

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

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## Pashinyan, Former Security Chief Step Up War of Words

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Artur Vanetsyan, the former head of Armenia's National Security Service (NSS) forced to resign last week, have traded fresh and more bitter recriminations.

Vanetsyan hit out at Pashinyan when he announced his resignation in a statement issued on September 16. He said that the latter's "impulsive" leadership style is not good for Armenia and runs counter to the NSS "officer's honor."

Pashinyan swiftly rounded on Vanetsyan through his press secretary. His chief of staff said afterwards the former NSS chief



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, left, and National Security Service Director Artur Vanetsyan

was sacked because the prime minister was dissatisfied with his work.

Visiting the United States on Sunday, Pashinyan accused Vanetsyan of showing "disrespect for the officer's honor" by making the "statement against his commander-in-chief." "Would an officer do such a thing?" he told a news conference held in Los Angeles. "Do you know what that means? That means throwing your shoulder straps into a trash bin."

see PASHINYAN, page 2

## Pashinyan Uses Charm Offensive In Historic Los Angeles Address

**By Taleen Babayan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES – Thanking the Diaspora and encouraging closer ties between Armenia and the diaspora formed the core of the message Sunday, September 22, in Grand Park as up to 15,000 supporters gathered to witness the historic first visit of the Republic of Armenia's Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, to Los Angeles, home to the largest Armenian community outside the homeland.

Pashinyan, who has promised to lead the Republic in a new – and transparent – direction, was met with great fanfare as he addressed the enthusiastic crowd in a symbolic location on the steps of City Hall. Following a cultural performance including patriotic dances and songs, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, flanked by elected local, state and county officials, shared his



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

reflections on the momentous trip and on the strong presence of the 200,000-plus Armenian-Americans in Los Angeles and the adjacent San Fernando Valley.

In his keynote address, Pashinyan expressed his gratitude to the Armenian Diaspora for all its support to help bolster the Republic of Armenia and the role they

played in ushering in a more optimistic future for the country.

"You weren't there physically but all of us were there together in spirit during those days of protests and we felt your see VISIT, page 8



Dr. Noubar Afeyan (Leo Gozbekian photo)

## Making Immigration Great Again at Tribute to Afeyan

BOSTON – Immigrants and their unique and vital contributions to the success of the US economy since the nation's founding were the dominant themes of a program paying tribute to Dr. Noubar Afeyan, biotech innovator and philanthropist, on Wednesday, September 18, at the InterContinental Hotel.

The program also was a fundraiser for the maintenance of Boston's Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway and it did not disappoint; the roughly 500 people gathered there raised \$700,000.

Throughout the evening, the phrase "coming together on common ground" was stressed. The immigrant theme goes to the heart of the park, which has become a gathering place not only for Armenian commemorations, but also the site of the annual welcome reception for new US citizens who are sworn in at nearby Faneuil Hall, as well as other creative programs.

see TRIBUTE, page 10

## Biden, Warren, Harris, Gabbard and More Emphasize Affirmation of Armenian Genocide in Letters in Honor of Speier

WASHINGTON – The Armenian Assembly of America received letters from former Vice President and Senator Joe Biden; Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi (D-CA); Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY); Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Robert Menendez (D-NJ); California Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Kamala Harris (D-CA); Massachusetts Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Ed Markey (D-MA); the leadership of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues - Reps. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Adam Schiff (D-CA), and Peter King (R-NY); House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Raul Grijalva (D-AZ); Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA); Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA); Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-MN); Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI); Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD); and Rep. TJ Cox (D-CA) emphasizing the importance of reaffirming the United States' record on the Armenian Genocide and congratulating Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) for receiving the Assembly's Deukmejian see AFFIRMATION, page 20

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Foreign Minister Meets With OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs

NEW YORK (Armenpress) – Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, in New York on a working visit to take part in the 74th session of the UN General Assembly, on September 23 met with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairs Igor Popov of the Russian Federation, Stéphane Visconti of France, and Andrew Schofer of the United States of America, as well as Andrzej Kasprzyk, the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.

The sides touched upon the developments following the Washington meeting on June 20, the current situation of the peaceful settlement process of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and the opportunities to implement the agreements reached previously.

Mnatsakanyan and the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs exchanged views on the upcoming meeting of the Armenian and Azerbaijani FM's, as well as touched upon the upcoming actions planned in the co-chairs' calendar.

### Former Police Chief Found Dead

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Former Police Chief of Armenia Hayk Harutyunyan was found shot dead Monday, September 23, in a home in Bjni, a village in the province of Kotayk, the authorities said.

Police received an emergency call around 23:59, September 23, Investigative Committee spokesperson Naira Harutyunyan said on Facebook.

She said officers found Harutyunyan's body with a gunshot wound to the head.

A firearm and a cartridge case were found at the scene. Traces of blood were also found.

Harutyunyan was Police Chief of Armenia from 2003 to 2008. He also served as Minister of Interior before that.

From 2010 to 2014 he was the head of the Department of Corrections.

### Renowned Chemist Oganessian Receives Honor

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian on September 24 signed a decree on awarding academician Yuri Oganessian with the Order of St. Mesrop Mashtots, the President's Office told Armenpress.

The renowned academician has been awarded for the great contribution and achievements in the development of science.

The president signed the respective decree based on a request from Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Mirzoyan Participates in Eurasian Parliament Speakers Meeting

NUR SULTAN, Kazakhstan (Armenpress) – The President of the National Assembly of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan met with President of the Federal Council of Austria Karl Bader on September 24 on the sidelines of the fourth conference of the parliament speakers of the Eurasian countries.

Expressing satisfaction over the warm and active relations between the parliaments of the two countries, Bader emphasized the importance of the active efforts of the friendship groups for fostering the capacities of the parliaments.

Mirzoyan stressed the importance of the ratification of the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement by the Austrian parliament, as well as the role of Austria in launching the dialogue on visa liberalization. According to the Speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia, the two countries have potential for working together in the directions of strengthening the mechanisms of parliamentary supervision and developing of the capacities of the parliaments.

## Sarkissian Meets with Boeing Delegation

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian received the delegation of Boeing International Corporation led by Vice President Richard Muehlenbeck, on September 20.

The meeting touched upon the prospects and opportunities of Armenia's cooperation with the Corporation. The guests introduced the purpose of their visit, stating that currently they observe Armenia's aviation sector and the partnership opportunities.

President Sarkissian welcomed the delegation's visit to Armenia, expressing confidence that the government and the Corporation will form a prospective cooperation.

The meeting participants also touched upon the presidential initiatives, in particular, the Advanced Tomorrow (ATOM) initiative on development of science and technologies, and on its sidelines the cooperation opportunities with leading international technological companies, including Boeing.

## Armenian Governor to Resign Over Assault

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The governor of Armenia's southeastern Vayots Dzor province, Trdat Sargsyan, announced his resignation early on Tuesday, September 24, amid an investigation into his possible involvement in a violent dispute that left one man critically injured.

An aide to Sargsyan was arrested over the weekend on charges of assaulting an Armenian army officer during the incident that occurred in the provincial capital Yeghegnadzor. Lieutenant-Colonel Ara Mkhitaryan suffered severe injuries to his head and remains in a coma.

Mkhitaryan's relatives and friends say that he and other officers were attacked by a larger group of men that may have included Sargsyan, a claim denied by the governor.

In a statement posted on Facebook overnight, Sargsyan insisted that he was at home during the incident. "I have presented the investigating body with evidence of this fact," he wrote. "I am confident that there will be an objective investigation and the guilty will be punished."

Still, Sargsyan said he has decided to resign because he sees the need for "political ethics and political responsibility in the New Armenia." He added that his resignation will take effect immediately after the Armenian military completes large-scale war games on October 5.

"Everyone who places themselves above the law must be held accountable," human rights lawyer, Nina Karapetyants, said in this regard.

Sargsyan, 30, is a member of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party. Pashinyan and his close associates have not publicly commented on the Yeghegnadzor incident.



California's Gov. Gavin Newsom and Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan sign the agreement while watched by from left, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, California State Senator Anthony Portantino and Diaspora Commissioner Zareh Sinanyan.

# California and Armenia Sign Trade Agreement

NEW YORK – A Framework Agreement on Cooperation was signed between the Republic of Armenia and the State of California in New York on September 24 in the presence of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. The agreement was signed by Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan and California Governor Gavin Newsom. According to the agreement, Armenia and California will develop comprehensive cooperation in all areas.

Following the signing of the agreement, a meeting was held between Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and the Governor of California. The interlocutors agreed that the signing of the Framework Agreement would promote deepening of cooperation and development of Armenia-California relations.

Pashinyan noted that California is one of the centers of the Armenian-American community, as well as the most innovative US economy and state of the art technology, and Armenia is interested in further strengthening ties with one of the most populous states in the United States.

The California governor welcomed the Armenian prime minister's visit to the US, noting that the Armenians of California play a major role in the development of the state and the strengthening of Armenian-American ties. According to him, California also highlights the development of cooperation with Armenia and implementation of joint programs.



California's Gov. Gavin Newsom with Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan

The interlocutors discussed issues related to the deepening of Armenia-California trade-economic cooperation, intensification of contacts between business circles and expansion of ties. An agreement was reached to intensify bilateral discussions on taking practical

steps. Nikol Pashinyan and Gavin Newsom have also discussed cooperation in the field of forest fires, agreeing to make the exchange of experience and training more meaningful.

Pashinyan invited Newsom to visit Armenia.

## Pashinyan, Former Security Chief Step Up War of Words

PASHINYAN, from page 1

"That is disrespectful towards Armenia's armed forces," he said, likening Vanetsyan to Soviet generals who staged a failed coup d'état in August 1991.

Vanetsyan hit back at Pashinyan in equally strong terms on Monday, saying that the premier is misleading Armenians and "again not thinking about consequences of his words." "Imagine what will happen if I suddenly start speaking up without thinking about consequences," he warned in written comments to the

"Hraparak" daily.

Vanetsyan claimed that following his resignation Pashinyan has been "sending people to me to ask me to keep silent for a while so that the situation calms down." "But I can see now that he is once again breaching understandings and making incomprehensible and, in essence, shallow populist statements," he said.

"I insist with certitude: time will tell who or what will end up in a trash bin," added the 39-year-old career officer of Armenia's most powerful security service.

Pashinyan appointed Vanetsyan as NSS director two days after the Armenian parliament elected him prime minister in May 2018. Vanetsyan quickly became one of the most influential members of his entourage, overseeing a number of high-profile corruption investigations.

Pashinyan has not yet publicly explained why he decided to replace the NSS chief. His spokesman, Vladimir Karapetian, suggested last week that Vanetsyan might have secret ties to Armenia's former leadership. Vanetsyan strongly denied it.





## ARMENIA

# Armenia, Karabakh Start ‘Strategic’ War Games

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) — Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh called up thousands of reservists and put their armed forces on high alert on Tuesday at the start of “strategic” exercises aimed at simulating their joint response to external aggression.

The Armenian government formally approved

last week the official scenario of the 12-day war games which Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan said will be the most large-scale in the country’s history.

The exercises got underway early in the morning with a mock declaration of martial law by the government followed by a mass mobi-

lization and rapid troop movements.

Photographs released by Armenia’s Defense Ministry and Karabakh’s Armenian-backed army showed scores of soldiers, tanks and artillery systems leaving their military bases. They are due to simulate combat operations with live gunfire in the coming days.

Scores of reservists flocked to recruitment centers in Armenia and Karabakh in the following hours.

“Such exercises involving thousands of [reserve] personnel have never been held before,” Tonoyan told reporters in Yerevan. “I am grateful to everyone because within six hours thousands of reservists arrived at military commissariats and mobilization centers ... This was unexpected even for me.”

A senior representative of the Armenian army’s General Staff, Colonel Samvel Asatryan, said many of the reserve soldiers and officers are eager to “quickly join the troops.” He said the chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Artak Davtian, is urging them to “maintain calm.” “Everyone will join the army ranks according to plan,” Asatryan told a news briefing.

Tonoyan said last week that the vast majority of reservists will be called up for one day while the others will spend up to five days at various

military bases. He again did not reveal on Tuesday the total number of personnel involved in the exercises.

Sasun Mikaelyan, the chairman of Armenia’s Yerkrpah Union of Karabakh war veterans, said his organization alone sent more than 6,500 men to army recruitment centers. “In case of any aggression, around 7,000 of our men will stand with the army and go to the frontline,” the Armenpress news agency quoted Mikaelyan as saying.

The official purpose of the drills is to test the combat-readiness of troops, provide additional training to military personnel and improve the coordination of military and civilian institutions. This is supposed to improve the Armenian side’s ability to “cope with enemy aggression.”

The Azerbaijani military has reported several major exercises this year. The most recent of them were reportedly held last week and involved about 10,000 soldiers.



Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan (R) greets reservists called up for military exercises, Sep. 24, 2019.

