish that Nisanyan's case could have a similar outcome. (See related story on Page 1.)

Turkey currently is a candidate for membership in the European Union, upon whose preconditions the Erdogan government has been introducing some improvements in his country's laws, especially in the area of human rights and freedom of speech, never mind the continuing carnage of Kurds and attack on the free press with the incarceration of increasing numbers of journalists.

Turkish national Dogu Perinçek insults the Armenian Genocide in Switzerland and it is absolved by the European Court of Human Rights, supposedly in defense of the offender's right to free speech, yet the same country, clamoring for the rights of Mr. Perinçek, sentences an Armenian intellectual, Sevan Nisanyan, to 25 years of incarceration under trumped-up charges for speaking the truth about Turkish history. People could accept warped legal logic from a country like Turkey, but it is unexpected for a European court to emulate Turkish thinking.

Incidentally, there was a worldwide outcry when Turkish journalists, including the editor of *Cumhuriyet*, were jailed, while no similar movement has taken place in the two years since the unjust arrest of Nisanyan.

terms for 17 cases brought against him. In fact, everybody knows that the case against Nisanyan has nothing to do with construction infractions. He is being punished for his history and literary work challenging the official ideology."

Thanks to Nisanyan's initiative, Shirince has become a tourist paradise attracting 600,000 to 800,000 visitors every year. He and his wife moved to that former Greek village, which had become dilapidated, and bought many pieces of property and restored them to the original condition, plus all the modern updates a tourist may like. In fact, what he has done is much like what the Tufenkians have done in Armenia with restoring old properties with all the modern facilities. Instead of being celebrated for his efforts in increasing Turkish tourism, he is being punished for having a mind.

Istanbul may be considered the world capital of *gecekondu* (fly-by-night) construction, yet no one has been convicted and received jail time for building those illegal constructions.

It is obvious that Nisanyan's sentence has more to do with his outspoken nature than his construction activities. Nisanyan himself believes that his identity and opinions are the main cause of his persecution.

He is a graduate of Columbia and Yale. He has written an unusual book on the etymology of the Turkish language, reminding readers of the linguistic achievements of Hagop Martayan, whom Ataturk himself called Dilaçar, for his contribution to the development of the modern Latin-alphabet based Turkish language.

But Nisanyan's troubles began when he published his book titled *The Wrong Republic*, questioning the foundation of the current Republic of Turkey and the legitimacy of the Ataturk rule. His conclusions have already been affirmed by Turkish historian Taner Akçam, who has traced all Ittihadist war criminals who later joined the Ataturk movement to build modern Turkey on the blood of the Armenians and Christians in general.

Ataturk literally means the father of Turks or Turkey. The

Turkish writer Aziz Nesin has even gone one step further by posing the following question: "Why should a bastard be called the father of my nation or my own father?"

In later years, another Turkish historian based in Holland, Ugur Ungor, published his book titled *Making of Modern Turkey*, where he demonstrated that the affluent class in modern Turkey sits on the confiscated properties and the wealth of the Armenians. Yet Nisanyan is in jail for the same statements. On top of that, he has been vocal on the issue of the Armenian Genocide. He has received also many death threats for his opinions on religious

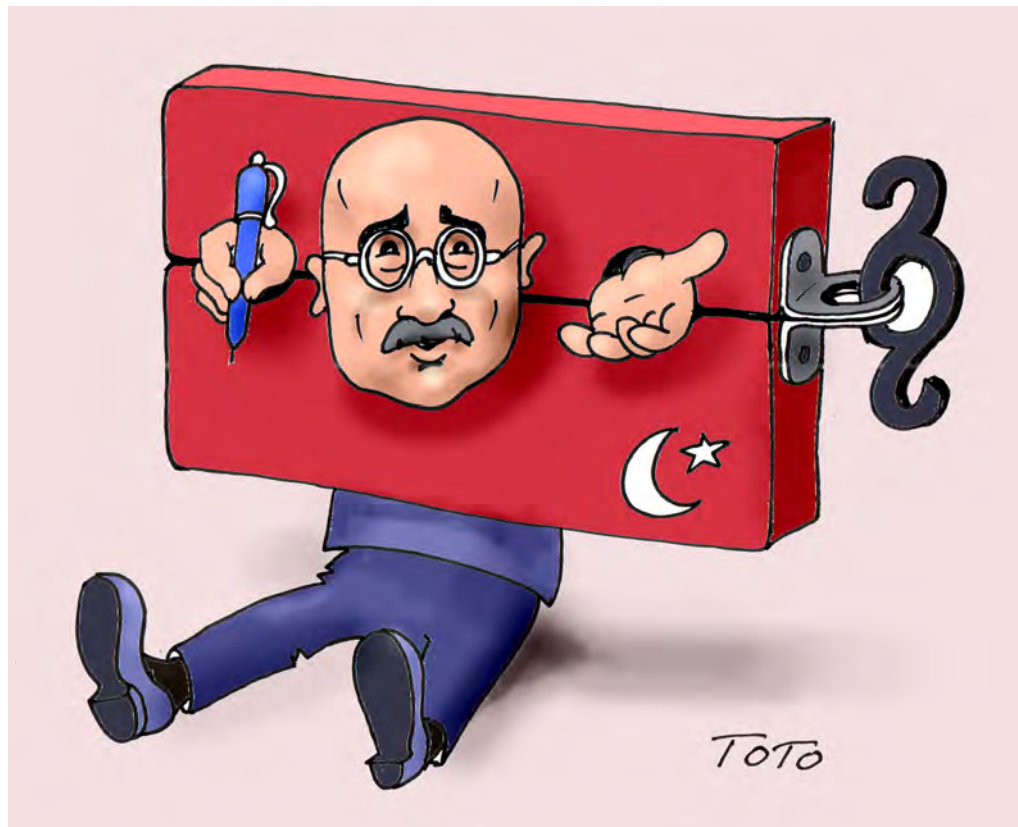
repression and perhaps his being in jail has proven to be a blessing in disguise, as otherwise he could have shared the fate of Hrant Dink, whose death could not only have been stopped by the authorities, but was indeed sought.

