

THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

Volume LXXXVI, NO. 20, Issue 4414

\$ 2.00

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

Armenia President receives Dean of Fletcher School and President of Tavitian Foundation

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – President of the Republic of Armenia Serge Sargisian received on November 19 Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University Admiral James Stavridis and President of Tavitian Foundation Aso Tavitian.

During the meeting the parties talked about the cooperation between Tavitian Foundation founded by Armenian benefactor Aso Tavitian and Fletcher School. In the framework of this cooperation and due to scholarships provided by Tavitian Foundation, talented young people of the

Republic of Armenia receive high-level education in Fletcher School.

More than 250 graduates have returned to Armenia after receiving education in the framework of the abovementioned program

Stavridis is also a member of US Council on Foreign Relations, has served in United States Navy for many years holding various senior positions. During his service he was decorated with more than 50 international



From left, Dr. Joyce Barsam, Prof. Richard Schultz, Aso Tavitian, Fletcher School Dean Admiral James Stavridis and President of Armenia Serge Sargisian

Gregory Adamian Dies

WALTHAM, Mass. (Combined Sources) – Gregory H. Adamian, who served as president of Bentley College – now Bentley University – from 1970 to 1991, and then as its first chancellor, died on November 21. He was 89 years old.

Adamian was a member of the Law Department faculty when he was elected



president in 1970. Under his leadership, Bentley was transformed from a small, regional accounting school to an innovator in business education with a national reputation. During Adamian's tenure, Bentley's development was comprehensive. Full- and part-time enrollment doubled while the faculty grew in number from 42 to 350.

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to implement their knowledge and skills in homeland.

Tavitian Foundation simultaneously finances the visits of the deans, distinguished lecturers of Fletcher School to Armenia so that they become familiarized with the Armenian people and the existing geopolitical realities.

medals and diplomas. During the meeting with the President of the Republic of Armenia current international issues, challenges, regional development were touched upon.

Tavitian stressed that they will continue their programs and their support to young see FLETCHER, page 16

President Serge Sargisian Honors Azg Editor on Milestone Birthday

YEREVAN – President of Armenia Serge Sargisian sent a congratulatory message to editor-in-chief of Azg newspaper Hagop Avedikian on his 70th birthday this week.

“You are one of the distinguished representatives of modern Armenian journalism. You have made significant contributions to developing journalism in Armenia.”

The Lebanese-born Avedikian is the founding editor of Azg, which appeared in the early days of Armenia's independence. Prior to moving to Armenia, he was the editor of Zartok daily in Beirut.

Azg is a sister paper to the *Mirror-Spectator*.

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Hagop Avedikian

NEWS IN BRIEF

Italian Senator Says Turkey Attack Helps ISIS

ROME (Public Radio of Armenia) – Turkey has entered the war on the side of the Islamic State, the Vice President of the Italian Senate Roberto Calderoli said after a Russian Su-24 jet was downed over Syria with an air-to-air missile launched by a Turkish F-16 fighter, Sputnik News reports.

“Turkey has officially entered the war on the side of ISIS by downing at the order of [President Recep Tayyip] Erdogan a Russian aircraft which has participated in operations against Islamic terrorists in Syria,” the leading member of the Northern League (Lega Nord) Party wrote on his Facebook page.

According to Calderoli, Turkey is a “Trojan Horse with whose assistance Islamic fundamentalism would like to take a clear shot at the West.”

“Why is Turkey still in NATO after what happened? What else can be expected of the UN apart from taking a strong stand on ISIS and its allies?” Calderoli wondered.

He also criticized Rome's official stance. “The Government [of Matteo Renzi] is on the wrong side with [German Chancellor Angela] Merkel, instead of taking the side of Putin in this war to defend our values, our freedom and our traditions.”

Argentine Ministry Publishes Textbook on Armenian Genocide

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina – Argentina Ministry of Education introduced a new textbook titled *Armenian Genocide, Questions, Answers and Proposals for Education*. The authors are Argentina Ministry of Education and Armenian National Committee of South America.

Nouvelles d'Armenie reported the presentation event was attended by Argentina Education Minister Alberto Sileoni, Director of the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism Pedro Mouratian, and Carolina Karagueuzian, Director of Armenian National Committee of Buenos Aires.

Regarding the difficulty of teaching children about the Armenian Genocide Sileoni said the book would help to introduce the events of 2015. “This Ministry of Education was committed to the way the educational community has accompanied things that had been invisible for many years,” said Pedro Mouratian. “What has occurred in our country in terms of memory, truth and justice has been revolutionary and refreshing.”

Carolina Karagueuzian emphasized that Argentina is the only country that “publishes and disseminates educational material on the Armenian Genocide at the federal level.”

Argentina recognized the Armenian Genocide in 2003.

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Conan Conquers

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NEW YORK – Tekeyan Cultural Association's November 21 “Remembrance and Rebirth” concert at Merkin Concert Hall commemorated the Armenian Genocide centennial. Renowned artists like soprano Hasmik Papian, pianist and composer Karén Hakobyan, cellist Alexander Chaushian and conductor Arkady Leytush, with the World Peace Sinfonietta Chamber Orchestra, performed a range of music. The forthcoming issue of the *Mirror* will feature an article on this event.



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenian in Russian Border Guards Found Hanged

GUMRI (RFE/RL) – An Armenian who was serving with Russian border guards in Armenia has been found hanged.

Officials in the village of Gusanagukh in the northern Shirak region said on November 20 that 31-year-old Volodya Hovannisian was found hanged in his village home overnight.

In March, another Armenian national serving with Russian border guards, 26-year-old Artur Afian, was found hanged in Shirak's capital, Gumri, where the unit he served as a contract soldier was based.

Gumri is the site of Russia's military base in Armenia, Moscow's main foothold in the strategic South Caucasus region.

A private from the base, Valery Permyakov, is currently being tried for the alleged murder of seven members of an Armenian family in Gumri on January 12.

The high-profile killings sparked large protests by Armenians in January.

Armenia to Continue With NATO Peacekeeping Mission in Afghanistan

BERLIN (Panorama) – A delegation led by Armenian Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan was on a working visit to Berlin on November 23, according to the Defense Ministry. The main purpose of the visit was to attend a meeting of defense ministers of the North Command of NATO-led Resolute Support (RS) Mission Troop Contributing Nations. The participants exchanged opinions about the situation in the area of responsibility of the North Command led by Germany, the existing problems, and the further steps.

In his speech, Ohanyan said that despite the security challenges existing along the perimeter of its own borders, Armenia intends to maintain the level of its participation in the program until the completion of the mission. He expressed hope that thanks to efficient assistance of the international coalition, there will be new achievements in Afghanistan soon in terms of establishing peace and stability.

Delegation Discusses its Strategy in PACE

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The head of the Armenian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Hermine Naghdalyan, said on Tuesday that members are doing their best to prevent the adoption of anti-Armenian reports during the plenary session of the Assembly.

Naghdalyan noted during her conversation with journalists that both the Armenian delegation and the leaders of the parliament, as well as Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs have carried out activities in that direction.

"We are currently discussing all the possible steps that will be favorable for us and will allow us to make a breakthrough in the process during the plenary session. I must say that our MPs working in different international parliamentary platforms also take steps to influence the delegations which work at PACE with the help of their colleagues," Naghdalyan said.

Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has included (24 in favor, 16 against) in the agenda of its plenary session Robert Walter's anti-Armenian report titled "Escalation of violence in Nagorno-Karabagh and the other occupied territories of Azerbaijan."

He used such imprecise and anti-Armenian formulations as "the withdrawal of Armenian armed forces and other irregular armed forces from Nagorno-Karabagh and the other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, and the establishment of full sovereignty of Azerbaijan in these territories."

PACE's Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development Committee adopted with 9 against, 16 in favor of the anti-Armenian report related to the Nagorno Karabagh Sarsang Reservoir.

Armenia Honors Iranian-Armenian Painter Edman Ayvazian

YEREVAN (*Tehran Times*) – The 83-year-old London-based Iranian-Armenian painter, Edman Ayvazian, was honored Friday with the Arshile Gorky Medal of the Armenian Ministry of Diaspora.

He received the medal from Minister of Diaspora Hranush Hakobyan during a special ceremony held at the National Gallery of Armenia in Yerevan, the Iranian cultural attaché's office announced in a press release on Saturday.

The medal was presented to Ayvazian for his notable contributions to the development of Armenian arts, Hakobyan said.

The National Gallery of Armenia also hung a collection of works by Ayvazian in an exhibition titled "Colors of the Homeland."

The collection unites traditions of Armenian, Oriental and European culture, the gallery said on its website on Saturday.

The exhibition displays architectural designs and landscapes created over the past 15 years.

Ayvazian attained his professional



Edman Ayvazian, center, with Hranush Hakobyan

education in Rome. He then further developed and perfected his skills in London.

He has a wide scope of artistic interests; his creative ideas are expressed in various spheres of art including painting, graphic art, architecture and design.

He has made the interior designs for some Armenian churches and public and sacral buildings in Europe, Near East and Iran.

The showcase will run until December 20 at the National Gallery of Armenia, which is the country's major exhibition venue for art.

AUA's Turpanjian Rural Development Program Opens Its Doors in One More Region in Armenia

YEREVAN – The official celebrations on the occasion of the opening of the American University of Armenia (AUA) Turpanjian Rural Development Program (TRDP) office in Vayots Dzor took place recently.

The well-attended event, complete with a red ribbon-cutting ceremony, took place in Yeghegnadzor, Vayots Dzor on October 29. About 40 people were present at the event, including the very first TRDP beneficiaries of Vayots Dzor who had come from the region's different villages and towns, as well as TRDP Chair Dr. Haroutune Armenian, AUA Vice President Ashot Ghazaryan, and TRDP staff members.

During the reception, food products produced by TRDP-supported businesses from other regions of Armenia were made available: honey produced by Seyran Gevorgyan from the village of Kamo, Shirak; lavash produced by Harutyun Khachatryan from the village of Anushavan, Shirak; and "floss" cheese produced by Gurgen Abovyan in the border village of Koti, Tavush. The quality and taste of the food impressed the guests, and the success of the older TRDP-supported businesses further encouraged the 13 new beneficiaries from Vayots Dzor.

Since the creation of AUATRDP in 2006 through a donation by Gerald Turpanjian, the program has expanded to include Nagorno-Karabagh Republic and the regions of Shirak and Tavush in Armenia. A representation was also set up in Javakhk. The program is aimed at promoting sustainable development in the rural communities of the Republic of Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic and Javakhk by offering continuous training and advisory services for business plans, developing skills necessary for entrepreneurial activity, as well as providing financial assistance.

Since its inception, TRDP has conducted trainings in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills for residents of more than 900 communities, contributing to the launch of over 250 businesses and the creation of over 400 jobs in rural communities.

In his speech, Dr. Armenian highlighted the key to the program's success. "One of the key points of program's success is Gerald Turpanjian's readiness to finance the program to whom we are very grateful. The second

determinant of success is that, at TRDP, there is no director: we are all partners and work in direct collaboration with each other to achieve the economic development of rural areas of Armenia, Artsakh & Javakhk," he stated.

Dr. Armenian also mentioned that entrepreneurship is an important aspect of Armenian culture. Encouraging entrepreneurship and personal initiative among the villagers would lead to the people themselves developing their communities, rather than waiting for others to do so. "This is the way of thinking the program encourages. It's a new way of thinking among the people—that you yourself

should take the initiative, earn your living, and contribute to the development of your community. We want to bring this culture, this way of thinking to Vayots Dzor, but we need to learn a lot from you as well," Armenian appealed to the gathered guests.

Representatives from the regional government expressed their deep appreciation for the excellent job that TRDP is carrying out in their region and for the new jobs that would result from the establishment of TRDP-supported businesses, which would help keep families from leaving their homeland and contribute to the improvement of socio-economic conditions in rural areas.

President Sargisian Honors Azg Editor on Milestone Birthday

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On the same occasion, Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian awarded the veteran journalist a special commendation.

Avedikian was trained under the legendary editor Kersam Aharonian and succeeded him as the editor of the daily *Zartok* in Beirut.

When Armenia declared its independence, Avedikian moved there and settled in Yerevan with his family.

It is then and there that his pioneering mission in journalism began. He became the founding editor of the daily *Azg*, which was destined to transform the image and the function of journalism in Armenia.

He was instrumental in changing the dull and dour image of Soviet journalism by introducing Western methods and technology in the fledgling business of newsgathering.

In addition to editing a dynamic daily, which at first hit 40,000 in circulation, Avedikian rallied young and promising journalists around the paper. At that time, *Azg* became the most powerful and respected daily in Armenia. He was also smart enough to realize that those in the diaspora would want to read about Armenia, therefore he put out online translations of the main stories in English, Russian, Arabic and Turkish.

Many journalists, who later on embraced more ambitious careers as editors and diplomats, took their maid-

en steps in the editorial offices of *Azg*.

In addition to his profession as an eminent editor, he also became an educator, which in a way complemented his editorial mission. Indeed, he was invited by the State Pedagogical University to serve as a professor of journalism. Thus, he trained the new generation of journalists who ended up in the editorial offices of other newspapers and online publications, as well as in the TV stations as broadcast journalists.

Azg daily was initially supported by the ADL and it became an ADL organ. However, later it became an independent paper, continuing to serve as a proponent of liberal democratic ideals.

Azg also operated within the pool of ADL publications feeding and being fed by sister publications of *Abaka* in Montreal and the *Mirror-Spectator* in Boston.

Because of financial hardships, *Azg* recently became a weekly, mostly serving the intellectual and political elite in Armenia and in the diaspora.

Hagop Avedikian is rightfully considered as the dean of modern Armenian journalism in Yerevan and deserves all the accolades bestowed on him.

The editorial staff of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* joins the president and the foreign minister to congratulate him on his 70th birthday, wishing him many more years of contribution to Armenian journalism in the years ahead.