## Independence Day Celebrated in Gyumri

GYUMRI (Armenpress) — Commemorative and celebratory events marking the 28th anniversary of the independence of Armenia took place on September 21 in Gyumri.

In addition, the top officials of Armenia and Artsakh visited the Yerablur military pantheon in Yerevan on the occasion.

Armenia’s President Armen Sarkissian, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, Speaker of Parliament Ararat Mirzoyan and President of Artsakh Bako Sahakyan visited the pantheon.

The officials laid flowers at the graves of Sparapet (Commander) Vazgen Sargsyan, Andranik Ozanyan and a wreath at the memorial dedicated to the fallen soldiers.

The catholicos offered a prayer.

The declaration of the newly independent Armenia gave the start of the Third Republic of Armenia’s history. For 28 years already, the bearers of the Armenian statehood are the people of Armenia.

Congratulatory messages were sent by officials from around the world, including Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who wrote: “The Russian-Armenian relations, which are based on centuries-old friendship and allied partnership, continue to develop progressively. Our countries are effectively cooperating with integration unions at regional and international platforms.”

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo wrote on the State Department’s website: “On

behalf of the United States, it is my great pleasure to wish the people of Armenia a happy Independence Day. On September 21, 1991, the people of Armenia declared their independence from the Soviet Union. During the past year, the government and people of Armenia have taken bold steps to broaden political participation and advance democratic governance. Armenia now has a unique opportunity to fight corruption consistent with due process, strengthen the rule of law buttressed by an independent judiciary, and attract greater foreign investment. I look forward to continuing our work with Armenia to realize these goals and to build a better future for the next generation of Armenians.”

In his message to his constituents, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan praised the heroics of the people, especially in light of the Artsakh war at the same time. “The Armenian people managed to win thanks to the unity and will. This victory was first of all brought by the war volunteers who voluntarily joined the process of defending the homeland. They conducted their mission with honor and prevented the eradication of the mother land. And after this a much more complex process of state-building started.”

He added that during the independence years there have been difficult years. “We saw quite a sad period when there was a time when almost every day a question was being voiced in the media how would be the results

if the independence referendum took place 5, 10, 15, 201 years after 1991. Of course, I have always believed that at all times, no matter when the independence referendum would take place, our people would say a united “yes” to the independence. I have never doubted this. But I should state that there have been many people who had doubts during this period. And eventually, the response to this question was given. Because I believe that in April-May 2018 a new independence referendum took place in Armenia, and those 100 thousand citizens, who went out to the square, the streets, in Armenia and the Diaspora, came to once again say “yes” to Armenia’s independence with the same determination. It was a referendum for a new independence, which said that during these 28 years the Armenian people not only have not worn out their will to have an independent statehood, sovereignty and democracy, but also have become more decisive, determined, strong.

“And so today is September 21, September 21 of 28 years, and we gathered here to once again reaffirm that Armenia’s independent state will exist on the universe forever and the Armenian people as a great unity have enough will, enough wisdom, knowledge, talent and determination to bear the responsibility of statehood on their shoulders and live freely and happily in that statehood as proud citizens of a free country,” Pashinyan said.

## Lebanese Defense Minister Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A delegation led by Minister of National Defense of Lebanon Elias Bou Saab arrived in Yerevan on September 19 on an official visit.

Following the official welcoming ceremony, the Lebanese and Armenian defense ministers met on September 20, which continued in an expanded format with the participation of the delegations.

Greeting Elias Bou Saab, Armenian Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan praised the high-level cooperation between Armenia and Lebanon and the friendly relations between the two peoples oblige the governments to develop cooperation also in the sphere of defense. Tonoyan highlighted the ratification of the agreement on defense cooperation signed in Beirut in November 2018, which will give new opportunities for the partnership in the sphere of defense.

Tonoyan presented the goals of the Armenian humanitarian mission in Syria. Bou Saab saluted Armenia’s humanitarian mission in Syria, noting that such missions are aimed at the establishment of peace.

He also thanked Armenia for the participation in the United Nations peace-keeping mission in southern Lebanon.

During the visit he met with President Armen Sarkissian, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan. Bou Saab will also visited the Armenian Genocide memorial complex and Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

Pashinyan saluted the visit of the Lebanese Defense Minister to Armenia and recalled his own visit to Lebanon in 2018. He noted that the two peoples are linked with centuries-old friendship and a vital Armenian community is present in Lebanon.

During the meeting the two exchanged views on strengthening partnership in defense spheres, exchange of experience, implementation of joint projects, referred to international and regional security challenges.

During his meeting with Mnatsakanyan the Armenian-Lebanese Inter-Governmental Commission session was discussed, which is expected to boost the outlining of prospects for enhancing cooperation in the defense, political, cultural, tourism, IT, agriculture and numerous other sectors.

He and his wife participated on September 21 in the events dedicated to the 28th anniversary of the independence of Armenia in Gyumri.

## Government Raises Teachers’ Salaries

YEREVAN — On September 5, at a regular session of the government was held, chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

By the decision of the Government, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport will allocate 1.665 billion drams to increase teachers’ salaries by 10 percent this September. The money will be provided by from tax revenues of the state budget.

As Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Arayik Harutyunyan noted, the increase in salaries was planned for next year, but it has been possible to do so since September this year. “This has not happened for many years, and it is a good process for

the education system to make the system receptive to reforms,” the minister said.

Arayik Harutyunyan informed that other processes are being implemented to make the system effective: introduction of new attestation system, increase of salary related to the results. “We are going to establish a school funding formula where the minimum threshold for one rate will be 108,000 drams. I hope we will have it from January. It will allow us to make the system more predictable and not have the big differences that exist with regard to school funding. That is, the financing system will be more equitable. In addition to the pupil, other needs of the school will be taken into account, such as the number of classrooms, overcrowding, etc. “

Pashinyan inquired whether the salary increase was equally widespread.

Harutyunyan confirmed and added that there are false rumors that widespread cuts are being made to raise salaries. “The cuts were common as they were in the past and

were mainly related to age. That is to say, we have not cut curricula, which will reduce rates. There has been no action in this regard and there has been no collusion with this process,” the minister said, urging the media not to give this information.

Pashinyan emphasized that one of the fundamental goals of the process is to ensure proper qualification of teachers in schools and the services provided by them. “This is an important issue because we need to make sure that our schools have sufficiently qualified teachers, and we must constantly keep our pay rises in order to address this problem. And we also need to have a mechanism to understand how these decisions affect the quality of general education, the quality of teacher work. Of course, we do not consider this growth to be revolutionary, but on the other hand, this is the start of a process that will continue if we are able to build the right mechanisms to directly relate to quality. “





## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## Armenia to Open Embassy in Ethiopia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Armenian Cabinet on September 19 approved a bill on opening an Armenian embassy in Ethiopia, stationed in Addis Ababa.

The opening of an Armenian Embassy in Ethiopia will enable also cooperation with the African Union as Armenia doesn't have any diplomatic representation in Sub-Saharan Africa, Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan said during the cabinet meeting, stating that Armenia currently has an embassy only in Egypt.

"We reached this stage thanks to our comprehensive work. This is important both in terms of political and commercial agendas. We see a great potential in this direction," Mnatsakanyan said, adding that deep calculations have already been made and expressed hope that an Armenian Embassy will open in Ethiopia in the nearest timeframes.

Hakob Arshakyan, minister of high technological industry, agreed that Africa has a big potential market, especially in the technology sector.

## Armenian Weightlifter Named World Champion

PATTAYA, Thailand (Panorama.am) – Armenian weightlifter Hakob Mkrtchyan competing in the 89-kilogram weight category won gold on September 23 at the World Weightlifting Championships here. Mkrtchyan was named champion with a total of 360 kilograms.

The championship is a qualifying event for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020.

## Georgia Ambassador Meets Parliament Leader

TBILISI (Armenpress) – Armenian Ambassador to Georgia Ruben Sadoyan on September 18 met with Speaker of Parliament Archil Talakvadze, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced.

The parties touched upon bilateral relations and discussed inter-Parliamentary cooperation agenda, stressing the scheduled visit of Armenia-Georgia Friendship Group. In this context, the parties underlined importance of the exchange visits and Friendship Group ties.

They also discussed the official visit of the Georgian Speaker of Parliament to Armenia.

## EU and Council of Europe Launch of Anti-Corruption Programs

YEREVAN (Arka) – The European Union and the Council of Europe announced on September 24 the launch of the program called "Strengthening the institutional capacity to prevent and combat corruption in Armenia" with a total budget of 850 thousand euros.

According to Mustafa Ferati, head of a Council of Europe division in charge of co-operation and combating crime against economic activities, the program's duration is three years and its implementation is co-funded by the EU (90 percent) the Council of Europe (10 percent). The program is part of the Eastern Partnership program.

"The program's goal is to assist in the development of strategic steps in the fight against corruption," Ferati said.

He said the anticipated result is a modernized anti-corruption legislation, improved system for declaring property and detecting illegal enrichment, increased productivity in detecting corruption crimes and introduction of institutional mechanisms for the return of illegally acquired property.

According to Ferati, Armenia needs to step up steps to combat corruption and create appropriate institutional structures.

Among the priorities for Armenia, he also pointed out the strengthening of the institute for the protection of whistleblowers, and did not exclude the possibility of creating a special fund for the sale of confiscated illegally acquired property.

# Commemoration of the 28th Anniversary Of Armenia's Independence Day in London

LONDON – The great hall of St. Yeghishe Armenian Church in Cranley Gardens was packed on Saturday, September 21, for the Commemoration of the 28th anniversary of the independence of modern

Armenian Church in the UK and Ireland. In the audience one could recognize the Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy Gagjik Kirakosyan and the staff of the Embassy, the Primate of the Armenian Church Bishop

around the UK.

In his opening statement, the Chairman of ACC Arman Abramian stressed the importance of the occasion and conveyed the good wishes of ACC to the Government of Armenia, and all Armenians in Armenia and the Diaspora. In his turn, Kirakosyan thanked the organizers, in particular the ACC for making this Day a memorable Day in the calendar of the British Armenian community. He highlighted the accomplishments of Armenia and called for complementarity between the Diaspora and the mother country.

The highlight of this year's commemoration was the presence of the people's artist Alla Levonyan specially invited from Armenia for the occasion. She inspired the audience with a kaleidoscope of songs from the great Komitas to her own compositions.

At the end, the Bishop Manukyan gave his message of the occasion and closed the commemoration with a prayer.

A special booklet was published for the occasion sponsored by people from all walks of life, amongst them the "M. Damadian" London Chapter of the ADLP-Ramgavar Party – a testimony to the support and deep involvement of grass roots organizations in the affairs of the British Armenian Community Council.

– H. Kouyoumjian



The audience in St. Yeghishe Armenian Church

Armenia. The event organized by the British Armenian Community Council (ACC) through its Executive Committee was under the auspices of the ACC, the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia and the Primacy of the

Hovakim Manoukian and the clergy, members of the ACC Board of Directors, representatives of the political parties, representatives of grass roots organizations, civic dignitaries and fellow British Armenians from all

# PM Spouse Hakobyan Visits Yaroslavl Russia for Independence Program

YAROSLAV, Russia (Armenpress) – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's spouse Anna Hakobyan, the chair of the Board of Trustees of the My Step and City of Smile charity funds, visited on September 19 Yaroslavl, Russia, to participate in a joint celebration of the 28th Armenian Independence Day and the 95th anniversary of birth of the late Charles Aznavour in the Fyodor Volkov Russian Academic Theater.

Armenia's Ambassador to Russia Vardan Toghanyan, Armenia's Honorary Consul in Yaroslavl Vahagn Khachatryan, Vice President of the Union of Armenians of Russia Herman Ananyants, Yaroslavl Oblast Administration Head Ilya Balanin, French envoy to Russia Paul Bertrand Baretts, Yaroslavl Oblast lawmaker Tigran Ghazaryan, My Step foundation executive director Hovhannes Ghazaryan and many others were in attendance of the event.

In his remarks Toghanyan thanked Yaroslavl Governor Dmitry Mironov and Armenia's Honorary Consul Vahagn Khachatryan for organizing the concert.

"This concert is also dedicated to the 95th anniversary of birth of our genius countrymen Charles Aznavour. A man who had dedicated his whole life to French culture but was with his life and spirit ties to his historic homeland Armenia. A man who with his cheerfulness and stability proved to humanity how one should serve his fatherland and people," Toghanyan said.

Hakobyan delivered remarks at the event and thanked for the invitation to visit Yaroslavl, one of the oldest cities of friendly Russia.

"I would also like to express gratitude for organizing the concert dedicated to Armenia's Independence Day and the 95th anniversary of birth of Charles Aznavour. In the distant year

of 1991 the Armenian people expressed their will through a referendum to live in an independent, free and democratic country. And during all these years the Armenian people strived to create a democratic society where all their inalienable rights and freedoms will be protected. One and a half year ago it was possible to carry

Artsakh," Hakobyan said.

Hakobyan also presented the activities of the My Step and City of Smiles foundation to the audience.