As far as the actual case against him is concerned, the law that landed Nisanyan in jail had already been repealed. Opposition HDP Party Member of Parliament, Pervin Boudan, has questioned the validity of the law in parliament to no avail. Law 2863 Section 65 was deleted from the Constitution in 2012 yet the judge on the case has insisted on using it. The conviction also contravenes the 6th and 7th articles of the European Human Rights Court.

In today's xenophobic atmosphere generated by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's religious zeal, the niceties of actual laws do not cut any ice.

But the case at hand is a challenge for all Armenians around the world as well as for human rights organizations. The world public opinion has to be sensitized to unmask modern Turkey's human rights abuses, which otherwise will render into a mockery its bid to join the European Union.

It is time to release Sevan Nisanyan from prison. He is garrulous, contrary and not ready to appease or hide his colors in order to live a safe life. And that is precisely the sort of person that Turkey needs in order to grow into a democracy.



People of extraordinary talents are often colorful and they tend to challenge the social, moral and political norms of the day. In the process, they carve out new ways of thinking which later, in their turn, become norms in society, meanwhile sacrificing their lives. Nisanyan fits the mold of those social rebels and pioneers (such as Jesus Christ, Joan of Arc, Giordano Bruno, Paradjanov, etc.); unfortunately, he lives in the wrong country for this.

He is an erudite person and has contributed to his society tremendously. Yet, he has been sent to prison under false charges. There is an online petition at [change.org](http://change.org) demanding his release, but the petition has not yet attained international traction, presenting a challenge to the global Armenian community.

But his case deserves attention far beyond that of the Armenians, since he has become a universal symbol of justice (or injustice). He has been in jail for two years and he faces another 11.5 years and if pending charges against him are upheld, his punishment may be extended to 25 more years.

Orhan Kemal Gengiz has written in an article in *Al Monitor*, "Sevan Nisanyan is being punished for doing illegal construction on his land in Turkey, which is a haven for illegal construction, and is now incarcerated at Izmir-Torbali prison. Moreover, instead of being awarded a Nobel Prize for architecture for what he has created in Shirince, he faces about 50 years in prison





## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## 4,500 Guests Attend Special Armenian Genocide Program in Kremlin Hall

The 10th annual Armenian Music Awards (AMA) program was held on February 27, at the Kremlin's Kevorkiev Hall in Moscow, with 4,500 guests in attendance. Many of Armenia's top stars entertained the large crowd with patriotic songs and musical performances for more than four hours.

This year's program, organized by Valeriy Saharyan, recognized the important contributions made by 12 individuals and organizations on the occasion of the Armenian Genocide Centennial, including Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (member of the Russian Parliament), Harut Sassounian (publisher of the *California Courier* and President of Armenia Artsakh Fund), Armenia Futura and Sergey Smpatian (conductor). Other honorees, some of whom could not be present, appeared by video or through a representative, such as Valerie Boyer (member of the French Parliament), Vigen Sargsyan (Armenian President's Chief of Staff and Coordinator of Programs organized by the State Centennial Committee of

the Armenian Genocide), Armenia's Minister of Culture, Archbishop Ezras Nercessian (Primate of Moscow and Nor Nakhichevan), Serj Tankian (System of a Down), Rouben Vartanian (benefactor and businessman), Artur Janipekyan (Gazprom Media Holding) and Ara Vartanyan (Hayastan All-Armenian Fund).

