

THE ARMENIAN
Mirror-Spectator

Volume LXXXVI, NO. 44, Issue 4438

\$ 2.00

The First English Language Armenian Weekly in the United States Since 1932

Erdogan Overplays His Hand

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN – There are good reasons to believe that on June 2, the German Bundestag (Parliament) will vote up a resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide. The government coalition parties, Christian Democratic Union and Christian Socialist Union (CDU-CSU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD), plus the Green party, have agreed on a unified text, after intense debate and repeated postponements. The title of the document is “Remembering and Commemorating the Genocide against the Armenians and other Christian Minorities in the Ottoman Empire 101 Years Ago.”

This must have taken Turkish President Erdogan by surprise. Over the past weeks he has acted as though the agreement his government made with the EU over the refugee crisis had given him carte blanche in dictating European policy. According to the deal, Turkish citizens should be able to enter Europe without a visa, on condition see ERDOGAN, page 5



President Serzh Sargsyan giving an interview on the way back to Armenia aboard the presidential plane.

Armenia, Azerbaijan Agree To Resume Peace Process

VIENNA (ArmeniaNow) – President Serzh Sargsyan of Armenia and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan agreed to respect the ceasefire in Nagorno Karabagh and resume their dialogue to find a compromise peace deal during internationally mediated talks in Vienna, Austria, late on Monday, May 16.

The two leaders met for the first time since last month’s four-day hostilities in Artsakh that left scores killed and injured on both sides in the worst violence since 1994.

The meeting was co-hosted by United States Secretary of State John Kerry, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and France’s State Secretary for Europe Affairs Harlem Desir – the top diplomats of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chair countries.

After the meeting the top American, Russian and French diplomats said that Sargsyan and Aliyev will meet again in June to try to revive the peace process and reiterated that “there can be no military solution to the conflict.”

see CEASEFIRE, page 2

ADL Releases Statement Recognizing Armenian Genocide, Support for US Recognition

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON – The national director and CEO of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Jonathan Greenblatt, made Friday, May 13, a lucky day for mending relations with the Armenian and non-Armenian activists who for years had asked the organization to recognize the Armenian Genocide and also throw its support behind its recognition by the US government.

On that day Greenblatt released a statement on the group’s website in which he stressed his support for both issues. (See the full statement of the ADL with the continuation.)

“What happened in the Ottoman Empire to the Armenians beginning in 1915 was genocide. The genocide began with the ruling government arresting and executing several hundred Armenian intellectuals. After that, Armenian families were removed from their homes and sent on death marches. The Armenian people were subjected to deportation, expropriation, abduction, torture, massacre and starvation.

see ADL, page 12



The elegantly attired Vosgi Dagdelen addresses the crowd.

Dagdelen Honored as Mother of the Year By Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston

WATERTOWN – The Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston held a Mother’s Day dinner celebration on May 14 at the Armenian General Benevolent Union center in Watertown honoring Vosgi Dagdelen of New York as “mother of the year.” Dagdelen, a teacher and administrator both in Istanbul and later New York, came with her family to Boston for the occasion. Dr. Aida Minasyan Yavshayan served as the master of ceremonies. She is both an advisor to the board of the Society and co-chair of the evening’s event. Arto Kurkjian, vice president of the Society, served as the other co-chair. Approximately 60 people were in attendance from Boston, New York and other areas.

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

Dagdelen was born in Sepasdia as Vosgi Marzvanian but moved with her parents to Istanbul as a four year old. She graduated Esayan School in 1939

see MOTHERS, page 13

NEWS IN BRIEF

Aleppo Attacks Leave 200 Christians Dead

ALEPPO (Bos News Life) – Sustained rocket attacks in the last two weeks have left up to 200 Christians dead, workers at Barnabas Fund said.

When 1,350 rockets hit the Christian area in Aleppo from April 22 to April 30, 132 individuals were killed, half of them were women and children. On May 3, another 65 died in the rocket attacks and hundreds were left injured, the aid group added.

Barnabas Fund said 35 of the victims who died last week were being treated at the Dabbit Hospital when a rocket destroyed the place. Two of the patients died on the operating table. The explosion also partially damaged another hospital in the area, causing it to close down. A Christian insider said only 16 out of the 134 hospitals in Aleppo are functioning after the recent attacks.

While many of the rocket attacks were carried out by Syrian or Russian forces against opposition groups, Barnabas Fund said Islamic Rebel groups had threatened to wipe out Armenian Christians in the area.

Last week, a Franciscan priest in Aleppo said the violence in the city is the worst he has seen.

“Never, since the beginning of this terrible war, were things as bad as they are now. I have no words to describe all the suffering I see on a daily basis,” Fr. Ibrahim Alsabagh, the Aleppo priest told Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need.

Armenia Parliament Turns down Bill on Karabagh Recognition

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – A bill on Armenia’s recognition of Nagorno Karabagh’s independence did not receive the backing of the National Assembly’s Foreign Relations Committee.

Following the discussion, the majority of the committee members did not participate in the voting, with only one parliament member, Hamlet Harutyunyan from the ruling Republican Party, voting against, and another one, Tevan Poghosyan, voting in favor.

According to committee Chairman Artak Zakaryan, the bill will not be put on the agenda.

“It’s still not the right time for this, but that time is not far off,” Zakaryan said.

“Generally I agree with the proposal by Zaruhi Postanjyan and Hrant Bagratyan, but this has to be done with 100-percent consent, without any discussions.”

Earlier, Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharyan had said that Yerevan’s decision to recognize Nagorno Karabagh’s independence would be determined by negotiations between the two Armenian states.

“There is no alternative to a peaceful settlement,” Kocharyan said.

“And if Azerbaijan attempts to avoid reaching a ceasefire and renews aggression, the issue of recognition will certainly be included in the agenda.”

INSIDE

Aurora’s Story

Page 14

INDEX

Arts and Living	11
Armenia	2,3
Community News.	6
Editorial	17
International	4,5



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenian Armed Forces Down UAV in Vayots Dzor, Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Spokesman of the Defense Ministry of Armenia Artsrun Hovhannisyann announces via Facebook that the Armenian state armed forces have downed a reconnaissance Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) at 14:00 on May 13 in the territory of the Yelpin community of Vayots Dzor Province, Armenia.

Armenia to Host Economic Conference

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenia's Central Bank will host a key economic conference in the fall, which will be attended by several prominent economists.

The conference on macroeconomics will be held on September 15-16 at Dilijan Training and Research center of the Central Bank of Armenia.

Head of the center Martin Galstyan announced that this is the first time Armenia plans to receive such a large group of world famous economists. "Both representatives of academic circles and central banks of different countries are invited", he said, clarifying that among the guests there will be representatives from the International Monetary Fund, Northwestern University, Central Bank of France and others.

Armenia Hosts Individual Deaf Chess Championships

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – President of Armenia, President of the Armenian Chess Federation Serzh Sargsyan on Tuesday, May 17 attended the opening ceremony of the 16th World Individual Deaf Chess Championships at the Tigran Petrosian Chess House.

Set to run through May 26, the tournament will host some 120 players from 24 countries.

Before the opening ceremony, Sargsyan and FIDE president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov laid flowers at the Tigran Petrosyan's bust, paying tribute to the memory of the brilliant Armenian grandmaster.

Dismissals Address Errors during April War

YEREVAN (ArmeniaNow) – Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan's April decrees dismissing three senior officials from the Ministry of Defense in the wake of the fiercest battles in Nagorno-Karabagh since 1994 have mainly been hailed by the public.

While for some this step by the Armenian leader, who, under the Constitution, is also Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, was expected, others, who considered it necessary, still were skeptical about such a possibility.

Sargsyan signed decrees under which dismissed from their posts were Deputy Minister of Defense, Lieutenant-General Alik Mirzabekyan, who is in charge of the Logistics Department, Chief of the Intelligence Department of the General Staff, Major-General Arshak Karapetyan, head of the communications troops of the Armed Forces, chief of the Communications and Automated Management Systems Department Major-General Komitas Muradyan.

"It is obvious that the Armenian side is strengthening certain positions. New objectives have been set and a qualitatively new, higher level of fulfillment is expected, which also implies a personnel change," said Tigran Abrahamyan, an expert on security issues in a Facebook post.

Some, like political analyst Ruben Mehrabyan, do not consider the steps sufficient and demand more resignations.

And political analyst Stepan Safaryan wrote: "At least this way let's acknowledge that we had errors during the April war connected with intelligence, supplies, communication..."

Armenia, Azerbaijan Agree To Resume Peace Process

CEASEFIRE, from page 1

"The Presidents reiterated their commitment to the ceasefire and the peaceful settlement of the conflict," reads a joint statement issued by Kerry, Lavrov and Desire after the meeting and published on the OSCE official website. "To reduce the risk of further violence, they agreed to finalize in the shortest possible time an OSCE investigative mechanism. The Presidents also agreed to the expansion of the existing Office of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson in Office."

According to the statement, Sargsyan and Aliyev also agreed on a "next round of talks, to be held in June at a place to be mutually agreed, with an aim to resuming negotiations on a comprehensive settlement."

Finally, the two leaders reportedly agreed to continue the exchange of data on missing persons under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to which they committed during the Paris summit of October 2014.

OSCE Chairman-in-Office, in the direction of the possible resumption of the negotiating process on conflict settlement," it said.

Before the meeting the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders also held separate meetings with Kerry and top European Union diplomat Federica Mogherini.

The meeting was, in general, positively received by the Armenian side, but experts and politicians also generally expect no significant changes in the process as a result of that.

On his way back from Vienna to Yerevan, Sargsyan gave an interview to Armenian TV channels on board his presidential jet, saying that the goal of the Armenian side was to find out whether in reality negotiations had reached an impasse and there was no other way than war, or, however, the problem could still be solved with minimal losses.

"In general, my colleagues and I are satisfied with the results of the meeting, and we can speak about this more clearly, when the co-chairs'

Babayan said work has started in the right direction – from the lowest rung, that is, introduction of monitoring mechanisms.

"They should start little by little, by taking small steps to construct, so to speak, the building of the conflict settlement. This issue has been neglected for some unknown reasons, meanwhile the importance of it has been voiced by both official Yerevan and Stepanakert many times. It's all about [the introduction of] equipment, which should be installed along the line of contact between Azerbaijan and Artsakh [an alternative name for Karabagh], as well as along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The co-chair countries may use satellites to see whether there are movements of troops or not," said Babayan.

Armen Martirosyan, deputy chairman of Armenia's opposition Heritage party, said that by this meeting the results of the Azerbaijani aggression have only been confirmed, while they have not spoken about



The Vienna meeting, with the OSCE Minsk Group leaders, including US Secretary of State John Kerry, with the Russian and Armenian delegations at left, and the Azeri delegation at right

Since the escalation in Nagorno-Karabagh in early April President Sargsyan presented three preconditions for resuming talks with Azerbaijan: introduction of mechanisms to investigate ceasefire violation incidents; "targeted" statements by international mediators; and guarantees for non-resumption of hostilities.

Azerbaijan has for years effectively rejected internationally proposed confidence-building measures, including mechanisms to reinforce the ceasefire and investigate incidents.

Sargsyan's press office released a report on the meeting late on May 16, saying that "the co-chair countries' representatives insisted on the strict implementation of the 1994 truce and 1995 truce-reinforcing agreements."

"Agreement was reached to initiate steps on the introduction of monitoring of their implementation and mechanisms of investigation of incidents, the increase of the possibilities of the personal representative of the

statement is released. But nevertheless, the Azerbaijani president gave assurances that his country and he have no intention of achieving a military solution to the problem," he said, hinting, however, that the Azerbaijani leader's assurances should be treated skeptically.

"You understand very well, and I think you even predict my reaction, which is the following: it is good, but it inspires little faith, because there had been lots of such talks, whereas, in reality, the agreement has not been observed for several years," said Sargsyan, adding that despite the desire of the Armenian side to a peaceful settlement of the conflict, in all cases they are ready for any outcome.

Incidentally, during the meeting, skirmishes continued around Karabakh. Both the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides reported casualties.

However, the outcome of the Vienna meeting was welcomed in Stepanakert, too. The NKR President's spokesman David

what Sargsyan called "targeted" statements by international mediators and the restoration of the line of contact in the form it existed before Azerbaijan's offensive on April 2.

"In fact, no major changes happened. In my opinion, this is for winning time, while Azerbaijan will continue its policy, and this has been proven by the fact that even during the Vienna meeting, a soldier was killed at the line of contact," Martirosyan told ArmeniaNow.

According to political analyst Sergey Minasyan, the meeting was broadly consistent with the purposes for which it was arranged.

"They have possibly been silent on President Sargsyan's demand related to statements directed to the initiator of the aggression, but we should take into consideration that diplomatic processes sometimes require a milder reaction. I think that a frank discussion took place during this meeting, and, in this respect, it can be treated with cautious optimism," the political analyst told ArmeniaNow.



ARMENIA

History in A Glass

(Re)discovering Armenian Wine

By Rebecca Wall

YEREVAN (Smithsonian Magazine) – Armenia holds a remarkable depth and diversity of cultural and natural landscapes, all within an area approximately the size of the state of Maryland. This diversity and richness is evident in music, cuisine, art, and—increasingly—Armenia’s burgeoning wine industry.

What makes a wine Armenian? I posed this question to Irina Ghaplanyan and Vahe Keushguerian, two wine professionals passionate about the country’s current wine renaissance. Ghaplanyan represents Vineyards of Armenia, a group of almost a dozen winemakers from across the country, including both boutique and large-scale wineries. Keushguerian is a winemaker and the owner of Semina Consulting, a winery consultancy based in Yerevan. He has been involved in the wine industry for over twenty-five years, first in the San Francisco Bay Area as a wine importer, then Tuscany, Puglia, and now Armenia.

Ghaplanyan and Keushguerian emphasized the unique grape varieties indigenous to Armenia and the country’s exceptional terroir, the characteristics that soil, weather, climate, and other environmental factors impart to the grapevines. Armenian wine is also connected across time with a more than six thousand-year-old history of viticulture.

In 2011, researchers from UCLA and the Armenian Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography discovered the oldest winemaking facility in the world, dating from approximately 4100 BCE. This Areni-1 cave complex sits at the mouth of a gorge leading to the medieval Noravank monastery, at the outskirts of Areni village.

The discoveries at Areni-1 place Armenia at the fore of an emerging “Historic World” of wine, including Georgia, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Syria. Working with Historic World colleagues, Armenian wine geneticists, archaeologists, and producers are rediscovering ancient varieties that are the ancestors of today’s wine varieties. In a region

fraught with conflict, this is a kind of “wine diplomacy,” bridging contemporary geopolitical borders.

Ghaplanyan and Keushguerian recently traveled to northwestern Iran, near the Hajji Firuz site where the oldest wine-making related evidence has been discovered, to search for grape varieties in abandoned vineyards.

“Genetic analysis found that four of these varieties had unique genotypes, which is fascinating, and another clue to understand the period of grapevine domestication, and also the way it began migrating to Europe,” Ghaplanyan remarks. These discoveries may “explain how they migrated and the links between the current European varieties and the varieties we have here.”

Armenian grape varieties, like Areni, Kakhet, Voskehat, Khatun Kharji, Movuz, Sireni and Chilar, are still relatively unknown outside of the region. Indigenous to the area and distinct from both the European Old World and New World varieties, these are the grapes that, as Keushguerian puts, “would perplex a wine professional.” He continues, “Their flavor profile is different than what you’re used to – not too different, but distinct. The sensation is different.”

Ghaplanyan and Keushguerian are propagating many of these vitis vinifera varieties in nurseries. They grow rediscovered varieties and produce wine in a process called “microvinification,” creating wines from very small batches of grapes to learn more about the different flavor profiles possible from these ancient grape types. One of their discoveries is the sheer number of flavor profiles possible from only one variety.

“If you compare different grapes, there’s usually a set



Irina Ghaplanyan, My Armenia project specialist and Vahe Keushguerian

amount of flavor profiles that a grape can produce,” she explains. “With the Voskehat grape, the aroma profiles and complexity are much higher than average. It is also a very terroir-driven grape. In 2013, a colder year, it acquired a very stone fruit flavor, very peachy, apricot. 2014 was a lot warmer, so we had tropical notes from banana to pineapple to passion fruit.”

Situated at the intersection of the European and Arabian tectonic plates, Armenia has frequent seismic activity. The resulting volcanic soil is ideal for grape cultivation, enriching terroir. Georgian wines also benefit from this soil type, but

Armenia’s higher elevation and extreme continental climate distinguishes its grapes. Ghaplanyan says very hot summers and very cold winters give the grapes boldness and “a certain maturity.”

Armenia’s extreme climate is surprising when you consider its latitude—roughly the same as Sicily and Mt. Etna. The Armenian highlands produce a range of microclimates, and diverse grapes grow from the lowest elevations of 2,000 feet above sea level to the highest at 5,700, where Keushguerian grows the grapes for his Keush sparkling wine.

“What we’re doing is something like ‘extreme winemaking,’” he says. “We are pushing the limits of the frontier. Armenian vineyards are some of the highest in the northern hemisphere, apart from one small patch of vineyard in Colorado.”

This elevation also breeds a high concentration of polyphenols. These chemicals, which may be linked to prevention of degenerative diseases, lend Armenian wine “a higher structure, a certain *je ne sais quoi* ... a certain elegance similar to northern Italian wines,” as Keushguerian describes it.

The extreme climate also breeds grapes with high acidity, so there is no need to add tartaric acid during the winemaking process, which is common with wines of the New World. High acidity without additives made early winemaking possible, when early inhabitants of the South Caucasus may have used wines for ritual purposes.

Winemaking in Armenia dates from at least 4100 BCE to the present day, but Armenian viticulture has been disrupted throughout history by imperial conquests, political revolutions, and shifts in society. During Soviet times, and especially when Stalin came to power in the 1930s, the government asked Armenian winemakers to shift production toward cognac and European-style fortified wines (i.e. sherry, madeira) instead of table wines. This system rewarded quantity rather than quality.

“We can give one credit to the Soviets,” Ghaplanyan reminds. “They created collective nurseries, where they would preserve the historic varieties. They didn’t industrially use them because they weren’t as weather resistant, but they didn’t ignore them. They had a collection which we lost during the collapse of the Soviet Union.”

Instability, privatization, and conflict characterized this collapse in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the wine industry lay dormant for years. The vineyards, which need steady and constant care, fell into neglect until the late 1990s.

Since 1998, they and their fellow winemakers have been rebuilding and expanding the Armenian wine industry, and today there is a renaissance. The 2010 vintage was a watershed year, and Yerevan now boasts almost a dozen wine bars, while Armenian wines are appearing on global top ten lists.