"The mission of My Step foundation is to contribute to building a healthy, educated and inclusive society where everyone will have a chance to discover and realize their potential. We seek



Wife of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Anna Hakobyan, in Yaroslavl

out a velvet revolution of love and solidarity. And today the Armenian government is working painstakingly to build a stable and institutional democratic state," she said.

"I would like to thank our Russian friends for the sincere attitude towards the Armenian community which has become an inseparable part of the oblast during the years. I was happy to know that we have such an active community where the Saint Gevorg Church is functioning, also the Armenian Sunday school, a youth organization, a dance group and even Armenian football teams – Ararat and

to create the kind of environment where every citizen will be responsible for their own and public welfare. The foundation is carrying out projects in the cultural, educational, environmental and social protection sectors. The City of Smile foundation's goal is to provide free medical treatment to children and young people up to 25 years of age having cancer in Armenia. 223 children have become beneficiaries since the creation of the foundation. In August of this year alone the foundation supported 99 children in receiving medical treatment, medicine and laboratory tests," Hakobyan said.



# Community News

## Youredjian Family Foundation Helps Seven Gyumri Families Obtain Housing

LOS ANGELES – Since the beginning of the year, Jack Youredjian and the Youredjian Family Charitable Foundation have offered support to the Paros Foundation to move seven families from their domiks (metal containers) to modern apartments in Gyumri. Most of these people have spent their entire lives in domiks, first as children following the earthquake, and later as adults with no other economic opportunities.

“My mother, Marguerite Youredjian, spent years following the 1988 Spitak Earthquake in Gyumri helping hundreds of families who lost their homes and family members,” said Jack Youredjian. “My heart breaks when I see children living in these horrible conditions, and I want to do my part to try and help.”

The Paros Foundation’s Purchase a Home project has moved a total of 20 families to date, from inadequate wagons, containers and temporary shelters into clean, modern and safe apartments in Gyumri. Whenever possible, families are also given needed appliances, furniture and additional humanitarian support. Many of the families’ children also attend, or are invited to attend, the afterschool programs at the Debi Arach Children’s Center, which was launched



Anna Boghosian, her father and her three daughters are all smiles moving into their new home.



Anna Boghosian, her father and her three daughters are all smiles moving into their new home.

by and is supported through the Paros Foundation.

“The housing crisis continues to effect more than 2,000 families in Gyumri. I commend Jack Youredjian and his family for their commitment to help children living in terrible conditions,” said Peter Abajian, Paros Foundation executive director. “Our program goals in Gyumri are two-fold, to help move as many families from domiks into apartments as possible; and secondly to work diligently through our programs at Debi Arach to empower many of these children to break their families’ cycle of poverty through academic success, career planning and vocational training.”

The Paros Foundation was launched in 2006 and has implemented more than \$6.6 million worth of projects in Armenia through its unique model of philanthropy and community partnership.



Avedisian School students planting trees

## Avedisian School in Yerevan Receives First-Ever LEED Certification In Armenia

PARAMUS, N.J. – The Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School and Community Center, located in the Malatia-Sebastia District of Yerevan, Armenia and operated by the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), has been awarded a Silver LEED Certification - the first building in the Republic of Armenia to achieve such an award.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is an ecology-oriented building certification program run under the sponsorship of the United States Green Building Council (USGBC), headquartered in Washington, DC.

The school was also awarded the LEED Earth Designation, given only to the very first building project in each developing country to satisfy the USGBC LEED criteria.

According to Mahesh Ramanujam, President and CEO of the USGBC, “the LEED Certification identifies the AMAA Avedisian School as a showcase example of sustainability and demonstrates the AMAA’s leadership in transforming the building industry. The USGBC congratulates the AMAA Avedisian School on earning the LEED Certification and thanks you for your commitment to our common goal of building a healthy, sustainable future.”

The Avedisian School was founded in 1998 as a tuition free kindergarten for



Avedisian School Solar Panels

students from economically disadvantaged homes. The new K-12 School complex includes a Community Center and the Krikor and Beatrice Bilezikian Building and opened on September 1, 2014. It was the dream of AMAA Benefactor and Board Member Edward Avedisian of Lexington, MA to build a school to honor his Genocide survivor parents, Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian, who had placed an extremely high value on education throughout their lives. The School, with a current enrollment of 552 students and 50 Kindergarten students, provides a free education for economically disadvantaged children from the Malatia-Sebastia District. It is operated by the AMAA and conforms to the standard of education as set forth by the Armenian Ministry of Education.

see LEEDS, page 12

## Los Angeles Community Pays Tribute to Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian

LOS ANGELES – More than 300 guests gathered at the California Club in downtown Los Angeles on September 7, to pay tribute to American University of Armenia (AUA) President Emeritus Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian who served as the fourth president of AUA July 2014-June 2019. The event raised over \$350,000 and the proceeds will go toward establishing the Armen & Nelly Der Kiureghian Endowed Scholarship Fund earmarked for scholarships to young veterans returning to AUA to continue their education. The scholarships available through this new fund will add another favorable dimension to the safe environment AUA provides for young veterans to smoothly transition back to student life and continue their studies, build a career, and grow to become responsible citizens of Armenia.

Co-chairs Lori Muncherian and Arsine Phillips welcomed the guests and following the invocation by archbishops Hovnan Derderian and Moushegh Mardirossian, Dr. Mary Papazian, President of San Jose State University (SJSU), gave the opening remarks. Papazian applauded Dr. Der Kiureghian for his tireless efforts in many facets of University administration, making special reference to the memorandum of understanding signed between SJSU and AUA, by which SJSU hosted several AUA students this past summer along with a staff member from student affairs.

Speaking next was Sinan Sinanian, a member of the AGBU Council of Trustees and AUA Board of Trustees. For AGBU as a founding supporter of the University, he considered AUA as the most successful investment in Armenia.

A video presentation followed highlighting the many accomplishments of AUA during Dr. Der Kiureghian’s tenure, not the least of which was the launch and completion of the 100 Pillars campaign, the creation of the Entrepreneurship & Product Innovation Center (EPIC), the start of three new degree programs, as well as the establishment of the offices of Student Affairs and Counseling.

A highlight of the evening were the words of Arman Vardanyan, a veteran who is now a senior at AUA majoring in English and Communications: “Every time I passed by the AUA buildings as a young teenager, I dreamt of becoming a student there one day. Well, dreams come true for those who dream but also take action. I did get admitted to AUA and I am now chasing my dream.”

When he was still a freshman at AUA, Vardanyan received the call of duty and had to put his studies on hold to serve in the military for two years. He was a soldier during the April 2016 Four-Day-War in Artsakh and served his country with dignity and honor. Upon return to AUA, he was grateful for the warm welcome and a full scholarship, which made his transition back to civilian life so much smoother. “That is when I felt the sense of belonging to a community that believes in me and has my back. I set my mind to study hard to become a better citizen of Armenia and also a citizen of the world. AUA has made this possible. I am surrounded and continually inspired by excellent administrators, outstanding faculty and staff at AUA, all of which I attribute to the tremendous leadership of Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian. On behalf of all my fellow students, and particularly in the name of the growing number of returning veterans, I extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Der Kiureghian for always staying focused on students.”

Der Kiureghian’s daughter, Naira, and son, see DER KIUREGHIAN, page 17





OBITUARY

# Actor Sid Haig Horror Film Icon

By Nick Romano

LOS ANGELES (*Entertainment Weekly*) – Sid Haig (born Sidney Eddie Mosesian), a legend of the horror genre from films like “House of 1,000 Corpses” and “The Devil’s Rejects,” died Saturday, September 21, following an unspecified “accident” two weeks earlier. He was 80.

In a statement shared on the actor’s Instagram account, wife Susan L. Oberg wrote, “My light, my heart, my true love, my King, the other half of my soul, Sidney, passed from this realm on to the next. He has returned to the Universe, a shining star in her heavens. He was my angel, my husband, my best friend and always will be.”

“He adored his family, his friends and his fans,” she continued. “This came as a shock to all of us. We, as a family, are asking that our privacy and time to mourn be respected.”

Earlier this month, Oberg wrote on Haig’s Instagram that her husband had been in an accident, but didn’t go into specifics. On September 13, she updated the now-deleted comment by stating Haig was “winning the fight” after taking a “nasty spill.”

Haig got his start in horror with 1967’s “Spider Baby or, the Maddest Story Ever Told.” He was then cast in Rob Zombie’s “House of 1,000 Corpses” as Captain Spaulding and its sequel “The Devil’s Rejects.” Haig was meant to have a larger role in this fall’s third installment, “3 From Hell,” but Zombie told EW that health issues prevented him from doing so.



Sid Haig (Sidney Eddie Mosesian) (Photo courtesy of NBC Bay Area)

“The movie that I prepped to make, and was getting ready to start shooting, it was Captain Spaulding, Otis, and Baby, the three originals,” Zombie said. “But three weeks out from shooting, I got a call from Sid Haig. He had been in the hospital, and he had just had surgery, and he was now recovering in a rehabilitation facility. ... I went to see him, and he had changed drastically from the last time I saw him.

Because Sid, he’s big and burly, and now he’s tiny as a skeleton. So, I was like, oh man. I kind of realized, yeah, he’s in rough shape.”

Knowing how important it was to include Haig in the film, the director added, “Lionsgate was fine with me sort of sneaking him in one day to shoot as much as I could. It was on me to make sure that nothing went wrong. So I got him in, I shot everything I could shoot.”

Haig also appeared in Quentin Tarantino’s “Jackie Brown” and would later re-team with the filmmaker on “Kill Bill, Vol. 2.”

Other credits to Haig’s name include “Night of the Living Dead 3D” 2007’s “Halloween,”

“The Lords of Salem” and “Bone Tamahawk.”

In addition to the horror films, he had made guest appearances in dozens of television shows.

Rosario Dawson, who filmed a deleted scene in “The Devil’s Rejects,” wrote in the comments to Oberg’s Instagram post, “Oh! Dear Sid. You will be missed beloved. Grateful to have met and worked with you. What a talent and energy graced this earth. Blessings and love to your adored family.”

In his own post, Zombie simply wrote, “Hurray for Captain Spaulding. Gone but not forgotten.”

## Charles Gérard Noted French-Armenian Actor

PARIS (AFP) – Noted French-Armenian actor Charles Gérard died on Thursday, September 19, in Paris. He was 96.

He was born in Istanbul in 1922.

He appeared in several of the films of director Claude Lelouch and was a great friend and collaborator of Jean-Paul Belmondo.

Recognizable by his singular nose – broken by Jean-Paul Belmondo during their first meeting on a boxing ring in 1948 – Charles Gérard, whose real name was Gérard Adjémian, was first a director in the 1960s (“The Man Who Betrays the Mafia,” and “The Enemy in the Shadows”) before becoming an actor in the 1970s, in “Le Voyou” by Lelouch.

He made about 20 films with him as well as with Claude Pinoteau (“The Slap”), Philippe de Broca (“The Incorrigible”), Henri Verneuil (“The Body of My Enemy”), Francis Veber (“The Toy”), Claude Zidi (“The Animal”), Georges Lautner (“Flic or thug,” “The Guignolo”) and Fabien Onteniente (“Turf”).

A close friend of Jean-Paul Belmondo, he had



often played alongside him, notably in “L’Incorrigible”, “L’Animal” or “Cop or thug”. He also shared a passion for sports, boxing, but also football and tennis.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS



## Pashinyan Makes Case for Country in Silicon Valley

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif. — During a private event on Monday night, September 23 at the office of Synopsys, a semi-conductor tech firm in the heart of Silicon Valley, a couple of hundred Bay Area Armenians welcomed Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

**By Kim Bardakian**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

During his presentation, Pashinyan emphasized the importance and urgency of connecting the resources in Armenia with the technology sector of the region. This was followed by a brief question-and-answer session. The event was sponsored by AGBU Silicon Valley Chapter under the leadership of Dr. Yervant Zorian, AGBU Central Board Member, founding president of the Armenian Virtual College, and Chief Architect of Synopsys.

Above, Pashinyan answers questions; below, Dr. Yervant Zorian, left, with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.



## Armenian Assembly National Advocacy Conference Activists Secure Results on Capitol Hill

WASHINGTON — Armenian-American leaders and activists from across the United States attended the Armenian Assembly of America's 2019 National Advocacy Conference this week, and secured immediate results following meetings on Capitol Hill.

As a result from the meetings, Representatives David Schweikert (R-AZ) and Paul Gosar (R-AZ) joined the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues.

"The Armenian Assembly of America appreciates all of our members and activists who took time from their busy schedules to travel to Washington, D.C. and join us for our Advocacy Day on the Hill. With many more results to come, we are encouraged to welcome Congressmen Schweikert and Gosar on the Armenia Caucus so quickly following our meetings," Armenian Assembly Executive

Director Bryan Ardouny stated.