INTERNATIONAL

Turkey Downs Russian Warplane

ANKARA/MOSCOW (Reuters) – Turkey shot down a Russian warplane near the Syrian border on Tuesday, saying the jet had violated its air space, in one of the most serious publicly acknowledged clashes between a NATO member country and Russia for half a century.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said the plane had been attacked when it was 1 km (0.62 mile) inside Syria and warned of “serious consequences” for what he termed a stab in the back administered by “the accomplices of terrorists.”

“We will never tolerate such crimes like the one committed today,” Putin said, as Russian and Turkish shares fell on fears of an escalation between the former Cold War enemies.

In a letter to the U.N. Security Council, Turkey said it had shot down the jet while in Turkish air space. Along with a second plane, the aircraft had flown more than a mile into Turkey for 17 seconds, despite being warned 10 times in five minutes while approaching to change direction, the letter said.

“Nobody should doubt that we made our best efforts to avoid this latest incident. But everyone should respect the right of Turkey to defend its borders,” Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said in a speech in Ankara.

In condemnation of Russian air strikes in Syria, during which Turkish air space has been violated several times in recent weeks, Erdogan said that only Turkey’s “cool-headedness”

had prevented worse incidents in the past.

Each country summoned a diplomatic representative of the other. Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov cancelled a visit to Turkey due on Wednesday and the defense ministry said it was preparing measures to respond to such incidents.

US President Barack Obama and French President Francois Hollande, meeting in Washington, urged against an escalation, while NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the military alliance stood in solidarity with Turkey.

Footage from private Turkish broadcaster Haberturk TV showed the warplane going down in flames, a long plume of smoke trailing behind it as it crashed in a wooded part of an area the TV said was known by Turks as “Turkmen Mountain.”

Separate footage from Turkey’s Anadolu Agency showed two pilots parachuting out of the jet before it crashed.

A deputy commander of rebel Turkmen forces in Syria said his men shot both pilots dead as they came down. The Russian military confirmed one pilot had been shot dead from the ground and another soldier died during a rescue operation.

Russia’s defense ministry said one of its Su-24 fighter jets had been downed in Syria and that “for the entire duration of the flight, the aircraft was exclusively over Syrian territory.”

“The data we have is very clear. There were two planes approaching our border, we warned them as they were getting too close,” another senior Turkish official told Reuters. “Our findings show clearly that Turkish air space was violated multiple times. And they violated it knowingly.”

A U.S. military spokesman said it was an issue between the Turkish and Russian governments and that US-led coalition operations in Syria and Iraq were continuing “as planned.”

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said the warplane crashed in a mountainous area in the northern countryside of Latakia province, where there had been aerial bombardment earlier and where pro-government forces have been battling insurgents on the ground.

“A Russian pilot,” a voice is heard saying in the video sent to Reuters as men gather around the man on the ground. “God is great,” is also heard.

The rebel group that sent the video operates in the northwestern area of Syria, where groups including the Free Syrian Army are active but Islamic State, which has beheaded captives in the past, has no known presence.

A deputy commander of a Turkmen brigade told reporters on a trip organized by Turkish authorities that his forces had shot both pilots dead as they descended.

Assyrians, Armenians in Syria Protest Kurdish Confiscation of Property

HASAKA, Syria (Public Radio of Armenia) – Sixteen Assyrian and Armenian organizations have issued a statement protesting Kurdish expropriation of private property in the Hasaka province of Syria, the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA) reports.

The statement accuses the Democratic Union Party (YPD), the Syrian wing of the Turkish Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), of human rights violations, expropriation of private property, illegal military conscription and interference in church school curricula.

YPD has gained some international attention in its fight against ISIS, a fight which Assyrian fighters have joined, but it has been accused by Human Rights Watch of massive violations of human rights, extending to forced evictions and the destruction of homes and property of non-Kurdish populations in regions under its control. Some of the violations which impact the Christian Assyrian population are: Enforcement of new curricula in private and public schools; conducting forced recruitment of young people; enforcing special taxes and occupation of Assyrian owned public buildings.

According to Assyrian leaders in Hasaka, the Kurds form about 30 percent of the population in Northern Syria’s Jazeera region (provincial capital Hasaka) but increasingly act as occupiers of the region. YPD militia killed David Jendo, the commander of the Assyrian Khabour village guards, in April this year. The guards were established to defend the Khabour villages from ISIS.

Assyrian and Armenian churches, political and civic organizations issued the following letter to protest YPD’s actions:

For over four years our country, Syria, is struggling with tragic events. War dev-

astation and terrorism have caused all ethnic groups much suffering. But we, inhabitants of Al-Jazeera, have kept so precious nowadays ideals of peaceful coexistence between various communities of our province. Due to extraordinary situation and having safety in mind local self-administration was created, together with number of dependent institutions. Some of its regulations, however, are not properly prepared nor thoroughly measured. This causes valid concerns among various ethnic and national groups. While it is happening official authorities are still performing its fiscal, administrative, legal and military duties.

Law on Emigrant Property

After careful consideration representatives of Christian communities in Qamishli agreed on following:

Aforementioned Law on Emigrant Property is in violation of Human Rights Law, breaking fundamental Right to property

Under no circumstances, nobody can be labeled as “traitor” just for leaving their home.

Efforts at creating “Institution for Emigrant Properties Redistribution and Management” is an attempt of expropriation real estate under a guise of helping those in need.

These regulations create a dangerous precedence in Proprietorship Law in whole province of Al-Jazeera. Additionally this will cause substantial demographic changes centered at local Christians who will lose their homes. It’s worth mentioning that nearly 35 percent of all real estate in the area is owned by Christians. Expropriation of this properties will cause valid concerns amongst both those who fled and stayed, preventing the latter from ever coming back.

It’s worth noting that stance, taken by many local Christians, of not selling nor

appointing a proxy for their properties is fully supported by both state and international law. Any claims of this being illegal are false.

Taking all of the above into account we believe that such actions of “Local Administration” will cause ethnic cracks and turmoil. In order to avoid it and to convince authors to abandon these regulations we hereby announce ourselves as plaintiffs and prosecutors for any and all cases under both state and international tribunals and courts of law.

“Procedure on issuing permits and licenses, new permits and licenses fees and taxes” is redundant and illegal. Existing permits and licenses are valid. They were issued in accordance with law by official Syrian authorities and did not lose their legitimacy. Demand for their replacement and new fees, often exceeding their holders financial capabilities, is unacceptable.

Conscription Law

Demanding military service by organization without state legitimization is preposterous.

Any interference into church private schools in Al-Jazeera province in unacceptable. These institutions are sanctioned by administrative and education authorities. Pressure on these institutions is viewed as an interference in education and upbringing of Christian children and adolescents.

We appeal into everybody’s sense of responsibility and ask for restraint when handling matters that could limit rights of both individuals and communities. Fundamental Human Rights have to be upheld in order for peace and safety to once again grace all of Syria. We are hoping for continuous, peaceful coexistence of all Al-Jazeera inhabitants, regardless of their faith, ethnicity, nationality and culture.

International News

Georgia, Armenia to Have Model Border Management

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – A 4.3 million euro project promoting more secure and easy traffic between the border of Georgia and Armenia is coming to its end, according to Georgia Today.

On November 25, a summary conference in Tbilisi brought together the representatives of border management agencies in Georgia and Armenia as well as international organizations.

The delegation of the European Union to Georgia, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Ministry of Finance of Georgia and Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia are completing a project to assist the governments of Armenia and Georgia in reducing the barriers for trade, transit and movements of people across the Bagratashen-Sadakhlo border.

The project helped the governments of the two countries to tackle smuggling and trafficking, ease people’s movement at the border crossing point, equip and train border guards and promote professional cooperation between the border management agencies of Armenia and Georgia.

The European Union and UNDP also assisted Georgia to prepare and endorse the Border Management Strategy of Georgia from 2014-2018.

Kickstarter Campaign Launched to Fund Genocide Film

SYDNEY (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The Armenian National Committee of Australia has partnered with Sydney-based filmmaker Shahane Bekarian to produce the first Australian-made documentary on the Armenian Genocide, according to the ANC Australia official website.

Today, a crowdfunding campaign was launched with Kickstarter to help raise funds for this project. ANC Australia is seeking to raise \$20,000 to help fund the production of the film, set for a release in 2015, on the Armenian Genocide centennial.

The film, titled “Children of the Genocide,” is drawing on archival footage of interviews with Australia-based survivors of the Armenian Genocide, who are now no longer alive. It also features interviews with their descendants, currently living in Australia.

The film is described as “an examination of the sentiment of Armenians in Australia 100 years after the Genocide which saw them flee their motherland after World War I. The issue to be explored relates to the surviving Armenians who found refuge in Australia.”

ISIS Threatens Georgian Muslims

TBILISI (Public Radio of Armenia) – Alleged representatives of the so-called Islamic State (IS) released a video on Monday, which showed fighters speaking Georgian addressing the Muslim population of Georgia. The fighters urged them to support the Islamic Caliphate, Georgia Today reports.

The fighters threatened to establish a ‘Caliphate’ in Georgia. One of the extremists stated “I would like to address the faithless people living in Georgia that have been fighting Islam for a long time. Everybody who has acted against Islam, no matter in Iraq or Afghanistan, will be judged by God’s law.”

The address, published on sendvid.com, emphasized that “God is very strict,” and called on [you] to stop persecuting Muslims. “Your actions against the Muslim will be not remain unanswered. Everybody will be accountable for it.”

Another group of fighters threatened Muslim Khoja and Muftis living in Adjara (Georgia), accusing them of misleading people. “You will pay for what you have done. Be afraid of Allah but not the dirty leaders, don’t be afraid of their orders, you will fulfill them without hesitation,” the group has stated.

Soon after the address, the Georgian State Security Service announced it was launching an investigation into the case. The Security Service did not wish to speak about any possible additional measures surrounding the issue.

Community News

Turkish Armenians Topic at St. John's Anniversary Dinner

By David Lührssen

MILWAUKEE, Wis. — “What of the Armenians left behind?” Ani Boghikian-Kasparian asked. A lecturer at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, Boghikian-Kasparian was the keynote speaker at St. John the Baptist Armenian Church's 74th anniversary dinner. Her topic at the November 15 event, “The Oral Histories of Life in Eastern Turkey After the Genocide,” explored the situation of Armenian families and communities that continued to survive in the Turkish Republic.

Boghikian-Kasparian found parallels between the Armenians of post-Genocide Turkey and the Diaspora, noting that the degree of “Armenianness” in both cases is a matter of choice. Although living in their ancestral homeland, the traditional heartland of Armenia, Turkish Armenians have become a minority ethnic-religious group with many ways to assimilate or not, of blending in or disappearing altogether.

Coming to her topic through her husband, who was born in Turkey in Sepastia (Sivas), Boghikian-Kasparian interviewed Armenians from that region as part of her research. “It was a window to another part of our history,” she said. As to how some Armenians survived the Genocide, she explained that some were hidden by friendly non-Armenian neighbors and a few were spared because they had special skills; many women were sold into marriage and forced to convert to Islam. Some descendants of those Turkish Armenians have returned to the Armenian Church and accepted baptism.

In places where larger numbers of Armenians congregate, community rituals such as Vartavar continued to be celebrated. Generally, Turkish Armenians stepped softly, maintaining some level of “Armenianness” without calling attention to themselves. “Many small measures have been taken,” Boghikian-Kasparian said, relating that conditions have improved in recent years, including the establishment of Armenian cultural associations. Even the tricolor flag has occasionally been seen in Turkey.

Boghikian-Kasparian's talk capped a full program in observance of St. John's anniversary, including a visit by the Vicar General of the Armenian Church's Eastern Diocese, Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian; the singing of Der Getso by St. John's pastor, Rev. Fr. Nareg Keutelian accompanied by organist Jan Kopatic; a musical interlude by parishioner Donald Rask; and a power point presentation by Nicole Kashian on her pilgrimage to Jerusalem earlier this year with a group of young Armenian Americans.

Genocide Still Casting Large Shadow in *Giants* Book

By Mitch Kehetian

DETROIT — Six years ago when Publish America agreed to print *Giants of the Earth*, it culminated a personal project that took me on a 1969 mission into Turkish-occupied Western Armenia in search of an aunt lost in the 1915-23 massacre of Armenians.

It was a mission of tragedy knowing that just 50 years earlier historic Armenia was under the assault of the Genocide-driven Ottoman Turkish government.

My aunt died six years before I prayed at her mountaintop gravesite in Keghi province overlooking a tributary of the Euphrates River.

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At a PowerPoint presentation

AIWA SF Works on Training The Trainers at Public Schools Of Armenia

YEREVAN and SAN FRANCISCO — In collaboration with the Yerevan mayor's office, the Department of Education, Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) San Francisco, sponsored a workshop on comprehensive health education for the educators teaching the “Healthy Lifestyle” a required subject at the public schools of Armenia.

By Gaiane Khachatryan

Nearly 30 teachers (male and female) from various schools gathered in the Erebuni district to participate in this interactive workshop focusing on the various topic within health education.

The workshop was led by Ani Jilozian, a public health practitioner who has worked extensively in the field of women's sexual and reproductive health. She received her master's degree in global public health from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City. As a Fulbright Scholar, she led a qualitative research study that evaluated the social influences that impact abortion and contraceptive use in rural Armenia. At the same time, she also worked with the Women's Resource Center to evaluate the sexual education curricula in schools across the country. She has managed educational reproductive health program, which has served several hundred women in rural Armenia. Currently, she works with victims of domestic violence at the Women's Support Center and continues to lead workshops on the topic of sexual and reproductive health and rights both among adolescents and women.

The teachers who attended the workshop left with ample resources, including a manual and handouts, to be able to facilitate comprehensive sexual education in the classroom. AIWA San Francisco, will continue developing such workshops in Yerevan, and will expand its reach to the regions of Armenia in the future.