Ghaplanyan and Keushguerian see this evolving industry as a boon to local communities. As wine quality improves, so does the value of the final product and the grapes themselves. Within a more profitable economy, many farmers who have been steadily leaving for work in Russia might be able to afford to stay on their land. In marginal plots of land, on hill-sides dotting the Armenian highlands, winemakers, communities, and families are cultivating the future of Armenia—by revisiting and reinterpreting its historic grapevines.

Vahe Keushguerian and Irina Ghaplanyan will present a selection of Armenian wines with the Smithsonian Associates on May 18, including a tasting of Voskehat.

(Rebecca Wall is a historian and fellow with the Smithsonian’s Office of International Relations, where she works on international programs including My Armenia.)

Martakert: A Karabagh Town Defying War under Azeri Shelling

By Gayane Mkrtychyan

MARTAKERT, NKR (ArmeniaNow) – “There is no panic, we are calm. As many as 169 volunteer servicemen from Martakert are at military posts with the soldiers and the rest are in town, do their everyday work. The town has water, light, natural gas. The two schools are open, though the number of students decreased a bit. No problem, they will return. The Martakert-Yerevan, and Martakert-Stepanakert transport is working,” says Martakert Mayor Misha Gyurjyan, who himself is a veteran of the 1992-1994 Karabagh war.

The town is three kilometers from the Karabagh-Azerbaijani contact line, and 75 kilometers from NKR capital Stepanakert. It is home to about 4,800 people, the total number of students in the two schools is 800.

During military actions, Martakert civilians often become targets of Azerbaijani armed forces, which constantly shell the town. Dozens of homes have been destroyed. However, life in Martakert is going on, and its residents continue to “impose” peace by reconstructing destroyed

houses, cultivating gardens, and tending cattle.

Artur Shahbaryan, one of the builders who are repairing damaged homes, says that they have been working for already 15 days. They repair ceilings, walls, broken windows.

“If those who live in this house had left it a few minutes later, all of them would have been killed as a result of the exploded shell. Whenever I am told, I will put down my tools, take a gun instead and go to [military posts]. I am a war veteran. I fought for the liberation of Talish and Seysulan. But there is a need to repair these homes, too. People should have a place to stay,” says Shahbaryan from Arajadzor.

Suren Ayvazyan, a resident of Martakert, says: “We hope that there will be peace, and we will not have to leave our homes. This is our land. Where shall we go? Why do they shell civilians? Let me show you the place where a shell of adversary dropped,” says the father of two sons, who are conscripts in Hadrut.

Manya Grigoryan, a mother of three sons, is trying to arrange things in the renovated house. She says that she was on duty in hospital on April 2. Her husband and three sons were at home. When the shooting became intense, her husband and sons went out of the house, and

minutes later the house was bombed and destroyed.

“A shell of a Grad system dropped into the house after they left the house. Everything was destroyed. Now my two sons are in Khnatsakh, in the Askeran district. They stay in my parents’ house. My husband is at a military post, and my elder son will start his service in the army in June. Never did I imagine that a thing like this might happen. We have no other place to go. Our home is in Martakert: we have lived here for 20 years. Where else shall we go? How can I leave everything and go,” says Grigoryan, wiping away her tears.

In the border town of Martakert people live face-to-face with war. The homeland starts and ends here. Heroes are born here.

During the Artsakh war, on July 4, 1992, the Azerbaijanis, with the support of the USSR’s 4th Army, captured Martakert and kept it under their control for almost a year. On June 28, 1993, Armenian forces finally liberated Martakert.

Ruzanna Ayvazyan, a 48-year-old resident of Martakert, with her husband, took part in that war. Now, their son is at a military post. Ayvazyan says that she often visits soldiers by going up to the military posts.

“I took sweets and juices from my shop to the military posts for them all. I encouraged them to stand strong and be brave. I told them that we had also served in the army and had lived through worse feelings. Though I worry for them a lot, they are perfectly united. If there is any need, I will close down my store and will stand next to our children,” says the mother of two children.

She wipes the tears off her eyes and says: “I understand how worried are those parents from Armenia, whose sons are next to us. I went up the military posts and kissed them all and told them to consider me as their mom. I’ll do my best for them”.

The main topic of people gathered at different corners of Martakert is the same: they are actively discussing the April war and the processes that followed it.

“We are standing on our land like an oak. We were born here and live here. Our life is here. My father and my two brothers, we all participated in the war, and now our children are more courageous than us. We will foist peace on them [Azerbaijanis] by our existence,” says Yura Baghryan, a father of three children and six grandchildren.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

ISIS Desecrates Cemetery in Deir ez-Zor

DEIR EZ-ZOR, Syria (Public Radio of Armenia) — During the raid on al-Assad hospital in Deir ez-Zor on May 14, ISIS fighters simultaneously seized most of the Deir ez-Zor cemetery, Al-Masdar News reports.

Islamic State's media outlet Amaq News said 10 government soldiers were killed during skirmishes at the Christian cemetery. Upon entering the cemetery, ISIS militants posed for pictures, which they sent to Amaq News to publish for propaganda reasons.

Although the provincial capital of Deir ez-Zor city is largely Sunni, the city is also home to a large Christian, mostly Armenian minority.

Some 100,000 civilians live in government-held areas of Deir Ez-Zor, facing an ISIS-imposed siege which has caused food prices to rise some 80 percent.

The Holy Martyrs Armenian Church in Deir ez-Zor was destroyed by the Islamic State in September 2014. The church was built in 1989-1990, and consecrated a year later. A genocide memorial and a museum housing remains of the victims of the genocide was also built in the church compound.

Fight Erupts in Kung Fu Ring

LVIV, Ukraine (ArmeniaNow) — A brawl between Armenian and Azerbaijani delegations marred European Kung Fu championships in Lviv, Ukraine, where a fight between the two rival nations' representatives had to be stopped because of a skirmish that got out of hand.

Armenia's David Petrosyan, a native of Nagorno Karabagh, was poised to gain a semifinal victory over his Azeri rival when Azerbaijan's delegation initiated a brawl inside the ring that quickly erupted into the sports hall in front of cameras.

A video from the May 13 out-of-the-ring fight that went viral on the internet over the weekend shows more than three dozen Azeris attacking 11 Armenian team members, most of whom were underage, with sticks. European Kung Fu Federation head Nikolay Matulevsky was also reportedly hurt in the incident as he apparently tried to intervene to stop the fistfight.

The Azeri team was eventually disqualified from the competitions for "unsportsmanlike behavior" following a decision of the Referees' Committee.

EU Warns Turkey on Reneging on Deal

BRUSSELS, Belgium (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The European Union (EU) is ready to stick to its migration deal with Turkey but Ankara should not seek to change the rules after they had already been agreed, a top EU official said on Tuesday, May 17, according to Reuters.

"The EU stands ready to fulfill its part of EU-Turkey deal as long as Turkey agrees to play by the rules, and not with the rules," European Council President Donald Tusk said on Twitter.

Though much-criticized by rights advocates, the accord helped sharply cut the number of refugees and migrants reaching European shores, giving EU politicians precious breathing space after some 1.3 million people reached the continent last year.

But clouds have now gathered over the deal as Ankara threatens to walk away from it should the EU not ease travel rules for its citizens, a politically contentious discussion in the 28-nation bloc.

Armenian Church in Dersim Damaged

ISTANBUL (Public Radio of Armenia) — The historic Armenian "rock-temple" in Mazgirt, in the Dersim Province, has been seriously damaged by looters and treasure hunters, Akunq.net reports, quoting Dicle news agency.

According to the source, the church is targeted by treasure hunters regularly. Its condition is deplorable. The altar has also been destroyed.

Of Politics and the Pope

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

VATICAN — Pope Francis is preparing to visit first Armenia, then Azerbaijan and Georgia. With this visit, he is trying to bring peace and hope to a region that has been recently beset by troubles. He will visit Armenia June 24-26, and in the autumn, go to Georgia and Azerbaijan. According to the program released by the Vatican press office on May 13, the Pontiff's visit will be apostolic, but will also include political talks. On June 24, after prayers at the Mother Cathedral of Holy Echmiadzin, with greetings by the Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and the Pope, he will pay a courtesy visit to President Sargsyan in the Presidential Palace. Then he will meet with civil authorities and the Diplomatic Corps in the same venue, and will deliver a speech. Following this event, he will hold a private meeting with the Catholicos at his residence.

The second day, June 25, will begin with a visit to Tzitzernakaberd Memorial Complex, after which he will go to Gumri. There he is scheduled to celebrate Holy Mass in Vartanants Square and then to visit the Holy Martyrs Armenian Catholic Cathedral. On his return to Yerevan, he will participate in an Ecumenical Encounter and Prayer for Peace in Republic Square. On the third day, Sunday June 26, he will meet with Catholic Bishops of Armenia in the Apostolic palace at Echmiadzin, then will participate in the Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral, during which the Catholicos will deliver the homily, and the Pope, greetings. An ecumenical lunch is planned, with the Catholicos, archbishops and bishops of the Armenian Apostolic Church. There will follow a meeting with delegates and benefactors of the Apostolic Armenian Church, and a Joint Declaration will be signed. His last visit will be to the Khor Virap Monastery, at the foot of Mount Ararat near the Turkish border, for prayer.

While it is impossible to know much about the content of the events, statements and declarations in his busy schedule, it is clear from the program that recognition of the genocide, ecumenical relations and perspectives for

overcoming conflict with Turkey (and Azerbaijan) are on the agenda. Based on past performance, the Pope can be expected to speak out. As the Italians would put it, he is a person who "does not have hairs on his tongue." No wonder, then, that his visit is awaited with such hopeful expectation.



Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, Pope Francis



In remarks made to the Catholic News Agency, the Armenian Ambassador to the Holy See Mikayel Minasyan stressed the importance of the visit for Armenians, coming as it does at the end of the centenary of the genocide and during the Year of Mercy proclaimed by the Pope. "The Armenians made the whole world see what it is to overcome an injustice," he said. "They gave the possibility to the world to understand what a genocide is, what the denial of genocide is," and recalled that the very term was coined on the basis of studies made of the Armenian genocide. The centenary, he said, had also been an occasion on which to recognize those who have supported the Armenians. Pope Francis stood out among them last year, when he offered a mass for the faithful of the Armenian Rite, in commemoration of the victims on April 12. Ambassador Minasyan highlighted the historic significance of that mass, in the Pope's "calling things as they are, creating another term, 'ecumenism of

joy." The Armenian people, he said, "are waiting with great excitement to manifest their own remembrance. Pope Francis is going to Armenia to fulfill this visit in full respect and love for the Armenian people and for their history. And also," he added, "the recognition of what the Armenian Republic represents now in that region." Minasyan noted that the timing of the visit is particularly meaningful, in light of continuing denial of the genocide by Turkish authorities. "We are not closing this year," he said, "turning a page. We are opening another book and this new book is titled, 'the fight against denialism,' and it is yet to be seen." He considers recognition particularly important considering what the genocide meant for the Middle East. "Now we see that in the past 100 years the quantity, speaking in percentages, of Christians is drastically diminishing. In the past five years, it has been something truly dramatic," he said. "I don't want to put it into a box, but it all started with the Armenian Genocide."

Azerbaijani Soldier Killed on Karabagh Contact Line

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net and Armenpress) — An Azeri soldier was killed on the Nagorno Karabagh contact line on Tuesday, May 17, Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry said.

Karabagh's Defense Ministry said earlier that an army conscript of its own, Khachatur Harutyunyan (b. 1996), received a fatal gunshot wound on May 17, at around 12:50 a.m., as a result of Azeri violations.

The Azerbaijani army violated the Nagorno Karabagh ceasefire on the night of May 16-17, using various caliber firearms and an infantry fighting vehicle, as well as 60-mm mortars and automatic grenade launchers. Especially intense violations were registered in the southeastern (Hadrut) and eastern (Martuni) directions of the contact line.

President Serzh Sargsyan spoke with reporters on his way back from Vienna. He said that Artsakh (Karabagh), which controls some 800,000 hectares of land as a "safety zone" around Nagorno Karabagh lost

some 800 hectares (around 8 square kilometers) in the course of four-day hostilities unleashed by Azerbaijan in early April.

According to Sargsyan, those 800 hectares have no tactical or strategic importance.

"From the psychological viewpoint, Azerbaijanis can convince their people that they have achieved something, but at least one soldier was killed and two more wounded for gaining control over just one hectare of land," Sargsyan said.

"The Armenian forces were capable of restoring the status quo, but the question is whether it's worth such major losses."

"I'm concerned about the fate of every one of our soldiers and officers," Sargsyan added, urging those keen on advising to go to the front-line, assess the situation and see the difference between a meter of land and a human life.

"Years ago, I set a clear task for our armed forces and the security agency

to prevent any disruption or destruction of our security system. The latest developments proved the failure of Azeri strategy," he said.

Earlier, Armenia's Deputy Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan told the Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Thomas Lenk (Germany) that the current format of the monitoring of the Karabagh contact line is not effective.

"Several hours after the OSCE monitoring, a Karabagh soldier was killed in the Azerbaijani fire," Tonoyan said.

According to the Deputy Minister, establishment of mechanisms for investigating border incidents will help prevent such incidents in the future.

Citing Azeri claims of Armenia's alleged use of white phosphorus munitions, Tonoyan further stressed the importance of introducing international mechanisms to prevent misinformation.



Turkish Opposition Leader Speaks out As MPs Debate Legal Immunity Law

By Constanze Letsch

ISTANBUL (*The Guardian*) – A push by the Turkish government to strip parliamentarians of their immunity is a clear attempt by the president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to target opposition MPs and risks inflaming tensions in an already highly polarized country, the co-chair of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic party (HDP) has said.

Turkey's parliament will begin to debate the contentious draft law – which was proposed by Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development party (AKP) – on Tuesday, May 17, with a final vote expected on Friday, May 20.

"The [proposed bill] will have a very negative impact on Turkey, and it is very clear that the attempt to strip MPs of immunity targets us," Selahattin Demirtas, the HDP co-chair, told the



Selahattin Demirtas, co-leader of the Peoples' Democratic party,

Guardian in an interview, warning that there was "a serious risk" of violence increasing in the country as a result.

"Democratic political channels in Turkey are already in great difficulty, and if the bill passes, many people will feel that these channels have been shut completely. The belief in democracy and politics of peace will drop to zero."

The HDP – a party largely representing Kurds but also encompassing leftwing liberals which emerged on the national political landscape last year – opposes the bill, which aims to remove legislators' immunity in legal cases.

The party argues that it is mainly designed to push its members out of parliament to strengthen Erdogan's ambition of an executive presidency. If passed, the bill would affect about 50 of the 59 HDP deputies.

Erdogan and the AKP have repeatedly called for HDP parliamentarians to be prosecuted for "terrorism" and accused the party of being the political arm of the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK) – a charge the HDP, which backs Kurdish and other minority rights, vehemently rejects.

The government's push comes amid a surge of violence in the predominantly Kurdish south-east of the country, the worst Turkey has seen in two decades.

"If parliamentary politics are closed down, people will turn towards other ways [to make themselves heard]," said Demirtas, adding that efforts to revive the peace process were already strained by government policies in the south-

east.

"It is already difficult to speak of peace in a time when Kurds are under such immense pressure. Many of our voters are giving up on hopes of peace, and some youngsters want me to use harsher language against a state they believe is only interested in war.

"There is a serious risk that violence will increase, and there is already way too much of it in Turkey. But if immunity is lifted and [HDP MPs] are arrested, the youngsters who support our party will lose all hope in democratic politics."

Hundreds have been killed and towns have been left in ruins since a ceasefire between Ankara and the outlawed PKK fell apart last July, shattering a tentative three-year peace process and reviving a conflict that has killed more than 40,000 people since it began in 1984.

While the HDP is staunchly opposed to the bill, both the main opposition Republican People's party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement party (MHP) voted in favour of it being sent to parliament this month.

At least 11 CHP deputies, including party leaders Kemal Kiliçdaroglu and Sezgin Tanrikulu, face legal proceedings over "insults" to the president. Members of the AKP and the MHP might also face court cases if the bill is passed.

Under current legislation, Turkish lawmakers are immune from all prosecution while in office, but prosecutors can file police proceedings, or "dossiers", against deputies that can lead to court cases once they leave parliament.

Tanrikulu, a human rights lawyer as well as a deputy, underlined that the constitution should be changed and parliamentarians made accountable for their actions, but that such a change should not be used to muzzle freedom of speech.

"The current article on parliamentary immunity is wrong," he said. "But MPs absolutely must have the right to free speech and to freedom of expression, both inside and outside of parliament. Immunity needs to be lifted for all other crimes committed by lawmakers, and that is what needs to be changed, but not in the way proposed by the government."

As the vote will be held by secret ballot, many expect a majority of CHP legislators to vote against the contentious bill. Tanrikulu said there was a good chance the draft law would fall short of the 367 votes needed to be passed directly by the 550-seat assembly. The bill will go to a referendum if it wins 330 votes, but Demirtas said he doubted this would happen.

"It is difficult to predict the outcome, because there are large numbers of parliamentarians who are uncomfortable with the bill, especially in the CHP, but also in the MHP and even in the AKP," Demirtas said. "I believe that many realize that it would be disastrous, that the bill would be political suicide for Turkey."

However, he underlined that he would keep pushing for the peace process to be revived, even if he had to face prosecution and prison.

"If I have to go to jail I will continue to work for peace from there, I will continue to spread the HDP's message from there," Demirtas said. "I believe that I can do that. Erdogan will regret that he had me arrested, and he will do everything to get me out, because I know that I will be even more efficient from jail."

Turkish Columnist on Trial on World Press Freedom Day

ISTANBUL (AP) – A Turkish columnist has appeared in court on World Press Freedom Day, accused of insulting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Murat Belge, an academic who writes for *Taraf* newspaper, faces four years in prison if found guilty of insulting the Turkish leader in a column suggesting that Erdogan reignited a conflict against Kurdish rebels for electoral gains.

Belge denied insulting Erdogan during the

opening hearing on Tuesday, May 3, which Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk attended in a show of solidarity.

Close to 2,000 cases have been opened against people accused of insulting Erdogan. Critics say Erdogan is exploiting a previously-seldom used law to muzzle dissent.

Belge quipped: "I am a member of one of Turkey's most populous clubs – the club of people who have insulted Erdogan."

Erdogan Overplays His Hand

ERDOGAN, from page 1

Turkey comply with the preconditions, 72 in all. Among the requirements is a reform of Turkey's notorious anti-terrorist laws, which currently allow the government to jail and maltreat journalists and human rights activists who issue critical views of its policies. Erdogan demanded that visa restrictions be lifted by the end of June, and when EU refused, reminding him of the conditions (demanded of any country desiring visa-free privileges), he exploded in a fit of narcissistic rage. In public speeches he railed that if the EU did not capitulate, Turkey would "go its own way" and that the EU could negotiate with someone else.