"We would like to thank the efforts of our Arizona delegation, especially Kirk, Zhanet, Armen, and Shoushana Kaprelian, who have helped us year round in our efforts to engage more with elected officials in Arizona," Ardouny added.

In addition, Congressman Stephen Lynch (D-MA) co-sponsored H.Res.296, which affirms the United States' record on the Armenian Genocide, and Congressmen Jamie Raskin (D-MD) and Mark Takano (D-CA) co-sponsored H.Res.452, applauding the recent free, fair, and transparent parliamentary elections and peaceful transfer of power in Armenia, as well as reaffirming the critical importance of the United States-Armenia partnership after meetings with Assembly activists.



ABOVE: Rep. David Schweikert (R-AZ) and Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ); BELOW Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD), and Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA)



## Los Angeles Pays Tribute to Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian

DER KIUREGHIAN, from page 5  
Sebouh, added a personal touch to the evening when they talked about their father's dedication to AUA. "A defining characteristic of my father has been his readiness to roll up his sleeves and make sacrifices when his homeland needed him," noted Sebouh. "At the graduation party, I was amazed at how students were competing with each other for an opportunity to take selfies with him. Throughout my years in both undergraduate and graduate schools, I've never seen students so excited about their university president," added Naira.

A surprise guest appearance was made by Armenian jazz pianist Vahagn Hayrapetyan who entertained the attendees with beautiful musical renditions. Next at the podium was Dr. Lawrence "Larry" Pitts, chairman of the Board of Trustees of AUA. Pitts said that the Velvet Revolution had shifted the country toward a new path and that, "AUA has become the premier university in the region under Dr. Der Kiureghian's leadership." Among the many accomplishments of the University during Dr. Der Kiureghian's tenure, Pitts acknowledged the continued support of those gathered and many other donors that have grown the "AUA endowment from \$19.8 million to \$61.6 million."

Dr. Pitts then invited Dr. Der Kiureghian and his wife Nelly on stage where he presented them with a beautiful sculpture by Michael Aram and a book of testimonies by many AUA faculty, staff, and students.

Noticeably overwhelmed, Der Kureghian thanked members of the organizing committee

and the AUA Development team. "It's hard to put into words what I am feeling tonight," he said. "I want to thank the Board of Trustees and all my colleagues at AUA for the amazing five years. We accomplished so much, but I must say that my greatest joy came from the interaction I had with the students and alumni." He proceeded to give a brief history of when he and Dr. Mihran Agbabian visited Armenia after the 1988 earthquake and met with Yuri Sargsyan, Rector of Yerevan Polytechnic Institute who said the best thing the diaspora could do for Armenia was to establish an American-style university Armenia.

"With the help of many people including Louise Manoogian Simone and later Stepan Karamardian, we requested assistance from UC's President David Gardner. The affiliation with UC provided vital academic and administrative guidance including management of our endowment. I am proud to be a co-founder of AUA as well as its fourth president," he said. "AUA is now internationally known and has students from 25 countries."

Dr. Karin Markides, the new president of AUA concluded the evening by saying that she was honored to take on the role, and thanked everyone for attending the banquet and supporting AUA, especially the Veteran's Campaign. "I am deeply honored to take on this torch, to lead the university to have the greatest impact in Armenia we possibly can. I want to thank Armen for doing everything possible to make this a smooth transition, so valuable for me but even more valuable for the students."

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Pashinyan Uses Charm Offensive in Historic LA Address

VISIT, from page 1

strong presence,” he said. “That victory showed that one country and one people that is ready for change can achieve that.”

He reflected on the difficult times in Armenia following its independence 30 years ago when hundreds of thousands left the country to search for economic opportunities outside of their homeland, “not because they wanted to but because they had to work in order to live.”

He acknowledged the significant role the Diaspora played in helping Armenia survive during those days of hardship, helping create “vast improvement” in Armenia. He cited the Tumo centers and smart centers that were established in Armenia through the investments provided by the Diaspora.

Pashinyan spoke of the significant ties between the diaspora and Armenia and how they have created vast improvement in helping modernize Armenia, including the early economic assistance of Kirk Kerkorian and the Lincy Foundation that rebuilt the roads and enhanced transportation in the country. He singled out “the evidence of Tumo centers and smart centers which were created in Armenia through the investments provided by the Diaspora. I cite this example of the dynamic relationship to show that our gathering today is another manifestation of this new stage where Armenia is no longer seen as an object of humanitarian assistance because today in Armenia there’s a republic that has been established and the proud citizens are the ones who now govern. Now it is not just to survive through the humanitarian assistance but to build up his or her abilities through the sweat of their brow and his or her enthusiasm.”

He added, “The time has come that the diaspora investors take another step and think about making economic and financial investments in the Republic of Armenia, to make wealth in Armenia and make Armenia wealthy. And I hope that this day will signify that

change. We have the right to be counted among the leaders of the democratic movements in the world as a result of the Velvet Revolution and just as the diaspora stood shoulder to shoulder in the revolution that happened in Armenia, the diaspora will also stand by the economic revolution happening in Armenia.”

He invited more investment from the diaspora in Armenia, reassuring them that they won’t “encounter the same corruption” since “it has been rooted out.”

He encouraged all to collaborate to help Armenia. “Let’s work for the benefit of Armenia and Artsakh build friendly relations with neighbors.

He also said that the country needs to make more of an effort to make inroads to entice investments from around the world. He said that all 10 million people of Armenian background around the world can help develop the country. In the wake of the Velvet Revolution, Pashinyan added, the country’s profile has somewhat been raised.

“I’ve been told there is more interest in Armenia now since the revolution and we have developed this new slogan, dear compatriots, that it’s cool to be Armenian and together we have to make it even more interesting and even cooler to be Armenian,” Pashinyan added.

“Armenians have a great history, a great past, and a great present,” said Pashinyan, who reiterated the words of Barouyr Sevag in his poem, “We Are Few But We Are Called Armenians.”



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, his wife and state and Armenian dignitaries

## LA, State Officials Join Pashinyan

“We are proud to have Armenian men and women scholars, cultural and political leaders,” said Garcetti, alluding to his own ethnic background, born to a Mexican father and great-grandparents who were Russian-Jewish immigrants. “You made Los Angeles what it truly is, a City of Angels, because in times of division and hatred, everyone belongs here and every Armenian feels Los Angeles is their second home because you belong to this state.”

Garcetti reaffirmed his support not only of Armenian-Americans but for recognition of the Armenian Genocide that is widely commemorated throughout California and particularly Los Angeles, as thousands “walk arm in arm to say never again and make sure that every lie is met with truth when we gather on the streets to speak the truth.”

“We will always defend you here in Los Angeles,” said Garcetti.

He touched upon solidarity between the United States and Armenia and the new opportunities in Armenia thanks to the election of Pashinyan.

“With this prime minister, a new day of sunshine, democracy and openness has come to Armenia,” said Garcetti. “It’s time for us in Los Angeles to visit, invest and support the new Armenia so it rises into a new era of progress under the leadership of this prime minister.”

In his reflections, Los Angeles Councilman Paul Krekorian, the first Armenian-American elected to the Council in 2010, and who spearheaded the Prime Minister’s visit, along with Los Angeles County Supervisors Kathryn Barger, remarked that independence, freedom and democracy cannot be achieved overnight and is an “ongoing struggle that all of us must continue to fight.”

“The velvet revolution led by His Excellency was one of the brightest, most optimistic most exciting moments in that long struggle and it not only transformed Armenia but inspired everyone around the world who strives for democratic governance,” said Krekorian, asserting the importance of carrying on an ancient culture and history. “Our nation’s survival has depended on millions of ordinary Armenians who have passed onto each generation a national identity, commitment and a profound faith and culture that has enriched the world since before the Egyptians built their first pyramid.”

Krekorian stated that Pashinyan understood the power of the Armenian nation and those “unsung heroes” of the past and those of today, who together



Nikol Pashinyan addresses the crowd.

achieved this new dawn in Armenia’s democratic governance.

Rep. Adam Schiff highlighted that Los Angeles is the capital of the Armenian Diaspora and he is “proud of the strong relationship between the United States and Armenia.”

“I have watched with enormous interest and hope the democratic revival Armenia has experienced from the Velvet Revolution and the peaceful transition of power and free and fair elections that show the strength and resilience of Armenia’s democracy,” said Schiff, who reaffirmed his commitment to “advocate” for Armenia and to ensure its security and prosperity.

Schiff acknowledged the 28th anniversary of the Republic of Armenia’s independence and its successes while also recognizing the “ever-present threat” from the bordering countries of Azerbaijan and Turkey.

“I’m confident the strength and determination of the Armenian people, who have survived and thrived across centuries,” he concluded.

The American and Armenian National Anthems were performed by The Rose and Alex Pilibos Armenian School choir. Clergy in attendance included Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese, Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian, Primate of the Western Prelacy, and Reverend Joseph D. Matossian of the Armenian Evangelical Church said the Invocation of the event.

There was some opposition to Pashinyan’s presence, including protestors of the Amulsar project, green-lit by the government of Armenia that permits its largest foreign investor, Lydian, to begin development of the gold mine despite the potential environment and health impacts. Azerbaijan, which had earlier protested Pashinyan’s scheduled speech in Grand Park, may be tied to airplanes that flew above the rally with anti-Armenian banners in relation to Karabakh.



Crowds listen to Pashinyan.



Crowds listen to Pashinyan.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Food Security in the Landlocked Country of Armenia

FRESNO – On the 30th anniversary of its founding in Fresno, the Armenian Technology Group, Inc. (ATG), through its office in Armenia, officially registered its latest high-yielding, high-quality wheat seed variety with Armenia's Seed Inspection and Quality Control Service. The seed was bestowed the name Arthazar, in memory of the founding chairman of the group, Dr. Arthur O. Hazarabedian, D.V.M. (1930-2003).

The selection of the seed is the result of years of research during which ATG's staff in Armenia set up trial plots in numerous locations throughout Armenia. The idea was to ensure that each wheat seed variety was suitable for planting in the various growing or climate zones of Armenia and, most importantly, would secure larger quantities of harvest per acre, while generating higher incomes for the growers.

"This is simply our gesture to express our gratitude to Dr. Hazarabedian and his group who, despite having their own different professions, focused their attention on the most vulnerable segment of our economy," stated the originator of the seed-naming concept, Gagik Mkerchyan, director of the ATG Foundation in Armenia, who was spearheading the project. "The notion that

"We now germinate the seed in our country and supply local grain growers with the highest quality seed available for Armenia's climate. Needless to say, over the years we experimented with some 250 seed varieties, several of which already have been registered and start with ATG acronyms. These are in circulation but, certainly, we had to select the best seed for the legacy of Dr. Hazarabedian," said Mekhitar Grigoryan, head agronomist of the group.

"This is homage to the vision that Art and his colleagues had for the people of Armenia. By sharing Arthazar wheat seed with the grain growers we are spreading Art's spirit and hope in Armenia's heartland. We congratulate our staff for their dedication in continuing the organization's mission," said Varoujan Der Simonian, executive director of ATG.

For a landlocked country like Armenia, food security is an integral part of national security. This issue becomes more apparent when Armenia's geo-economic situation is taken into account. Since its inception in 1989, the founding members ATG rebuilt Armenia's agricultural infrastructure by placing their greatest emphasis on securing the country's wheat consumption needs.

While Armenia was part of the Soviet Union, some 80 percent of its grain consumption was being imported from Ukraine and Russia. Independence and the economic blockade, since then, made such transactions much more difficult and costly. Dependence on other countries for grain to feed its own people made Armenia much more vulnerable, while affecting, at the same time, its overall economic and political bargaining strength.

Reflecting on 30 years of service to the people of Armenia, Der Simonian said, "We pay homage to all the ATG board members and technical advisors: Dr. Arthur Hazarabedian, D.V.M., Dr. Robert Bushnell, Dr. Leon Garoyan, Dr. Jack Morse, Don Tounjes, Monte Bell, Roger Benton with an onlooker, and the local agronomist, Mekhitar Grigoryan, who planted the first wheat and alfalfa seed fields and trial plots near the epicenter of the earthquake-devastated city of Spitak."

The support of US government entities was substantial during the following years. Through



Gagik Mkrchyan with Mekhitar Grigoryan of ATG, documenting the characteristics of one of the wheat varieties in the border village of Varagavan, one of 320 villages in which ATG has been active since its inception.

their means, in 1995 world expert in the wheat seed production, Dr. Warren Kronstad, Curt De Louche, PhD and Dr. Richard Newberg, who had significant contribution in India's Green Revolution, drafted the strategic map for ATG to follow in increasing wheat production in Armenia. One of the key components is to insure the sustainability of the program was to propagate the breeder seed in consecutive years and thereby germinating foundation, registered, certified followed by common seed prior to making the harvest available to grain growers to be sown for milling or general consumption.

The people of Armenia appreciate the support that they receive from friendly countries during natural disasters or economic blockade. However, in order for a country to sustain economic and social stability, particularly during crisis, she must be in position of producing substantial amount of its main food supply and be capable of feeding her population.