In September a team of three professional women representing AIWA San Francisco in Armenia, collaborated with the Arabkir Hospital to revise the sexual education portion of the Healthy Lifestyles curriculum/teacher's manual. The draft document has been submitted to the Ministry of Education in Armenia. If the new curriculum is adopted, educators at public schools will receive a revised

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Students gather in a circle

Hayk Film Studio Visits US to Make Film on Armenian Carpets

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — A group of documentary filmmakers from Armenia was present in Boston for several days at the end of November as part of a trip to collect material for a new film on the history of Armenian rugs. Hayk Documentary Film Studio Director Shushanik Mirzakhanyan, with film director Grigor Harutyunyan, cameraman Samvel Babasyan, and cameraman's assistant Armen Harutyunyan have been visiting museums, private collections, and rug experts in New York, Boston and Washington D. C. for their project.

Hayk Studio is a state studio which is the heir of the Soviet-era ArmenKino. It existed from the 1920s under various names. Today, it works under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia and receives financing through the state. Every year it produces 12 to 13 documentary films on a wide variety of subjects. First it assembles film proposals, and a list is prepared to be reviewed by the Art Council (Gegharvestakan Khorhurd). The final list is given to the Ministry of Culture for its input.

Film topics include historical themes, art, culture (for example, the 500th anniversary of printing in Armenian was commemorated through a film which traced the beginnings of Armenian printing in Europe), and current events, such as the Nagorno Karabagh movement, the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, the career and fate of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, and the odysseys of the Armenian ships “Kilikya” and “Armenia.” Some documentaries deal with Armenian Americans, like a long film on William Saroyan.

The studio negotiates with various television stations in Armenia to show their works, though the stations can only pay small symbolic amounts to the studio for this. Films are also shown in festivals, and often win prizes.

A second important function of the studio is to document interesting events taking place every year in Armenia for archival purposes. The studio attempts to cover all important events, whether in the villages or in the cities of Armenia. Whatever is known in advance is filmed, and what cannot be immediately filmed is somehow covered afterwards through interviews. Though the studio is funded by the government, it has the freedom to film all types of events, including protests against the government and opposition movement activities, if they are significant.

The archives of the studio from the early period of Soviet Armenia are kept in Russia, so every year a trip is taken to the Russian archive by the studio director and others to choose portions for digitalization. These materials are then added to the Yerevan archive.

While the documentaries are usually produced in Armenian, some have subtitles in English, and occasionally dubbing into English and other languages may be arranged, though this is more expensive.

The film on Armenian rugs was begun two years ago. The basis of the film is a book by rug specialist Volkmar Ganzhorn, whose book was translated into Armenian several years ago. Last year he and his wife came to Armenia and were interviewed at the Megerian Carpet Factory in Yerevan. He pointed out that the carpet and the culture formed around it composed a part of the

see FILM, page 5



COMMUNITY NEWS

Hayk Film Studio Visits US

FILM, from page 4
Armenian identity.

The Hayk Studio team has already interviewed other non-Armenian rug specialists, such as the editor of Hali magazine, and have filmed in the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia, what is called the world's oldest known pile rug, the Pazyrik. In Europe other interviews of specialists and carpets have taken place.

In Boston, the team was hosted by Jack and Eva Medzorian, and director Harutyunyan pointed out how inspirational it was to visit dedicated Armenians

like the Medzorians in the diaspora.

The studio's budget is much lower than that of private firms, and it works with older equipment, yet it manages to do quite a lot through innovative approaches and hard work. It hopes to eventually raise money for better digital film equipment from sponsors in the diaspora and Armenia.

For more information on the activities of Hayk Documentary Film Studio, excerpts from some of its works, and contact information, see www.HaykDFS.com.



From left, Hayk Documentary Film Studio filmmakers Armen Harutyunyan, Samvel Papasyan, Shushanik Mirzakhanyan and Grigor Harutyunyan.

AIWA SF Works on Training the Trainers in Armenia

TRAINING, from page 4

manual that will include topics on comprehensive sexual education, such as sexual hygiene, the menstrual cycle, sexual anatomy and physiology, breast health, sexually transmitted infections, family planning, informed decision-making, sexual rights, discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, and sexual violence, among other relevant topics. The revisions are based on internationally recognized standards, and the language in the

ness, confidence, coping strategies and critical thinking skills through artistic, fun, recreational, and physical activities. To promote the girls' well-being, self-care, and sense of purpose, the programs are developed with a holistic approach. "The girls are truly inspired and are enjoying every minute of the sessions," says Elvira Meliksetyan from Women Resource Center, who leads the sessions. "They are very engaged and are motivated to learn more. That's an indicative that we have been successful in our



Sports plays a large part in team-building.

manual is culturally sensitive and appropriate for Armenian youth.

Since its inception, AIWA San Francisco strongly believed that an approach must be taken at a policy level to improve the lives of women and girls in Armenia. For that reason, the organization is supporting comprehensive sexual education reform, which is known to balance gender roles and expectations, delay sexual initiation, reduce rates of STIs and unwanted pregnancies, and challenge the cultural tolerance of gender-based violence.

AIWA San Francisco continues to partner with the Women Resource Center in Armenia sponsoring educational programs at the Avedisian High School, and Levon Mirijanyan School # 155 in Yerevan. Prior to implementing the initiative, the WRC team introduced the program to the teachers, parents and students to ensure everyone was comfortable with what was offered in the classroom.

The educational programs are designed to empower teens in public schools through helping them develop leadership skills, self-aware-

efforts of creating a safe environment for them to express themselves."


Physical activities, including football sessions, medication, and yoga classes, have been incorporated into the program to make it more vibrant for the teens. The program is enhanced to promote team-building skills. "Physical activities are important aspects of a person's daily life," says Sona Barseghyan, the Physical Education instructor. "This is a field for endless exploration of one's abilities. Making sports a part of the girl's routine will not only promote their physical health and well-being, but will also improve the psychological well-being. My goal is to see them enjoy sports and not be afraid of being on the field."

The girls learn something new with every session. They have come to better understand themselves – their strengths, skills and abilities, and are continually encouraged to build on their strengths.

To learn more about AIWA, visit www.aiwainternational.org. To get involved with the AIWA SF affiliate, visit www.aiwasanfrancisco.com




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OBITUARY

Gregory Adamian Dies

ADAMIAN, from page 1

Bentley was an innovator in a number of academic areas under Adamian's leadership. The Center for Business Ethics, among the first such academic centers in the nation, was founded in 1976. In 1985, Bentley became the first college to require laptop computers for all students. And its business offerings were supplemented in the 1980s by programs and majors in English, history and philosophy. A commitment to excellence in ethics and social responsibility, information technology and the art and sciences remains essential to Bentley's mission today.

Adamian was involved in the building of more than two dozen campus buildings. He increased the endowment from over \$350,000 to \$60 million when he retired as president. Today it is in the range of \$200 million. An adept fundraiser, his Armenian contacts came in handy here. He was close friends with Detroit industrialists and philanthropists Alex Manoogian and Edward Mardigian. Adamian was on the board of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) when Manoogian was its president, and was frequently invited to lecture for the AGBU. After each lecture, Manoogian would send a check for \$5,000 to Bentley. Manoogian donated several hundred thousand dollars to build the president's house at the Bentley campus. Mardigian donated part of the graduate center for \$150,000.

His impact on Bentley was recognized in many ways, including the creation of the Gregory H. Adamian Professorship in Law and the Gregory Adamian Award for Teaching Excellence.

Adamian retired as president in 1991 to become chancellor and president emeritus, in which roles he was an ambassador and fundraiser. He served on the Board of Trustees until 2002 when he was elected trustee emeritus. He received honorary degrees in 1991 from Bentley and Boston University.

Adamian was born in Somerville on September 17, 1926. He graduated from Harvard College in 1947, and later from Boston University Law School. He also held an MPA from the Graduate School of Public Administration at Harvard (today the Kennedy School). He practiced law in Cambridge and began teaching law and economics part-time at Bentley in 1955, when it was still located on Boylston Street. He became a full-time faculty member in 1968.

Adamian was a respected spokesman for higher education. As chairman, vice chairman and treasurer of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts (AICUM), he was a strong advocate for increased financial aid. He was also a member of many corporate and non-profit boards, including Liberty Mutual, the Massachusetts Higher Education Assistance Corporation, West

End House and Inroads.

Adamian was a leading member of the Armenian-American community and an articulate spokesman on the Armenian Genocide. A founding director of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, he helped establish an endowed chair in Armenian studies at Harvard University. In 1990, he received the Humanity Award from the organization Facing History and Ourselves for his work as a spokesman for the Armenian-American community. He was also a recipient of the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2007. He served on the boards of the International Armenian General Benevolent Union, St. Nersess Seminary and the Armenian National Science and Education Fund. In 1998, he received the medal of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob from Karekin I, Catholicos of All Armenians.

In 2012, the *Mirror-Spectator* awarded him the a Lifetime Achievement Award at the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator's* benefit gala, "Celebrating 80 Years and Beyond."

Adamian's father came to Boston from Aintab after the Genocide, while his mother's parents had fled Kharpert to Worcester even earlier, before his mother was born.

His grandmother, who lived with his parents, could not speak English, therefore his first language and only language was Armenian until he began elementary school. The family moved to Brooklyn for a few years, where the family was in a less Armenian environment, but Adamian's father was hired as a bilingual compositor by the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* and *Baikar* and they moved to Watertown.

Adamian skipped several grades to graduate high school early and began work at the Hood Rubber Company, in whose sweatshop-like factory many Watertown Armenians found employment, including, briefly, artist Arshile Gorky.

At the very end of World War II, he joined the navy, which sent him to college and officer training. He graduated from Harvard University and received a commission as an officer. He went to the Pacific for a year after the war was over.

Adamian was one of the founders of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research and served for some 50 years on its board. He was president of the Council for Immigration and Resettlement of Armenians. In 1956, he testified at a Washington Senate Committee on the Judiciary hearing on behalf of this organization for a bill to assist Armenian immigration into the US, together with other prominent Armenians.

Adamian was an associate trustee of the Armenian Assembly of America. He became a frequent lecturer on the Armenian Genocide for Armenian organizations, speaking nearly every April.

Adamian's ties to the Baikar Association and the *Mirror* ran deep. He worked while young on Saturdays to help wrap newspapers for mailing. At that time the Baikar offices were on Shawmut Avenue in Boston proper.

Adamian is survived by his wife, Debbie Murdza Adamian of Medford, and Boca Raton, Fla.; children Douglas and his wife Angela and Daniel and his wife Carrie Ellen; Brother-in-law of Diana Adamian, Valerie Daniel, Victoria Rowland, Randal Murdza and Garret Murdza. Loving grandfather of Jenna, Anna, Julia, Addison and Olivia. He was the uncle of Wendy Avedisian, Denise Oldham, Jeremy Daniel, Gillian Daniel and Nicholas Daniel.

Funeral services were at Saint James Armenian Church, 465 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, on Monday, November 30. Interment was at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge.

Arrangements were by Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.

Prof. Sona Aronian

KINGSTON, R.I. — Sona Aronian died on November 17 after a long illness. She was 85.

She was Professor Emerita of Russian, Comparative Literature and Women's Studies at the University of Rhode Island.

Aronian held a BA in comparative literature from Boston University and a PhD in Slavic languages and literatures from Yale. She taught at the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Pennsylvania, and at the University of Rhode Island (URI), where she established and directed the program in Russian Studies and participated in the creation of the Comparative Literature and Women's Studies Programs.

She did archival research in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Prague, and Paris on the Russian modernist writer Alexei Remizov with the support of grants from the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX).

She served as contributing editor of a two-volume set of the *Russian Literature Triquarterly* devoted to the life and works of Remizov as well as a separate volume of his

Selected Prose. She also presented papers on Remizov at several international conferences in the United States and in Russia.

In retirement she became engrossed in the study of the Armenian language, literature and culture. She endowed two book prizes for outstanding scholarly work in Armenian studies to be granted through the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research. She financed the construction of a state-of-the-art language lab at the Avedisian School in Yerevan, Armenia. She and her husband endowed a URI scholarship in music composition.

Aronian was the daughter of the late Arusiag Opsoyan Aharonian and Arshag Aronian (Aharonian).

She is survived by her husband, Geoffrey Gibbs; a sister, Karen Beaver; a nephew, Hovannes Beaver; six nieces (Susan Sparling, Pat Opsoyan, Sharon Kehaya, Pamela Sparling, Marty Light and Nancy Cleveland), and her husband's daughter Allegra Brunborg.

Relatives and friends are invited to attend a graveside gathering on Saturday December 12, at 10 a.m. in the Old Fernwood Cemetery, Kingstown Road, (Rte. 138), Kingston.

In lieu of flowers contributions may be made to the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont, MA 02478.



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For the purpose of intact intent of establishment of legal state and civil society in the Republic of Armenia, the Congress of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party of Armenia, announces that it approves the proposed Constitutional Amendments and calls for support for their implementation.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Tree in Honor of Genocide Centennial

HARTFORD, Conn. – The Sunday Schools from Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection, St. Stephen's Armenian Church and St. George Armenian Church have joined forces to create a Christmas Tree for the Wadsworth Atheneum's Festival of Trees in December. The tree's theme is "Traditions of Armenia" to increase awareness among the non-Armenian community, and in honor of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

The decorated tree will be donated to the Wadsworth Atheneum as part of their fundraising, and will be sold during the Festival of Trees event. All are welcome to attend the Festival of Trees and purchase any of the trees and other decorations. Thousands of people attend this event each year.

This tree was a collaborative and unifying effort by representatives from three church communities.

The Tree Project Committee members include: Anita Arakelian, St. Stephen's Armenian Church; Melanie Kevorkian Brown,

St. George Armenian Church; Darlene Evslin, St. Stephen's Armenian Church; Roxie Maljanian, Armenian Church of Holy Resurrection; Cynthia Messikian, St. George Armenian Church; Anna Tufankjian, St. Stephen's Armenian Church and Virginia Derbabian Wasynczuk, St. George Armenian Church.