On May 12 he escalated the rhetoric, claiming the conditions for visa freedom had been cooked up after the fact to sabotage the agreement: "Now they come with 72 criteria!" he complained. Not only; he accused the EU of providing "terrorists" weapons and money to destabilize his country. Referring to the EU's alleged orders to terrorists, Erdogan stated: "They say: Go and divide Turkey. Do you believe that we don't know that?" And he flatly refused to make any changes in Turkish anti-terror legislation: "Since when do you tell Turkey what to do? Who gave you this right?"

It appears that Erdogan has grossly miscalculated the relationship of political forces. The genocide resolution which he has feared is now on the agenda in Berlin, and no matter how loud the cries of protest come from Turkey, the politicians pushing it are resolute. "It may well be that there will be anger from Ankara," Green Party leader Cem Özdemir, one of the initiators, told the tabloid *Bild Zeitung* on May 15. "But the Bundestag does not let itself be blackmailed by a despot like Mr. Erdogan." Pointing to the historical documents in the wartime German Foreign Ministry archives, which are irrefutable, Özdemir continued, "After the decision of the Bundestag, it will be much more difficult for Turkey to deny it any longer."

Indeed, the German role historically considered has been and remains a key factor in the entire process. The leader of the SPD parliamentary faction Thomas Oppermann commented, "Germany, as the former main ally of the Ottoman Empire, bears a special historical responsibility. This applies utterly independent of day-to-day political discussion about the refugee crisis. I am opposed," he concluded, "to a subservient manner with Erdogan." He advised against making the mistake of taking the wrong precautions. And as for Chancellor Angela Merkel's party, the CDU, its faction leader Volker Kauder highlighted the positive contribution genocide recognition can make to reconciliation: "We want to help [Turkey] work through its past, with the aim of overcoming what divides Armenians and Turkey."

In response so far Erdogan has reportedly dispatched his ambassador to lodge a protest against this use of the term "genocide."

UN High Commissioner Urges Turkey to Conduct Investigation in Southeast of Turkey

GENEVA (Armenpress) – The United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein expressed concern over alarming reports about violations allegedly committed by Turkish military and security forces in south-east Turkey, according to a story on the UN official website. He urged the Turkish authorities to give independent investigators, including UN staff, unimpeded access to the area to verify the veracity of such reports.

"More and more information has been emerging from a variety of credible sources about the actions of security forces in the town of Cizre during the extended curfew there from mid-December until early March. And the picture that is emerging, although still sketchy, is extremely alarming," Zeid said. He stated that Turkey has a duty to protect its population from acts of violence, it is essential that the authorities respect human rights at all times while undertaking security or counter-terror-

ism operations. The High Commissioner said he had received reports of unarmed civilians – including women and children – being deliberately shot by snipers, or by gunfire from tanks and other military vehicles. "Most disturbing of all," the High Commissioner said, "are the reports quoting witnesses and relatives in Cizre which suggest that more than 100 people were burned to death as they sheltered in three different basements that had been surrounded by security forces."

Zeid called for a prompt investigation and prosecution of all those suspected of being involved in violations of the right to life, including extrajudicial killings and disproportional use of lethal force, and stressed that the judiciary should act independently from all other branches of the State, including the military and the Executive. He also called on the Turkish authorities to allow the return of all those who have been forcibly displaced from Turkey.

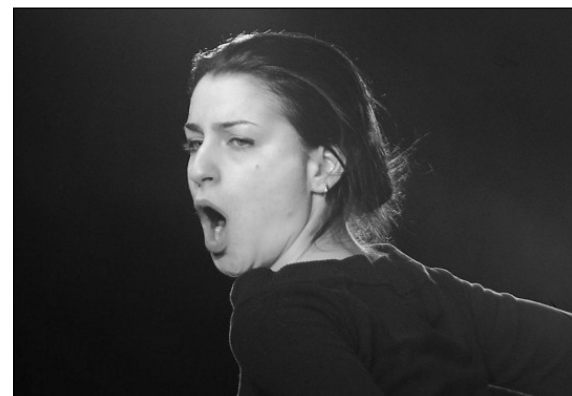
Vocal Success: Armenian Soprano Wins 'Opera Oscar'

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia – The St. Petersburg Mariinsky Theater's soprano Hasmik Grigorian has won the Young Female Singer award at an International Opera Awards ceremony, which is often dubbed the "Opera Oscar."

Russia's TASS Agency reports that the ceremony was held at London's Savoy Theatre on May 15.

The award to Grigorian, who represents Lithuania, came as a kind of birthday present for the singer who turned 35 on May 12.

This is not the first time Grigorian has won prestigious international prizes. In 2005, the artist won the Golden Stage Cross Award for the best debut, and in 2010 she was given



Hasmik Grigorian

the Golden Stage Cross Award for the best performance.

Community News

Armenian Assembly Urges Congress to Direct \$15 Million in Aid to Armenia For Syrian Refugees

WASHINGTON – Citing corrupt practices, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Inspector General (OIG) has suspended 14 entities and individuals involved with humanitarian aid programs operating from Turkey, reported the Armenian Assembly of America.

“Given this latest development, the Assembly renews its call that \$15 million be provided in refugee assistance and resettlement programs to help Syrians in Armenia,” stated Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. “We urge Armenian Americans to contact Congress and make their voices heard to help ensure relief aid reaches those in need,” added Ardouny.

“USAID OIG’s investigation has identified corrupt practices involving a number of these programs operating from Turkey,” according to a May 6 statement from USAID OIG. “The investigation to date

has identified a network of commercial vendors, NGO employees, and others who have colluded to engage in bid-rigging and multiple bribery and kickback schemes related to contracts to deliver humanitarian aid in Syria.”

The same day, Human Rights Watch (HRW)

identified Turkish border guards shooting and beating Syrian asylum seekers trying to reach Turkey. Between March and April 2016, Turkish border guards used violence against Syrian refugees, killing five people – including a child – and seriously injuring 14 others.

“While senior Turkish officials claim they are welcoming Syrian refugees with open borders and open arms, their border guards are killing and beating them,” HRW Senior Refugee Researcher Gerry Simpson said. “Firing at traumatized men, women, and children fleeing fighting and indiscriminate warfare is truly appalling.”

As conditions worsen along the border in Turkey, Armenia remains dedicated to accepting Syrian refugees, with over 20,000 to date. “As a host country, Armenia has been absolutely exemplary in terms of the ratio of welcomed Syrian-Armenian refugees to the number of native inhabitants,” United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) Representative in Armenia Christoph Bierwirth said. According to The Economist, Armenia has taken on the third largest number of refugees in Europe as a proportion of its population.

The Institute for War & Peace Reporting (IWPR) reported yesterday that Armenia “stands out as a rare example of integration” and refugees are “welcomed by ordinary people and supported by the Yerevan government.” The Assembly urges the U.S. government to consider allocating at least \$15 million in refugee assistance to Armenia. The Assembly continues to encourage members to contact their Representatives and urge them to support the Armenian government’s efforts in offering a safe and stable environment for the refugees escaping from Syria.

On March 24, the Assembly submitted the same appeal in testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, recommending that from the Administration’s proposed budget of nearly \$3 billion for migration and refugee assistance, at least \$15 million be allocated for Armenia.



Bryan Ardouny



From left, Armenian Assembly of America Board of Trustees Co-Chairmen Van Krikorian and Anthony Barsamian, President Carolyn Mugar, and Board Member Aram Gavoor

Assembly Holds Annual Meeting in South Florida

WASHINGTON – Earlier this year, the Armenian Assembly of America held its annual members meeting in Boca Raton, Fla. Organized by the Assembly’s South Florida Regional Council (SFRC) Chair Arsine Kaloustian and Assembly Board of Trustees Member and Life Trustee Lu Ann Ohanian, the annual members weekend in March included a three-day program of meetings, receptions, and events.

The success of the Assembly’s annual members weekend was ensured thanks to the generosity of Gold Sponsors Carolyn Mugar, Joyce Stein, Lu Ann and Bruce Ohanian, and Peter Vosbikian; Silver Sponsors Michael Haratunian and Annie Total; Bronze Sponsors Marta Batmasian, James Kalustian, and Harry and Edna Keleshian; and Donors Ara Jabrayan, Ed Shooshanian, Hagop and Arlys Koushajian, and Nevart Talanian.

The weekend kicked off with a “Pints and Professionals” reception at Tap 42 restaurant, organized by Florida Chair Arsine Kaloustian. Over 100 guests from Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade Counties gathered in downtown Boca Raton to enjoy complimentary cocktails and appetizers in a business casual atmosphere throughout the evening.

“The Assembly is looking towards the future with fresh ideas and out-of-the-box thinking to build up new membership as well as engage the active member base we already have. The three events we hosted in Florida reflected that aim. Our networking event, ‘Pints and Professionals,’ was particularly successful. Over 100 young Armenian professionals in attendance were anxious to learn more about the Assembly and excited for other upcoming events,” Kaloustian said. “The South Florida Regional Council plans to continue this renewed energy and encouraging momentum for the duration of 2016,” she added.

On Saturday morning, Assembly members and friends gathered at the Boca Raton Marriott for the Members and Board of Trustees meeting. The meeting featured reports from Board of Trustees Co-Chairmen Van Krikorian and Anthony Barsamian, Board President Carolyn Mugar, and other board members and staff. Members also approved the Assembly’s annual budget and amended by-laws. The Board of Trustees meeting will hereafter convene every two years, rather than annually, to review the organization’s budget, endowment fund, and audit reports.

The Trustees also confirmed the new board slate presented by the Board of Trustees Nominating Committee, electing Co-Chairmen Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian, Assistant Secretary Lisa Kalustian, and Talin Yacoubian to a

see ASSEMBLY, page 8



Guests at the Armenian Assembly of America “Pints and Professionals” Reception.

Annual Diocesan Assembly Held In Cleveland

CLEVELAND, Ohio – At the 114th Diocesan Assembly, the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), introduced a new theme for the coming year, which encouraged reflection on the legacy bequeathed by the generation of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Titled “Legacy of Our Martyrs: A Gift to Carry Forward,” this year’s theme will be explored through a social media campaign, parish resources, and local events.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), presided over the meeting of more than 125 clergy and lay delegates, representing parishes from across the Eastern Diocese. The assembly was held in downtown Cleveland, from April 28 to 30, and hosted by the St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church of Richmond Heights, Ohio.

In his message to delegates on Friday morning, April 29, Barsamian reflected on the commemoration of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide and encouraged the delegates to consider how the sacrifices of the generation of 1915 continue to inspire the Armenian people a century later.

“As Armenians, we would not be here today if it were not the legacy and commitment of our martyrs and survivors,” he said. “For it was the survivors who arose from the ashes of destruction, migrated to a new world, and planted the seeds of the community we would inherit.”

He shared the personal story of his grandmother, a Genocide survivor who kept the Armenian Christian faith alive in the home and taught her grandchildren the sacred ways of the Armenian Church.

“With the Holy Martyrs so vividly present in our consciousness, we will try to strengthen the vital connection we all share with the great gift we have inherited,” Barsamian said. “It is a legacy that answered death with life. That responded to destruction with creativity. It is a legacy that endured suffering, but never brought suffering upon anyone else. This great legacy now rests in our hands. It is a gift to carry with us throughout our days, to guide and complete the journey through life.”

At the conclusion of the Primate’s address, a video titled “Living Legacies” was screened to the delegates. The video launched a social media campaign the Diocese will implement in the coming months, in which local parishioners will be able to share the legacies they’ve inherited from the survivors of the Armenian Genocide.

Very Rev. Garegin Hambardzumyan, dean of Gevorkian Theological Seminary at Holy Echmiadzin, read the message of Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. Hambardzumyan and Very Rev. Shahe Ananian, director of Interchurch Relations at Holy Echmiadzin, both attended the Diocesan Assembly as representatives of Holy Echmiadzin.

“The legacy of our holy martyrs is love and faithfulness to Christ, which requires us to love our Armenian people and the homeland,” the catholicos wrote. “Our fathers were martyred believing that our people would rise up again, would become strong and defend their just rights. Our obligation before their inextinguishable memory is to empower our nation with multiple efforts, for the good welfare of all our people, and for the splendor of our national and spiritual life.”

Rev. Daron Stepanian offered good wishes on behalf of the Armenian Prelacy.

Diocesan Council Chair James Kalustian highlighted some of the programs of the past year, including the many events organized across the Diocese in commemoration of the centennial year of the Armenian Genocide. He also gave an update on the strategic plan, see DIOCESE, page 9



COMMUNITY NEWS

AMAA Provides Food and Shelter to Evacuees from Martakert at Camp Bedrosian in Shushi



Martakert Evacuees at Camp Bedrosian in Shushi



Children of Martakert Evacuees enjoying Camp Program

PARAMUS, N.J. — The recent shelling of the settlements of Mataghis and Martakert regions of Karabagh resulted in major destruction. Houses, shops and community centers have been completely or partially destroyed. To ensure the safety of the citizens of Martakert region, the local population has been evacuated, while the fathers and adult males of these families remaining on the frontline defending the Homeland.

The evacuees were provided temporary shelter by the NKR government. Some evacuees were accommodated in Stepanakert, and some took shelter in Armenian Missionary Association of America's (AMAA) Camp Bedrosian in Shushi until safer conditions prevail.

Camp Bedrosian is currently housing around 180 people (about 120 of them are children and teenagers) from the Maragha, Karmiravan, Mataghis, Maghavuz and Horatagh communities of the Martakert region. AMAA is



Martakert Evacuees having lunch at Camp Bedrosian in Shushi



Children of Martakert Evacuees at Camp Bedrosian in Shushi

Archbishop Yeznik Petrosian, Guest Celebrant and Homilist, at Holy Trinity Armenian Church on May 22

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Archbishop Yeznik Petrosian, General Secretary of the Inter-Church Relations Department of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, will be the Guest Celebrant and Homilist on Sunday, May 22, at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater

Boston, 145 Brattle St. The Divine Liturgy will begin at 10 a.m., and conclude at noon.

Fr. Vasken A. Kouzouian, Pastor of Holy Trinity Church, "encourages the faithful of the community to join us to witness this accomplished archbishop of the Armenian Church."

Petrosian was born in 1955 in Tbilisi, Georgia, with the baptismal name of Samvel. He received his primary education in Yerevan, Armenia. He obtained his primary theological education at the Gevorkian Theological Seminary at the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, which he attended from 1967 to 1973. During his years at the Seminary, he published *Tatev*, a student's monthly newsletter. He was ordained to the diaconate in 1971, and became a member of the Brotherhood of Holy Echmiadzin. In 1973, he was ordained to the priesthood by the late Archbishop Sion Manoukian, and was given the priestly name of Yeznik. Following his ordination, Petrosian served as the Secretary of the Etchmiadzin monthly, a chronicle publication of the Mother See. Continuing his education, he attended the Faculty of Theology of the National University of Athens and graduated in 1981. Returning to the Mother See, he served as the Dean of the Gevorkian Theological Seminary from 1980 to 1989. He also presented lectures on Patristics, to the New Testament, and History of the Armenian Apostolic Church. While serving as Dean, he also completed his PhD in Theological Studies with the University of Athens in 1987, after successfully defending his doctorate entitled "The Standpoint of the Armenian Church Concerning Holy Icons."

Following the completion of the PhD, he was assigned to serve as the parish priest and abbot of the Haghpat Monastery. In 1991, he was assigned to serve as the Vicar General of the Diocese of the Northern Caucasus. He served the Diocese until 1996 where he founded more than 20 parishes and built 14 churches and chapels in the Diocese of Southern Russia.

During his time as Vicar General, he successfully presented and defended his doctorate thesis "Christology of the Armenian Church" and received the rank of Senior Archimandrite (Dzayraguyn Vardapet) in the St. Mesrob Mashtots Church of Oshakan by Archbishop Shahe Ajemian.

Petrosian was consecrated as a bishop on July 13, 1997, by the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, the late Karekin I, in the Mother Cathedral of Holy Echmiadzin, and was confirmed as the Primate of the Diocese of South Russia where he served until 1999.

Serving as the General Secretary of the Inter-



Archbishop Yeznik Petrosian

Church Relations Department of the Mother See since December 1999, he also represents the Armenian Church on the Conference of European Churches (CEC) Central Committee as well as the Churches in Dialogue Commission of the CEC and the World Council of Churches (WCC). Since 2001, he has been the representative of the Armenian Church on the International Commission of the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox Dialogue. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Inter-Religious Council of CIS, and has represented the Armenian Church participating in a wide variety of International and Ecumenical Symposiums and Conferences.

In 2006, he was elevated to the rank of archbishop by the Pontifical Encyclical of the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin II.

The archbishop is a current member of the Supreme Spiritual Council, where he has been a member since 2000. Additionally, he is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Armenian Bible Society. He has continued his involvement in academia by serving as the

Chairman of the Commission of Gevorkian Theological Academy studying the research works of the seminarians. From 2002 to 2004, he organized and directed the Pastoral Seminary (the Accelerated Courses for the Priests) of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

He has published more than 20 books dedicated to the *Bible*, in Armenian, English, Russian and Greek.



OPENING FOR PRIVATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL - QUEENS, NEW YORK

Celebrating nearly 50 years as a pillar of the New York Armenian American community, Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School (HMADS) of Bayside, Queens, has earned a well-deserved reputation for academic excellence and for inspiring a love of Armenian heritage in her students. Combining the best elements of American education with an added emphasis on Armenian Studies, the small classroom settings and focus on individual abilities has allowed the dedicated staff of this private elementary school to provide a nourishing learning environment for students in grades N-6.

HMADS seeks experienced administrator for position commencing August 2016.

Qualified candidate should possess:

- Exceptional leadership qualities and effective interpersonal and communication skills
- Knowledge of current best practices and the ability to implement and support staff professional development
- Interest in supporting the school's mission to provide an exceptional academic education for a diverse student body, while promoting knowledge of the Armenian language, history and culture
- Ability to work collaboratively with parents, School Board, auxiliary bodies and the greater community to foster student success
- Degree in Education, Educational Leadership and/or Administration, School Counseling or related field
- Valid New York State administrative certification or equivalent
- Fluency in English with knowledge of written and spoken Armenian strongly preferred

Qualified candidates are invited to send a letter of interest, résumé, and copy of administrative certificate to mailbox@hmads.org by June 1, 2016.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Assembly Holds Annual Meeting In South Florida

ASSEMBLY, from page 6

four-year board term. The other board members will be up for election in two years.

The Assembly's current Board of Trustees include Anthony Barsamian, Co-Chairman; Van Krikorian, Co-Chairman; Hirair Hovnanian, Chairman Emeritus; Carolyn Mugar, President; Robert A. Kaloosdian, Vice Chairman and Counselor; Edele Hovnanian, Vice President; Bianka Kadian-Dodov, Treasurer; Oscar Tatosian, Secretary; Lisa Kalustian, Assistant Secretary; Aram Gavoor; Alex Karapetian; Raffi Kassarjian; Lu Ann Ohanian; Toros Sahakian; Joyce Stein; Annie Totah; and Talin Yacoubian. Mark Momjian will continue to serve as solicitor.