Subsequently establishing a seed bank is a vitally important component of having sustain-

able domestic seed production that could meet local climatic requirements and planting needs. Over the past two decades ATG had built its seed inventory reserve, however, several times due to seed shortage or drought, distributed its seed supplies to the growers to sow their farms. Currently, ATG again is in the process of re-building Armenia's Seed Bank with locally generated seeds.

As the project evolved with technical advisors James Boudier, PhD, Mark Goodson and Roger Culver joining the group, the organization embarked on applied science methodology in setting up trial plots in seven growing zones in Armenia and Artsakh. ATG took it on its own in carrying out the Research & Development process to select the most suitable and high yielding seed varieties with the potential of securing highest economic return on investment. These trial plots were scattered up to 30 locations each year. Over the past 30 years some 300 selected wheat, alfalfa, corn and other seed varieties obtained from International Maze and Wheat Improvement Organization (CIMMYT), ICARDA and other entities, were tested and only upon selecting the most suitable ones, made these varieties available to the grain growers.

The trial plots became the foundation upon which the Seed Multiplication Program was launched. The USDA Foreign Agricultural Services was a major contributor in this endeavor. The seed producers association was formed composed of ATG affiliated farmers.

"We follow the process by extensive trial of those varieties over a two years period. We carry all the risks, and only after ensuring the best seed varieties suitable for producing results at a given region, only then we make the seeds available to seed producing association members," states Grigoryan, who remembers fondly working with the founding members in planting the first fields.

"With the official registration of the new Arthazar wheat seed variety, we are pleased the Seed Inspection and Quality Control is functioning. Once our office makes the new variety available to the local grain growers, we anticipate it will generate higher production yield and increased of farm family income," said Dr. James Reynolds, president of ATG.



Hamlet Khachatryan of the Seed Inspection and Quality Control Service, inspecting the crop prior to harvest at ATG's Armavir fields. A.T.G initiated and funded the Inspection Services in 2002, to ensure that a higher standard of seed would be produced and marketed to grain growers.

Dr. Hazarabedian initiated in Armenia saved thousands of lives during the early years of independence, to say the least, and which continues to re-building the country's Seed Bank," added Mkrchyan.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Making Immigration Great Again at Tribute to Afeyan

TRIBUTE, from page 1

In his remarks, honoree Afeyan singled out for praise his Swedish-born wife, Anna, his partner in his philanthropic endeavors, and expressed his hopes for his four children.

“My kids are descendants of an Armenian father and a Swedish mother. They are 100 percent Armenian, 100 percent Swedish and 100 percent American,” he said.

A special guest at the program was Dr. Vartan Gregorian, the president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Afeyan’s partner at the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, as well as an immigrant himself. Gregorian is the former president of Brown University as well as the New York Public Library.

Afeyan noted that he was especially delighted to have Gregorian there. “There is really no word to describe what he is. He serves as a role model and mentor to me. I look up to him even though he is half my size,” he said, eliciting chuckles. “I bow to his heart, his mind and to his legacy.”

Afeyan, the founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering, one of the Boston area’s biggest venture capital firms specializing in biotech and life sciences, said that his phenomenal success had its roots in his immigrant experience, adding that it was no surprise so many innovators are immigrants.

“The immigration experience includes hope, optimism, fear, uncertainty, struggle, leaving, adaptation, courage and above all, the feeling of being uprooted and being rootless,” he said.



James Kalustian, Founding President, Armenian Heritage Foundation; Board Chair, Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy with Cindy Fitzgibbon, emcee (Leo Gozbekian photo)

Afeyan also spoke at length about the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative that he, Gregorian and Russian-Armenian entrepreneur Dr. Ruben Vardanyan had founded four years ago, and its mission to express gratitude for the help Armenians received in their darkest hours.

“We need to leverage what we have gone through to help other people,” he said. “We

pleted his PhD in biochemical engineering in MIT. He received the Golden Door Award in 2017 from the International Institute of New England in recognition of his contribution to the US as a foreign-born American.

## Bringing People Together

The program featured as emcee WCVB’s Cindy Fitzgibbon. The Maine-born and respected longtime meteorologist on Boston area television stations, praised the park as a “really welcoming place for all people.”

Representing the city of Boston was Marty Hernandez, head of the Mayor’s Office of Health and Human Services. He thanked the organizers on behalf of Mayor Martin J. Walsh, adding, “We thank you for bringing the park to us and keeping it. The park symbolizes our diversity. Boston is a city built by immigrants.”

He also said that according to the most recent statistics, 29 percent of the population of the city is foreign born. He added that the newcomers bring in hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes to the city and state.

He called the park as a “community partner” for the city, one which gives an arena to immigrants to “tell their stories.”

Hernandez and many of the other speakers stressed that in the current anti-immigrant mood, it was important to hold just such a program and discuss the “common purpose and shared values” of all people.

Hernandez added: “I am proud of what this country has become. My grandparents came to this county and [so did] my mother. They set us up on the path to success. I am the first gener-

England; Irish International Immigrant Center; Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition and Refugepoint.

Kahvejian serves on the board of the International Institute of New England.

The representatives, when singled out, received thunderous applause.

Afeyan added his praise to the organizations that were recognized for their work and especially the timing of the recognition “at a time they are very much needed.”

“I congratulate them and thank them for being here,” he said.

## Focusing on the Park

In her opening comments, Barbara Tellalian, a tireless fundraiser for the park and the wife of its designer, architect Donald Tellalian, said the park – as well as the evening – “was dedicated to what connects us, celebrating the American immigrant experience.”

Next, Armenian Heritage Foundation President James Kalustian brought a congratulatory message from Gov. Charlie Baker. (Baker and Walsh, as well as Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian were honorary chairs of the banquet.)

He praised the park on three levels: It is a beautiful public space, a park rich in symbolism and a place that celebrates the immigrant experience.

It shows that life, hope and opportunity triumph over tragedy and despair, he said.

“Noubar, like so many immigrants who survived the Armenian Genocide and their descendants triumphed [over tragedy] and the world is a far better place for the contributions of our honoree,” Kalustian said.

He praised Afeyan and his family for giving back to the community. In honor of their donations to the park, he presented Afeyan with a miniature version of the split rhomboid dodecahedron abstract sculpture that is the centerpiece of the park. (Each year the two halves of the sculpture are pried apart and reconfigured in a new way, to symbolize leaving the past and creating a new life.)

The park was opened on May 22, 2012 with a celebration that included then Gov. Deval Patrick and an official delegation from Armenia.

The park is a unique collaboration between the state and a private group, the Armenian Heritage Foundation, which has created the park and is tasked with maintaining it. A total of \$3 million has been deemed necessary by the foundation for the maintenance to go on in perpetuity; of that total, \$2.1 million has been raised thus far.

Several political leaders were present at the program, including Middlesex County District Attorney Marian T. Ryan, Koutoujian, former



From left, Raffi Afeyan, Taleen Afeyan, Anna Afeyan, Noubar Afeyan, Alex Afeyan (Leo Gozbekian photo)

“What is good about immigrants is that they are the ultimate founders; they are the founders of a new life. That is a huge, huge advantage.

“They are innovators,” he added.

“That is why the city has progressed. Thousands of firms in this country’s history have been founded by immigrants,” he said. “When you are uprooted and unrooted, it is a very different feeling,” leading to survival and revival.

During his talk he asked the first, second- or third-generation immigrants in the audience to rise. “That is 99 percent of the room standing,” he said. “To the rest of you, thanks for welcoming us.”

find heroes that are helping people. It follows the works that exactly caused us to be saved. These are folks that come from Myanmar, Burundi, South Sudan. It is the notion of gratitude in action.”

Gratitude, he said, is the ultimate “renewable resource,” infecting giver and receiver positively.

He also noted the organization’s #AraratChallenge, a global crowdfunding campaign aimed at supporting those in urgent need of basic humanitarian aid around the world.

Afeyan was born in Beirut and his family later moved to Montreal, Canada. He did his undergraduate work at McGill University and com-



Dr. Avak Kahvejian (Leo Gozbekian photo)



Marty Martinez, Mayor’s Office of Health & Human Services, City of Boston. (Leo Gozbekian photo)



Celebrating! Park’s Newest Benefactors - Megan (third from left) and Ron (2nd from right) Hovsepian with their family with Noubar Afeyan. (Leo Gozbekian photo)

ation in my family to go to college. We should tell that story, especially now.”

It was a message reiterated by Dr. Avak Kahvejian of Flagship Pioneering, who was chair of the benefit. Kahvejian introduced and recognized the representatives of the five different organizations serving immigrants and refugees: The greater Boston Immigrant Defense Fund; International Institute of New

Registry of Motor Vehicles head and Secretary of Labor Rachel Kaprielian and California State Assembly Member Adrin Nazarian.

Short films were shown about the park and the evening’s honoree.

At the conclusion of the event, Afeyan said, “I am happy that the occasion brought this many people out to support the Armenian Heritage Park.”





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Autism Awareness Event Organized by Tekeyan Metro LA Chapter in Glendale

GLENDAL — On September 12, the Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles chapter joined forces with the Armenian American Medical Society (AAMS) and the Armenian Autism Outreach Project (AAOP) to present an informative event called Autism Awareness: Diagnosis, Testing, Supportive Care and Resources. The event was held at the Glendale Public Library. Parents, educators, staff and community members attended this public event to learn about autism, its development, challenges and the individuals and organizations that assist in supporting families with autism challenges.

Autism is a lifelong complex neurodevelopmental disorder, with biological roots thought to be present at birth, which continues through adulthood. Autism can affect any child and family from any race, ethnic or socioeconomic group anywhere in the world. Research indicates that early identification and interventions tailored to each child's strengths and needs can result in significant positive outcomes for many children with autism.

Talene Hachikian served as master of ceremonies on behalf of the Tekeyan Metro Los Angeles chapter, while Hasmig Karayan was the chair of the Tekeyan organizing committee.



From left, Talene Hachikian, Dr. Tamar Nazerian-Chorbadjian, Dr. Talin Babikian, Dr. Ani Khatchadourian, Dr. Sonia Konialian-Aller, Hasmig Karayan

Keynote speakers included developmental-behavioral pediatrician Dr. Tamar Chorbadjian, who serves as the director of the High Risk Infant Follow-Up Clinic and Assistant Division Head of the Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics at Kaiser Permanente Baldwin Park. Chorbadjian began the series of lectures introducing and characterizing autism.

Dr. Ani Khatchadourian, the next keynote speaker, focused on describing some of the evaluations and testing applied in her practice to diagnose autism. Khatchadourian, a neuropsychologist, is the founder and clinical director of Dr. Ani and Associates in Pasadena.

Following Khatchadourian's presentation, Dr. Talin Babikian, board-certified clinical neuropsychologist and Associate Clinical Professor in the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at UCLA and Associate Director of UCLA's BrainSPORT program, spoke about comorbidities associated with autism and highlighted some treatment and alternative perspectives.

The evening concluded with AAOP representative Dr. Sonia Konialian-Aller. Konialian-Aller is a developmental psycholinguist and licensed Speech-Language Pathologist practicing at

Children's Hospital Los Angeles for over 30 years. Konialian-Aller presented behavioral modifications, treatment modalities and resources for supporting autism.

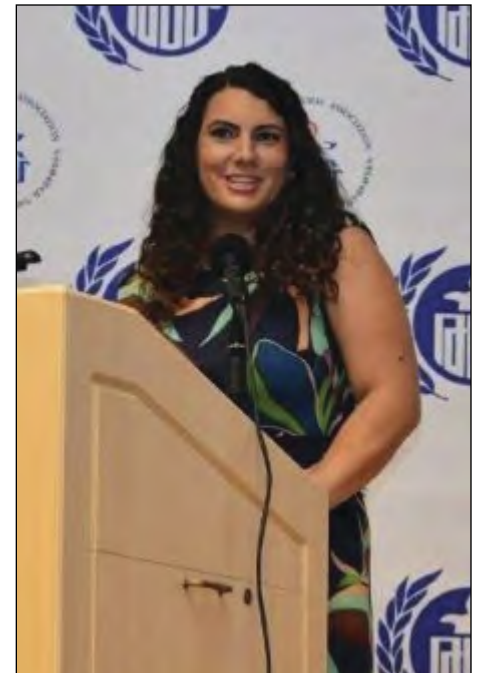
The event was warmly accepted by the community and attendees had the opportunity to meet and greet members of the Armenian Autism Outreach Project and obtain information regarding future events, support groups and contact information. Attendees were also



Talene Hachikian, master of ceremonies, during her welcoming remarks on behalf of the Tekeyan Metro Los Angeles chapter



Hasmig Karayan, chair of the Autism Awareness program expressing thanks to the four speakers on behalf of the Tekeyan Metro Los Angeles chapter



Dr. Tamar Nazerian-Chorbadjian during her presentation

able to connect with the clinicians after the lecture presentation and elaborate further with questions.