The decorated tree is a result of donations and financial support from the Sunday Schools as well as other donors. Perfect Productions of New Britain, CT donated the 7 ½ ft. artificial tree and lights, and Karen Fallo, of Perfect Productions, donated her design expertise and consultative services to the

Committee.

The first unveiling of the Festival of Trees at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford is part of First Thursday Events, December 3 from 5 to 8 p.m. and continues 10

a.m.-5 p.m. Friday, December 4 through Sunday, December 13.

Please note the museum and exhibit is closed Monday, December 7 and Tuesday, December 8.



From left, Darlene Evslin, Cynthia Messikian, and Melanie K. Brown; Roxie Maljanian, Anna Tufankjian, Virginia D. Wasynczuk and Anita Arakelian with the "Traditions of Armenia" tree

Genocide Still Casting Large Shadow in *Giants* Book

GIANTS, from page 4

While encouraged to complete the memoir that remained unfinished after nearly four decades, it was at the urging of my late cousin Rev. Vartan Kassabian, who inspired me to complete the dormant project into published book format for future family generations.

When the Baltimore publishing firm was absorbed last year by America Star Books, the 160-page memoir was temporarily shelved by the new company until recently. Thanks to the new publishing outlet *Giants of the Earth* was made available at its online book store.

My mission took me to Sepastia, Erzeroum, Lake Van, Bitlis, Moush, Bingol, Keghi, Khoops, Malayta, Kharpet. and through the Pontic-Manzur mountains and across the Mourad River.

With the help of Kerrin Wuchter, a special services coordinator at Star Books, interested readers can now acquire *Giants of the Earth* by going online to <http://www.americastar-books.net/9781615820009.html>.

In addition to Kerrin's assistance my long-time friend Hrayr Toukhanian, the noted film director and producer of "Assignment Berlin," a docudrama on the assassination of Talaat Pasha, regrouped my previously produced 32-minute video encompassing my mission into barren Western Armenia.

Without the support of Star Books publishing and Toukhanian this renewed project would not have seen light.

The abridged video can be viewed by going online to <https://youtu.be/AiNDannZYRU>

Hrayr's film features the assassination of the despot Turkish minister Talaat. It premiered here in 1982 at the Masonic Temple – focusing on the ARF's assignment for Soghomon Tehlirian to kill the mastermind of the Armenian Genocide. Tehlirian gunned Talaat down on the streets of Berlin March 17, 1921.

The 1982 produced movie on the killing of Talaat was a first to be shown to public audiences on the silver screen and later developed as a full length video.

The entire filming and production of "Assignment Berlin" took place in Detroit.

Notables who have praised *Giants of the Earth* include Prof. Dennis Papazian, a former national grand commander of Knights of Vartan; John Evans, former ambassador of US to Armenia, and US Senator Carl Levin. In a speech on the Senate floor the Michigan senator said anyone who denies Ottoman Turkey carried out a genocide "should read *Giants of the Earth*. It was genocide."

(Mitch Kehetian is a retired editor of *The Macomb Daily* and former board trustee at Central Michigan University.)

95-year-old World War II Veteran

By Tom Vartabedian

TEWKSBURY, Mass. – On Veterans Day at Bayberry Emerald Court, something special was going on with one of its cherished residents.

A 95-year-old is busy at work setting up an eye-popping art exhibit that characterizes his World War II Army career, then prepares himself to entertain the guests on the kanoun, an intricate Armenian stringed instrument.

He follows this with a capsule account of his military days and his venerable career on the Voice of America with the legendary Edward R. Morrow.

Add to the fact he will conduct an interview by computer if you take the time to e-mail him the questions. He will get around to it after driving himself and his wife of 66 years, Mary, to their various appointments around town.

Amazing: there's no other way to describe Leo Sarkisian.

"Never a dull moment," he is quick to respond. "Life is even better when it puts you to work and gives you energy. I don't have time to act my age – and never did."

The artwork he has displayed is impeccable. He calls his exhibit "Faces of Africa" and they are well worth the take. Four different museums around the world carry his work.

On this Veterans' Day, Sarkisian encountered another soldier who fought in the same bloody battle of Anzio. They embraced like long-lost brothers and recounted their harrowing moments in the war. It took this art show to bring the two together through sheer fate.

Among the gathering of 60 folks at this assisted living center were several veterans, some Armenians, fellow residents, administrators, and other friends.

"It's no small achievement to what this man has accomplished wherever he has gone," said Rev. Stephan Baljian, pastor, St. Gregory Church of North Andover. "He has created an atmosphere of camaraderie and artistry – a household name, really. We thank him for his service to humanity."

This day belonged to Leo serving as a most gracious host at an exhibit that defined a brilliant and eclectic career. Ask him to describe it and he'll point to a panel with Edward R. Morrow and the "Voice of America."

It's all you really need to know – 68 years

as a Foreign Service officer – the rest of it as an Armenian poster child for his generation, a talented artist and musician, world traveler and a guy who never stops dancing with his ageless bride.

"I'm just a little Armenian farm boy from Massachusetts," he tells you. "I'm very proud of my heritage. It makes me feel happy to see my work and my history being relived."

When Sarkisian signed off on "Music Time in Africa," it was the oldest English language music program in that country, ending a career that spanned more than half a century and took him to every country on the African continent. He was 91 when he called it quits as an "ethnomusicologist."

He used his travels to hunt down and

received a degree in fine arts, commercial and illustration art with honors just as World War II erupted.

During his childhood, he was surrounded by Middle Eastern music, playing the lute, clarinet and flutes with Armenian musicians. A thirst for language skills only enhanced his character.

When he was hired by broadcasting legend Edward R. Morrow in 1961 to work for "Voice of America," it was the beginning of a long and illustrious relationship between the two for the official broadcaster for the United States government. The stint lasted 47 years.

Leo's connections with the job led to meetings with presidents and kings of countries, listening to their stories and sharing many of



Leo Sarkisian by his artwork

record music of every stripe and genre, including some 10,000 reel-to-reel tapes that are now part of his Leo Sarkisian Library of African Music.

What people don't know is that he spent decades traveling as a Voice of America goodwill ambassador, visiting countries that most Americans knew nothing about, learning about their music and sharing it with his radio audience.

Together, the Sarkisians have been to 85 countries. Both husband and wife served in World War II, Leo in intelligence, earning a Bronze Star, and Mary as a communications decoding specialist with the Navy. They met at an Armenian dance in Haverhill shortly after the war and never looked back.

A lifetime filled with national service has been turned into a ritual of art, travel, pride for their ethnic heritage. Both personify the very goodness of Armenian-Americans from Merrimack Valley and Lawrence from where they originated.

After graduating from Methuen High, Leo received a three-year scholarship by the Vesper George School of Art in Boston, one of the finest art institutions of its time. He

his own. Often, he would let his music do the talking.

Distance never kept the two apart whenever Leo sauntered off to another land. Mary often joined her husband on these ventures, the first being to Afghanistan where she found the people friendly.

One prized possession they own is the kanoun and Leo looks for every opportunity to perform, much as he did this day.

He took to the harp-like instrument, adorned with a tricolor flag, and gushed out Armenian folk tunes for his audience after giving a brief history of the Armenian troubadours. Sitting mesmerized was oud virtuoso Leo Derderian and wife Mary, who came to visit.

"He could fit into any band ensemble right now," said Derderian. "We should all be so blessed."

Sarkisian takes it all in stride. He looks upon it as just "another day in paradise."

"I was once told that my life is like an African proverb," he says. "When a door opens, you go inside. Our adventures have been the result of seizing opportunities."



COMMUNITY NEWS

Knights of Vartan Oakley Country Club Gala Recognizes Community Leaders

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN – Ararat Lodge Number 1 of the Knights of Vartan acknowledged leaders in the Armenian community and in its own organizations through its 2015 awards dinner at the Oakley Country Club on November 6, at which more than 130 guests were present.

Ara Balikian welcomed guests as the master of ceremonies, and later gave the closing talk of the evening. Fr. Arakel Aljalian, pastor of St. James Armenian Church, blessed the gathering. Lodge Commander Armen Bogossian made introductory remarks about the various individuals being honored throughout the evening and the significance of the awards that they would receive. A number of last year's award recipients served as presenters to the new honorees. The basic biographies of the awardees have already been summarized in a *Mirror* article of December 27, 2014.

The formal ceremonies began when Krikor Gennetian, honored as Ghevont Yeretz Faithful Knight in 2014, presented the 2015 award to George W. Haroutunian. Gennetian noted that Haroutunian was not only a great leader, but also was a person of great character highly respected by all Ararat Lodge members because of his helpfulness to others. Haroutunian served in US elite airborne forces in the Korean War and in the 10th Special Forces, and later worked 24 years with the Registry of Motor Vehicles in Massachusetts in various positions in law enforcement.

While receiving his award, Haroutunian declared he joined the Knights in 1975, having already been a member of a Masonic



George W. Haroutunian with Krikor Gennetian

order. He said, "Not to diminish the Masons, but I was finding a new home that had my culture and my people, and I wanted to help my people." He joined Hayk Lodge, which lasted about 31 years and then was subsumed in Ararat Lodge in 1966.

This year, the Knights created a new award to recognize the activities of four young activists who successfully organized a vigil as part of the Boston Armenian community's commemoration of the Armenian Genocide centennial. The award is named after the nephew of Vartan Mamigonian, who carried on his uncle's struggle against outside domination in the fifth century. This first Vahan Mamigonian Young Leaders Award was given by Bogossian to Zareh Zurabyan, Armine Afeyan, Michael Demirchian and Karina Demurchyan. Only Zurabyan and Demirchian were present at the event, as the other two were traveling outside of the US at the time. Demirchian and Zurabyan declared their thanks for the award.

Bogossian then awarded the Mamigonian Family Community Leader Award to the Ashjian family, praising their dedication and sacrifice in the interests of the Armenian community, beginning with mother and father Alice and the late Joseph Ashjian. They instilled in their children the call to serve the community, and in turn their children, Apo (with wife Arlet), Sona, and Hagop (with wife Arpie), inspired countless others. A number of the Ashjian grandchildren, active in Armenian affairs in their own right, were present in the audience with their parents this evening.

Apo Ashjian, founder of the Sayat Nova Dance Company, spoke on behalf of the family. He noted that his father Joseph



Peter Koutoujian with Armen Bogossian

was a dedicated member of the Knights. He then modelled a helmet that he first wore as a youth during a play in which his father made him play the role of Vartan Mamigonian. Apo emotionally expressed his thanks for the award. His father used to tell him in Armenian, "do your honest and humble work, and do not expect anything else," and he felt that this is true too for the Knights of Vartan. The Knights and Sayat Nova, he believed, have similar missions, helping the Armenian community in many creative ways, with Sayat Nova focusing on the field of dance, which is important in particular for the youth.

More than 400 youth have danced with Sayat Nova over the past decades, and during this process, they have learned about Armenian culture, music, history and current issues. When they stop dancing, Apo Ashjian said, they take away this knowledge with them, and can pass it down to future generations. Furthermore, Sayat Nova today has 64 original dance choreographies, more than even the Armenian State Dance Ensemble, with only 34.

He went on to recognize various individuals who played an important role in the dance ensemble, particularly in various technical aspects. He also pointed out that the other honorees



Apo Ashjian at podium with Ashjian family

of the evening also had a connection in various ways to Sayat Nova.

Bogossian then announced that playwright and teacher Joyce Van Dyke would receive the Shushanik Mamigonian Woman of the Year, and asked her friend Paul T. Boghosian to say a few words. Boghosian first recognized the role of Nigoghos Atinikian, a former commander of the Knights, who initiated the custom of the special gala awards evening, and congratulated the

other awardees of the evening before speaking about Dr. Van Dyke's accomplishments and plays.

He emphasized that Armenians must support culture, for culture will triumph over politics. Boghosian said, "One of the great virtues of having the Joyce Van Dykes in our community, and the Chris Bohjalians, and other writers, is that they give us an opportunity to reestablish our identity as to who we are as Armenians, what we stand for, where we came from, and it gives us the opportunity in an objective way to communicate our story to the following generation."

Former Diroohie Donna Maria Deranian, last year's recipient



From left, Paul Boghosian, Joyce Van Dyke, Donna Deranian

of the Woman of the Year Award, then formally delivered the award on behalf of the sisters of Arpie Lodge. Van Dyke expressed her thanks and related to the audience a little of her personal history, growing up in the San Francisco Bay area without an Armenian community except for her mother's family. She became part of one only later. She said, "When I moved to the East Coast and eventually moved to the Boston area and started writing plays, the kinds of stories that I wanted to tell turned out to be Armenian stories. It wasn't my intention...it just happened. Those were the stories that were really compelling to me. And it

has continued to be true. ... I decided once that if it is not about an Armenian story I am going to at least put the word Armenian into the text somewhere."

She felt she came late to the experience of having an Armenian community, but, she said, "it is incredibly important to me." She expressed her gratitude for the support by Armenians for her work, and in particular mentioned Eva Medzorian and Martin Deranian, neither of whom could be present that evening, as well as the Knights and Daughters of Vartan. Supporting the creation of an artistic work does not only give a loving and caring feeling to recipients like Van Dyke, but, she said, it generates new work. She closed by reiterating her thanks for the emotional and financial support that the Daughters and Knights have provided her in the past, as well as for the present honor.

Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian was then invited to speak. Koutoujian said he had become a Knight almost 20 years ago. He praised the work of the Knights in unifying Armenians and supporting projects like Armenian Heritage Park, say-

ing "When you think about the power that this group has had, it is second to none." He congratulated many of the other awardees.