During the meeting, the Assembly thanked Michael and Marie Haratunian, who became life trustees after years of dedication with the Assembly. Former Chairman of the Board Michael Haratunian participated in the Airlie House conferences that established the Armenian Assembly of America in 1972 and served as a member of the Board of Directors for many years. He also participated in the Assembly's Mission Trips to Armenia in 1993, 1994, and 1997.

"The Armenian Assembly, the Armenian-American community, and Armenians around the world are grateful to Michael and Marie Haratunian for their hard work over the years, preparing a new generation of leaders," Assembly Board of Trustees Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian said. "The value they place on the Assembly's core philosophy to approach important issues in Washington in a professional and on a non-partisan basis yielded a remarkable record of success, promoted four decades of interns, and helped Armenians everywhere."

Krikorian and Barsamian also recognized several Assembly members and other prominent Armenian American leaders who passed away over the last year, honoring them with a moment of silence. Assembly members spoke in memory of the departed: Harry Keleshian; Gregory Adamian; George Kay; Hirant Candan; George Yacoubian, Sr.; former Washington Post Editor Ben Bagdikian; and former US Ambassador to Armenia Harry Gilmore. While speaking about Ambassador Gilmore, the Armenia Tree Project (ATP) shared about the tree planting on October 14 at the Memorial Park in Parakar Village, west of Yerevan, which was done in his honor.

During the meeting, the Board of Trustees reviewed the Armenian Genocide centennial anniversary year and presented updates on Assembly activities from around the world, including Vatican City, Los Angeles, New York City, Boston, Chicago, Yerevan, and more. The Assembly members reviewed the events in 2015 and additions to the Assembly's staff, with new positions filled in California, Washington, D.C., and Armenia.

Krikorian spoke about the new, young leadership and the updated by-laws, aimed at charting the Assembly's path toward a successful future. The board announced the now-mobile friendly Armenian Genocide Museum of America (AGMA) website as an example, and showcased the virtual museum. AGMA is now easily accessible on mobile and tablet devices.

Reflecting on the situation on the front line of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic, prior to the four-day war, Krikorian displayed the Assembly-created Artsakh Cease-Fire Map, depicting violations by Azerbaijan on the Line of Contact. As feared, Azerbaijani aggression reached new heights in the weeks following the Assembly's Annual Trustees Meeting, further endangering the region for Armenians in Nagorno Karabagh, as well as refugees being forced to escape persecution in Syria and Iraq.

Barsamian discussed recent meetings he had with various officials, including President Serzh Sargsyan in Armenia as well as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group US Ambassador James Warlick in Washington, DC. He mentioned exciting new projects in store for Armenia, including the Smithsonian Armenia spotlight on the National Mall Discovery Center to be opened in 2018, where the Armenia Tree Project plans to play a significant role.

Assembly President Carolyn Mugar presented on the Assembly and ATP's tree planting projects. She focused on last April's commemoration dedicated to the memory of US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau in Armenia, where 10 members of the extended Morgenthau family, including eight great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren of Morgenthau participated in several ATP events.

On Saturday evening, Assembly members and friends gathered for a reception where guests discussed the new energy and planned initiatives of the Assembly. Attendees enjoyed the rest of the night dancing with live music provided by Dick Barsamian (Oud), John Arzigian (Accordion), and Mike Gregian (Dumbeg).

The Assembly's Annual Members Meeting weekend concluded on Sunday with a book presentation at St. David's Church where renowned Armenian American photojournalist Scout Tufankjian presented her book *There is Only the Earth: Images from the Armenian Diaspora Project*. Released in April 2015, the publication culminates six years dedicated to documenting Armenian communities in over 20 countries. Tufankjian is best known for her photography during the Barack Obama campaigns and her work in the Middle East reporting on the Egyptian Revolution.

Fond Farewell to Dr. Mary Papazian

NEW YORK – On Friday, May 6, the Eastern Diocese and the Knights of Vartan hosted a farewell reception in honor of Dr. Mary Papazian, the current president of Southern Connecticut State University, who is leaving for California this summer to serve as the new president of San Jose State University.

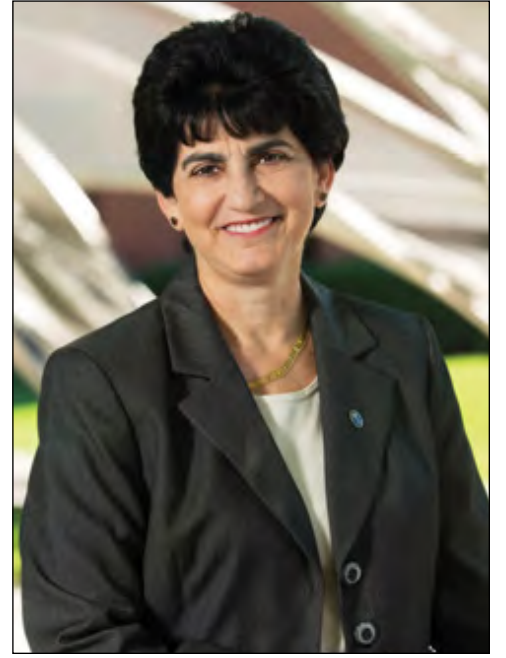
Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Diocesan Primate, presided over the event at the Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium. Dr. Papazian received a pontifical encyclical and the "Sts. Sahag and Mesrob" medal from Karekin II, as well as a medal from Armenia's Ministry of Diaspora.

"We are proud to know such a woman of character and substance, who exemplifies the dignity of a life devoted to learning, patriotism, family, and faith," Archbishop Barsamian said. "Spend even a small amount of time with her, and you become aware of her extraordinary qualities: her keen intelligence; her personal warmth and humanity; her drive and appreciation for excellence."

Papazian has served as president at Southern Connecticut State University for the past four years. In addition to her many achievements at SCSU, she had the distinction of

being the first Armenian-American woman to serve as president of an American university.

Papazian will be returning to her roots in California, where she was born and raised in the heart of an active and faithful Armenian family. She is the wife of Dr. Dennis Papazian – professor emeritus and founding director of the Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, and himself a lifelong member of the church and stalwart leader of the Eastern Diocese.



Dr. Mary Papazian

Giragosian

FUNERAL HOME

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC
Mark J. Giragosian
Funeral Counselors

576 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472, TEL: 617-924-0606
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

OBITUARY

Arthur Aprahamian

DETROIT – Arthur "Art" Aprahamian has died. He was born in Detroit, the son of Nahabed and Haiganoush (Tashjian) Aprahamian.

He graduated from Central High School in Detroit while working at the family's grocery store. He entered the US Army at age 19. After basic training in the armored division, he joined the 82nd chemical mortar division and was sent overseas in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater, serving two years in the Philippines and Japan. World War II ended shortly before his arrival in Japan.

After returning, he continued to work in the

family grocery store, eventually taking over the business.

He was active in the Detroit Armenian community. Like the entire Aprahamian Vanetsi clan, he was a devout ADL member.

He was the husband of Carol Aprahamian (nee Nersessian); brother of Alice, Anthony, the late Haigaz, the late Agnes and the late Helen; Godfather to Elizabeth and the late Lynne.

He also leaves his nieces, nephew, many cousins and dear friends.

His funeral service was at St. John's Armenian Church on Tuesday, May 3. Interment was in Woodlawn Cemetery.

In lieu of flower donations in his memory are to St. John's Armenian Church or The Wounded Warrior Project or Friends of Holy Echmiadzin (Focus Armenia Endowment Fund).

Arrangements entrusted to Edward Korkoian Funeral Home.

Edward D. Jamakordzian, Jr. d/b/a

EDWARD D. JAMIE, JR.
FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Serving the Entire Armenian Community
Any Hour - Any Distance - Any Location

Edward D. Jamie, Jr., Manager

Call (718) 224-2390 or (888) 224-6088

Bus. Reg. 189-06 Liberty Ave., Hollis, NY 11412



Nardolillo Funeral Home

Est. 1906

John K. Najarian, Jr.

Rhode Island's Only Licensed Armenian Funeral Director

1278 Park Ave. Cranston, RI 02910 (401) 942-1220
1111 Boston Neck Rd. Narragansett, RI 02882 (401) 789-6300

www.nardolillo.com



COMMUNITY NEWS

Annual Diocesan Assembly Held in Cleveland

DIOCESE, from page 6

which was developed a few years ago by the Diocesan Council and Diocesan staff to provide support to parishes as they continue to explore the theme in their communities.

The strategic plan focuses on six key areas: enhancing worship, offering continuing education opportunities for clergy, strengthening youth ministry, developing Christian and Armenian education programs, creating outreach initiatives to welcome prospective church members and cultivating stewards.

Each area is further broken down into concrete programs and resources the Diocese hopes to offer parishes to help realize the various components of the plan. For the coming year, the council suggested focusing on forgiveness and death and eternal life.

The Diocese's new video series, "Bread and Salt: Stories from the Armenian Church," was introduced, and two episodes were screened for the delegates.

Kalustian introduced the Diocese's new Director of Administration, Dr. Armen Baibourtian. Dr. Baibourtian stressed that the Diocese's programs have an impact on all of its parishes, and noted that the Diocese welcomes feedback in an effort to better serve its communities.

Diocesan Council member Paul Mardoian spoke about a new outreach initiative that aims to help parishes welcome new parishioners. He noted that efforts are underway to distribute a

"welcome packet" to parishes, as well as a manual for Sunday greeters and display materials for the narthex and parish halls.

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director, made a presentation about developments in the ecumenical arena. He noted that thanks to the efforts of church leaders, the State Department has officially acknowledged the systematic killing of Christians in the Middle East as genocide.

Aykazian and the Armenian Assembly recently met with House Speaker Paul Ryan to discuss the situation in Nagorno-Karabagh and the Armenian Church of Dikranagerd, which was seized by the Turkish government earlier this spring.

Archbishop Aykazian encouraged all parishioners to get involved in local ecumenical activities. "It is important for everyone to meet with local religious leaders, to advocate, and to make our voices heard on issues facing Armenians and other Christians across the world," he said.

Rev. Vart Gyozyan, pastor of the Armenian Church at Hye Pointe, made a presentation on the parish's progress toward erecting a new house of worship. The new church brings together the historic Lawrence and Haverhill parishes in Massachusetts—one of the first such unification efforts in the Diocese.

On Friday morning, April 30, delegates took part in small group sessions, during which they heard annual reports from the Diocesan ministries, including Armenian Studies, Christian

Education, Communications, Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Development, Mission Parishes and the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center.

Presentations were also made by representatives of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, Fund for Armenian Relief, Ararat Center, Sacred Music Council, Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) and the Women's Guild.

Dean Shahinian, Ara Araz and Michelle Ouzounian gave the report of the Auditing Committee. Among their suggestions, was for the Diocese to draft an annual capital budget in addition to the operating budget, to address capital improvements at the Diocesan Center in New York.

Delegates approved a \$4.8-million budget for 2016, and a proposed budget for 2017. Diocesan Council treasurer Rose Ann Manoogian Attar noted that the Diocese's Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium has been renovated, and that facility rentals are expected to generate more revenue. Delegates thanked Ms. Manoogian Attar for overseeing the Diocese's accounting department in the absence of a Director of Administration.

Diocesan Council member Zaven Tachdjian, who represented the Eastern Diocese at the Ecclesiastical Representative Assembly in September 2014, made a presentation on the universal bylaws for the global Armenian Church. Delegates at the 114th Diocesan

Assembly adopted a motion to establish a standing committee consisting of two clergy and three lay members to report regularly on the Ecclesiastical Representative Assembly and the National Ecclesiastical Assembly, and these respective assemblies' efforts regarding with the bylaws for the global Armenian Church.

Under new business, delegates approved a proposal that will add annual allocations of \$250 each for the ACYOA and the Sacred Music Council to the annual parish assessments issued by the Diocese. They also passed a proposal calling on all parishes to observe the National Day of Prayer each year.

In closing the meeting on Saturday, April 30, Barsamian expressed his gratitude to clergy and delegates for their commitment to the Armenian Church. He also thanked the officers of the assembly and the host committee for their hard work in organizing the weekend's events.

The 114th Diocesan Assembly was chaired by Diran Jebejian of St. Leon Church of Fair Lawn, NJ, with Thomas Garabedian, of Holy Translators Church of Framingham, Mass., serving as vice chair. Lorig Chorluyan served as the secretary.

The assembly host committee was led by the Rev. Hratch Sargsyan, pastor of St. Gregory of Narek Church; Mona Karoghlanian, committee chair; and Cindy Russell, vice chair.

The 115th Diocesan Assembly will be hosted by St. Hagop Church of Pinellas Park, Fla.

Diocesan Assembly Banquet Honors Genocide Scholar, AGBU President

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Clergy, delegates, and community members gathered at the Renaissance Hotel in downtown Cleveland, OH, on Friday evening, April 29, to honor two individuals for their support of the Armenian Church and contributions to the greater Armenian community. The Grand Banquet of the 114th Diocesan Assembly was hosted by the St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church of Richmond Heights.

The award for the "Friend of the Armenians" was bestowed on Dr. Taner Akçam, professor of history and the Kaloosdian/Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University, in Worcester.

A native of Turkey, Akçam was arrested in 1976 while serving as editor-in-chief of a student political journal. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison, and adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience. A year later, he escaped to Germany, where he received political asylum and began his graduate work.

He received a Ph.D. from the University of Hannover with a dissertation titled, "Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide: On the Background of the Military Tribunals in Istanbul between 1919 and 1922."

Akçam has written a number of books on the Armenian Genocide, including his landmark work of historical investigation, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*.

His book, *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity*, received the Hourani Book Prize of the Middle East Studies Association, and was listed by Foreign Affairs magazine among the "Best International Relations Books of 2012."

Last year saw the publication of the English edition of his book, *The Spirit of the Laws: The Plunder of Wealth in the Armenian Genocide*.

Akçam said that significant strides have been made in the struggle for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide worldwide, and went on to stress the importance of education in raising awareness and achieving justice.

"Truth wins in the fields of education and scholarship," he said. "Education is where the real investment needs to be made."

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director, and a longtime friend of Akçam, extolled his courage in the face of denial and persecution. "He is a champion of human rights, a man who never stops fighting for justice," Aykazian said.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), said that Professor Akçam "represents some very rare virtues – virtues that were understood and shared by that great generation of Armenians whose story Taner has documented."

"He is a man dedicated to the truth," the Primate said; "but imagine how difficult it was, as a young Turkish student, to pursue that dedication—to uncover a dark chapter in the history of a nation; to deal with it honestly, truthfully, wherever the evidence would lead. We are proud to have such a friend, and to name you as this year's 'Friend of the

to Berge for his advice and judgment."

Setrakian said the honor bestowed upon him by the Diocese comes in an especially poignant year, as 2016 marks both the 110th anniversary of the establishment of the AGBU and the 25th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Armenia.

"Serving the Armenian community is a privilege, an honor, and above all, a calling," Setrakian said. He went on to describe memories of participating in Armenian Church services as a child, and spoke about how he and his wife raised their own children – Ani and Lara – in the Armenian community.

"Our Christian identity has served as a source of strength for the Armenian people throughout history," he said, noting the importance of passing on Armenian Christian values to younger generations. "We are all missionaries of our faith, and must support it on the road to renewal."

The awards were presented to Akçam and Setrakian by Barsamian and Diocesan Council Chair James Kalustian.

"Both of tonight's honorees are leaders on an international level," Kalustian said. "They are men who have gone

to the very height of their professions. Their efforts on behalf of the Armenian community, the Armenian Church, and the Armenian Cause have had far-reaching effects."

Rev. Hratch Sargsyan, pastor of St. Gregory of Narek Church, expressed gratitude to the parish committee that had organized the Diocesan Assembly and Grand Banquet.

"Organizing and hosting this Assembly served as an opportunity for our community to grow closer together," he said. "It was truly a joyful journey."

Diocesan Council member Antranig Garibian served as master of ceremonies. Musical selections were performed by pianist Dn. Ari Terjanian and the Narekatsi Choir of St. Gregory of Narek Church.

Archbishop Barsamian closed the evening with remarks and a prayer.

"This has been an evening filled with a spirit of common purpose and faith – a perfect example of our theme for the coming year on the 'Legacy of Our Martyrs,'" he said. "Tonight we have honored two individuals who exemplify, in powerful ways, the enduring relevance of that beautiful, brave generation, who emerged from the ashes a century ago and laid the groundwork for everything we enjoy today."



Prof. Taner Akçam and: Berge Setrakian



Armenians."

Receiving this year's "Armenian Church Member of the Year" award was Armenian General Benevolent Union President Berge Setrakian.

As a partner in an international law firm with thousands of attorneys stationed around the world, Mr. Setrakian has led the AGBU as its President for 14 years. He is a trusted counselor to His Holiness Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, and a supporter of the growth and development of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

Under Setrakian's leadership, AGBU and Holy Echmiadzin jointly developed youth centers and soup kitchens for the elderly in Armenia. Other projects include medical initiatives and educational opportunities for clergy.

Setrakian and his wife Vera undertook the complete renovation of the old pontifical residence at Holy Echmiadzin. The 300-year-old site now houses the Pontifical Museum dedicated to the memory of the catholicoi who resided there.

"Berge is a man of passion for all things Armenian. He has a high aspiration for our people – and for this reason he seeks out the best among us, and encourages greater achievement," Barsamian said. "He is truly a man of international standing. Leaders of our community around the world look



COMMUNITY NEWS



From left, Dr. Ara Stepanyan, Suren Aloyan and Hovhannes Ghazaryan at the Intel ISEF.

Visiting the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair to Prepare Armenian Students For Future Competitions

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Armenia has never participated in the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF). As an initial step toward rectifying this, a delegation from Armenia together with Armenian Americans attended the 67th annual Massachusetts State Science and Engineering Fair (MSSEF) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on May 6-7, and the 2016 Intel ISEF in Phoenix, Arizona on May 8 to 13. The purpose of these visits was to learn about the management and administration of these prestigious science fairs in order to introduce science fairs and promote project-based science teaching in Armenia.

The Intel ISEF is the world's largest and most prestigious science competition for high school students. Each May, approximately 1700 students from over 75 countries arrive in the US to showcase their talents on an international

stage, where doctoral level scientists review and judge their work. Students compete for scholarships, tuition grants, internships, scientific field trips and the grand prizes, including one \$75,000 and two \$50,000 college scholarships. All the prizes together amount to over \$4 million. Seven ISEF alumni have gone on to win Nobel Prizes.

Armenia has never participated in the Intel ISEF, while other post-Soviet states, including Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, have had Intel ISEF affiliated fairs for many years.

Two years ago, after learning about this situation, a group of Boston-based science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education enthusiasts, led by Dr. Ara Stepanyan, decided to introduce science fairs to Armenia. They founded the Armenian National Science and Innovation Competition (ANSIC) initiative with the goal of organizing

the first national science fair for high school students in Armenia and representing the country at the Intel ISEF.