The event marked an important need for autism awareness to be highlighted in our community and allow for understanding and connection among individuals and families struggling with this daily challenge.

Konialian-Aller remarked that the Tekeyan Cultural Association provided "a comprehensive panel of excellent presenters, with excellent coverage of the important pieces of information, from all angles. There was so much good and helpful information; and the audience was so attentive."

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More than 11 million Syrians have been forced to flee their homes as a result of civil war. Many of these people left everything and everyone behind to start new lives in a new country. They traveled hundreds, even thousands, of miles to start new lives in a place where they knew no one, and even didn't speak the language. These are their stories—stories of escape, hope, and resilience.

In *Nightingales*, Mimi Melkonian has compiled a fascinating collection of stories of Syrian migrants who left familiar surroundings, family members, and more, knowing they may never step foot in their homeland again. Their vision of a better life is what inspired them to keep moving forward without looking back. Their resilience has enabled them to flourish in their adopted countries. Melkonian profiles 16 inspiring migrants, including artists, musicians, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs.

Light refreshments will be served. Books will be available for sale and signing

Cohosts: Tekeyan Cultural Association-Greater NY, Armenian International Women's Association-NJ Affiliate, The Daughters of Vartan

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Avedisian School in Yerevan Receives First-Ever LEED Certification in Armenia

LEEDS, from page 5

"The idea of the Avedisian School and Community Center came from the American and German Missionaries working in Western Armenia who provided free tuition and board for students during the mid-19th and 20th centuries," said Avedisian. "My mother was one of those fortunate enough to receive this education. We decided to bring that same concept to the present but with an ultra-modern building based on sustainable energy in the Yerevan Valley where pollution was out of control and high incidences of cancer had been noted for many years. After being invited to a meeting with the United Nations Development Program in New York, our sustainable energy expert, Armen Gharibyan, and I were provided funding to visit the new UN European Headquarters Building in Copenhagen to see if we could get some new ideas from their massive ecological masterpiece. As it turned out, Armen knew at least as much as their experts and we returned to Yerevan with renewed confidence in the project. Today, the Avedisian School's new approach to building using sustainable energy has captivated both the government and the public so much so that an entire industry is growing rapidly and providing many good paying jobs for those working in the industry. What started as a small step to the future, combined with over 300 sunny days a year in Armenia, provides the catalyst for Armenia to achieve over 50% of its energy needs in the next ten years. That, I am confident, will be another first in the world. A major benefit will be a great reduction in cancer rates since the CO2 reduction will provide for much reduced pollution. Add to that the joy of seeing Ararat for most of the daylight hours will make my day and yours for sure."

Joseph Zeronian, EdD, former President of the AMAA Board of Directors during the building of the Avedisian School in 2014, said, "It is gratifying to see the Avedisian School gaining honors in the Motherland. The School has met and exceeded the hopes and dreams of its founders and the Board of the AMAA that endorsed its establishment."

The Avedisian School's building team included senior technical advisor/architect Ronald Altoon, Architect Isahak Nersisyan, Construction Manager Faraj Yeretsian, LEED Consultant/Solar Energy Design and Implementation Consultant Dr. Armen Gharibyan, LEED Consultant AJB Inc., Conservation Advisor Dr. Kenell Touryan, AMAA, LEED and USGBC Liaison Richard Youatt and Legal Counsels Peter Kougasian, Esq. and Jeanmarie Papelian, Esq.

"From start to finish, this was a concerted team effort," said Altoon. "Every role was essential, every challenge met head on. Armenia, under the Soviet system, was unaccustomed to addressing environmental or sustainable design issues so we were faced with many challenges. When Mr. Avedisian approached me about working on this project, I suggested that we accept the challenge to design the School to become LEED Certified. This was not an easy task to be sure. Mr. Avedisian became the champion of the LEED Certification goal. He advocated for this to the AMAA Board and sustained his commitment throughout the process. After our very challenging LEED journey, we have fulfilled our original vision. Not only have we achieved LEED Silver, but also LEED Earth."

"The LEED Certification shows how the Avedisian School fits into the global sustainability movement and how the AMAA is an important innovator and leader not only within Armenia but within the region and globally," said Youatt. "Mr. Avedisian played a very important role in the transformation from the immediate post-Soviet era to the present. His broad vision for rebuilding Armenia's entire educational system and his early focus on LEED

Certification were visionary at a time when Yerevan was 'on its knees' with water and energy shortages."

The School's construction process introduced a new construction culture in Armenia by keeping all of the local and international environmental laws and standards. The School achieved LEED credits for meeting requirements of applying efficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, introducing a unique system of solar hot water, using proper polyurethane thermal insulation levels, applying efficient LED lighting and a proper architectural design with correctly selected windows and walls. The School also used light colors on the roof, developed lots of green areas around the School which reflect the solar irradiation as nature, installed rainfall collection areas underground, recycled concrete waste to make concrete tiles, and used environmentally friendly materials for finishing, indoor air quality and natural lighting.

come. Our family is proud to have been able to help make the School a beacon in Armenia for sustainability, energy conservation, pollution control and environmental education and responsibility."

The Armenia Tree Project (ATP), an organization headquartered in Watertown that has been working to protect Armenia's environment since 1994, also collaborated on the environmental education curriculum at the Avedisian School which helped secure the LEED Certification. One of the School's projects, funded by the ATP, has been the green roof gardens which feature grasses, trees and vegetables planted atop the building which provide insulation, lower heating and cooling costs. It is also used as a hands-on teaching tool for conservation as the students help care for the plants and observe their growth.

"My first visit to the Avedisian School was in 2009 when I visited the old campus in Malatia-Sepastia," said Ms. Papelian. "Despite the chal-

"The United Nations Development Committee (UNDP) was also impressed by the Avedisian School," added Youatt. "A site visit by a UNDP representative during the School's construction and a meeting with Mr. Avedisian left the representative with a very positive impression of the visionary, yet practical, energy efficient design of the Avedisian School. The UNDP subsequently provided some material support for the construction and saw the project as inspirational for other countries and cities addressing similar challenges as those faced by the School."

The students at the Avedisian School have greatly benefitted from the healthy and sustainable environment at the School, where they attend classes in math, language, science, geography, computers, art, music, crafts and physical education. They have excelled in many areas helping the School win many awards, including national chess and debate competitions. The School has also won several prestigious awards including 1st place in Nationwide Russian Language Competency, 1st place in Nationwide French Competency and a Gold Medal for Best School Administration. Since 2015 the Avedisian School has had 62 students graduate from the high school. This year all of the 31 graduates have been admitted to higher educational establishments, including American University of Armenia, French University of Armenia Foundation, University of Foreign Languages, Pedagogical University of Armenia, Engineering University of Armenia, Armenian State University of Economics, Armenian Medical University, Armenian Conservatoire, Yerevan State University and Russian-Slavonic University.

"The Avedisian School has also benefitted from the LEED Certification in terms of being the most unique environmentally friendly building not only in Armenia but also in the whole South Caucasus Region," said Melanya Geghamyan, Principal of the Avedisian School. "The whole building is an environmental laboratory. The students

have been taught how to differentiate between litter and recyclables, classify garbage into special bins for paper, plastic and litter, how to save water, and plant and care for trees and plants due to the green roofs. Because of the LEED Certification and the Eco Project implemented at School, the students learn about composting and how significant it is to take advantage of enriching the soil with the principle of 'zero waste.'"

AMAA-Armenia Representative Harout Nercessian added that "as a Christian organization, the AMAA cares deeply about the environment and protecting God's land and resources. The Avedisian School and Community Center educates our students about environmental issues both academically and practically and encourages them to adopt eco-friendly habits and promote them among their families and friends. The AMAA's trailblazing efforts at the Avedisian School have helped promote environmental awareness among the students and serves as an inspirational model to other schools and organizations throughout Armenia."

"The AMAA salutes the pioneering insight of a remarkable group of project owners and professionals who rose above the cost and construction considerations to be the good stewards of the Creator in securing the LEED Certification and the LEED Earth Designation for the Avedisian School," said Zaven Khanjian, Executive Director/CEO of the AMAA. "We have been entrusted with the welfare of our planet. The Benefactors, the AMAA Board and Administration and the faculty and students of the Avedisian School are taking good care of Armenia's ecology while they toil to provide an environmentally sustainable Homeland for the enjoyment of generations to come."



Avedisian School new building Inauguration Day

"The Avedisian School is a source of great pride for the AMAA in Armenia for many reasons," said Dr. Nazareth Darakjian, president of the AMAA's Board of Directors. "The standard of education is very high in comparison to other schools in the area and the School provides an education tuition free in an area that houses families with modest means. Almost all of the graduates have pursued higher education in the local colleges and universities. At the same time, the Avedisian School building serves as a lesson to Armenia's architects and designers on how to build a structure that is beautiful and yet efficient in the use of energy and natural resources. This is of utmost strategic importance for a country that must import sources of energy from other countries. Our congratulations and special thanks to Ed Avedisian and Ron Altoon for this accomplishment."

Funding for the LEED Certification process was generously provided to the AMAA by the John Mirak Foundation of Massachusetts. The Mirak family's Foundation has committed to preserving Armenia by funding organizations that focus on issues surrounding the environment, the welfare of children, autism, poverty reduction and education at all levels.

"When we were approached by Ed to help fund the new School, he gave us several naming opportunities," said Julia Mirak, Trustee of the John Mirak Foundation. "Many of them involved funding infrastructure or playing fields, but the idea of funding the LEED Certification process was immediately attractive to us. Not only would it help the current students and faculty by providing a more inviting atmosphere in which to learn and teach, but the systems that were being proposed would enhance the neighborhood for generations to

come. Our family is proud to have been able to help make the School a beacon in Armenia for sustainability, energy conservation, pollution control and environmental education and responsibility."

Today, five years after the new campus opened its doors, we can observe that it truly is a green school. More than 400 trees and shrubs surround the campus, many planted by the students with support from the ATP. Students plant and care for vegetables on one of the School's green roof areas. They also create compost from cafeteria scraps, recycle paper, and compete to see who can make the most creative art from discarded items. The ATP recognizes the Avedisian School as a prominent partner school - whenever ATP wants to pilot a new program or project in its environmental education curriculum, Principal Geghamyan welcomes our educators. And, it is great fun for students to visit ATP's nursery in Karin Village and plant trees each spring. It is fitting that the Avedisian School has received the first LEED Certification in the region. It sets the example for how schools can help develop the next generation of environmental stewards. Congratulations to the team who made this certification happen. I am proud to be associated with such a fine institution."



# Arts & Living

## Arpi Sarafian Anthology Published by Tekeyan Cultural Association

GLENDALÉ — Arpi Sarafian's 235-page anthology, *Endless Crossings: Reflections on Armenian Art and Culture in Los Angeles*, has just been published by the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada as part of its ongoing publication series.

In a wide-ranging and diverse mix of essays published over a span of over 30 years Sarafian explores the complexities of the immigrant experience. In a new definition of reality, she contends, survival requires the negotiation of several worlds. "Ethnic" is past its definition of the clash of two cultures.

Indeed, deconstructing the ethnic/mainstream polarity, that is removing Armenianness, and by extension any other ethnicity, from opposition to the "System," may just be the only hope for survival, if at all possible, for Armenians in the diaspora. The author would like to see the hyphen dropped from Armenian-American (as well as from Chinese-American, Mexican-American or from any other hyphenated American) as it creates a hierarchy which inevitably leads to the valuing of the so-called "majority" culture and the belittling of the "other," the "lesser" culture.

A rich and vibrant culture like that of the Armenians is capable of continual renewal and cannot but find its way into the mainstream. Thus, rather than deplore the gradual loss of

our ethnic identity, we could help make "ethnic" a relative term with no stigma attached to it.

The book includes reviews of the works of literary figures such as Leon Zaven Surmelian, Peter Najarian, Micheline Aharonian Marcom, Aris Janigian, Garin

Hovannisian, Tina Demirjian, David Kherdian; artists Kardash Onnig and Seeroon Yeretizian; musicians Arpine and George Pehlivanian; and various theatrical performances, art exhibits and conferences.

Sarafian holds a PhD from the University of Southern California and a BA and MA from the American University of Beirut. She was a lecturer in English Language and Literature at the California State University, Los Angeles, from 1978 to retirement in 2014. Sarafian has also taught at the California State University, Dominguez Hills and at Loyola Marymount University.

She has published articles in the *Armenian Observer*, the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, *Ararat* quarterly, *Armenian International Magazine*, *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, *Publication of the Modern Language Association*, *Journal of the Society of Armenian Studies*, and the *Los Angeles Times*.

Her anthology is available through Abril Bookstore in Glendale (email noor@abril-books.com). For more information about the Tekeyan Cultural Association's publication series, contact its North American headquarters (tcadirector@aol.com).