Charles Shahe Guleserian, 2014 Vartan Mamigonian Man of the Year, then presented the 2015 award to James Kalustian. He said he has known Kalustian for 12 years, beginning when they

continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

2015 Trinity Christmas Bazaar

Friday, December 4 12 noon-9 pm
Saturday, December 5, 10 am-7 pm

Delicious Armenian Dinners

Lamb Shish, Losh, Chicken Kebab
(combo dinners available)

Kheyma (Saturday lunch only)
served

Friday, December 4, 12 noon-7:30 pm
Saturday, December 5, 11:30 am-6:00 pm

Take-out meals and A La Carte Menu Available
Optional Seating for Families with Children Available

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The Perfect Place To Do Your Christmas Shopping

Armenian Gourmet Foods, Delicacies and Pastries

Choreg, Braids, Paklava, Bourma, Nut and Cream Khadayif, Apricot Squares, Simit, Spinach Boreg, Puff Pastry, Tourshi, Manti, Yalanchi, Vospov Kheyma, Maamoul Cookies, Roojik, Sini and Porov Kufita, Boyajian Oils, Harvest Song Preserves, and more!

Booths and Vendors

The Super Country Store, Abundant Farmer's Market, Sweet Candy Shoppe, Exciting Sports Silent Auction, Silent Auction, Poinsettias and Wreaths, Jewelry The "Punch is Right" for Kids, Made in Armenia Direct, KEZI (handcrafted jewelry) Touchstone Crystal by Swarovski, Tupperware, ArmenianVendor.com, Armenian Cooking Videos, Raffles, and more!

Activities for Children

Peter Adamian Hall, Admission is Free

Friday, December 4, 7:00 pm-9:00 pm
The Polar Express Pajama Party

Saturday, December 5, 10:45 am-11:30 am
The Magic and Juggling of Robert Clarke
aka *LuckyBob*

Visit with Santa
and have your photo taken too!

Saturday, December 5
1:00 pm-2:00 pm
Charles and Nevert Talanian
Cultural Hall



Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston
145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA 617.354.0632



Knights of Vartan Grand Commander Steven Kradjian

from previous page

worked together on the Armenian Heritage Park project. After summarizing Kalustian's biography, Guleserian explained that the Knights convinced Kalustian to join by pointing out that all the initial executives of the park were Knights, and they arranged for the initial funding of the park.

Kalustian responded with some humorous brief remarks and then congratulated the other honorees. He spoke of his connection to the Armenian Church, and his familial connection to survivors of the Armenian Genocide. He felt that the Armenian existence here in the US is an indication of triumph despite attempts to

groups.

Next April will be the 101st anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Kalustian wondered, "Will we go back to quiet remembering, or will we build off the momentum of the 100th anniversary to move our community, our people and our church forward?" He felt that the challenge for the Knights and for the community at large is to work to become stronger, more united and more relevant than ever.

The final speaker was the Grand Commander of the Knights of Vartan, Steven Kradjian of San Diego. His presence was a pleasant surprise. He declared that among Armenians often helping others goes unobserved and unrecognized but "tonight was a very fitting recognition of service."

Kradjian reported that the Knights at their July national convocation chose to honor the martyrs of 1915 for the centennial as "Man and Woman of the Year." They commissioned a painting of the ascension to heaven of these martyrs from Samvel Marutyan of California, which they presented to Catholicos Karekin II in Echmiadzin on October 6. During the same trip, they were invited to meet with Diaspora Minister Hranoush Hakobyan. The latter asked the Knights to establish an office in Armenia, have a big meeting there in their own centennial of 2016, and expand their activities and presence in Armenia. This is now under consideration, he said, adding further information about the ongoing programs of the Knights in Armenia.



James Kalustian, left, Armen Bogossian

extinguish the Armenian people and its spirit.

Kalustian felt it was time for American Armenians to give thanks and give back, with their talents and gifts, and to look to the future. In particular, the underprivileged people of Armenia need help, he said.

Kalustian said he was proud to be a Knight because "service to others is not an obligation—it is a privilege," while he felt the movement to create Armenian Heritage Park, in which the Knights played an important role, was important not only because it helped Armenians remember who they are and give thanks to those who helped them. It was also important as a paradigm of cooperation among Armenian

The children of Zangakner Performing Arts Ensemble, led by artistic director and conductor Hasmik Konjoyan, performed between the awards ceremonies to great applause. DJ Argishti (Chaparian) provided music for the evening, which concluded with dancing.

Daughters of Vartan Grand Matron Sona Manuelian was present in the audience. The 2015 Gala Awards Committee was co-chaired by Arakel H. Yacubian and Karnig G. Ostayan, with members Armen Bogossian, Bedros Geyoghlian, Artak Kalenjian, Daniel Markarian, Eric Markarian, Ashot Papoyan and Aleksan Yildizyan.



Members of the Zangakner Ensemble led by Hasmik Konjoyan at left

Arts & Living

Berberian Is Master of Violin and Oud

By Tom Vartabedian

SHREWSBURY, Mass. — Over the past six decades, many have come to know Johnny Berberian as an oud virtuoso playing countless gigs and releasing numerous CDs.

He has played dances and concerts, weddings and special occasions. His musical resume is still being written every time he picks up his instrument and plucks the strings.

Many have compared Berberian to the very best who have ever played the oud — and very few might boast of such a long and distinguished career.

But what you may not know is that as a child, he was raised on the violin and continues to shift gears during a rare moment.

Anybody that's heard him play violin will tell you his versatility with this instrument deserves added applause.

"Despite my eagerness to learn the oud at an early age, my father encouraged me to study the violin instead because it represented a more respectable instrument with greater potential in America," Berberian recalled.

His dad sent him to a violin music school at the age of 9. After a few months, Berberian began taking private lessons.

"I can remember the first day I auditioned in front of my teacher," Berberian reminisced. "He asked me to perform something I knew so I played *Catskill Jampan*. Needless to say, it was not what he was expecting and from that day forward, I had to concentrate on Western classical violin form. I remember going to my lessons and having my mother carry my violin through the tough neighborhood streets so my friends wouldn't poke



Johnny Berberian started out with the violin as a child, joined by his oud-playing dad Yervant.

fun at me."

While pursuing violin lessons, Berberian slowly taught himself the oud with some help from his father and a myriad of old 78 RPM and LP recordings. In later years, personal encounters with master oud players such as Oudi Hrant, Marco Melkon, George Mgrdichian and Chick Ganimian complemented his artistry.

In the back room of his father's dry cleaning store was a workshop where Yervant repaired ouds. It is where Johnny learned valuable skills about oud repair.

At 16, he got to sit in with two of the very best in the business — Mgrdichian and Ganimian — at a Greenwich Village coffee house called Harout's before a live audience. Soon after that, he connected with the Vanites Band in Whitinsville and has not looked back.

see BERBERIAN, page 11



Zander Semerjian on clarinet with Simone Semerjian on violin.

Amaras Young Stars Concert Dedicated to Genocide Centennial

BELMONT, Mass. — Amaras Art Alliance presented a concert called "Our Young Stars" in the afternoon of November 22 at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church. Amaras began organizing annual concerts for young talented children in 2008 to

help promote and recognize talent from within the community. This year's concert

was dedicated to the Armenian Genocide, and all pieces performed were by Armenian composers, including Aram Khachaturian, Aleksandr Spandarian, Arno Babajanian, Robert Amirkhanian and Marina Margarian. Armenian poetry by authors like Hamo Sahian was also recited.

The young performers, from 8 to 18, were Rebecca Lai, Chloe Santilli, Sonia Ourfalian, Mark Antranig Arkun, Meghri Der Vartanian, Maggie Xu, Emily Sun, Zander Semerjian, Elize Ohanian, Simone Semerjian, Zachary Semerjian, Cameron Pomer, Mary Galstyan and Shant Der Torossian. They played the piano, clarinet, or violin, and several sang. They included a number



Maral Der Torossian welcomes guests

of non-Armenians.

There were two guest performers from Greece: Jasmin Atabekyan, on the piano, and her 13-year-old daughter Emily Gasparyan, on the violin. Atabekyan is the winner of France's prestigious Pierre Lantier-Ober Piano Competition in Paris, Aram Khachaturian Competition in Yerevan, Armenia and several other international competitions.

The planning committee for the concert included Arax Badalian, Marina Margarian, Maral Der Torossian and Tatoul Badalian. The music teachers of the children performing are Anahit Truzyan, Marina Margarian, Nana Gazaryan and Tania Schwartzman. The sound system was provided by Pavillion Sound Works.



A group picture of the young performers

O'Brien on Bringing Conan to Armenia, Meeting Syrian Refugees, Peaking In his 23rd Season

By John Horn

LOS ANGELES (*Vulture*) — Inspired by his exotic trip to Cuba earlier this year, Conan O'Brien decided to hit the road once again, but this time with his beloved longtime assistant, Sona Movsesian, sharing the center stage. Traveling to Armenia with his Conan crew in tow, the excursion was naturally spurred by Movsesian's Armenian heritage and, simply, O'Brien's yearning to learn more about it. What ensued were adventures at Armenian flea markets, a popular soap opera, a rowdy Yerevan Day celebration, and, on a more somber note, a visit to the Armenian Genocide Memorial.

Earlier this week, the late-night host and Movsesian talked with friend of *Vulture* John Horn, host of the KPCC radio show and podcast "The Frame," about their trip of a lifetime, their unique boss-assistant dynamic, and meeting Syrian refugees.

John Horn: The last time we talked, you were about to air your episode on your trip to Cuba. Did that have some influence on your wanting to go to Armenia?

Conan O'Brien: It had a direct influence in that we realized America loves it when I leave the country. America's favorite thing is when Co is gone. We obviously got a terrific response from that show. It reminded me how much I love traveling, and how much I love



Conan and Sona Movsesian at Garni

doing comedy on the road, and how much I love doing remotes. Years ago I did a remote in Finland, I did one in Ireland, and it was fantastic. The comedy is really organic, and the interactions are pure. I thought, Okay, once we did Cuba, let's keep this going. Sona has been talking about Armenia and her culture for the six years we've been together, and the idea just popped in one day: What if I took Sona, my assistant, back to Armenia? And we had this crazy adventure, and we're really proud of the way it turned out.

JH: So, Sona, was this trip something you've been planting in his mind all these years?

Sona Movsesian: You know, if I was, I guess I wasn't doing it on purpose. But whatever I did, I'm glad I did it. Because I ended up getting a trip to Armenia out of it. If it was subconscious, good for me.

CO: It's not that subconscious when every third Post-it I get from her says: "Go to Armenia."

"And bring me with you."

CO: Yeah, it's two pink Post-its long. No, she's talked about it so much, and Sona and I are always joking around about my culture, her culture, how different our cultures are. Then it

see CONAN, page 12



ARTS & LIVING

Berberian Master of *Oud* and Violin

BERBERIAN, from page 10

"I was placed between the two oud greats and introduced to the audience as an up-and-coming player," Berberian traced back. "It was my first public exposure and what a thrill! I was fortunate during my college years and later to be offered recording contracts from well-known studios like Mainstream, Roulette, Verve Forecast, MGM and RCA records."

Berberian graduated from Columbia University with a bachelor's degree in economics. As a student, he never stopped playing the oud and performed regularly in Manhattan music venues.

Berberian expanded beyond the ethnic music market in the 1960s before "world music" became fashionable with a series of LPs which explored fusions between traditional Middle Eastern music, psychedelic, rock and jazz. By then, he had established himself in the musical genre.

In 1970, Berberian started his own recording company called Olympia Records. He has recorded 10 albums on his own and performed guest spots with various other Armenian and international artists, not to mention movie sound tracks and documentary films.

He has played no fewer than 2,500 gigs.

"Despite the knowledge and experiences within Armenian folk culture, I'm quite attentive to Western classical music," he says, "in particular, violin concertos by Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Brahms and others."

He named Jascha Heifetz as his favorite musician.

Versatility extends itself willingly to other great Armenian musicians. Mal Barsamian juggles the clarinet with the oud and saxophone. In fact, Oudi Hrant also played the violin as did Richard Hagopian and John Bilezikian, two other oud virtuosos.

Clarinetist Hachig Kazarian plays and actually composes on the piano, but capable of performing many other wind instruments. Others like Ara Dinkjian and John Vartan play multiple instruments as well when not focusing on the oud.

"You may not know that vocalist Onnik Dinkjian is self-taught on the oud and actually accompanied himself in his early musical career," Berberian pointed out.

The oud and violin are not Berberian's sole instruments. He can also play mandolin and other string instruments like a jumbush and viola.

"But my concentration, of course, is on the oud and occasionally the violin for fun and select occasions," he maintains.

Berberian was born and raised in New York City. He was selected to sing and represent his school in what was called the All-City High School Chorus. The group performed in New York's prestigious Carnegie Hall.

Most memorable was singing in 5-part harmony on subway platforms and inside trains as they returned home after practice.

"I always enjoyed choral singing," he said. "I've been singing in the Armenian church for almost 40 years now – first at Sts. Vartanantz (NJ) and now at Soorp Asdvazadzin (Whitinsville). Although I enjoy singing harmony with Onnik and others, I prefer to concentrate on my oud playing where I get the most enjoyment."

The women in Johnny's life happen to be his mother Sirpouhi and wife Barbara (Goshgarian). Barbara, or Bobbie as she is affectionately called, seldom misses a gig and remains his favorite fan. Both are extremely active with the church. Three children and six grandchildren bring them ultimate joy.

How would he like to be remembered? The legacy is far from ended.

"I'd like to be known as a first-generation Armenian who helped preserve the folk music of my ancestors," he confirms. "I would also like to be recognized for developing a manner of playing rooted in that tradition but with my own style and a flare for current day."

"I've done my best to pass the baton forward by teaching oud to some aspiring, very talented players," he resumed. "It has given me great pleasure to see their progress over the years."