ANSIC started reaching out to individual schools in Armenia. A turning point came as the result of a meeting between Stepanyan of ANSIC and Hovhannes Ghazarian of Dasaran in Boston in 2015, which led to collaboration between the two organizations. Dasaran is a unique educational platform which connects over 1,495 schools in Armenia and Artsakh with a user community of over 1 million students, teachers, and parents. ANSIC organizers realized that Dasaran was the perfect platform to engage not just a few schools but all schools in Armenia and Artsakh.

ANSIC partnered with the Massachusetts State Science and Engineering Fair (MSSEF) to invite representatives from Dasaran and Ministry of Education of Armenia to Boston, and to organize teacher and science fair administration training in Armenia. The visit of the ANSIC team, including Dasaran's Suren Aloyan and Ghazaryan, and Stepanyan and Dr. Ara Nazarian, to the MSSEF and the Intel ISEF was very productive.

Stepanyan said that "to see the scale of organization and the energy of the kids is extremely impressive." One of the panelists, a Nobel Prize winner in physiology, said that when the competitors went back to their schools, they should tell their principals to put their projects at the front entrance and let everybody see them, because this is what will drive progress in the next century.

There were 1,700 students at the Intel event from 77 countries, including Armenia's neighbors, accompanied by parents and chaperons, so that there were close to 3,000 people in all. Some 2,000 middle schoolers were also invited for one day as observers.

Most schools participate in their state science fair, either through the curriculum or by means of an afterschool program or club. It takes several months for children to conduct their project, which is judged by researchers or scientists. Winners of regional tournaments go on to the state tournament, which in turn chooses participants for the world cup. Both events began in 1967.

We often hear about the accomplishments of Armenian high school students at various science Olympiads. These events primarily test students' theoretical knowledge and problem solving skills in an exam setting. Applied sciences in Armenian schools, on the other hand, have seemingly not received the same level of attention and, oftentimes, have been neglected.

Yet, it is through applied sciences that almost all tangible technological impact on society is made, since scientific theory is turned into practical and usable products and services. Therefore, introducing school students to the scientific method, i.e., the way to ask and answer scientific questions by making observations and doing experiments, as early as possible in their lives, is a critical step in ensuring



From left, Dasaran Cofounder Hovhannes Ghazaryan, Nobel Laureate J. Michael Bishop and MacArthur Fellow Elissa Hallem, Suren Aloyan and Dr. Ara Stepanyan of ANSIC at the Intel ISEF in Phoenix, Arizona



COMMUNITY NEWS

Agenus CEO Garo Armen On Entrepreneurship and Being an Immigrant



“You have radical ideas, and I don’t want you to end up in jail.”

BOSTON (*BizJournal*) – A passion for science first spurred Garo Armen to learn about chemistry, but what started him on the path to become an entrepreneur was the realization in the 1970s that someone was going to have to replace a lot of gas pumps, and soon.

Armen, an Armenian whose grandmother lived through war and alleged atrocities of genocide, had immigrated to the U.S. in 1970 from Istanbul at age 17. He has been physically beaten at his school for talking about the Ottoman government’s execution of more than 1 million Armenians in Turkey from 1915 to 1917. His father told him at the time, “You have radical ideas, and I don’t want you to end up in jail.”

A passion for science first spurred Garo Armen to learn about chemistry, but what started him on the path to become an entrepreneur was the realization in the 1970s that someone was going to have to replace a lot of gas pumps, and soon.

“I am thankful to the center for the recognition,” he said. “They are doing a wonderful job of educating and assisting immigrants seeking new opportunities in the U.S., and with these ceremonies they are also helping with public awareness of the important role immigrants have played in our society.”

The role Armen himself has played in the local life science industry began in 1993, after he’d worked at financial firms such as E.F. Hutton and Dean Witter for more than a decade. It was at that time that he met with Pramod Srivastava, the founding scientist of Agenus, about a then-novel idea to treat cancer by harnessing the power of the immune system. Armen had reason to care about oncology, having just brought his mother to the U.S. the year earlier to take care of her while she was dying of cancer. Of the experience, he says, “cancer is humiliating. It’s dehumanizing in its last days.”

Agenus was formally incorporated in 1994 in New York City, and is one of the few companies that never wavered from the goal of creating immuno-oncology drugs. That aim has fallen in and out of favor ever since, only recently rebounding with the FDA approval of the first-ever immuno-oncology drugs last year.

“We persisted. We expanded,” he said. “We are the only company in this space that has stuck to its underpinnings – not only stuck to them, but expanded.”

The company’s move to Massachusetts came in 1996 when Armen was looking for a manufacturing space and called on Noubar Afeyan, a friend he met a couple years earlier. Afeyan, CEO and founder of Flagship Ventures, was a fellow Armenian, and the two became fast friends after meeting at a healthcare conference in Baltimore a couple of years earlier.

Afeyan offered Armen some space in Framingham suitable for Agenus’s autologous cell manufacturing of cancer treatments. The company later moved into its own space in Woburn, then in 2002 to Lexington, where it remains today. Over the years, Armen filled in as CEO of another biotech firm, Elan Corp. for a couple years, and weathered major challenges at Agenus as it worked toward a marketed drug. The company’s technology was incorporated into the first-ever vaccine for malaria, and today it’s one of a handful of companies developing a type of cancer drug called checkpoint inhibitors.

Armen contends that the roots of true entrepreneurship comes from passion, and not from a particular school or degree.

“I think the definition of entrepreneurship is someone who has a high conviction of doing something, and figures out a way to do it,” he said. “I figured out a way of starting the company, of surviving, of expanding, of figuring out how to do it. ... It was based on conviction, not on me having gone to a school.”

that the society will have a healthy pipeline of world-class applied scientists and engineers. Just as young athletes are trained and nurtured through their school years, children with curiosity about science and the world around them, should also receive the same attention.

Science fairs at school level aim at planting seeds of applied science and the scientific method among students. Adding to the excitement are the trophies and public recognition, which often propels students’ scientific inquiries.

ANSIC’s goal is to have students from Armenia participating at this Intel fair. It will attempt to guide an Armenian national science fair through the process and obtain Intel affiliation. It will serve as a liaison between academics in US and the local participants, so that the latter can follow the required standards and procedures. Lastly, once there are winners, it will work to get funding to provide airfare and food costs (the hotel stay is provided by Intel).

ANSIC is pretty certain that at least five schools will qualify out of 1,500 to participate, if not many more. The ANSIC scientific review board consists of academics from various universities. Aloyan and Ghazaryan are co-founders of Dasar. Aloyan serves also as the CEO of Dasar, holds a degree in business management and has dedicated over ten years of his professional life to improving IT conditions in Armenian schools. Ghazaryan is a graduate of Harvard Kennedy School of Government and has over ten years of experiences in the public sector.

Dr. Stepanyan is an economist and management consultant based in Boston, and serves as the founding director of ANSIC. Dr. Ara Nazarian is a professor at Harvard Medical School and an ANSIC board member, and has served as a MSSEF judge for many years.



From left, Dasar cofounder Hovhannes Ghazaryan, Kimberley Kamborian of Kamborian Consulting, Dasar cofounder Suren Aloyan and Dr. Ara Stepanyan of ANSIC at the MSSEF in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



COMMUNITY NEWS

ADL Statement Recognizes Armenian Genocide, Support for US Recognition

ADL, from page 1

"What happened to the Armenian people was unequivocally genocide.

"We believe that remembering and educating about any genocide – Armenian, the Holocaust, Bosnia, Rwanda, and others is a necessary tool to prevent future tragedies."

He continued, "Our experience regarding the Holocaust is relevant. When the first pictures of Auschwitz appeared at the end of World War II, there was widespread shame in the Western world at the realization that anti-Semitism was deeply embedded across cultures and countries and could produce such horror. That collective shame helped to inhibit manifestations of anti-Semitism for decades. Now, as time moves on, as that sense of shame eviscerates, it is no accident that anti-Semitism has reemerged with full force. In other words, we must educate each generation about the tragedies of the past.

"That is why I am speaking out today and why we would support U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Silence is not an option."

The statement was welcomed heartily by the Armenian community.

Peter Koutoujian, the sheriff of Middlesex County, said he had been in continuous talks with the local ADL throughout the years, with several other Boston area activists.

Koutoujian said that he remembered when the national ADL leader, Abe Foxman, spoke against the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the New England chapter of the ADL as well as the local Jewish community remained steadfast in their support of the Armenian community.

"They stepped right up to do the right thing," Koutoujian said. "The language is quite clear and they delivered on both."

Koutoujian noted that during recent years, the ADL had been vocal about its recognition of the Armenian Genocide and in fact spoke out during the uproar over a billboard denying the Genocide in Boston, which had been erected at a site overlooking the Armenian Heritage Park. The billboard, which had been put up in early April, was taken down in less than a week.

"The Jewish community in New England has never wavered in their recognition of the Armenian Genocide," he said.

He gave credit to the New England ADL chapter and its leader, Robert Trestan.

Trestan concurred, saying, "We have been working with the Boston Armenian community for many, many months. This is the culmination of a lot of discussions and a lot of dialogue."

One particular event that helped push the issue along, Koutoujian said, was a trip that the members of the ADL took with Koutoujian to Israel a couple of years ago, part of the an ADL-sponsored trip focused on counterterrorism.

"I took the entire delegation to the Armenian Quarter and we sat with the Patriarch and it is still spoken about as one of the highlights of the trip," Koutoujian said. "There were people from Israel that had never been to the Armenian Quarter. It was one of my proudest moments."

Trestan concurred with Koutoujian, saying the trip to Israel forged many close relationships.

Trestan noted, "This is the result of a lot of healing and reconciliation and dialogue. There is also concession at the national level that this is the right thing to do. We felt this particular time, after the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust Remembrance [Yom HaShoah]" would be a good time to address the issue.

"It is of critical importance," he said.

Koutoujian, in addition to his praise for Trestan and the local chapter, said that the ADL's most recent director, Greenblatt, who came on board a year ago, is "forward thinking" and grew up in Los Angeles, where he had become familiar with the Armenian community and the issue of the Armenian Genocide.

The issue about the ADL's lack of recognition for the Genocide came to a head in 2007, when activist David Boyajian pointed out in a letter published in the *Watertown Tab* that the ADL's leadership was opposed to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the US. As a result, many activists, both Armenian and Jewish, worked together to get the ADL to acknowledge the Genocide and more importantly, stop working against its recognition. They also urged that municipalities around the state cut off ties with the ADL, and stop using its "No Place for Hate" program. The group got a lot of support, including from the New England ADL leader, Andrew Tarsy, who was fired from the organization for his opposition to the ADL's stance.

Trestan said, "We've been working in Boston with the Armenian community over many, many months. This is the culmination of a lot of discussion and a lot of dialogue."

"This is a result of a lot of healing and reconciliation. There is also concession on the national level that it was the right thing to do."

As a result of the announcement, he said, he has gotten a lot of emails supporting the change from members and leadership of the Jewish community.

Dikran Kaligian, chair of the Armenian National Committee of Eastern Massachusetts and a member for the board of the ANC Eastern US, is another person who had been in contact with the local ADL to resolve the issue. He expressed his satisfaction with the statement. He, like Koutoujian, praised Trestan for being present for the commemorations of the Armenian Genocide at the Armenian Heritage Park, as well as at the special mass in April for the Armenian Genocide orga-

nized by the Boston Roman Catholic Archdiocese at the Holy Cross Cathedral downtown.

Kaligian said that he and a group of concerned citizens had kept in touch with activist members of the Jewish community as part of a loose group that had emerged after the 2007 break, Coalition to Recognize the Armenian Genocide. About six to eight Armenians and Jewish activists, including two rabbis, worked together and Trestan was "encouraging us," Kaligian said.

"He was working with us and the Newton events just brought it to a head," he said.

He added, "Essentially it was a long time coming. It finally addresses what the ANC and all the activists had asked for, which was the unequivocal acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide and support for US recognition of the Armenian Genocide."

He added that he was pleased that the "statement goes on to say that they will oppose denial of the Genocide."

said, "When Boston-area Armenians united to protest the ADL's genocide denial, human rights advocates and members of the Jewish community stood with us. Through the Coalition to Recognize the Armenian Genocide, the rabbis and members of Lexington's Temple Isaiah and Boston's Temple Israel worked with Armenians to educate the Jewish community about the Armenian Genocide and to advocate for US recognition, as well as press the ADL to reverse its denialist policies. The ADL's announcement this week of unequivocal recognition and support for US affirmation demonstrates well the power of sustained activism."

Barsamian also praised Trestan for participating in the activities of the local Armenian community marking the Genocide.

"We welcome the recognition," Barsamian said.

Kaligian added that he hoped now the ADL would join the diverse coalition working together in Washington in support of two resolutions in Congress, one in support of the Armenian Genocide recognition (House Resolution 154), and the second

ADL on the Armenian Genocide

By Jonathan Greenblatt

CEO of the Anti-Defamation League

As the still fairly new CEO of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), I've been on the job less than one year. I'm frequently asked about our current position on historical League decisions. One of those crucial questions is where ADL stands with regards to recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

My family was directly impacted by the Holocaust. Given that profoundly personal experience, I appreciate the pain of those who suffered losses even generations ago and the need to remember. I am reminded daily that we must educate and take action against hate in our own time, as we vow "never again."

Therefore, only a few weeks after the 101st commemoration of the tragedy, and on the occasion of Yom HaShoah, the remembrance of the Holocaust, I am using this opportunity to make our position clear.

ADL is a 103-year-old organization and very proud of both its history and its mission to not only lead the charge combatting anti-Semitism, but to also fight against all forms of bigotry. We recognize and uphold a connection between our leadership role to stand up for the Jewish community and stand up for other minority and marginalized communities at the same time.

Our mission reflects the words of the Jewish Sage Hillel from 2,000 years ago: "If I am not for myself, who will be? And, if I am only for myself what am I?"

That connection is both moral and practical: It is the right thing to do.

When we teach about the Holocaust, we speak about the 2,000-year history of anti-Semitism that made the Shoah possible.

We have a similar responsibility to talk more broadly and recall that in our own lifetime the world did not stand up against the horrors happening in Cambodia, Bosnia and Rwanda. Too often, the response to genocide has been global silence.

So, let me be crystal clear: the first genocide of the 20th century is no different. What happened in the Ottoman Empire to the Armenians beginning in 1915 was genocide. The genocide began with the ruling government arresting and executing several hundred Armenian intellectuals. After that, Armenian families were removed from their homes and sent on death marches. The Armenian people were subjected to deportation, expropriation, abduction, torture, massacre and starvation.

What happened to the Armenian people was unequivocally genocide.

We believe that remembering and educating about any genocide – Armenian, the Holocaust, Bosnia, Rwanda, and others is a necessary tool to prevent future tragedies.

Our experience regarding the Holocaust is relevant. When the first pictures of Auschwitz appeared at the end of World War II, there was widespread shame in the Western world at the realization that anti-Semitism was deeply embedded across cultures and countries and could produce such horror. That collective shame helped to inhibit manifestations of anti-Semitism for decades. Now, as time moves on, as that sense of shame eviscerates, it is no accident that anti-Semitism has reemerged with full force. In other words, we must educate each generation about the tragedies of the past.

That is why I am speaking out today and why we would support U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Silence is not an option.

In many ways, we have made great strides in this country fighting bigotry. Consider the great gains of the civil rights movement; the diminution of anti-Semitism that limited Jewish life in America; the ascendance of the Latino community; the revolution in attitudes and laws impacting the LGBT community. There have been setbacks and there is still tremendous work to be done, as exemplified by the stereotypes regarding Latinos and immigrants as well as anti-Muslim rhetoric that has characterized this unusual presidential campaign.

Collectively, this background makes it imperative for groups who, sadly, share a history of oppression to stand together. When individuals or groups deny the Armenian genocide, as recently took place with a billboard in Boston, ADL will speak out and denounce that denial. In that spirit, I am optimistic about greater cooperation going forward to end all forms of hate and bigotry.

ADL's education curriculum explores genocides that have taken place during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries including the Cambodian Genocide, the Rwandan Genocide, the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust. It also explores the world's response to genocide and some of the reasons for global silence in the face of mass atrocities:

The change in the organization's stance will now free many municipalities, including Newton, which had stopped using No Place for Hate, to go back to it, in light of three acts of anti-Semitic vandalism in a middle school in town this March.

Another activist involved is Anthony Barsamian, the co-chair of the Armenian Assembly of America.

He said, "We are pleased that they have come to fully and unequivocally recognized the Genocide and support the US recognition of the Genocide."

He also credited the Coalition to Recognize the Armenian Genocide, a group which includes Laura Bogosian, Sona Petrossian, Herman Purutyan, Judy Norsigian and Kaligian. "They have worked for nine years," he said.

A No Place for Denial activist Laura Boghosian, who co-founded the Coalition to Recognize the Armenian Genocide,

return of church properties in Turkey (House Resolution 4347).

Kaligian praised local rabbis, including the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis, which in honor of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide last year issued a strong statement in support of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

With this new position, Koutoujian said, the community can now heal. "Our community as looking backwards and now it is looking forward."

"I am hopeful for the future," Trestan added. "I am very proud of what has been accomplished here. I am grateful for the support of the Armenian community and the willingness to work together. Ideally we look forward to doing some joint programming and to work on some educational initiatives jointly."



COMMUNITY NEWS

Dagdelen Honored as Mother of the Year by Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston

MOTHERS, from page 1

and Getronagan High School in 1942. She began teaching at the Esayan School while studying French at Istanbul University for two years.

She taught 35 years at Esayan and also became its general office administrator, with financial and educational responsibilities. In 1955 she married Dr. Vahrij Dagdelen and had a daughter, Aghavni-Rita. She became a member of the executive of the Teachers Association of Istanbul and of the Esayan and Getronagan Alumni Associations there.

Dagdelen retired in January 1979 and moved to New York, where she taught the seventh-grade class for ten more years at the Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School in Bayside. During this period of time she visited Yerevan in order to follow a course for diasporan Armenian teachers organized by Soviet Armenia's Committee for Relations with the Diaspora.

She wrote articles for the Istanbul daily newspaper *Marmara*, which were republished in Egypt in the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party newspaper *Arev*. She edited the 30th and 40th anniversary commemorative books of the Esayan-Getronagan Alumni Association of New York, and was a member of the executive of this organization.

Dagdelen published an Armenian-language book in 2012 entitled *Yerazanke baher geanki darineres* [Moments of Reveries from the Years of My Life], copies of which Dagdelen signed for guests at the event.