Arpi Sarfarian



## Rima Pipoyan

### 'When I Am Creating, I Feel Like I Am Not on the Earth'

YEREVAN — I have known dancer and choreographer Rima Pipoyan for more than 10 years. Together we have participated in modern dance lessons and I have

**By Artsvi Bakhchinyan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

watched more than a dozen of her performances. She is one of the few young professionals who always says something new in our art and about whom you will not say "promising" anymore, as she has justified all hopes one after

another and is never being satisfied of what she has achieved. Like many artists who are constantly in search of creativity, she does not care about archiving her work.

**Dear Rima, let's start our conversation with the opinion of Lithuanian ballet figure Jurijus Smorignas. "I have often noticed that interesting choreographers come not from great dancers, but from so-called mediocrities." As a dancer and choreographer do you agree with him?**

Actually he was right, I totally agree. Today, many world-famous choreographers and dance teachers prove the truth of these words. In my opinion, the dancer, lacking the ideal ballet body or skills, is starting to think more, to work more, to study more to achieve the perfection that the given art requires. By doing so, he gains deeper knowledge, which later he is being able to pass it in a more accessible way to his pupils, students, students, or artists. In my opinion this is the way to become a good dance teacher, and to become a good choreographer you need to have a vivid imagination and talent. And most of all, one should have love, great dedication, and boundless diligence.

I have not gone the easy way as a dancer, but I am happy and grateful for the challenges I have encountered in my creative life - they have polished and shaped me as an artist, as a director, as a thinker, as a human being in general. I was still a 14-year-old student at the State Choreographic College when I handed out my first ballet libretto on paper, which remained on paper, and I began to compose dances since I can remember. Who knows, if everything in my life were ideal and easily accessible, I probably would not have done anything

**And even if you never wore pointe shoes, you still perform in modern dance performances.**

Although I still dream of dancing "Giselle," at any rate today I am free to stage and dance whatever I want. I cannot live without creativity and I value my "freedom" very much. My love for classical ballet has not changed since childhood. Now, I appreciate it even more, but there was a moment in my life when I realized that the ideas I had could not be expressed only by the movements of ballet and classical dance. The movements automatically came into me, born mainly through improvisations. Of course, for me it was important to take master classes from modern

see RIMA, page 15



Rima Pipoyan

## Armen Edgarian's Photopainting Solo Exhibit Coming to La Cañada, Calif.

**By Aram Arkun**

Mirror-Spectator Staff

LA CAÑADA, Calif. — In Armenian circles, many know Armen Edgarian as a graphic designer. He has done freelance designing for various departments of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America and St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in New York for several decades, and has prepared the ads and mailings for the new Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Metro Los Angeles chapter. His full-time job is a Financial Publishing Specialist, meaning that he does graphic design production work for a financial company, and he has worked for prestigious firms like the Wall Street Journal Custom Studios and Hearst Magazines. But his heart is in his personal art, and his first solo exhibition of mixed media photographs, called *Urban Transitions*, opens Saturday, October 5 at Stephanie's Gallery in La Cañada, California. The TCA Metro Los Angeles chapter is supporting this event.

Born in Iran, Edgarian lived in Spain for two years, and came to the US when 22 years old. While he was in Spain, he met an Iranian photojournalist by the name of Bruce Shahidi, who introduced Edgarian to photography by show-



Armen Edgarian

ing him photographs he took in Iran and in places all around the world. Edgarian said that he still has the first photograph Shahidi showed him.

Edgarian majored in photography and computer graphics at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, and graduated in 1996. Though he took painting classes, he decided to focus on photography and design, and his photographs in New York were of a more traditional variety. He had participated in two or three group shows. Edgarian exclaimed that "This [present] show is major and life-changing for me! I found my medium and I am going to continue doing it. Hopefully, it will excite people as well who look at this art and see something different."

Edgarian explained further: "The reason I am having this show is that I moved to Los Angeles. Almost every subject that I have in the show is from Los Angeles. The Los Angeles area is not like New York. It is just suburban houses, with no subjects for me to photograph. So I ended up going around all the new construction sites that are happening in downtown Los Angeles. Most of the subjects are from those boarded up wooden boards around new construction sites where people come and put up posters, and somebody comes and puts up a poster on top of that. Then the building

see EDGARIAN, page 17





# Reclaiming Our Ancient Heritage

## Portasar

### (Göbekli Tepe)

By Adriana Tchalian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

During my first visit to Armenia, I expected to find a rugged and muscular terrain, given the steady diet of clichéd images I had consumed over the years of one very famous, snow-capped mountain range. What I found instead was a mild and feminine landscape where ribbons of smooth terrain are topped with delicate, cream-colored hills set against lush valleys. Even mighty Ararat appeared painterly, if not feminine, underneath the Anatolian sun. Vincent Van Gogh would have liked painting this delicate landscape, I thought to myself, seeing flecks of Japan in its eastern terrain. Could the Armenian Plateau be, as some have described, the navel of the world?

Enter Portasar (the navel of a mountain), better known as Göbekli Tepe (potbelly hill), a prehistoric magnum opus built by hunter-gatherers dating back to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period (ca. 10th-9th millennia BC). Considered the oldest megalithic monument in the world, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is located in the historic Armenian Plateau, approximately 35 miles north of the Syrian border and roughly ten miles northeast of Urfa (Sanliurfa).

It's also a mere 25 miles from the ancient city of Haran, mentioned in the book of Genesis as the place where Abram (later called Abraham) settled for a time after emigrating from Ur of the Chaldeans, an epic journey that would take him all the way to the promised land of Canaan.

Portasar is perched above a thousand-foot-diameter mound overlooking what was once a fertile plain. At first glance, its circular construction is reminiscent of England's Stonehenge (ca. 2500 BC). But unlike Stonehenge and all other prehistoric monuments, including Armenia's Karahundj (ca. 5500 BC) and Metsamor (ca. 5000 BC), Portasar is said to be the world's first "temple," this according to German archaeologist Klaus Schmidt who excavated the site from 1996 to 2014.

To summarize Schmidt, Portasar breaks all the rules of how an early hunter-gatherer society is supposed to behave. According to a standard model of prehistoric human development, religion and, by extension, its architectural vernacular, arrives on the scene after the invention of farming, not before. But Portasar turns that model on its head by building monumental structures before the onset of farming.

Portasar's circular megalithic structures were likely used for funerary purposes and other notable observances. It's believed that the site was set apart from mundane, day-to-day activities, much like Stonehenge (ca. 2500 BC) and nearby Durrington Walls (a circular structure made of timber, ca. 2600 BC). According to Schmidt, there is no evidence of dwellings found at the site. Hence, it's very likely that the builders of Portasar lived in a nearby settlement and travelled to the sites on notable occasions. Numerous animal bones uncovered at Portasar, as well as Durrington Walls, suggest that there may



Detail from Portasar, a "Vulture Stone"

have been sacrifices and feasting going on.

Two iconic T-shaped pillars, measuring as high as 16 feet tall and weighing as much as 10 tons each, were constructed from locally-sourced limestone and erected in the middle of the structure. These giant pillars, some with anthropomorphic features, are encircled with a stone wall that's interjected with a smaller set of T-shaped pillars.

According to Andrew Curry of the Smithsonian Magazine, much of Portasar is yet to be discovered. Only 5 percent of the 22-acre site has been excavated. It's estimated that the area contains at least sixteen additional megalithic structures that have yet to be dug up.

Portasar is set in Upper Mesopotamia, an area nested within the Fertile Crescent, also known as the Cradle of Civilization. This region includes parts of Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. The term – Cradle of Civilization – typically conjures up images of ancient Mesopotamian empires dotting the Tigris and Euphrates corridor, not to mention those along the Nile. This crescent-shaped landmass has given birth to many "firsts" in human history. The ancient Sumerians (ca. 5000/4500-1750 BC), for instance, invented everything from writing to geometry; they domesticated animals and developed irrigation for agriculture, among many other originations.

According to Harvard archaeologist Ofer Bar-Yosef, agriculture began in south-eastern Turkey and northern Syria (part of the Armenian Plateau). But many of Bar-Yosef's contemporaries disagree with his claim, citing that agriculture originated in multiple locations within the Fertile Crescent. Nevertheless, Bar-Yosef maintains that honest-to-goodness agriculture (one that combined crops and livestock) developed once, and then proliferated into other parts.

The hunter-gatherers who built Portasar seemed to possess a remarkable cognizance about life – be it zoological, anatomical, celestial, et al. This is evident in the artifacts and relief sculptures found at the site. For instance, there's a stylized

etching of what appears to be a woman giving birth, and another featuring a large aperture (seven to eight inches in diameter) that may have symbolized a womb, with archaic representations of human legs. An additional example includes the so-called Vulture Stone, an etching featuring gruesome animals and insects that may have corresponded to constellations.

Perhaps it's this level of perception that eventually led the builders of Portasar to transition into a proto-farming society. But as Schmidt explains, this shift from hunter-gatherer to farming may have brought about the downfall of this megalithic site. It's believed that the site was deliberately buried as this new farming technology was being implemented in the region. Later on, nearby settlements of Boncuklu Höyük (ca. 8500 BC) and Çatal Höyük (ca. 6000 – 5900 BC) would become important centers of agricultural activities.

One of the most interesting aspects of Portasar is its seemingly unapologetic view of nature, something that really comes through in its artifacts. Like so many other prehistoric sites – the caves of Lascaux (ca. 15,000 – 13,000 BC) and Chauvet (ca. 15,000 – 13,000 BC), just to name a few – many of the animals depicted at Portasar were not used for food. Instead, these creatures seem to be showcasing their gruesome traits, perhaps as a testament to nature's dark and destructive attributes.

By sharp contrast, many contemporary artists have taken a much softer view of nature, perhaps in fear of being labeled offensive, given nature's inevitable identification with women (à la mother nature, etc.). This, coupled with a relativist mindset where everything is meaningless and there is no Truth, etc. has resulted in empty art galleries on any given weekend. But prehistoric sites, like Stonehenge, are bustling with tens of thousands of tourists from all over the world, eager to witness its timeless vernacular where meaning and purpose still preside as important ingredients in life, in art. What's more, these ancient sites attract not just the learned few, but people from all walks of life who've been stirred by its style and substance.

Ironically, many centuries later, the people of the Armenian Plateau would be the first nation in the world to adopt Christianity (301 AD). Perhaps this was partly due to their age-old understanding of nature as something more than just a benevolent force – Christ as the antidote to nature.

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Portasar at night





ARTS & LIVING

# Rima Pipoyan: ‘When I Am Creating, I Feel Like I Am Not on the Earth’

RIMA, from page 13

dance specialists, studying Asian martial arts, philosophy, religion; they helped to further refine, strengthen and substantiate my knowledge and movements. It is also very important when you are trying to find your own style, to discover your world; this is one of the major points of modern dance art. The freedom that I lacked in classical ballet, modern dance gave to me.

**I remember your “La vita nuova,” a contemporary ballet performance at the X Theater Festival in 2013, and we were all upset when the jury gave the first prize to an alumni’s ten-minute performance, which much inferior to yours.**

Art is a field of subjective perceptions, and since the jury members had nothing to do with dance or ballet art, at best they could only say whether the performance touched their heart or not. Frankly saying, not winning a prize did not affect me, after a while we were awarded the Artavazd Prize, one of the highest awards in the Armenian theatrical field, but it did not change anything in our creative life.

**If I remember correctly, “La vita nuova” was partially funded by the Georgians.**

Yes, it was staged with funding from the

Ministry of Culture of Georgia, and they also partially financed my contemporary ballet performance “Sinful Passions” based on Beethoven’s music, which took place marking the jubilee of ballerina Maria Divanyan’s stage activity. The performance premiered in July 2015 at the Alexander Spendiaryan National Academic Opera and Ballet Theater.

**To develop modern dance, one should not just copy styles, techniques, but change mind-sets. How ready is Armenia for a change in mentality when it comes to dance?**

Yes, the important thing is the mind; if the mind is ready, the body easily obeyed. I used to have amateur dance groups, and I noticed that people over the age of 20, who have never danced and have developed minds, can easily perceive and reproduce new movements. Sometimes it is very interesting to look at and follow people who have no physical training or dance instructions. One can also learn and even get almost the same aesthetic that a trained body has. After all, modern dance was created by people who wanted to express their thoughts in mature age without having a ballet educated body. People always call me asking if I have a permanent group where they can come and learn modern dance. How can I have such a group?

We do not even have a special stage for dance in Yerevan.

**I have heard that we have a theater of choreography in the ground floor of our choreographic college. Such a theater would seem to be the most suitable place for modern ballet performances...**

This theater, which was established by our eminent choreographer Maxim Martirosyan at the time, is unfortunately in a hopeless state and is on the verge of closing. It could have been a great platform for developing contemporary dance art in Armenia, educating new generations and presenting our art to the international community.