One of the works by Barry M. Martasian on exhibit at the Armenian Museum of America

Exhibit of Works by Barry Martasian At Armenian Museum

WATERTOWN – On Sunday, November 29, at 2 p.m., the Armenian Museum of America will host the opening for a new exhibition, "Full Circle: The Art of Barry M Martasian." The opening will include a reception held in the Adele & Haig Der Manuelian Galleries on the third floor of the Armenian Museum of America (ALMA). The event is free and open to the public, and light refreshments will be served at the reception.

Born in Providence, RI, in February of 1948, Martasian credits his parents for nurturing his creative side, not only with constant support, but with handing him his first camera and job in image-making. After spending four years in the Navy, Martasian attended Rhode Island College to study studio art with a concentration in photography. Throughout his career, he has been inspired and influenced by expressionist, abstract and graffiti art, and he believes that his work, like his children, must stand and live for themselves.

In the 1980s, Martasian became interested in graffiti for the first time and now sees it as the modern form of cave paintings, which he believes are the result of the innate human desire to leave a visual mark on the world.

The exhibit will remain on display at the museum until January 17. For hours, visit www.armenianmuseum.org

Greater Worcester Armenian Chorale and Holy Trinity Church Present Christmas Concert

WORCESTER – The Greater Worcester Armenian Chorale and Holy Trinity Church of Worcester present a Christmas concert featuring traditional music in Armenian and English, with guest soloist Knarik Nerkararyan, on Sunday, December 6, at 1:30 p.m., at Holy Trinity, 635 Grove St.

Led by artistic director and conductor Konstantin Petrossian, the program features traditional Christmas music in Armenian and in English.

Nerkararyan is an Armenian operatic soprano who graduated with honors from the Komitas Yerevan State Conservatory in Armenia. During 2003 and 2004 she participated in the International Christian Music Festival SOZO in Baja, Hungary, introducing large audiences to Armenian medieval spiritual music. In 2006 she received a scholarship to continue her studies in the United States and in 2008 earned her degree in vocal performance from Azusa Pacific University in California and won second prize at the Los Angeles International Liszt Competition for Vocalists and is the winner of the 2010 Concerto Competition at Azusa Pacific University and the 2011 American Educators of Italian Origin United 41st Annual Opera Auditions.

She was selected as a resident artist in the Riverside, Calif. Lyric Opera and in 2011 performed the role of Mimi in "La Boheme" with the Repertory Opera Company. She performed scenes from "The Abduction from the Seraglio" as Konstanze and "Lucia Di Lammermoor" as Lucia with the Intimate Opera Company. Among her other operatic



Knarik Nerkararyan

roles are Fiordiligi in "Cosi Fan Tutte," Sister Angelica in "Sister Angelica," the Mother in "Amahl And The Night Visitors," Tatiana in "Eugene Onegin," Kupava in the US premiere of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera "The Snow Maiden," and Zemfira in Rachmaninoff's opera "Aleko."

Admission is free. There will be a fellowship before the concert, starting at 12:30 p.m.

E-Mail Charles Der Kazarian ckdkwmc@verizon.net for tickets.



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ARTS & LIVING

O'Brien on Bringing Conan to Armenia, Meeting Syrian Refugees

CONAN, from page 10

just became a natural, "Let's go to Armenia." The episode begins with me going to her parents. There's a massive community here in Los Angeles, in Glendale.

CO: Yeah, there are pockets everywhere. We decided we'll start the episode by going to her parents' house, and me expressing concern that Sona is losing touch with her Armenian roots. I talk to her grandparents and parents, and they have a wish list of things they would like to have happen in Armenia. We accomplished most of what we set out to do.

John Horn: In the preview material, a lot of the gags had what I'd call a Western bias – kind of poking fun at Armenian culture. The pig or cow feet in a market, for example, or when you're commenting on the safety precautions, or lack thereof, at an Armenian car rally. But I'd suspect there was a little more to your visit than poking fun in that way.

CO: Oh, no. A lot of the laughs are at my expense, sort of in the flavor of the Cuban episode. When I travel somewhere, obviously, there's an "idiot abroad" quality. So, yes, I'm a Westerner, and I'm going to this other culture, and I have my biases, but that melts away pretty quickly. There are moments that are extremely powerful, that were unlike anything in the Cuba episode. My favorite moments are the ones where you see me really interacting with the people – where they're laughing at my attempts to be Armenian. One of my favorite moments is when I appear in an Armenian soap opera, playing a mobster, a tough guy, and I actually have a line in Armenian. That is one of my favorite things I've ever done. It's absolutely absurd. There was a Russian director who spoke no English who talked to me at length about my emotional journey, even though I have one line. He spoke to me, seriously, for ten minutes. "You see in your victim yourself; you also see a reflection of what you could have been had your life been different. Your soul feels old even though your mind is still young." I just want to know: Where's my mark, and what do I say?

JH: Sona, what did you take away from this trip? Because it's a little more personal for you to go back to your homeland.

SM: I grew up in Los Angeles, in a really rich Armenian community. I've learned a lot about my community throughout my life – the language, the culture, the history. Then to see these things in person was really cathartic. It was emotional, beautiful. Going under these circumstances, too, was great. To go with someone like Conan who's willing to learn a lot about the culture. The writers did a lot of research before we went. It was, for me, a very profound trip.

JH: This is hardly a staple of comedy, but there was a horrible genocide in Armenia around World War I. As many as a million and a half people were killed. Is that part of what you'll be reporting back on when you air this segment?

CO: Yes. It is part of the show. I had some people asking me before we went, what about the genocide? "How do you get around that?" I said, "You don't get around that." This idea that everything is supposed to be funny is mistaken. When we go to these cultures, I go and I try to find common ground, and a lot of that is through comedy. But I do have a section I'm immensely proud of where that is the focus of the show. What's interesting to me is when you show it to people, they don't see a disconnect. They don't see, "Wait, this part is amusing and warm and fun, and that part's silly, and then there you are with kids and that's sweet – but then that part is very somber." They don't see a disconnect. People are willing to take it all in as a whole. I am enormously proud of the episode where that is the exclusive focus of the program for the whole act.

JH: But that raises a kind of bigger question: Late-night hosts historically comment on or make jokes about what's happening in the rest of the world, rather than actually visiting that part of the world and engaging in it. Do you think there's a larger role that you and people like you can play in getting out in the world and bringing it back to a larger audience?

CO: Two things have happened: The world has gotten a lot smaller than it was even 20 years ago. The globe is shrinking; we're all in each other's pockets. I was just in Qatar. I went with the First Lady to do a show at the air base there.

And I flew there, did the show, and came back. I was in a completely other part of the world, and I was back doing shows on Monday. That's how close we are to everything. That's how much the globe has shrunk. At the same time, while that's happened, I grew up in a world where there used to be one talk show – Johnny Carson – and there are now 650 talk shows.

And so, yes. I don't think it's a responsibility, but I look at it like an opportunity. For me, it just fits well. I love going to different places. I actually think I'm funnier when I have less control – when I jump into situations and cultures where I'm completely unfamiliar. You get really human moments. People like to see me thrown curveballs left and right and not really know what I'm doing. My favorite moments are with these people who speak a different language, and who don't know who I am, and if I can get them to laugh – and, yes, they're laughing at me, but that's extraordinarily satisfying. At the end of the day – between Cuba and this show – you do feel like it's this weird form of diplomacy now, where if you do it right, you can actually make connections with people.

We did a segment on our show last night – we do a segment called "Fan Corrections." A fan sent in a commentary where he thought he caught us making a mistake. He's from Iran, and he watches us on YouTube. I absolutely love that there's a kid in Tehran who's laughing at my nonsense, and then we responded to him on the show. It feels like a gear I didn't even know was possible. I've been doing this for 22

years. To be having the most fun that I've had in late night here on my 23rd season on the air is pretty extraordinary. And it's mostly because of these travel shows.

There's a part of this episode that was really touching to me. I'm in Armenia, in Yerevan. I'm told there are a bunch of fans waiting for me outside, and I'm thinking, Armenian fans? That's interesting. I go outside – they're all Syrian refugees. There were about seven or eight teenagers. They fled to Armenia and took shelter there a couple of years ago when things really got rough. It's heart-breaking. They could not be smarter, funnier, nicer, sharper. They know the show from YouTube. They were citing certain bits. They were so happy

to see me that we wound up going out to the Village Square and just dancing around because there was some sort of disco celebration going on in Republic Square in Yerevan. I remembered, I called my wife – it was an 11-hour time difference, but I said, that was one of

the great experiences of my life. Connecting with these Syrian refugees who liked the show on YouTube. They never get to see someone they know from YouTube, especially from the West – and then they're with him. In those moments, I'm so grateful for the Internet. It's so incredible that I can have a connection with



Conan O'Brien and Sona Movsesian in Armenia

people from Syria who are living in Armenia and they just like some bits I do on the show, and we actually meet, and they get to be on the show. That's magical to me.

(This interview has been edited and condensed.)






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ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

NOVEMBER 29 — Full Circle: The Art of Barry M. Martasian, exhibition opening reception, 2 to 4 p.m., The Armenian Museum of America, the Adele & Haig Der Manuelian Galleries (3rd Floor). Watertown. Martasian's art is heavily influenced by graffiti, which he sees as the result of the innate human desire to leave a visual mark on the world. On view through January 17. Light refreshments will be served. Free and open to the public.

DECEMBER 1 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association, the Armenian Mirror-Spectator and Facing History and Ourselves are presenting a talk by Peter Balakian on the classic film "America America" written and directed by Elia Kazan. The film is about a young Anatolian Greek man from the provinces who loses his family fortune on his way to Constantinople and is dreaming of going to America. 7 p.m. Balakian will also sign copies of his two recent books, *Ozone Journal* and *Vise and Shadow: Essays on the Lyric Imagination, Poetry, Art, and Culture*. At the Armenian Museum of America, together with the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

DECEMBER 3 — Richard Hovannisian, "The First Republic of Armenia and Its Importance Today," at First Armenian Church, 380 Concord Ave., Belmont. 7:30 p.m. Presented by NAASR and co-sponsored by Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian National Committee of America-Eastern Mass., Hamazkayin Armenian Cultural and Education Society, and First Armenian Church. Contact NAASR at 617-489-1610 or hq@naasr.org for more information.

DECEMBER 4 and 5 — Trinity Christmas Bazaar, Friday, 12-9 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Featuring delicious Armenian dinners, a la carte menu and take-out meals; booths and vendors — perfect for doing your Christmas shopping; Armenian gourmet foods, delicacies and pastries; raffles, and more. Activities for Children, Peter Adamian Hall: Friday, 7-9 p.m., All Aboard "The Polar Express" Pajama Party, recommended for children ages 6 and older; Saturday, 10:45-11:30 a.m., The Magic and Juggling of Robert Clarke, aka "LuckyBob," for "children of all ages." For further information, contact the church office at 617.354.0632, or log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/111/.

DECEMBER 5 — Lowell ARF "Aharonian" Gomideh 120th anniversary celebration, 6:30 pm, Kazanjian Memorial Pavilion, Sts. Vartanantz Church, 180 Old Westford Road, Chelmsford; dinner and program; Armenian National Committee Freedom Awards to James Milinazzo, former Lowell mayor; Daniel Varoujan Hejinian, noted artist; David Boyajian, journalist/Armenian activist; Community Service Awards



Peter Balakian will speak about the classic film by Elia Kazan, "America America," on Tuesday, December 1, at a program jointly sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association, the Armenian Mirror-Spectator and Facing History and Ourselves, Armenian Museum of America, Watertown, at 7 p.m. He will also sign copies of his two new books.

to Kathy Cryan-Hicks, Chelmsford Public Library; The Lowell Sun newspaper; Jennifer Doaks, Chelmsford High instructor; musical oud performance by Datev Gevorgian; donation, \$50 adults, \$15 students; reservations, Armen Jeknavorian, (978) 256-2538 or armenj@comcast.net.

DECEMBER 6 — The Greater Worcester Armenian Chorale presents a special Christmas Concert led by Artistic Director and Conductor Konstantin Petrossian, Sunday, 1:30 pm, with a fellowship at 12:30 p.m., at Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, 635 Grove St., Worcester. Admission is free. Soprano Knarik Nerkararyan is the guest soloist. For additional information call 508-963-2076.

DECEMBER 7 — Aram Arkun, Historian and Executive Director of Tekeyan Cultural Association and Assistant Editor of the Armenian Mirror Spectator will be the speaker at the St. James Men's Club. Topic will be "Zeytun: The Armenian Eagles' Nest." Losh Kebab and

Kheyma Dinner Social Hour (mezza) 6:15 p.m. Dinner 7 p.m. \$14 per person. St. James Armenian Church Charles Mosesian Cultural & Youth Center - Keljik Hall 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. Ladies welcome.

DECEMBER 10 — Christmas Open House, 6-11 p.m., with talk at 7:30 by Christina Maranci, "Vigilant Powers: Three Churches of Early Medieval Armenia," at NAASR, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont. Contact NAASR at 617-489-1610 or hq@naasr.org for more information. 20% off all on-site purchases.

DECEMBER 13 — St. James 84th Anniversary Name Day Celebration & Banquet Honoring Raffi & Carol Yeghiayan, Parishioners of the Year. Save the Date, details to follow. St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown.

DECEMBER 13 — Christmas Holiday Concert — Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra, 7 p.m., Church Sanctuary, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Founded by the Very Rev. Fr. Oshagan Minassian (1930-2008), and now under the direction of Composer Konstantin Petrossian, Music Director and Conductor, the concert will feature the Vocal Quartet from the Bostonians, and Knarik Nerkararyan, Soprano. The program will consist of a variety of traditional Armenian and Western sacred and holiday music. The public is warmly invited to attend this complimentary concert which is a gift to the community. For further information, contact the Holy Trinity Church office, 617.354.0632, or email office@htaac.org.

DECEMBER 31 — St. James 2016 New Year's Eve Celebration. Entertainment by Arthur Apkarian and Band from Montreal. Save the date, details to follow. St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown.