In receiving his award, Zhirinovskiy had strong words for Turkey. Here are excerpts from his remarks: "The day will come when Armenians will celebrate their festivals in the territory of liberated Western Armenia. That could be a festival bearing the name of your holy mountain – Mount Ararat – and could take place in Kars, Ardahan, Sassoun or Trebizond.... After the downing of the Russian jet, I would have ordered a powerful attack on Turkey. Today, very little would have remained of Turkey.... I wish the dream of Armenians worldwide would become a reality; that those who committed that horrible genocide on April 1915, during World War I, would be punished."

Zhirinovskiy continued his aggressive words, stating that Turkey attacked the Armenians who "were living in their homeland, in their land. But the Turks were nomads; their homeland is in Central Asia, in Tashkent. They should go there and leave Anatolia to Armenians, Kurds, and Greeks. And Constantinople should be a free city. Times are changing. It is possible that shortly this would become a reality. Armenians, no one will bother you. Therefore, the descendants of Western Armenia should prepare their documents to get back their lost lands and properties. I am not talking a lot of 'hot air.' I am convinced that Armenians will shortly commemorate not the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, but celebrate the liberation of Western Armenia. And the Armenian flag will fly in Kars, Ardahan, on Ararat,

Sassoun, and Trebizond."

I had a hard act to follow after Zhirinovskiy's powerful words. In accepting my award, I made the following brief remarks: "Genocide is a monstrous crime which has no statutes of limitations. The Turkish government should well know that the Armenian nation will never give up its just rights. Although 100 years have passed, even if 1,000 years should pass, we will continue to demand, and struggle to regain everything that we lost. Turkey must return all our personal and communal properties – and more importantly – our historic lands of Western Armenia. In other words, we demand our confiscated possessions, and compensation for the murder of our 1.5 million holy martyrs."

I then urged the audience not to despair: "One hundred years ago, the powerful and vast Ottoman Empire collapsed and broke apart, turning into the Republic of Turkey within much smaller borders. With God's help and our persistent efforts, I am convinced that the day will come when today's Turkey would also collapse due to internal and external pressures. We must be prepared to take advantage of such an opportunity to liberate our historic lands. Until then, Armenia, Artsakh and the diaspora should be united into one fist, so that our homeland would become a strong economic, political, and military power. Only such a powerful Armenia can take ownership of its just rights rather than begging for them."

This uplifting four-hour program was broadcast live by Armenia's public television to Armenian communities throughout the world. I am confident that the 4,500 guests at the Kremlin Hall and millions of TV viewers felt a renewed sense of determination to pursue their national goals until their eventual realization.

# Syrian Revival in Armenia

By Raffi Elliott

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

RECENT media attention over a new wave of Syrian-Armenians leaving Armenia in for new beginnings in Canada has sparked renewed concern about the state's ability to integrate its refugees from the war-torn Middle East. Questions about the country's prospects for tackling its corruption problem were also highlighted in a recent Radio Free Europe report where one Canada-bound emigrant at Yerevan's Zvartnots airport cited notorious government-connected oligarchs Ruben Hayrapetyan and Samvel Alexanyan by name as having made it impossible for him to run his small business in Armenia.

Similarly sensationalized reports of Syrian-Armenians taking part in a second exodus, this time from their ancestral land, marks a stark contrast with initial expectations of the impact that droves of Syrian repatriates would have on Armenia; bringing up dark memories of previous waves of unsuccessful repatriation efforts of Iraqi and Azerbaijani-Armenians in prior decades.

As civil unrest in Syria morphed into full-blown civil war, the country's ancient Armenian community was devastated. The Armenian authorities, however, were quick to respond, offering automatic citizenship to ethnic Armenians living in the Middle East, and even setting up passport offices in the Armenian embassy in Damascus. Flights from Damascus, Latakia and Aleppo continued to bring waves of refugees (which Armenia branded as "Repatriates") to Yerevan. When it became impossible to fly, many took to the roads; driving through Turkey and Georgia to make it to safety in Armenia. It is estimated that between 15,000 and 17,000 Syrian-Armenian repatriates came this way.

Throughout the war, ethnic Armenians were largely spared the fate of many of their Syrian compatriots, with as many of 5 million of them being squeezed into refugee camps spread throughout Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, or forced to illegally cross the Aegean to Europe, while others remained in the devastated wasteland their country had become.

Armenia's relatively low living standards and struggling economy, notwithstanding, the country garnered internation-

al praise in its efforts to assist the refugees. Syrian-Armenians were offered certain benefits, including housing, assistance with basic needs, Eastern-Armenian, and Russian classes, community centres, favorable small business loans, and so on. Repatriates, particularly from Qamishli, willing to relocate to Artsakh were offered free land and special tax rates.