The elegantly attired Dagdelen later addressed the crowd without a microphone in a clear and powerful voice, testimony no doubt to her years spent as a teacher. Prior to her formal speech, Dagdelen spoke of two episodes from her life which gave her great happiness. Her mother wanted her to become a seamstress/tailor but her father encouraged her to continue her education and gave

her a paper with registration for the Getronagan School. She cried tears of happiness. Years later her husband gave her roundtrip tickets to go to Boston from

the moments of joy are short and often cast in shadow. The mother always attempts to make those moments last longer.

Dagdelen quoted a poem of Zabel Asadur



Vosgi Dagdelen, second from left, with Society of Istanbul Armenians members



A group of singers from Zangakner Performing Arts Ensemble with Artistic Director Hasmik Konjoyan

Istanbul to spend a month with her daughter, who was at the time a student in that city. At the end of her trip, she met with Prelate Mesrob Ashjian who invited her to come to the US as a teacher. This changed her life.

Dagdelen spoke about the ideal of the Armenian mother as the embodiment of love and sacrifice, and praised her unending labors. She is the first teacher of every child, and the chief defender and nurturer of the child. Every year mother's day is celebrated with special dinners for the mothers who are with us, while we visit the graves of those mothers who have departed this world.

Even nature is called Mother Nature, as it has great love like a mother toward mankind. Life is full of such unimaginable pain, that

(Sibil) on the nature of the mother, and gave several stories of sacrifice by mothers, including one she herself witnessed in Armenian school.

Several videos were screened, including one by Istanbul-Armenian singer Sibil Pektorosoglu dedicated to Mother's Day, and another of a youth from New Jersey reciting Baroyr Sevag's poem "Mor tzerkere."

On a different occasion several years ago, Archbishop Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) had declared, "Vosgi Dagdelen, with her love of the Armenian heritage and language, is an inspiration to all of us," and the event of the Society of Istanbul Armenians demonstrated this to be true.

Town to Buy Former Armenian Sisters' Academy Site

By Al Gentile

LEXINGTON, Mass. (*Lexington Minuteman*) – Town Meeting voted to pursue the purchase of the former Armenian Sisters' Academy with an \$8 million appropriation.

"This location has the potential for short-term, mid-term, and long-term municipal or school uses," said Board of Selectmen chairman Joe Pato.

By a vote of 130-26, Town Meeting voted to appropriate \$8 million in borrowing within the levy limit to pursue either the purchase or taking by eminent domain the former Armenian Sisters' Academy, located at 20 Pelham Road. The property, which the selectmen announced on April 25 was officially being considered for purchase after it came on the market in the fall 2015, could be used either for a school or municipal use.

The 8.4-acre parcel of land associated with the property has wetlands, and is centrally located in town. It abuts the Community Center and conservation land. Currently, a 10-classroom school sits on the property, which closed in June 2015 when the Armenian Sisters determined they did not have enough money or enrollment to continue to operate.

The property could be the site for a 24-section school without athletic fields, according to town reports. Though no definitive purpose has been proposed, selectmen have ruled out a future police or fire station on the property because of road access issues, Pato said.

"This is not a good location for fire trucks

to dispatch from," Pato said.

In order to build an appropriate access road for school buses, \$3 million would be needed, Pato said. For a municipal use, approximately \$400,000 would be needed.

The lack of a definitive purpose and transparency in the negotiations was a key concern for opponents to the article. Charles Hornig, a Precinct 8 Town Meeting member and the sole dissenting vote on the Planning Board, spoke against the process in which the Pelham property was negotiated.

"I'm really troubled with the process around this. There's been no opportunity for community discussion," Hornig said. "I haven't even heard a use that is definitely possible for this property. We don't even know the price. The price will have to be set by the court."

Negotiations for the property have been conducted in executive session at both Board of Selectmen and School Committee meetings. In order to be negotiated in executive session, members believe having a public debate on the matter would be detrimental to the negotiations.

"We are still in negotiations, we cannot release an anticipated purchase price," Pato said.

If negotiations break down, the town can pursue the property through eminent domain. This would ensure the town becomes the sole valid bid on the property, but the town would need to pay fair market price for the property, according to a court decision.

Anthony Barsamian, a managing partner at the law firm Hutchings, Barsamian, Mandelcorn & Robinson, which represents the Armenian Catholic Sisters, said during

Town Meeting that bids for the property are coming in at far higher numbers than the town is offering.

"Unsolicited bids are coming in well above the \$8 million number," Barsamian said.

After the meeting, Barsamian said many of the bidders want to purchase both the school and the attached convent. He said fair market value for just the school would still be well above Town Meeting's appropriation.

"It's probably one of the most sought after parcels of land in Massachusetts at this point," Barsamian said. "No zoning changes are needed, it can be built by right."

One bidder would purchase the property as is, without contingencies, he said.

"They'd buy it sight unseen, with everything," Barsamian said.

Pato told the Minuteman the \$8 million, which is to purchase and conduct engineering studies on the property, was derived from appraisals of the property. He said the board tried to determine a fair market price before requesting the funds from Town Meeting.

"We came up with the number of \$8 million to come above the purchase price," Pato said. "The town has looked at what the value of the property would be for institutional or by right development at that lot."

Assistant Town Manager for Finance Rob Addelson said if fair market value was determined to exceed the \$8 million because the issue is brought to court, then the town has two options on how to proceed.

If the court decision on fair market value price comes before setting the tax rate, the town could then adjust the tax rates to absorb the additional cost. If the decision comes after setting the tax rate, Addelson

said, the town would have to cover the unexpected cost through available funds.

"We could finance that judgment without the appropriation," Addelson said.

Proponents of the appropriation said the opportunity afforded the town by the property should not be passed up because of the scarcity of available land and the school enrollment crisis.

Currently, the School Committee is considering several options for redistricting. Town Meeting also recently appropriated \$71 million in borrowing for renovations and additions at the William Diamond and Jonas Clarke middle schools and modulars at three elementary schools.

"We are not going to have another opportunity for a site like this," said Elaine Ashton, a Precinct 1 Town Meeting member. "Students are here, and more are coming."

Dawn McKenna, a Town Meeting member representing Precinct 6, said the fear of a residential use, which could possibly contribute to the enrollment problem, made her decide to support the appropriation.

"We know we need more elementary school classrooms," McKenna said. "If we don't buy this it will become a housing development we have no control over."

Jill Hai, chairman of the Capital Expenditures Committee, said working with the Pelham Street property would be less expensive than adding to existing schools in the long run.

"This preserves the town's ability to plan and anticipate for future growth," Hai said. "We find it might be cheaper to build new at Pelham than to expand at existing schools."

Arts & Living

Verismo Opera Accepting Applications from Vocalists Worldwide For Competition

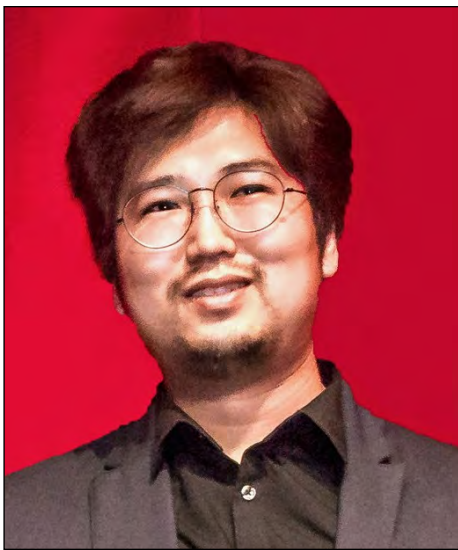
FORT LEE, NJ. – Artistic Director Lucine Amara invites vocalists of all ages worldwide to apply now to the New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera's 28th Annual International Vocal Competition. The early bird registration deadline is July 31.

Preliminary auditions will take place on November 7 from 6 to 10 p.m., November 9 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., November 12 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., November 14 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., and November 19 from 2 to 6 p.m. at Yeoryia Megremis Studios in New York City at the Epic Building located at 2067 Broadway, 5th floor, Otello Room. The application deadline is October 31, 2016. Final auditions will be held at The Liederkrantz Foundation, 6 East 87 Street in New York City, on January 4, 2017 from 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

At the preliminary auditions, a luminary panel of judges will officiate, including Metropolitan Opera legend Lucine Amara; Lucy Arner, Music Director/Principal Conductor, New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera; Anthony Mors, Emeritus Music Director/Principal Conductor, New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera; and Evelyn La Quaif, General Manager and Stage Director, New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera. The judges' comments will be sent to all preliminary participants and finalists.

A professional accompanist will be provided to all participants at the preliminary and final auditions. A free master class will be offered to all applicants accepted to sing in the preliminary auditions, and finalists selected to perform in the vocal competition will be invited to attend three four hour free master classes. During the master classes led by Amara and La Quaif, artists will learn deportment, language, style and presentation at auditions.

MARILYN MONSANTO PHOTO



Sol Jin receives his first place award in the New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera's 27th Annual International Vocal Competition.

"Vocal competitions offer a singer the opportunity to experience performing at the highest level of intensity and fear. Performing in front of your peers is always more frightening than performing on stage. The New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera's annual vocal competition's free master classes offer a singer a deeper knowledge of their art from professionals in the business," said Amara, who performed for over 40 years at the Metropolitan Opera in 882 on stage performances in 56 roles.

Finalists will be given feedback; extensive free coaching on language, style and presentation; and the opportunity to perform in Verismo Opera's fully staged upcoming productions. Winners will receive cash awards totaling \$3,500 (\$2,000 first prize, \$1,000 second prize and \$500 third prize).

The New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera see COMPETITION, page 17



Aurora Mardiganian, above, with "Auction of Souls" poster, right, from 100 Lives

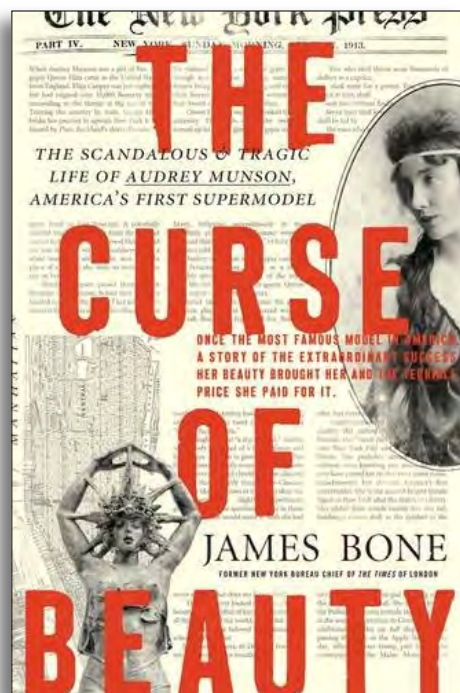
Journalist Finds New Material On Genocide Survivor Film Star Aurora Mardiganian

SHELTER ISLAND, N.Y. – James Bone, the former longtime New York bureau chief of the Times of London, while researching a biography now published as *The Curse of Beauty: The Scandalous and Tragic Life of Audrey Munson, America's First Supermodel* (New York: Regan Arts, 2016), has come across new material about Aurora Mardiganian. Mardiganian was a survivor of the Armenian Genocide

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

who came to star in a 1918 movie called "Auction of Souls," or "Ravished Armenia," but ended up exploited and dying alone in poverty in the US decades later. The Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity recently was established in her honor by the 100 Lives initiative, and the first awards were made this April in Yerevan.

Bone found a 20-part article titled "The Story of Audrey Munson," allegedly written by the famous model herself, "the Queen of the Artists' Studios," and published in 1921 in the New York American and other newspapers across America. One segment, published on March 20 of that year, described the shooting of "Auction of Souls." In one scene, a dozen actresses were filmed nude on crosses in the desert for the movie.



It was cold in the desert and it was the time of the great influenza epidemic. The article states, "When each had been assigned to her cross, she disrobed behind it, and, while the thousand extra people gazed curiously, each girl was lifted to the position of her 'crucifixion' and fastened in place with concealed ropes. Until sundown, there were see MARDIGANIAN, page 15

The cover of James Bone's book, *The Curse of Beauty*, which contains an eight-page chapter on Aurora Mardiganian

United Artsakh Fundraiser In Watertown Raises more Than \$27,000

WATERTOWN – United with Artsakh, a benefit concert which took place on April 29 at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center, with the participation of many location organizations, has raised more than \$27,000 to be sent to the families of soldiers who have been killed or injured in Artsakh (Karabagh).

The funds were raised through ticket sales, donations during the event as well as food sales.

The artists who volunteered their time includes: Zangakner Performing Arts Ensemble (Hasmik Konjoyan, Artistic Director), Maroukian Duo, Meghedi Vocal Group (Marine Margarian, Artistic Director), Davev Gevorkian and Mal Barsamian, Hamazkayin Ereboundi Dance Ensemble (Arman Mnatsakanyan, Artistic Director), Gegham Margarian, Markos Shahbazyan, Zori Babroudi, Shahan Necessian, Sevag Khatchadourian, Jasmin Atabekyan and her children, John Berberian Quartet (Mal Barsamian, Bruce Jigarjian, Harry Bedrossian), Arev Armenian Folk Ensemble (Martin Haroutunian, Ani Zargarian, Tamar Melkonian, John Kozelian, Stepan Megerdichian, Markos Shahbazyan and Gegham Margarian).

Volunteers who helped with all stages of the process were: Martin Haroutunian, Nairi Khachatourian, Markos Shahbazyan, Ani Khachatourian, Tosler Avedissian, Tatul Badalian, George Barmakian and Jano Avedissian.

The sponsoring organizations and businesses were: Armenian Assembly of America-Boston, ACEC, ARF-Sardarabad Gomideh, ARS Leola Sassouni and Shushi Chapters, AYF-Greater Boston Nejdeh Chapter, Hamazkayin-Boston, Boston Homenetmen, Knights of Vartan-Ararat Lodge, St. Stephen's Church, St. Stephen's Elementary School, Tekeyan Cultural Association, Pavilion Sound Works, Fastachi, Ani Catering, Seta's Café, Papken Suni Agoump and itsmyseat.com

According to organizer and coordinator Dr. Ara Nazarian, the Armenian Relief Society is scheduled to transfer checks and cash to the Artsakh Ministry of Finance this week in the name of the Boston community.

AGBU's New England District Raised over \$13,000 for Syrian and Artsakh Armenians

WATERTOWN – On Saturday, May 7, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) New England District hosted a night of jazz as a fundraiser at its newly renovated center. The event raised more than \$13,000 for AGBU's Humanitarian Emergency Relief Fund for Syrian and Artsakh Armenians.

Because of the generosity of several underwriters, 100 percent of all the ticket donations have been applied towards the Relief Fund.

"It was a unique and incredibly successful event all in the name of humanitarian assistance," said Ara J. Balikian, chair of the New England District. "We transformed our center into an intimate lounge, and everyone had a great time."

During the performance, the audience enjoyed homemade desserts, premium cocktails, and listened to an incredible performance by outstanding musicians Vartan Ovsepyan, piano, John Lockwood, bass, Karen Kocharyan, drums, and Samvel Galstian, vocals.

The event was supported by the Tekeyan Cultural Association.



ARTS & LIVING

Journalist Finds New Material on Genocide Survivor Film Star Aurora Mardiganian

MARDIGANIAN, from page 14
rehearsals, false moves, rearrangements, and mishaps - until just before the light faded the scene was finally taken." Two days later one of the models, Corinne Gray, was stricken with influenza, and died after a few more days.

Munson was not present at the filming, but the information, it turns out, comes from a credible source, as the articles were ghostwritten by Henry Leyford Gates, who also was the scriptwriter of the movie and "almost certainly there with Mardiganian" (p. 240). Gate's identity as ghostwriter was revealed in a lawsuit filed by Allen Rock.

Bone ascertained that Gates previously had been incorrectly identified as Harvey Gates in connection with the "Auction of Souls." Bone describes Gates as "an extraordinarily talented hack journalist, if that is not an oxymoron, and sometime *New York Times* feature writer, who was now association Sunday editor of Hearst's *New York American* (p. 238). Gates was married to novelist Eleanor Brown Gates, who became Mardiganian's legal guardian in the US.

Bone uncovered documents from the Surrogates' Court of the County of New York containing information about the guardianship established for Mardiganian as a minor by Mrs. Gates, which allowed the latter to spend the money Mardiganian earned, allegedly only for Mardiganian's expenses.

Bone also unearthed the February 25, 1921 issue of the *Evening World*, which contains an article, "Armenian Refugee Got \$15 a Week as Star of Film Play." The article states that Mardiganian claimed at a court hearing that she received \$15 weekly while touring with her film throughout the country, and was to have been paid \$7,000 for the film itself. However, her guardian Mrs. Gates only saved her \$195 out of that latter sum.

Henry L. Gates testified that her life story was bought from her for \$50, and then sold for



A scene from "Auction of Souls"

\$700 to a Dr. Levy of the International Copyright Bureau. The printed books were then sold for 50 cents a copy when Mardiganian gave a talk, and she would get 5 cents of this. However, Henry Gates admitted that there were 7 other women posing as Mardiganian in different parts of the country selling books. He claimed Mardiganian incurred expenses of \$650 weekly.

Mardiganian eventually won \$5,000 but led a difficult life, dying in isolation decades later in 1994. Her story, originally published with Henry Gates in 1918 as *Ravished Armenia*, has been republished in an annotated and revised edition (*Ravished Armenia and the Story of Aurora Mardiganian*, 2014, University of Mississippi) by Anthony Slide, along with a manuscript of the film script, illustrations, and a forward by Slide.

The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute of Yerevan has assembled various personal artifacts and photographs of Mardiganian, and this year published a new volume by its director

Hayk Demoyan, *The Road of Aurora: Odyssey of the Armenian Genocide Survivor*.

James Bone's Viennese great-grandparents died in the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Consequently, he declares that he understands all the more the value of the materials he discovered pertaining to

Mardiganian and her unique movie on the Armenian Genocide, and "appreciate[s] the importance of the historical record of the Armenian Genocide being as complete as possible." He says that he will ensure that the court papers he found will be lodged eventually in an Armenian library for all to use.



Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Roasted Eggplant and Garlic Salad



By Alice Vartanian

"This fragrant roasted Japanese eggplant is dressed in an herbed balsamic vinaigrette dressing. This dish is easy to prepare and can be served as a side salad or for a mazzza spread on pita bread, flat bread, or cracker bread."

INGREDIENTS

4-5 Japanese eggplants or 2-3 medium eggplants
1 medium green or red bell pepper, diced or chopped
1 medium red onion, chopped
4 large cloves fresh or roasted garlic, mashed
4-5 tablespoons olive oil
Balsamic vinegar or red wine vinegar to taste
2 tablespoons white sugar
Fresh chopped parsley
Dried or fresh basil and oregano to taste
Sea salt and black pepper to taste
2-3 tablespoons golden raisins (optional)

Lemon wedges, fresh chopped tomatoes, green onions, mint, parsley, olive oil, paprika or Aleppo pepper, and pine nuts or chopped walnuts as garnish

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Puncture eggplants with a fork and place on a baking sheet. Bake eggplants for one hour or until soft, turning occasionally. (You can also grill eggplants for this recipe.)