RHODE ISLAND

DECEMBER 5 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church in Providence presents "Silent Night, Holy Night" Christmas Concert featuring The Armenian Chorale of RI, with special performances by Joanne Mouradjian, Gohar Manjelian, Debra Pjojian and Junior Choir - Saturday, 6:30 p.m. in the Church Sanctuary. Light refreshments following concert - Donation \$10. Those attending the Christmas Concert will receive \$10 off the admission to the ACYOA dance !!

DECEMBER 5 — ACYOA Annual Holiday Kef, Saturday, at 8:30 p.m. in the Egavian Cultural Center Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church. Adults \$25, Students, \$15 (ID required). Mezze & Cash Bar. Featuring Mal Barsamian (Clarinet); Jason Naroian (Dumbeg), m Ken Kalajian (Guitar), Brian Ansbikian (Oud), David Hoplamazian (Violin). Reservations and information, contact Christina (401-256-2686) or Greta (401-556-0771). If you attend the Cultural Committee's Christmas Concert, you will receive \$10 off of the cost of the dance!

RMCC Library Receives Armenian Genocide Reference Guide

KINGSTON, Ontario, Canada — Emeritus Professor Alan Whitehorn (center) retired recently after more than 30 years of teaching in the Department of Political Science at the Royal Military College of Canada (RMCC), but he continues to work for human rights and a better world. In recognition of his commitment to humanity, his mentorship, and his scholarship, a group of his former students have donated funds to contribute copies of his latest book to libraries where it will make a difference.

David Last, left, former student of Alan's who is now an associate professor in the department, presented Head Librarian Sarah Toomey on the right with *The Armenian Genocide: The Essential Reference Guide* (ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, 2015). Whitehorn was on hand at the presentation. "It has been an honor to teach at RMCC and work with such wonderful colleagues and friends. I have many fond memories, particularly of the former students. It was a privilege to teach them, but also to learn from them, both at the time and more recently. I was delighted when David and some of his classmates from the different decades chose to raise some funds for copies of my most recent book on genocide."

RMCC Principal Dr. Harry Kowal expressed his appreciation to Whitehorn. "I would like to take this opportunity to thank you sincerely for all your great work and for the tremendous contributions you have made to the College through your time here and in retirement. This story is testament to your compassion and dedication and it is clear to me that you have made such a positive impression on so many."



DENISE ZORETICH PHOTO



COMMENTARY

Mirror Spectator



Established 1932
An ADL Publication

EDITOR
Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR
Marc Mgrditchian

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:
Edmond Azadian

CONTRIBUTORS:

Florence Avakian, Dr. Haroutium Arzumian, 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 Hovsepien

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

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COMMENTARY

Armenia at a Legislative Crossroad

By Edmond Y. Azadian

When President Obama launched his healthcare reform bill, he triggered a nationwide controversy. The most vocal opponents of the bill took their position in order to express their opposition to the president rather than the content of the bill. Therefore, any legislative move by the president seemed toxic.

To dramatize the controversy, political satirist Jon Stuart, the former host of Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" conducted a survey, asking people whether they favored Obamacare or Affordable Healthcare. Lo and behold, the latter turned out to be the winner. The farce, of course, is that the people were choosing the very same bill presented under two different labels.

If that degree of ignorance is tolerated in the most democratic country in the world, some latitude can be allowed for the electorate in Armenia, which is facing a referendum on constitutional reforms on December 6.

As of this writing, polls taken in Armenia indicate that 50 percent of the voting public is undecided. That may be the result of a variety of reasons: either the constitutional reforms have not been properly explained to the voting public or the voters are overwhelmed by the pressing demands of their livelihood — because of rampant poverty — or there is general apathy towards any political issues.

But since the constitution will determine the course of their daily lives in the future, it must be taken seriously so that the public does not miss this opportunity to make its position heard.

As complicated as those amendments may be, there are certain salient topics which are not beyond the comprehension of the ordinary citizen. One of those issues is the transformation of the government from a presidential democracy to a parliamentary system. Under the current system, the president is elected by the people and can only serve two five-year terms. The president retains single-handedly all power. In the parliamentary system, however, the president will be elected by the National Assembly or parliament, for a one term of seven years and he is no longer the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. That power will be conferred upon the prime minister. The presidency will become a mostly ceremonial post and the president will be accountable to the parliament.

The number of seats in the parliament will be reduced from 131 to 101 and political parties will compete to be elected to the parliament, rather than individuals campaigning for seats.



Under the current system, a proportion of the parliament is elected from the list of individual candidates and another group through party slates.

The government is, of course, promoting a yes vote, whereas the opposition is spearheading the no campaign.

The main argument of the opposition is that through the proposed amendments, President Serge Sargisian is planning to perpetuate his own rule. Armenia has in place a two-term limit for the president, thus Sargisian, who has run twice, cannot do so anymore. He has, incidentally, ruled out seeking the position of prime minister if the changes are adopted.

The viewpoint of the opposition gains some validity when we dissect Armenia's political spectrum.

As the head of the Republican Party, Sargisian may indeed wield some influence because it is the public's opinion that the Republican Party will continue to dominate the parliament for the foreseeable future.

But that cannot last forever, as it has been proven time and time again Armenia's recent history shows that political parties have an ephemeral nature and they are anchored on oligarchs or powerful individuals rather than a set of beliefs or principles.

A case in point is Gagik Zaruikian's Prosperous Armenia Party, which experienced a dramatic growth and importance in Armenia's power structures, only to be pulverized when his business interests were threatened. As of now, it has become a marginal party hanging on to the coattails of the Republican Party.

Therefore, the transformation into a parliamentary system will mean progress in democracy, as the political parties mature and stand on their own, advocating their particular political philosophies or maintaining a platform.

But because Armenia has not reached that level of political sophistication yet, the road towards a more democratic system should not be blocked at this stage.

The constitution already underwent one level of transformation during Robert Kocharian's administration in 2005, adopting the semi-presidential system.

The proposed constitutional reforms were launched in 2013 with the input of the experiences of more advanced democracies. The recommendations of the Venice Council have also been integrated in the proposed amendments. The Venice Council, which was created under the aegis of the Council of Europe, operates under the paradigm of "democracy through law."

Former President Kocharian is opposing the constitutional changes, because, he insists, "the proposed amendments fail to provide the true 'decentralization' which is one of the purported aims of the reform."

While Kocharian opposes the reforms based on principal, the opposition parties are promoting the "no" vote, on the principal of opposing every directive from the government.

The Armenian National Congress, headed by former president, Levon Ter-Petrosian, held its own rally to oppose the referendum.

Heritage Party founder Raffi Hovannisian and Founding Parliament headed by Jirair Sefilyan, are conducting their own "no" campaign.

The "no" campaign is not always based on substance; it is mostly motivated by politics, as it is revealed by the statement of one of the opposition leaders, Aram Manukyan, who recently visited Georgia, where the parliamentary system was adopted and the democratic process is experiencing its own growing pains.

"I have met members of political parties represented in the parliament, Georgia is facing serious problems today. They say it was not timely. I don't mean at all that the parliamentary model is not good; it was just a matter of expediency."

Manukyan added that he opposed the reforms because the country "is on the threshold of war."

It may sound ironic that all three traditional parties have adopted an identical position supporting the "yes" vote. The ARF, Social Democratic Hunchakyan Party and the ADL have all expressed their positions and they have been siding with the administration. The reason they support the "yes" vote does not mean they are in the pocket of the present administration. As traditional parties, which have many years of experience under their belts, they see the prospect of future developments as the other parties mature and the parliamentary system becomes truly functional then there are opportunities of power sharing. The ARF has the added incentive of favoring the referendum because it has chosen to join the ruling party in a coalition.

During the remaining short time before the referendum, the undecided voters have to make up their minds. But the government is convinced that the yes position will carry the day on December 6. Otherwise, they would not have taken the chance.

One way or another, Armenia's legislative drama will end on December 6.



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Columbia University Researchers Confirm Turkey's Links to ISIS

A team of Columbia University researchers from the United States, Europe and Turkey confirmed last week that the Turkish government has provided to ISIS: military cooperation, weapons, logistical support, financial assistance, and medical services. This detailed investigation was headed by David L. Phillips, Director of the Program on Peace-building and Rights at Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights. He had served as Senior Advisor and Foreign Affairs Expert for the US Department of State.

Here are brief excerpts from the extensive research documenting the direct links between Turkey and ISIS:

1) Turkey Supplied Military Equipment to ISIS

- An ISIS commander told the *Washington Post* on August 12, 2014: "Most of the fighters who joined us in the beginning of the war came via Turkey, and so did our equipment and supplies."

- Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, head of the Republican People's Party (CHP), disclosed on Oct. 14, 2014, documents from the Adana Office of the Prosecutor, revealing that Turkey supplied weapons to terrorist groups. He also produced transcripts of interviews with truck drivers who delivered the weapons to the terrorists.

- According to CHP Vice President Bulent Tezcan, Turkish agents drove three trucks loaded with rockets, arms, and ammunition to ISIS in Syria, on January 19, 2014.

- Cumhuriyet newspaper quoted Fuat Avni as stating that Germany and the United States had audio tapes confirming that Turkey provided financial and military aid to terrorist groups associated with Al Qaeda on Oct. 12, 2014.

- Documents made public on Sept. 27, 2014, revealed that Saudi Prince Bandar Bin Sultan financed the transportation of arms to ISIS through Turkey.

2) Turkey Provided Logistical Assistance to ISIS Fighters

- According to a June 13, 2014 article in *Radikal* newspaper, Turkish Interior Minister Muammer Guler issued the following directive: "Hatay is a strategic location for the Mujahidin crossing from within our borders to Syria.

Logistical support for Islamist groups will be increased, and their training, hospital care, and safe passage will mostly take place in Hatay."

- The *Daily Mail* reported on August 25, 2014 that many foreign militants joined ISIS in Syria and Iraq after traveling through Turkey.

- Britain's Sky News obtained documents showing that the Turkish government stamped passports of foreign militants seeking to cross the Turkish border into Syria to join ISIS.

- A senior Egyptian official indicated on Oct. 9, 2014 that Turkish intelligence is passing to ISIS satellite imagery and other data.

3) Turkey Trained ISIS Fighters

- CNN Turk reported on July 29, 2014 that in the heart of Istanbul, places like Duzce and Adapazari have become gathering spots for terrorists.

- Turks who joined an ISIS affiliate were shown on July 28, 2014, at a public gathering in Istanbul.

- A video showed an ISIS affiliate holding a prayer-gathering in Omerli, a district of Istanbul.

- According to Jordanian Intelligence, Turkey trained ISIS militants for special operations.

4) Turkey Extended Medical Care to ISIS Fighters

- An ISIS commander told the *Washington Post* on August 12, 2014, "We used to have some fighters – even high-level members of the Islamic State – getting treated in Turkish hospitals."

- On Oct. 12, 2014, *Taraf* newspaper reported that Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat, a founder of President Erdogan's ruling party (AKP), divulged that Turkey supported terrorist groups and still supports them and treats them in its hospitals.

5) Turkey Supported ISIS Financially Through Purchase of Oil

- On Sept. 13, 2014, the *New York Times* reported on the Obama administration's efforts to pressure Turkey to crack down on the extensive network of oil sold by ISIS.

- Fehim Tastekin wrote in *Radikal* on Sept. 13, 2014 about illegal pipelines transporting oil from Syria to Turkey.

6) Turkey Assisted ISIS Recruitment

- Kılıçdaroglu announced on Oct. 14, 2014 that ISIS offices in Istanbul and Gaziantep are recruiting fighters. On Oct. 10, 2014, the Mufti of Konya stated that 100 men from his city had joined ISIS four days ago.

- OdaTV reported that Takva Haber served as a propaganda outlet for ISIS to recruit Turkish-speaking men in Turkey and Germany.

- Minister of Sports, Suat Kilic, an AKP member, visited Salafi Jihadists who are ISIS supporters in Germany. These Jihadists recruit supporters by distributing free copies of the

Quran and raising funds to sponsor suicide attacks in Syria and Iraq.

- OdaTV released a video showing ISIS militants riding a bus in Istanbul.

7) Turkish Forces Are Fighting Alongside ISIS

- American investigative journalist Seymour Hersh asserted in the *London Review of Books* that "Prime Minister Recep Erdogan was known to be supporting the al-Nusra Front, a Jihadist faction among the rebel opposition, as well as other Islamist rebel groups."

- On Sept. 20, 2014, Demir Celik, a Member of Parliament representing the People's Democratic Party (HDP), stated that Turkish Special Forces had joined ISIS in the battlefield.

8) Turkey Helped ISIS in Battle for Kobani

- Anwar Muslim, Mayor of Kobani, revealed on Sept. 19, 2014 that trains full of Turkish forces and ammunition were delivered to ISIS. On September 30, 2014, a CHP delegation visited Kobani, where locals declared that everything from the clothes of ISIS militants to their guns comes from Turkey.

- A Nuhaber video showed on Sept. 25, 2014 Turkish military convoys, carrying tanks and ammunition, moving freely under ISIS flags in the Jarablus region of Syria and the Karkamis border crossing.

- Salih Muslim, PYD leader of Kurdish fighters, reported that 120 militants had crossed into Syria from Turkey on Oct. 20-24, 2014.

- According to an op-ed written by a YPG Kurdish commander in the *New York Times* on Oct. 29, 2014, Turkey regularly allows ISIS militants and their equipment to pass freely over its border.

- Diken reported on Oct. 1, 2014: "ISIS fighters crossed the border from Turkey into Syria in full view of Turkish soldiers."

9) Turkey and ISIS Share a Worldview

- RT reported on Oct. 3, 2014 on Vice President Joe Biden's remarks detailing Turkish support to ISIS.

- Hurriyet newspaper quoted a Turkish civil servant on Sept. 26, 2014: "I was shocked to hear words of admiration for ISIL from some high-level civil servants."

- An AKP council member posted on his Facebook page: "Thankfully ISIS exists.... May you never run out of ammunition...."