Many in Armenia welcomed this influx from Syria because it was expected that their reputation as entrepreneurs, and high skill sets would invigorate a sluggish economy, while their social skills would shake up the service sector. The result was that within a year, 40 new Levantine restaurants and eateries opened their doors in Yerevan, while countless other small businesses began operating across the country.

The plight of the Syrian-Armenians made daily headlines in Armenia for years as the war raged on, with thousands donating belongings, or food, while others offered employment. Despite this, a lack of familiarity with the region, linguistic misunderstandings, and general issues expected from refugee status contributed to a sense of alienation.

Stories of government failures in accommodating these new arrivals have dominated the Diasporan press. Many Syrian-Armenians have indeed met with frustration when faced with the country's small market size, large amount of administrative red tape, and bureaucratic corruption, opting instead to move on to greener pastures. One lady was quoted in saying that she had spent two years looking for work in Armenia, but was ready to move to Canada if she was still unsuccessful. However, when offered to apply for a job placement program for Syrian-Armenians, she replied that her CV was still in Arabic.

Many new arrivals never intended to stay in Armenia permanently. Most saw Armenia as a springboard to eventually rejoin relatives in Western Europe and Canada, which hosts a big Syrian-Armenian community. Organizations such as Hay Doun in Montreal, and the Armenian Relief Society in Toronto, facilitated the outflow of Syrian-Armenians from Armenia.

The situation changed dramatically as Canada's new Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, announced that the country would accept upwards of 60,000 Syrian refugees. Syrians in Armenia watched closely as the Prime Minister personally welcomed the Jamkossian family in Toronto, leading to a flood of new sponsorship applications at Hay Doun.

Tamar, an Aleppo-born Armenian living in Yerevan displays all the signs of a successful integration in Armenia: She works in one of the country's largest tech firms, has a very active social life, and is heavily involved in a number of local associations. Despite this, she continually uses the conditional "if I remain here" when discussing her life in Armenia. The appeal of a potential life in Canada which is now offered to Syrian-Refugees is not lost on her. "I love my life in Armenia," she says "but, what can I do with an Armenian passport? With a Canadian passport, on the other hand..."

This sentiment is echoed by the fact that Syrian-Armenians who had resettled in Armenia before the war have also tried to take advantage of Canadian refugee services, and alarming reports that the Syrian Embassy in Yerevan has taken advantage of the situation by selling fake Syrian passports to local Armenians.

Many other Syrian-Armenian, however, have found their homeland to truly be a land of opportunity. Gaidzak Jabakhtchurian, 28, his family, operated a small chain of lahmadjoun restaurants in Aleppo. During the war, they decided to move to Armenia, and opened another shop. They managed to beat the odds, quickly building a reputation as one of the best Lahmajoun spots in town. They have since moved to a larger and more central location, and have a loyal clientele.

Derian Kebab, a small eatery opened a little over a year ago just next to a car mechanic shop by a Syrian-Armenian family has also become synonymous with the new food scene that Yerevan is currently enjoying. They are now opening a second location.

Syrian repatriates have made their mark in other sectors of the economy as well. Car mufflers, manufactured by a Qamishli-born entrepreneur now completely dominate the muffler market once competed over by Turkish and Iranian imports.

Armenia has proven to be a land of broken dreams for some, and a land of opportunity for others. In the face of acute government failings, economic woes, endemic corruption and other obstacles to economic development, the country remains, at the very least, a safe haven for desperate people escaping a life of constant bombings, kidnappings, and existential threats, and the only pace on the planet that Armenians can truly claim.

Regardless, the thought of a life in Canada being as far away as a few clicks on the Hay Doun website proved to be too strong for many Syrians in Armenia. In a sadly ironic way, the Armenian Diaspora has once more indirectly contributed to the depopulation of Armenia.

Shant, a computer programmer from Aleppo just arrived in Montréal. At the start of hostilities, he escaped the draft by fleeing to Armenia, where he found employment in an American tech company. When he heard of the possibility of applying for a Canadian refugee visa through Hay Doun, he did his research, and weighed his options. "I determined that Canada would be the best place to continue my career, that's all."

Despite this, he remembers his time in Yerevan fondly, saying "Armenia is my homeland, I will try my best to end up back there."

(Raffi Elliott is a Canadian-Armenian entrepreneur and founder of [gettreated.com](http://gettreated.com). He is currently based in Yerevan and often comments on socio-political, economic and tech related issues in Armenia, the Caucasus, and beyond.)

**The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is now accepting all calendar items for free. All items should be sent to [mirrorads@aol.com](mailto:mirrorads@aol.com). Calendar items may be edited to fit the space.**





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