Cool eggplants, then peel, dice, and set aside in a bowl. In another bowl, stir together the chopped bell pepper, red onions, garlic, olive oil, vinegar, sugar, parsley, basil, oregano, salt, pepper, and golden raisins to taste.

Add the cooled, diced eggplant to the marinade and mix to coat well. Cover and chill for 2-3 hours or overnight before serving. Top salad with choice of garnish and serve with lemon wedges, pita bread, pita chips, flat bread, or cracker bread, if desired.

Mrs. Alice Vartanian was born in Lowell, MA, and is a resident of Fresno, CA. She is the mother of three children, including Steven Vartanian and Philip Vartanian of Fresno, Christine Vartanian Datian of Las Vegas, and grandmother to two grandsons, Brian and Justin Vartanian. She is an accomplished pianist who loves music, traveling, gardening, cooking, reading, and spending time with her beloved family and friends. She is pictured here in her lovely Fresno, CA kitchen, where she continues to work and create outstanding recipes and holiday meals for her children and grandchildren.

FRIENDS OF ARMENIAN CULTURE SOCIETY
PRESENTS

65th
**ANNUAL
ARMENIAN
NIGHT
AT THE POPS**

Edvard Pogossian
CELLO

Boston Pops Orchestra
Keith Lockhart
CONDUCTOR

FRIDAY, MAY 27, 2016 AT 8 PM
SYMPHONY HALL, BOSTON

FOR TICKETS AND INFORMATION,
PLEASE VISIT: WWW.FACSBOSTON.ORG



ARTS & LIVING

Babaian Painting Exhibition Reflects Her Identity and Passions

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN – Ani Babaian held her first solo exhibition of paintings in New England, called “The Spectrum of a Legacy,” at the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian galleries of the Armenian Museum of America. The opening took place on May 15, and the exhibition will continue until July 3. There were 35 works (in all 45 pieces) displayed. Approximately 60 people were present at the opening, including visitors from New York and Montreal.

Babaian gave a brief talk at the opening, and spoke about her interests as a painter. She declared that growing up in New Julfa, a suburb of Isfahan, Iran, she was surrounded by mosques, synagogues, churches and temples, as well as gardens and mansions. These surroundings, she said, “to me represented a dialogue among civilizations.”

Babaian obtained a Master of Fine Art degree from Alzahra University in Tehran, where she wrote her thesis titled, “Mutual Influences: New Julfa and Isfahan Mural Paintings of the 17th Century.” In Iran she worked on many restoration projects, including that of the murals of St. Amenaprkich Vank in New Julfa, and studied and taught art history. She moved to Massachusetts in 2010 after marrying Saro Khachikian and in 2013 joined the staff of the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). She is responsible for the cataloguing of the NAASR Mardigian Library.

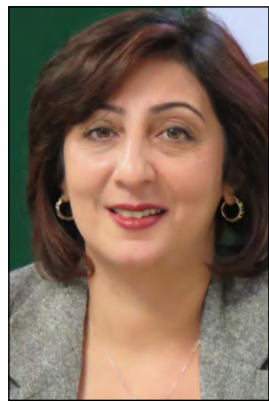
Babaian has participated in solo and group exhibitions of her paintings in Iran, Armenia and the US (Lowell, Lexington and Watertown in Massachusetts). The most recent one prior to this exhibition was in New York. It was called “Animating the Word: The Legacy of Iran’s Minority Calligraphic Traditions,” at the Tally Beck Contemporary Gallery. Her works appeared last year in the group exhibits “Pursuing Justice through Art 2015” at the Whistler House Museum of Art in Lowell and “The Armenian Genocide: A Silent Testimony” at the Armenian Museum of America.

Babaian said that her personal style of painting is “defined by my identity, thoughts, personal experiences, and the beauty around me.” Some of her paintings include Armenian letters, which were inspired by murals in Isfahan. She has depicted trees, the symbol of life, and ancient beliefs and traditions, including fortune telling, in paintings.

She recently was affected by the recurrence of fighting in Mountainous Karabagh, and this in turn moved her to depict the “innate strength of unity, survival and defense” of the Armenian homeland. She depicted tombstones from Artsakh, and women bearing arms on their side in a posture of strength and courage. She exhorted the audience, saying “Like them, let us look to the future, continue to defend our legacy, and move on.”

Babaian thanked her husband, Saro Khachikian, for his support and patience, the Armenian Museum of America with all its staff and leaders for providing her with this opportunity, colleagues at NAASR and Shushan Teager for encouragement and help, and Tally Beck of TB Gallery in New York for advice and guidance.

Babaian later said that when she began painting as a child, she was most strongly influenced by art books that she saw in her family home from Soviet Armenia. She particularly liked the colors used by Minas Avetisyan, for example. Armenian miniature painting and the art in the Armenian churches of New Julfa also were important for her.



Ani Babaian



“To the Memory of Setrak” by Ani Babaian. This piece is in the memory of an Armenian who lost his entire family in Alashkert in the Armenian Genocide with the exception of his brother who joined volunteer units to fight the Turks.



Sponsor A Teacher

In Armenia and Karabagh

16th Anniversary

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.



Yes, I want to sponsor teachers in Armenia and Karabagh to continue helping them to educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the teacher's name and address.

\$ 160 \$ 320 \$ 480 other \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Tel: _____

Make check payable to: Tekeyan Cultural Association - Memo: Sponsor a Teacher
Mail your check with this form to:

TCA Sponsor a Teacher
5326 Valverde, Houston, TX 77056

Your donation is Tax Deductible.



ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

MAY 20-21 — Armenian Memorial Church Annual Fair (rain or shine) On Friday evening, May 20, from 5 pm to 8 pm, the Church will be serving its delicious kebab dinners and selling exquisite desserts. The entire fair will be open on Saturday, May 21, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Meals will be served all day starting at 11:30 am. Features include an Armenian delicacies table, a variety of vendors and sale of household merchandise at bargain prices. At the Armenian Memorial Church, 32 Bigelow Ave, Watertown. For more information, call (617)-923-0498

MAY 21 — Saturday 1:30 p.m. Daughters of Vartan will present "The Great American Songbook" with historical interpreter Patricia Perry. Following the program, there will be an afternoon tea, refreshments and raffle prizes. First Baptist Church, Gordon Hall 111 Park Ave. Worcester. Parking and entrance in rear of Church. Tickets are \$20. Checks made out to Daughters of Vartan. Mail reservations to Elizabeth Orsi 128 W Millbury St. Sutton Ma. 01590 or call 508-865-9432 email orsi.elizabeth@gmail.com by Wed. May 18. Please include name(s) on check.

MAY 21 — Book Tour Schedule for Armenians of the Merrimack Valley. Authors E. Philip Brown and Tom Vartabedian are embarking on a presentation tour and book signing of their new book. Vermette's Market, 6 Pond St., Amesbury, 10-2, book-signing only

MAY 22 — Sunday, 2 p.m., the Armenian Museum of America (ALMA) and the Composer's Union of Armenia are proud to present a concert: **Anmorats Yerker-Unforgettable Songs.** The concert, dedicated to the 90th anniversary of composers Alexander Ajemyan and Khachatur Avetisyan, will feature the voices of Nouné Karapetian, Michael Calmés, Knarik Nerkararian, and Garo Nichanian, accompanied by Nuné Hakobyan on piano. Maestro Konstantin Petrossian will serve as Music Director for the concert. Light refreshments will be served at a reception following the opening. This event is free and open to the public. The concert is made possible by a contribution from the Dadourian Foundation.

MAY 26 — Annual Spring Dinner and Drawing sponsored by the Friends of Holy Trinity 1000 Club, 6:30 p.m., Charles and Nevert Talanian Cultural Hall, Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Open to all. You don't have to be a member of the 1000 Club to join us for a losh kebab and pilaf dinner, \$9.99 per person; tickets on sale at the door. Regular monthly raffle drawing at 8 p.m. plus 5 additional cash prizes. "One-time" numbers will be sold on the night of dinner; special offer: purchase five "one-time" numbers for \$20, save \$5. For further info, contact the Holy Trinity Church office, 617.354.0632.

MAY 27 — 65th Annual Armenian Night at the Pops, Featuring Boston Pops Orchestra, Keith Lockhart, Conductor; presenting Edvard Poghossian, cello. Presented by Friends of Armenian Culture Society. Symphony Hall, 301 Mass. Ave., Boston. For tickets and information, visit facsboston.org



On Sunday, May 22, at 2 p.m., the Armenian Museum of America and the Composer's Union of Armenia present a concert: Anmorats Yerker-Unforgettable Songs. The concert, dedicated to the 90th anniversary of composers Alexander Ajemyan and Khachatur Avetisyan, will feature the voices of Nouné Karapetia, Michael Calmes, Knarik Nerkararian and Garo Nichanian. Conductor Konstantin Petrossian will serve as music director. The event is free and open to the public.

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

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

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

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

OCTOBER 22 — Armenian Friends of America presents Hye Kef 5, a 5-hour dance, 7 p.m. to midnight with buffet; Andover Windham, 123 Old River Road, featuring musicians Onnik and Ara Dinkjian, Johnny Berberian, Mal

Barsamian, Jason Naroian and Paul Mooradian, with proceeds benefiting area churches. Advance tickets before Sept. 1 @ \$55, call either John Arzigian, (603) 560-3826; Sharke Der Apkarian, (978) 808-0598; Lucy Sirmaian, (978) 683-9121, or Peter Gulezian, (978) 375-1616.

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

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

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

NEW YORK

JUNE 4-5 — Tekeyan Cultural Association's Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group presents the AGBU Satamian Theater Group from LA, in "Funny Money," (in Western Armenian). Written by Ray Cooney. Translated and Directed by Krikor Satamian. Saturday, June 4th, at 8pm and Sunday, June 5th at 4pm at Oradell Elementary School, 350 Prospect Avenue Oradell, NJ 07649. Tickets: \$35 & \$50. For tickets please call: Marie Zokian (201) 745-8850, Talar Sesetyan Sarafian 201-240-8541, or Missak Boghosian 212-819-0097.

PENNSYLVANIA

JULY 6 — On the occasion of the 2016 Grand Convocation and Centennial Celebration of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan will sponsor the 25th anniversary showing of William Saroyan: The Man, The Writer, a one-hour documentary on the late writer, written and directed by Paul Kalinian and produced by Dr. Susie Kalinian. Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., Hilton Philadelphia at Penn's Landing, 201 S. Christopher Columbus Boulevard, Philadelphia. The filmmakers will be present for a question-and-answer session.

JULY 8 — Kef Night in Philadelphia Net proceeds will be donated to Artsakh Relief Fund, Sponsored by the Knights & Daughters of Vartan Featuring World Famous Richard Hagopian Band & DJ Robbie Barone. Hilton Philly @ Penn's Landing 201 S. Columbus Blvd, Philadelphia. Friday, July at 9 p.m. Tickets: \$25 purchased before July 1 or \$30 @ door (cash bar) Dessert & Coffee. For tickets or more info call/text: Vick Bazarbashian 610-389-4633 vbazar01@gmail.com or Gabrielle Meranshian 856-725-2260 gabriellemeranshian@gmail.com

Verismo Opera Accepting Applications from Vocalists Worldwide for Competition

COMPETITION, from page 14

(Verismo Opera) is the house opera company of the Bergen Performing Arts Center (bergenPAC) in Englewood, New Jersey. The nonprofit opera company is recognized for providing opportunities for artists to learn and perform in a professional environment with a live orchestra.

Vocal competition winners and finalists have performed in several of Verismo Opera's productions. On April 19, 2016, Nathan Resika, a finalist in the 27th Annual International Vocal Competition, performed in the company's premiere of Amilcare Ponchielli's La Gioconda. The 26th Annual International Vocal Competition's first prize winner, tenor José Heredia, performed in Verismo Opera's productions of Carmen and La Bohème at bergenPAC and will return on October 23, 2016 to sing in Rigoletto. Baritone Youngjoo An, the 2013 Verismo Opera Vocal Competition's second prize winner, has performed in the company's productions of La Bohème, Lucia di Lammermoor and La Gioconda.

The early bird registration fee, \$55, is in effect through July 31, 2016, changing to \$75 on August 1, 2016. Payment may be made securely online at <http://verismopera.org/donate2/> located at the bottom of the page or by check made out and sent to Verismo Opera, P.O. Box 3024, Fort Lee, New Jersey 07024-9024.

All applicants are required to send a resume, bio, a MP3 file or a CD containing at least three arias, an 8 x 10 black and white photo, and the application fee. Applicants will be notified if they are accepted into the competition. An application may be downloaded at <http://verismopera.org/causes/vocal-competition/>. For further information or to schedule an audition appointment, contact info@verismopera.org or call (201) 886-0561.

For 27 years, the New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera has been an integral part of the region's classical music culture. Led by Lucine Amara, Verismo Opera delivers a rich, grand opera experience for performers and viewers.



Third place winner (left) Janani Sridhar receives her award in the New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera's 27th Annual International Vocal Competition.

COMMENTARY

Armenia(ns) Need Visionary Approach

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Last year marked the centennial of the Armenian Genocide. The ceremonial and political activities evolving from that occasion proved to be far reaching, so much so that people began wondering what could be done the following year to match or surpass the 2015 commemorations.

On the occasion of the 101st anniversary, Azerbaijan perpetrated a four-day war, upon Ankara's instigation. Losses were heavy and the mood was somber in Armenia. Despite adversity, a dignified commemoration was held, at the same time broadening our horizon. The events which accompanied the commemoration this year in Armenia came to prove that as a nation, we are being emancipated from the parochial frame of mind which thus far has shaped our political thinking.

We have always assumed that our victimhood was known all over the world, therefore we are entitled to some justice. Unfortunately, political processes do not work that way. Unless we raise our pain to a universal level and share it with the world, we remain sidelined. Also, on that level, there is some tacit reciprocity; if we don't care and share other people's pain, why should they care about our issues?

The Jews, as well, are caught in the same dichotomy; some of them uphold the uniqueness of the Holocaust, demanding paramount retribution, but more illuminated leaders view the phenomenon of the Holocaust within the perspective of man's inhumanity to man and they empathize with the other victims of mass extermination.

Whatever took place in Armenia this year can be qualified as the universalization of our collective pain. The reference is, of course, to the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, the brainchild of Ruben Vardanyan, Nubar Afeyan and Vartan Gregorian. George Clooney's presentation of the prize was a colossal media event, in addition to its great humanitarian aspect.

The winner of the prize was someone far removed from Armenia. She is Marguerite Barankitse, a humanitarian who founded Maison Shalom in Burundi. As the first Aurora Prize laureate, Barankitse will receive \$100,000 and continue the cycle of giving by donation the accompanying \$1-million award to organizations that have inspired her work. She has saved almost 30,000 children and in 2008, she opened a hospital which has treated 80,000 people.

Some might think that the award money could be used for more urgent needs in Armenia. But that would be a self-serving agenda. The impact of the award has been global and eventually will benefit Armenia and Armenians in many ways. A selfless individual dedicated to saving children is something we as Armenians have seen. While tens of thousands of children were drowned by the Trabzon governor in the Black Sea, there were those children who were saved by Western volunteers and missionaries.

"Marguerite Barankitse serves as a reminder of the impact that one person can have even when encountering seemingly insurmountable persecution and injustice," said Clooney when presenting the award.

Ruben Vardanyan's thinking fell within the same parameter when he founded the Dilijan International School, making Armenia a magnet for international students.

There is another lesson to be learned from this phenomenon; the concept and the execution of globalizing our cause do not come from our traditional power structures of lay and religious leadership; they come from individuals whose purses, pulses and perceptions are synchronized.

This humanitarian endeavor will also generate political dividends.

Therefore, it behooves us to broaden our thinking in line with the project just outlined above.

We have a perennial struggle with Turkey. As our power dwindles gradually in Armenia and the diaspora, Turkey is rising to the stature of a regional power. Our struggle is somewhat of a David and Goliath if we don't align ourselves with other groups who

have suffered at the hands of the Turks, especially the Greeks and Kurds.

Our political relations with the Greeks do not go too far, especially in the diaspora. Fortunately, Armenia has been cooperating with Greece on the state level.

But the Kurds are waging a life-and-death struggle currently, yet we remain mere spectators to that struggle. Granted, we have some grievances from the past as Kurdish tribes were used historically by the Turkish authorities to massacre Armenians and usurp their properties. But, many Kurds have realized the mistakes of the previous generations and individual leaders and groups have apologized publically. They will certainly appreciate the value of their friendship with the Armenians once they attain their autonomy or independence in Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

At this time, Turkey has been conducting a ruthless massacre of the Kurds and the West has cleared its conscience by labeling the Kurds as terrorists. Besides Turkey's atrocities and battles within its territories, it has created a power upheaval in Syria by supporting ISIS and murdering Kurds in full contradiction of US policy.

"Under the pretext of combatting PKK members, Turkish authorities are bombing the infrastructures and residential neighborhoods across Sirnak and Diyarbakir," says Hoshin Ebdullah, a Kurdish lawyer and human rights activist. "Dozens of civilians have been killed, hundreds injured and tens of thousands displaced due to the brutal operations by Turkish forces in the southeastern part of the country," Ebdullah told ARA news. "More than 100,000 displaced people have been documented in two months, while many others remain in war-torn towns and villages in the Kurdish region."

A man-made humanitarian crisis is being staged in view of the entire world, yet political expediency is forcing the powers-that-be to keep silent.

The Kurdish deputies in the Turkish parliament have been emboldened. One of them, a female member, delivered an impassioned speech, shouting: "You will pay for the blood you are shedding in Kurdistan!"

There were video clips featuring other Kurds taking the podium and expressing their outrage. They all mention that the Turks belong in Central Asia, yet they have taken over land from the Armenians, Assyrians Greeks and Kurds.

They are all cognizant that President Erdogan has been manipulating the legislature to lift their immunity and send them to jail.

Even if he cannot garner enough votes, no illegal step will stop him from sending the Kurdish parliamentarians to jail.

In the past decades the Kurds in Turkey have been fighting for their independence. Their jailed leader, Abdullah Ocalan toned down the demands to settle for some language and cultural rights. Thus, negotiations continued between the government and Kurdish leaders. But, in July 2015, Erdogan reversed his course and began his war against the Kurds, a war that has caused 40,000 casualties since 1980.

Erdogan resorted to war because he considered the Kurdish bloc in the parliament as an impediment to his rise to absolute power. But above all, gauging developments in Iraq, where an autonomous Kurdistan came forth, and in Syria, where the Kurds have almost carved an enclave for themselves, it was not very difficult for him to foresee the domino effect that these developments could bring to Turkey.

The Kurds have been fighting for the same lands that the Armenians claim as their own. Should they attain autonomy or independence, Armenians have to deal with them.

What are Armenians doing today when the Kurds are in dire need of their support?