- Erdogan's son Bilal and Turkish officials met with ISIS fighters, according to Sariyer Gozlem.

It is absolutely unacceptable that while ISIS is committing mass murder in Paris and other European cities, its NATO "ally," Turkey, is continuing to aid and arm these terrorists. It is high time that Turkey is expelled from NATO and its leaders are indicted and brought to justice for their role in these heinous crimes.

Dissecting Armenia's Constitutional Reform Debate

By Raffi Elliot

On the December 6, Armenians are expected to vote in a referendum to amend the country's constitution. A core part of the proposed to voters is whether Armenia should shift from a presidential system of government to a parliamentary one.

The amendments, which had been drafted by the Specialized Commission on Constitutional Reforms in late August, had been submitted to the Republican Party-dominated National Assembly for a vote, which passed with 104 votes in favor, 10 against and three abstentions on October 5.

This vote was heavily criticized as being little more than rubber stamping, given the Republican Party's holding of a parliamentary majority, with 70 seats out of 131. The Republican Party's motion was also supported the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Tashnagsoutiun), which had long called for a parliamentary system, and had previously been a coalition partner with the Republicans until the 2009 Reconciliation Protocol vote, as well as the Prosperous Armenia Party (PAP), which despite initially campaigning against the reforms, was reined in after a controversial showdown between the president and the party's former billionaire leader, Gagik Tsarukyan.

The major opponents the vote were the Armenian National Congress, headed by Armenia's first president, Levon Ter-Petrosian; first foreign minister, and onetime presidential hopeful Raffi Hovannisian's Heritage Party, and the former governing partner-turned-opposition

Rule of Law Party.

Armenia adopted its first independent constitution in 1995, establishing the country as an independent, democratic and sovereign state, replacing the outdated 1978 Soviet-era constitution. The constitution was further amended in 2005 to allow for dual citizenship for ethnic Armenians abroad, as well as to further comply with Armenia's commitments to the Council of Europe, including new provisions for human rights. Another major component of this amendment was to transform Armenia from a presidential republic to a semi-presidential system, with some presidential powers being transferred to the National Assembly.

These reforms proved controversial, with opponents claiming that the Kocharian government at the time was not legitimate, and therefore, could not implement these changes. The voting process was also heavily criticized by international organizations citing large-scale voting irregularities.

The amendments were nevertheless commended by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, a constitutional body composed of independent experts, for strengthening Armenia's democracy and human rights record.

While adopting a parliamentary form of government, the constitutional amendments would also abolish presidential elections, with future presidents being elected by parliament for seven-year terms. The position of President would no longer be commander-in-chief, with that role being passed on to the prime minister. Furthermore, the number of seats in the National Assembly would be reduced from 131 to 101. These proposed amendments are being made in tandem with increased regional self-governance.

The Republican-dominated government argues that this new round of constitutional changes is necessary, since, as a democratizing country, Armenia is rapidly maturing and correspondingly needs to update its constitution to keep pace. Furthermore, transferring of power to parliament would help strengthen the country's democratic traditions by turning this legislative chamber into a real decision-making body.

The government has likewise argued that decentralization would also help strengthen democratic institutions across the country by allowing important decisions to take place on a local level.

These reforms are not without controversy, however, as a number of opposition groups, including the Liberal-leaning Heritage Party, the Armenian National Congress, and the extra-parliamentary opposition group, Founding Parliament, headed by Lebanese-born former fedayi, Jirayr Sefilian have vowed to oppose them. Sefilyan even went so far as to accuse the government of taking inspiration from the Communist Party, declaring that "Serge Sargisian dreams of becoming secretary of the Central Committee." The president, however, has declared that he would not seek to remain in a political role once his final term as president ends.

They argue that the government does not enjoy the legitimacy required to make these changes, and that, far from facilitating the democratic process, they are designed to guarantee perpetual rule by the Republican Party of Armenia through a majoritarian process. ANC member Vahagn Khachatryan, was quoted as saying: "This [new] Constitution will not solve our problems, but further complicate them. This Constitution will be in the interests of nei-

ther the State nor the citizens."

Critics of the opponents, however, argue that if the opposition doesn't believe in the legitimacy of the electoral process, or the government's democratic credentials, preserving the current constitution would be maintaining the status quo at best, or making it worse. If President Sargisian were truly intending to stay in power through illegal means, they argue, the current constitution wouldn't stop him. Others point out that a parliamentary system of government will allow a better organized and united opposition to have a louder voice in decision-making, and that such an opportunity should be capitalized on.

Other concerns with the first draft proposal include the possibility of a runoff election between the two largest factions in order to determine government portfolios, and the possibility of the right to marriage and freedom of spouses to be interpreted as a ban on non-traditional unions. These concerns were somewhat appeased in the second draft, which removed the requirement for runoff elections, while still allowing them.

The Venice Commission, which had previously helped the Armenian government draft the 2005 constitution, and has been advising Armenia's Specialized Commission on Constitutional Reforms in the 2015 constitutional amendments had previously noted some discrepancies in the first draft, but was satisfied with the amendments in the second draft, concluding, despite a number of misgivings, "Thanks to an open dialogue with the Venice Commission, important improvements have been made on a text which was already a very good basis for the constitutional reform."

see CONSTITUTION, page 16



Turkey Threatens Paraguay over Armenian Genocide Recognition

ASUNCION, Paraguay (Prensa Armenia) – Turkey suspended bilateral relations with Paraguay and threatened to boycott trade ties with the country after the Senate unanimously approved on October 29 an official recognition (Statement N° 101/15) of the Armenian Genocide.

Turkey's ambassador to Argentina, Taner Karakas, concurring in Paraguay and Uruguay, met with Senator Victor Bogado of the ruling Colorado Party, who is Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Affairs. According to local reports, Karakas expressed "disagreement and concern over the declaration."

After that meeting, Bogado said on November 19 that he would present "an alternative project as a way of rectifying the position of the Senate." "Turkey was deeply concerned about the term "genocide," given that this happened before the creation of the same Turkish state," said Bogado.

Bogado also said that "the Senate declaration is nonbinding with the government's position."

Alfonso Tabakian, director of the Armenian National

Committee of South America, said "the Turkish state, through its ambassador to Paraguay, exerted unprecedented pressure on Paraguay, brutally exposing the authoritarianism of the government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan."

On November 24, politician Rafael Filizzola Serra published in the ABC newspaper an article titled "The Armenian Genocide and our dignity as a sovereign country," in which he stressed that the decision of the Senate of Paraguay was "a sovereign decision consistent with the history of our country."

"The unfortunate thing is that our diplomacy, rather than defending the sovereign authority of the Senate to speak, has taken steps to reverse the parliamentary statement," he added. "Our diplomacy shows a supine ignorance of the current international position on the Armenian Genocide and historical facts found by the intellectual community."

"The dignity of a country that suffered the extermination and that has a moral obligation to speak out against acts like this and many others, to ever happen again. And for justice,

because crimes against humanity must not only be reported but also repaired. Armenia deserves a fair compensation for everything it suffered, as well as our country."

"I sincerely hope that Paraguay will not kneel once again to pressure and blackmail, and that our diplomacy is worthy of a sovereign country," concluded Serra.

Paraguay's Senate unanimously passed a resolution on October 29, recognizing and condemning the Armenian Genocide.

This year, there was a new wave of recognitions from various congresses and international bodies in South America: the province of Misiones, Argentina, the Latin American Parliament, the State of Rio de Janeiro, the Federal Senate of Brazil, the Chamber of Deputies of Chile and also the Argentine Pope Francis.

Other South American states, including Bolivia, Venezuela, Uruguay and other countries, regions and cities have recognized the Armenian Genocide.

Turkish TV Fires Journalist of Armenian Descent

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) – A Bugun TV journalist of Armenian descent, Hayko Bagdat was fired under court-approved supervisory actions on November 18, Yerkir.am reports.

The journalist confirmed the news with a tweet.

Several months ago, Bagdat filed a lawsuit against Ankara Mayor Melih Gokcek.

In March, Gokcek made what some see as a verbal attack on Cem Özdemir, the co-chairman of the Green Party in Germany, writing on Twitter: "I am asking Özdemir just out of

In response to Gokcek's tweets, Bagdat posted several tweets mocking Gokcek's question. "Reply Cem Özdemir! ... You are said to be an Armenian," posted Bagdat.

In his following tweets, Bagdat suggested that Gokcek is Armenian. "I formally say you are an Armenian. In my opinion, you should sue me @06melihgokcek," Bagdat wrote.

"The capital city [Ankara] was handed over to an Armenian! What a shame! I wait for you to come to church on Sunday @06melihgokcek. We are all grieving..." wrote Bagdat.

After these tweets, Gokcek first filed a crimi-

nal complaint against Bagdat and then filed a lawsuit demanding compensation of TL 10,000 for psychological damages, arguing that Bagdat's remarks defining him as an Armenian were insulting and libelous, and made with the intention of harming Gokcek's reputation.

Bagdat also used a hashtag #melihGokcek ermeniyimis" (Melih Gokcek turns out to be Armenian), which Gokcek referenced in his lawsuit. In response, Bagdat announced the lawsuit on Twitter, saying: "Turns out Melih Gokcek sued me demanding TL 10,000 for calling him Armenian. We are going to have so much fun."

After that case was launched, Bagdat filed a counterclaim against Gokcek based on the content of Gokcek's claims against Bagdat, stressing that the word "Armenian" had been used to defame and insult him, amounting to an "explicit example of an attack on his rights and honor."



Hayko Bagdat

curiosity... Please give me a response Cem Özdemir... Are you of Armenian origin?"

Gokcek's tweets came after Özdemir called on Turkey to recognize the killings of Armenians during the last years of the Ottoman Empire as Genocide.

nal complaint against Bagdat and then filed a lawsuit demanding compensation of TL 10,000 for psychological damages, arguing that Bagdat's remarks defining him as an Armenian were insulting and libelous, and made with the intention of harming Gokcek's reputation.

Armenian Genocide Documents from Vatican Archives Published in 7-Volume Set

VATICAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – On November 21, presentation of unique series of seven-volume set of books by Father Georges-Henri Ruysen was held in the Pontifical Oriental Institute of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. The event was organized by the Embassy of Armenia in the Holy See.

Rector of the Pontifical Oriental Institute David Nazar, founder of the Community of Sant'Egidio Andrea Riccardi, president of the Community of Sant'Egidio Marco Impagliazzo, clergymen from the Armenian Apostolic and Catholic churches, representatives of public and political sector, members of Armenian community in Italy attended the event.

The publication presents all the documents on the Armenian Genocide from the period of the Hamidian massacres till the post-Genocide years

of Kemalist rule, which were preserved in the Vatican closed archives, and gives a full picture of all the stages of this crime, from planning to implementation of the genocide.

During his speech Ambassador of Armenia to the Holy See Mikael Minasyan particularly stressed the fact that this seven-volume set is a significant achievement for Genocide studies and is a history which also that of the Turks. "The work by Father Ruysen helps us to trace back the facts. It helps us to read the past thus learning the lessons for the future."

At the event Minasyan presented to Father Georges-Henri Ruysen the Order of Honor awarded by the President of Armenia for the development of the Armenian studies and for his significant contribution to dissemination of spiritual values.

Dissecting Armenia's Constitutional Reform Debate

CONSTITUTION, from page 15

The commission did, however, note a number of minor concerns, such as the prohibition of forming new factions within parliament during parliamentary mandates.

Yerevan-based Human Rights lawyer Gabriel Armas-Cardona believes that from a strictly legal perspective, Armenia's constitutional amendments "are acceptable, and maybe even respectable." Despite the drafting process having been less than transparent, he believes that this didn't significantly harm the actual result, as the government clearly took the advice of international experts into account. The specific issues which he sees in the new draft are more than made up for in the positive changes, which bring it more in line with other European constitutions.

Armas-Cardona cautions, however, that despite the quality of this new constitution, the real challenge lies in the way it is applied. "A constitution needs codes to implement it." These new amendments will necessitate rewriting a great number of codes, including the electoral code. He predicts that in the event of a 'Yes' vote on December 6, the process of reform won't be easy, and "A good end result will require constant oversight by the people and civil society."

With the referendum date fast approaching, the 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns are in full swing, and already, opposition figures have accused the government of using state resources to sway the voting in its favour, citing inflated voter lists, but according to most figures, with

only weeks to go, more than half the population is still undecided. The NO side has been fraught with obstacles, including a fractured campaign, and a lack of a clear message. They have been running two separate campaigns, with separate rallies set for December 1 and December 3. The first being organized by the ANC, while the second being jointly promoted by Jirayr Sefilian group "Founding Parliament," and Raffi Hovannisian (who has been noticeably missing from the events, as he is currently in the United States for personal reasons). This, amongst many other things, has been cited by critics as a clear sign that the NO campaign isn't taking its role very seriously.

They have so far been unable to reach out to voters with more convincing arguments against the amendments beyond generic accusations of illegitimacy, and stoking fear that the government is intending to stay in power indefinitely. A social media campaign requesting that young people post photos of themselves holding signs saying no in Armenian has also done little to spur discussion on the issue. The yes side, meanwhile, has run an effective outreach campaign through social media, TV appearances and other methods.

For many, however, the real question isn't whether or not the reform proposal will pass the referendum stage, but how these reforms will be codified into law.

(Raffi Elliot is a Montreal native who is now settled in Armenia. He is a special correspondent for Abaka and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.)

Armenia President receives Dean of Fletcher School and President of Tavitian Foundation

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Armenian representatives of state bodies in studying at Fletcher Law and Diplomacy School.

Fletcher School Prof. Richard Schultz lectured further on "Armed Groups in Authoritarian States and Irregular Military Strategies" in Armenian Defense Ministry administration building.

First Deputy Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan stressed that Richard Schultz is known around the world as one of the best specialists in international security field.

The guests visited Kanayan Institute for National Strategic Studies where they were presented with briefing on the newly created National Defense Research University.