Armenians in large part have become apolitical. Otherwise, they would have sent volunteers. But above all, the Kurds need political support to have their voices heard. It would be legitimate to coordinate our political actions with the Kurds around the world, so that in addition to a formal apology we may expect some territorial settlements from them. Being on the land, they have already won 90 percent of the argument.

It is time for visionary and creative politics for the Armenians.

Mirror Spectator



Established 1932
An ADL Publication

EDITOR
Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR
Marc Mgrditchian

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:
Edmond Y. Azadian

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

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

Contributing Photographers:
Jacob Demirdjian and Jirair Hovsepian

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is published weekly, except two weeks in July and the first week of the year, by:

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472-1509
Telephone: 617-924-4420
FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

U.S.A.	\$80 a year
Canada	\$125 a year
Other Countries	\$190 a year

© 2014 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston, MA
and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472

Other than the editorial, views and opinions expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the policies of the publisher.

Copying for other than personal use or internal reference is prohibited without express permission of the copyright owner. Address requests for reprints or back issues to:

Baikar Association, Inc.

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

Nagorno Karabagh: An Armenian Perspective

It is more than 20 years since the cease-fire agreement between Nagorno-Karabagh, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Yet, the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict is still simmering in the South Caucasus, disrupting the lives of thousands of people.

This landlocked mountainous region is still subject to an unresolved dispute between its ethnic Armenian population and its former Soviet colonial master - Azerbaijan.

Historical cultural monuments thousands of years old trace the Armenian heritage of this region.

At the early years of the Soviet regime the region of Nagorno Karabagh was annexed to Azerbaijan as an autonomous region (oblast) upon Stalin's arbitrary decision, disregarding the will of the people of Karabagh and its history.

Nagorno Karabagh initiated its secession from Azerbaijan through the adoption of Declaration of Independence on September 2, 1991.

This act took place in full conformity with all the norms and principles of international law and the Soviet constitutional framework

of that time, that granted oblasts the right to follow that path in a legally binding manner.

On December 10, 1991 the Republic of Nagorno Karabagh held its own referendum: 82.2 percent of all voters participated and 99 percent voted for independence. Thus, Nagorno-Karabagh got its independence in the same vein as Azerbaijan and all other former Soviet Republics.

The people of Nagorno Karabagh want to live in peace and exercise their right to self-determination.

see KARABAGH, page 19



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Kurdish MP Delivers Fiery Speech In Turkish Parliament

In recent days, scathing speeches by Armenian and Kurdish deputies in the Turkish Parliament have been circulating on the Internet. Last week, I presented the bold speech by Armenian MP Garo Paylan, delivered in April on the Armenian Genocide. This week, I would like to share with readers another fearless speech by Kurdish MP Gultan Kisanak. Even though this video was recently posted on the Internet, her remarks were delivered in January 2012, shortly after the massacre of 35 young Kurdish civilians by the Turkish military in Roboski village, in Turkish-occupied Kurdistan.

Here are excerpts from her remarkable speech:

"...Those who don't feel grief or shame for this situation and call themselves Muslim; those who don't account for this situation, I question their humanity, their Islamic religion, and beliefs. Everyone is aware of what happened there. Is this how blinded your conscience has become? Is this your definition of humanity? ...How do you manage to be so reck-

less and careless about the massacre of 35 people? How do you manage to be so inhumane? First, you are going to stand up and apologize; get upset. That is if you're a human being as you claim to be. If you have a conscience. But you are not doing any of these things and instead acting as if a fly or a couple of chickens died by an 'accidental operation.' Shame on you. ...For 90 years, this country has been using the terrorism excuse and committing many massacres.... You are trying to exterminate the Kurdish people. There is no terrorism. ... The Military Chief of Staff of this country said: 'We killed 40,000 people. We bombed the mountains many times. But still this issue does not end.' You still cannot understand this truth. There are people there; and these people have rights. There are people there whose identity is being denied. There is a Kurdish issue. There is no terror issue...."

Using even harsher language, the Kurdish MP continued: "We are going to make you pay for this. Those who committed this massacre in broad daylight against these civilians and their mules, under the watchful eyes of the police, and those who think they can go around massacring 35 people and threaten the Kurds, will soon realize that they are the losers in these massacres. No one is afraid of death. Is there anything more than death? ... How dare you impose your superiority on us. What more do you have over us? What do Turks have more than Kurds? What did Germans have more than Jews? ...As equal citizens of this country, everyone is going to freely have their citizen's rights with their true identity. Living side by side as free citizens with honor, we will never accept to be dishonored. Never. Even if you commit a thousand massacres, we will never accept it."

When a pro-government MP tried to interrupt her speech,

the Kurdish deputy shot back firmly: "Shut up. You have not even shown the strength to condemn the massacre. Shut up."

Kisanak, who is now the co-Mayor of Diyarbakir, resumed her remarks: "Someone [Erdogan] is saying: 'We're not going to allow them [Kurds] to settle down in those areas.' What 'settling down?' We have been here longer than a thousand years. We are deeply-rooted in those cliffs, rocks, Mount Cudi, Mount Gabar, Mount Agri [Ararat], and Mount Munzur. We are in their depths. We are here and have been here since the beginning of history and we are going to be here till the end. What 'settling down?' We have been rooted here since the beginning. Our ancestors, grandfathers, and graves are all here. Our language, culture is here. What 'settling down' are you talking about? ...They want to assimilate and annihilate the Kurdish population that has been living here for over thousands of years."

Calling the killing of 35 young Kurds by the Turkish military "a crime against humanity," Kisanak continued: "We are not going to let it go – till the end. We will be using all possible international human rights to make them account for their crimes. All those who commanded it, gave the orders, bombarded the place, shredded the bodies of those young children, will give an account to the community for it. Someone said, 'there was no intent, there is no apology,' but, 'there is compensation.' Be ashamed of yourselves. You know what they call this in our [Kurdish] culture? Blood money. If I have the money, I can commit a crime and pay the money to cover it up. So you think you can kill, then pay and then try to cover it up? Be ashamed of yourselves...."

The Speaker of the Parliament turned off the courageous Kurdish MP's microphone, forcing her to end her speech.

Nagorno Karabagh: an Armenian Perspective

KARABAGH, from page 18

By virtue of that right they want to freely determine their political status and pursue their development. Azerbaijan opposes that independence and wants to turn back the clock of history. Nevertheless, the only viable option for the settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict is to let its people live independently, in safety and dignity.

Nagorno Karabagh itself is one of the most secure and stable regions in Europe. Despite the ongoing conflict and dire living conditions imposed by Azerbaijan, the people of Nagorno-Karabagh have succeeded in state-building and development: they established all the necessary elements of the State as required under the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, such as territory, population, government, and capacity to enter into legal relations.

The people of Nagorno Karabagh organize their political life through elections, democratic institutions, a well-established rule of law system and a vivid civil society.

Six parliamentary and five presidential elections have been conducted that were described by international observers as transparent, competitive, fair and in line with international standards.

Well-established and recognized international organizations such as Freedom House acknowledged that democratic governance in Nagorno-Karabagh has been much better established than in Azerbaijan, which suffers and exports high levels of corruption due to its ruling elite.

20 years of negotiations held by the leaderships of Armenia and Azerbaijan with mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group, co-chaired by the U.S., France and Russia, demonstrated that the irreconcilable positions of the parties and that no amount of additional talks would overcome the impasse.

Thus, independence of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic should be recognized in order to provide strong guarantees for the security of its people.

They fully deserved such recognition. Azerbaijan itself should participate in that process, but constructively and not just to block it. The democratic Nagorno Karabagh Republic deserved it much more than a fully-fledged UN, OSCE and Council of Europe member Azerbaijan that routinely violates all norms and principles of those organizations.

Indeed, to make such a decision on Karabagh would be difficult and hard first and foremost for the Azerbaijani elite.

However, it will not be harder for Azerbaijan than it was, to name just a one instance of secession, for such a staunch French patriot as President de Gaulle, who recognized the independence of Algeria.

(This editorial was written by the European friends of Armenia to offer one view on the situation in the Nagorno Karabagh region. It was originally published in Euronews.)

A Wake Up Call For Western Europe:

30 Children Allegedly Raped In A Turkish Refugee Camp

By Irene Kacandes

AT A TIME when the human tragedy that is the global refugee crisis appears to be losing its capacity to shock, last week's reports of child rape at a Turkish camp managed to rouse the world's attention.

According to BirGün, the Turkish newspaper that broke the story, a male employee at Nizip Refugee Camp in Antep, one of the many camps sheltering Syrian refugees in Turkey, raped at least 30 children between September 2015 and January 2016. Referred to in records only as "E.E.," the perpetrator is reported to have lured boys to the lavatories by promising small amounts of money.

At a time when the human tragedy that is the global refugee crisis appears to be losing its capacity to shock, last week's reports of child rape at a Turkish camp managed to rouse the world's attention.

Remarkably, E.E. was apprehended only after military personnel noticed that someone was taking children to a spot out of range of security cameras, and they have now gone on record criticizing Turkey's Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), which runs the refugee camp. Such a scenario raises grave doubts about the ability of the AFAD to protect the camps' most vulnerable residents.

To be sure, Turkey faces enormous challenges. It now houses the largest number of refugees of any nation in the world, including an estimated 2.7 million Syrians, according to Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But this does not detract from the horror of the rapes at Nizip, continued allegations of Turkish border guards firing at Syrian refugees trying to cross into Turkey, or of Turkey's alleged practice of returning refugees to Syria and Afghanistan with almost certain risk of

being persecuted for having fled in the first place. (Notably, only eight of the rape victims' families were willing to give official testimony; the others feared that they could be deported back to Syria if they joined the suit.) Against this backdrop, it's hard to take any comfort in the words of politicians like European Council President Donald Tusk, who has attested that Turkey is the "best example in the world of how to treat refugees."

Clearly some rethinking is needed.

It's a horrible irony that German Chancellor Angela Merkel, representatives of the European Union, and top Turkish officials sang the praises of this very camp after visiting it late last month. Those of us who study and teach German history hear the painful echo of the infamous Red Cross visit to the Nazis' "ideal camp," Theresienstadt, when it was expedient for the Red Cross representatives to see only what the Nazis had staged for them. It was similarly expedient for Merkel and her coterie to praise Turkey's camp administration in the wake of the March 18th agreement that positions Turkey as the key player for resolving the refugee crisis in Europe.

It's time for European leaders to recognize that the problem is not just Turkey's to fix and that, as Amnesty International's John Dalhuisen has urged, they need to suspend the return to Turkey of asylum-seekers who are already in Europe until conditions significantly improve for refugees there.

One obstacle to this policy shift is the widespread but misguided notion that the refugee crisis has grown too large for Europe to handle. This is belied by history. Indeed, there were many more millions of refugees in transit from 1945 to 1950 – at least on European territory – than there are today. Furthermore, the Europe of that period was in an incomparably worse position to take care of refugees. The vicious air war waged by the Allies and the Axis decimated German cities and many other European urban centers like Rotterdam, London and Warsaw – to name just a few. Roads and train tracks were in ruins too. Even with the so-called Euro financial crisis, today's Europe must be considered rich in a global context and enjoys excellent infrastructure.

In other words, post-WWII Europe was in much worse shape and yet still managed to aid millions of refugees and displaced persons. War-strapped European countries in the mid-20th century said "the boat was full" and yet still managed to settle so many refugees into new lives. More than 70 years later, we need to start realizing that today's boat is by no means full, and we have the resources to save many, many more people from the miseries and vulnerabilities they are exposed to now.

Today, the Nizip rape victims are getting psychological support, the perpetrator is in pretrial detention, and the Turkish agency that oversees the camp claims to have put new guidelines in place to help prevent future abuse. While this is all to the good, such steps are a drop in the bucket compared with what needs to be done.

Merkel once found the courage to say about the refugee crisis, "Wir schaffen das" – We'll manage it. All of Europe, indeed all the world, needs to find the courage of that conviction.

(Irene Kacandes is a professor of German studies and comparative literature at Dartmouth College. She is also a public voices fellow at the OpEd Project. Her column originally appeared on the cognoscenti blog of WBUR on May 17.)



Government Members, Lawmakers Discuss Anti-Corruption Fight after PM's Initiative

By Sara Khojayan

YEREVAN (ArmeniaNow) – Assurances by the Armenian government about its determination to fight corruption do not appear yet to inspire opposition parties and representatives of civil society that this fight is going to be successful.

As announced in advance, on Saturday, May 14, a meeting was held at the government office with the participation of government officials and members of parliament regarding the issue of combating corruption.

According to Armen Rustamyan, who heads the parliamentary faction of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), a junior political partner of the ruling Republican Party of Armenia in the current government, an exchange of views on the matter took place during the meeting.

“We called that meeting a ‘brain storm’ and all points of view were heard during that meeting,” Rustamyan told media on Monday, adding that members of all parliamentary factions, except the opposition Armenian National Congress (ANC), attended the discussion.

According to the ARF representative, during an in-depth discussion lawmakers made specific proposals.

“The matter concerns stipulating mechanisms for all officials who have a conflict of interest to be held accountable. Officials cannot be in charge of spheres where they have business interests, as it is natural that in that case they would put their power to the service of their interests,” said Rustamyan.

“I hope that everything will be summarized by the prime



Armen Rustamyan

minister, because it is the prime minister who initiated the discussions and it was the logic of the meeting,” the lawmaker added, voicing confidence that words will be followed by action.

Opposition parties, however, are not so confident of the ultimate success of the initiative. Orinats Yerkir (Armenian Revival) faction member Mher Shahgeldyan thinks, for example, that if there is truly a desire to fight corruption, then it should not be done by a body formed inside the government, but should be carried out by an independent body, which

shall be comprised of civil society, including NGOs, media and independent experts, as well as representatives of the opposition and the government.

According to Shahgeldyan, in the fight against corruption attention should also be paid to the bills in parliament that are designed to protect the interests of one oligarchic group or another.

At a government meeting last week Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan declared about his Cabinet’s determination and political will to fight against corruption. He also spoke about an inflated state apparatus and the need to cut costs on the maintenance of this apparatus.

Opposition political forces and civil society representatives, however, said they wanted the government to take concrete steps rather than make general statements. Many described the latest anti-corruption drive as an imitation of the process.

Only after certain steps are taken will it be possible to reduce corruption, the extra-parliamentary Mission party said in its message to the government.

According to the party, first of all, prohibition on high-ranking officials and their family members being involved in business activities should be enforced. A number of opposition parties, including Mission, also believe that Article 20 of the UN Anti-Corruption Convention that concerns “illicit enrichment of officials” should also be ratified by Armenia (the country ratified the 2003 Convention with reservations regarding the mentioned article).

The ANC, meanwhile, also believes that free and fair elections can be the best way of dealing with corruption in Armenia.

Erdogan: Turkey Will not Alter Anti-Terror Laws for Visa-Free Travel in EU

ANKARA (Guardian) – The Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has said Turkey would not alter its anti-terrorism legislation for the sake of visa-free travel for its citizens to the European Union (EU), telling European countries: “We’ll go our way, you go yours.”

Changes to Turkey’s domestic terrorism legislation to avoid conflicts with freedom of

expression was one of five remaining conditions set by the European commission on May 4 when it gave its provisional approval to visa-waivers for Turkish citizens.

The promise of visa-free travel was a key part of the bargain EU leaders struck with Turkey to stop the flow of migrants and refugees to Greece – a deal which Erdogan had appeared to

show little interest in.

The Turkish president was speaking the day after the Turkish prime minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, who had negotiated the deal, announced he was stepping down because of a rift with the president.


Turkey must complete five more benchmarks by the end of next month to complete the EU’s list of 72 criteria – which include changes to anti-terrorism law as well as protection of personal data.


“Why aren’t you changing your mindset when you allowed terrorists to put up tents close to the EU Parliament?” Erdogan said in a swipe at Brussels, in apparent reference to tents set up by Kurdish activists in March.

“You will allow terrorists to set up tents, say you are doing it in the name of democracy, and then tell us to change our terrorism law for visas. We’ll go our way, you go yours. Go make your agreement with whomever you can.”

Erdo said on May 6 he was also pressing for a rapid switch to a presidential system, turning the constitutionally ceremonial position of president into a stronger executive office. Critics fear that would concentrate too much power in his hands.

Davutoglu, who has been less than enthusiastic toward a presidential system, is widely expected to be replaced by someone who is more willing to push it forward.


 ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆԻ ԹԱՏԵՐԱԿՈՒՄ
 TCA MHER MEGERDCHIAN THEATRICAL GROUP
 presents
 AGBU SATAMIAN THEATER GROUP
 in
FUNNY MONEY
 WRITTEN BY RAY COONEY
 TRANSLATED & DIRECTED BY KRIKOR SATAMIAN



Պարսիկ Պարսիկի և Չ'բլեկ
 SATURDAY JUNE 4 8:00 PM & SUNDAY JUNE 5 4:00 PM
 Oradell Elementary School
 350 PROSPECT AVENUE ORADELL, NJ 07649
 ADMISSION \$35 - \$50
 RESERVATIONS
 MARIE (201) 745-8850 TALAR (201) 240-8541

Russia Constructing New Army Base in Palmyra

PALMYRA, Syria (PanARMENIAN.net) – The Russian military is constructing a new army base in the central Syrian town of Palmyra, within the protected zone that holds the archaeological site listed by UNESCO as a world heritage site and without asking for permission from relevant authorities, an American heritage organization and a top Syrian archaeologist said Tuesday, May 17, according to the Associated Press.

The American School of Oriental Research’s Cultural Heritage Initiative posted pictures from the satellite imagery and analytics company DigitalGlobe that show the construction on the edge of the ancient site that was damaged by the Islamic State group, which held Palmyra for 10 months.

Syrian troops backed by Russian airstrikes captured Palmyra in March and fighting continues miles away until this day. Maamoun Abdulkarim, head of the Antiquities and Museums Department in

Damascus, told the Associated Press that the Russians are building small barracks that includes offices and clinics.

Abdulkarim said his organization was not asked for permission but added that IS is close to the town and the presence of Russian and Syrian troops is

Russian Deputy Prime Minister to Visit Azerbaijan

BAKU (Armenpress) – Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Dmitry Rogozin was scheduled to visit Azerbaijan on May 17, according to the Interfax Azerbaijan news agency, which cites an “informed source.”

The source states that Rogozin was to discuss with the Azerbaijani authorities the upcoming visit of Vladimir Putin to Azerbaijan, and the situation in the Nagorno Karabagh conflict zone.

Rogozin’s last visit to Baku was on April 8. During the visit several issues related to the supply of Russian weapons to Azerbaijan were settled. Rogozin responded to the Armenians’ campaign against Russia’s selling weapons to Azerbaijan, affirming that “Russia will continue to sell weapons to Azerbaijan.”

The Azerbaijani media reports that Azerbaijan is preparing to make an order of another large batch of weapons and military equipment from Russia.