**Classical dance has its fixed positions, postures, movements. In modern ballet, the creator is free. But I have always wondered how modern dance movements are created: does the music t give birth to them?**

When I was in Berlin, the Germans asked me the same question. Many people are interested

in this question, but I can never find a clear answer. I can only say that there are no clear rules for me to create; the mind, the music, the time, the possibilities of the body inspire and



Rima Pipoyan

# Recipe

## Guest Recipe

by Christine Vartanian Datian

### Cheese Blintzes with Honey and Jam

Vintage Press Chef Creates a Delicious Brunch Dish  
Recipe and photo contributed by David Vartanian, The Vintage Press Restaurant in Visalia, Calif., named one of America’s Best Chefs.\*

#### BATTER

3/4 cup all-purpose flour  
3 tablespoons sugar  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
2 eggs  
1-1/4 cups milk  
1/4 cup + 2 tablespoons melted butter  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

#### PREPARATION

In a large mixing bowl, sift together the dry ingredients. Set aside.  
In a medium size bowl, combine the eggs, milk, 1/4 cup butter and the vanilla. Whisk the egg mixture into the dry ingredients until smooth. Heat a crepe pan over medium heat. Brush the pan with part of the remaining butter. Pour in an ounce and half of the batter. Tip the pan slightly to spread the batter. Brown the crepe on one side and then turn it over. Remove the crepe from the pan. Continue until all batter is used.

#### FILLING

3/4 cup ricotta cheese  
3/4 cup mascarpone cream cheese  
2 tablespoons honey  
Zest of one orange  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
Powdered sugar  
1/4 cup each of 2 varieties of jam

#### PREPARATION

Mix the ricotta, mascarpone, vanilla, honey and orange zest together in a bowl.  
To assemble crepes: In the center of each crepe, place a heaping tablespoon of the filling. Fold the edges in on each side and then fold the top and bottom sides of crepe over to form a rectangle.  
Now heat a large skillet over medium heat and brush with melted butter. Place the crepe in the pan and cook for approximately 30 seconds on each side. Place crepes on warm plates, dust with powdered sugar and garnish with choice of jam.

The Vintage Press is one of Central California’s most elegant dining experiences. If you are in Visalia, plan to visit the Vintage Press Restaurant for an incomparable Sunday brunch, lunch or dinner. Wine Spectator writes it has "one of the best wine lists in the world," while Fodor’s raves it is "the best restaurant in the Central Valley," and the L.A. Times applauds it as "a bastion of culinary merit."

\*Best Chefs America features premier chefs that have been nominated and recommended by their peers in the culinary field.

dictate me. When I put on a performance for a certain female dancer, all my work is being based on the image, skills, and peculiarities of her. While staging a performance I put the emphasis on music, but it is the subject that often comes to my mind the first, and I start searching for relevant music, which is a much more complicated process.

**Don’t you think traditional Armenian dance movements can also interestingly live a new life in contemporary dance performances?**

Of course they can, and it is only appreciated. For example, in the presentation of “Medieval Images,” which was my diploma thesis, I tried to reproduce the positions, gestures and movements depicted in our miniatures in a new way, by combining them with classical dance elements. I also love doing the opposite - inventing new movements under traditional Armenian music and stage them in a new approach. However, what is typical of our traditional dances - twists of wrists, shoulder movements, so-called springs, etc., I have not yet tried to include in my performances. Maybe in the future I will make such an attempt.

**You have been on constant tours lately and have received numerous invitations from different countries to stage and perform. What is your activity here in Armenia and what are your goals?**

Yes, in recent years the invitations fortunately (and maybe unfortunately), are so many that in my workplaces they jokingly say “you have become a mirage, you appear in our eyes occasionally.” Because of my absence, I had to leave the State Institute of Theater and Cinema where I had been teaching for seven years.

My “A Woman before Decision Making” solo received invitations from over 10 countries and was presented in over 30 different cities, participating in prestigious festivals and competitions around the world, receiving numerous awards.

In Italy, Poland, Croatia, Germany, I presented my “Hello, Kitty” performance, which I will present in Moldova this November.

I was in Venice in May-June this year; I was invited by the prestigious Venice International Biennale to stage a performance with seven dancers selected specifically for this project. After two months of work, the performance called “What If” was premiered at the Piccolo Arsenale Theater in Venice. The audience and critics enthusiastically accepted the performance. The “Self-portrait” solo dance that I recently staged and which I perform myself, went on tour in Belgium, Germany and was also a great success.

In November, I will travel to Spain to start a new project as a producer and dancer. I have many programs related to Armenia. But one of my dreams right now is to stage Stravinsky’s “The Rite of Spring” at our Opera and Ballet Theater and form a repertoire of contemporary ballet performances. I hope that we will perform it here next spring, with the talented composer and conductor Alexander Iradyan, who has enthusiastically agreed to head the orchestra. We also intend to invite a Ukrainian choreographer, a leading soloist from the Kiev Academic Theater and Kiev Modern Ballet Artyom Shoshin, who will work and perform in a one-act modern ballet with Komitas’s music.

Still so much!

**And I have no doubt that, despite all sorts of difficulties you will fulfill all them quite successfully. Good luck, dear Rima, to all your projects - both close and distant!**





ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

ARIZONA

**NOVEMBER 2-3 — ARMENIAFest at St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church.** Weekend food and cultural festival featuring traditional Armenian foods, beverages, exhibits, music and dance performances. 8849 E. Cholla St., Scottsdale.

CALIFORNIA

**NOVEMBER 23 — Armenian EyeCare Project Gala. Join the Armenian EyeCare Project for its annual Gala** celebrating another year of great accomplishments in Armenia. Held at the beautiful Balboa Bay Resort in Newport Beach, CA at 6:30pm. Evening begins with stunning cocktail reception and silent auction followed by an exquisite five-course dinner, live Armenian music by the Hosharian Brothers Band, an exciting live auction and more! Tickets are \$450/person if reserved by Oct. 10; \$500/person after Oct. 10; and \$250/person for those age 35 & under. All proceeds to benefit the AECP’s many sight-saving programs in Armenia. To RSVP or for more information, call 949-933-4069, email info@eyecareproject.com or visit eyecareproject.com/gala

CONNECTICUT

**OCTOBER 24 — Book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian, editor of her father’s memoir *Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army*, University of Connecticut’s Office of Global Affairs, UConn, Hartford, Hartford Times Building, Room HTB 210 – 10 Prospect Street, Hartford, from 5 to 8 p.m.** For information: (860) 486-5184 or zahra.ali@uconn.edu. Book sale/signing during reception prior to the presentation and after. All proceed from the sale of the books will be donated.

FLORIDA

**DECEMBER 7 — Saturday, 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. The Women’s Guild of St. David Armenian Church in Boca Raton,** invites all members, spouses & friends to their Annual Christmas Luncheon & Fashion Show at the Wyndham Deerfield Beach Resort, 2019 NE 2nd Street, Deerfield Beach, FL, to enjoy an afternoon of fellowship, delicious food, and exciting fashion provided by Mario Pucci, among others. For reservations (deadline Nov. 29th) and additional information, please call Diane Azarian (401) 556-3886, Ginny Kyvelos (781) 789-9169, or the church office (561 994-2335).

**DECEMBER 13, 14, & 15 — Friday, Saturday, & Sunday - Friday - 6pm to 10pm; Saturday - 9am to 10pm; Sunday - 1pm to 6pm; - St. David Armenian Art & Food Festival,** 2300 Yamato Road, Boca Raton, FL. Join us for an afternoon of delicious homemade Armenian food, fun, fellowship, raffles, and children’s activities while you shop for Christmas gifts at our vendors. For more information, call the church office at 561-994-2335. Admission is free and there is ample parking on the church grounds.

MASSACHUSETTS

**SEPTEMBER 29 — Sunday, 6 p.m., the screening of “The Stateless Diplomat,” a documentary by Mimi Malayan** on the heroic life and legacy of Diana A. Apcar (1859-1937), Armenia’s Honorary Consul to Japan in 1920 at Mosesian Center for Arts, Watertown. Organized by the Armenian Cultural Foundation and co-sponsored by Amaras Art Alliance, Arlington International Film Festival, co-Armenian International Women’s Association, Armenian Museum of America, Armenian Women’s Welfare Association, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, and Tekeyan Cultural Association. The tickets will be available in the Dorothy and Charles Mosesian Center for the Arts through the following link: <https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/pe/10450012>

**OCTOBER 2 — Food Tasting with Dr. Mari Firkatian, 6.30 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. lecture and tasting.** Armenian Museum of America Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Professor of History and Armenian cook, Firkatian will demonstrate traditional Armenian recipes from her book, *Home Again*. Tasting and Q & A to follow. Books will be available for purchase. To RSVP, call Garin Habeshian at

617- 926-2562, ext.103 or email [ghabeshian@armenian-museum.org](mailto:ghabeshian@armenian-museum.org). Members \$15. Non-members \$20.

**OCTOBER 2 —Joint Sts. Vartanantz – Hye Point Golf Outing at the beautiful Butter Brook Golf Club in Westford.** Proceeds to benefit scholarships to Diocesan youth programs. 10 a.m. Shotgun start. Golfers with all skill levels most welcome. Single players will be grouped into foursomes. \$150 for Golf, lunch, and Dinner. \$165 will include 25 raffle tickets. Awards dinner to follow golf outing at Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. For registration and sponsorship information, please contact Steve Sarkisian at 978-808-2820, [Stsgolf@earthlink.net](mailto:Stsgolf@earthlink.net).

**OCTOBER 7 — St James Men’s Club Dinner Meeting - social hour and mezza at 6:15 PM and dinner at 7 p.m.,** St James Armenian Church Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center - Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown. Guest speaker Dr. Myron Allukian, public health expert and the former Dental Director of the City of Boston for 34 years. The title of Dr Allukian’s presentation is Healthy is Wealthy: How to Live a Healthy and Longer Life, which is a discussion of health care in the United States with an emphasis on what individuals, families, and society can do to help ensure healthier lifestyles and healthier lives. He will also discuss the impact on our lives by the US health care system and big business. Dr. Allukian is currently the President of the Massachusetts Coalition for Oral Health and Vice Chair of the Oral Health Working Group. He has been called “The Social Conscience of Dentistry”. Mezza and a Losh Kebab & Kheyma Dinner \$17/person. Ladies invited. For additional information call the St James Church office at 617-923-8860 or call Hapet Berberian at 781-367-6598.

**OCTOBER 13 — Sunday Cultural Series! Traditional Armenian Dance Lessons. 2-4 pm,** Armenian Museum of America Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor, 65 Main Street, Watertown. On the second Sunday of every month, join experts Gary and Susan Lind-Sinianian for a workshop on Armenian dance. Gary and Susan have collected over 100 village dances and shared these with the community for the last 42 years. Learn Armenian dances performed at American picnics and traditional dances from the old country. Members free. Non-members \$12. Register online (<https://www.armenianmuseum.org/museum-events>) or call Education Coordinator, Garin Habeshian at 617.926.2562 Ext. 103

**OCTOBER 19 – NOVEMBER 9 — Fall Studio Art Classes Armenian Museum of America** Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Young artists will be inspired by objects on display in the galleries to refine their individual artistic talents. Projects such as painting from observation, designing Armenian calligraphy, and pottery decoration will be presented. Members \$96. Non-members \$120. For more info and to register visit <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/classes>, or call Education Coordinator, Garin Habeshian at 617-926-2562, ext. 103.

**OCTOBER 18-19 — St. James 72nd Annual Bazaar, Delicious Armenian Food and Pastries. Silent Auction,** Attic Treasures, Booths and Vendors. Raffles, Children’s Activities, and more. Friday and Saturday. Details to follow. St. James Armenian Church – 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information contact 617.923.8860 or [info@stthagop.com](mailto:info@stthagop.com) or visit [www.stjameswatertown.org](http://www.stjameswatertown.org).

**OCTOBER 19 — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) 100th Annual Meeting Banuquet** celebrating the Armenian Evangelical Church. Westin Hotel, Waltham, 70 Third Ave., Watlham. 6 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. Dinner, \$125. RSVP by October 5. Tickets and sponsorships available online at [amaa.org](http://amaa.org). Checks payable to the Armenian Missionary Association of Ameirca, and mail to 31 W. Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652

**OCTOBER 19 — The Vosbikians are coming to the Merrimack Valley.** The Armenian Friends of America proudly present their Annual HYE KEF 5 Dance, featuring The Vosbikians. The DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Andover, MA. Tickets Purchased before 9/13/19 will include the Great Venue, Outstanding Buffet, The Vosbikian Band and 5 Free Raffle Tickets Adults \$75.00 & Students 21 & under \$65 Specially priced AFA Rooms available through 9/17/19. For Tickets and more information, Contact: Lu Sirmaian 978-683-9121 or Sharke’ Der Apkarian at 978-808-0598 Visit [www.Armenia-FriendsofAmerica.org](http://www.Armenia-FriendsofAmerica.org)

**OCTOBER 20 — Annual Banquet of Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston,** Celebrating the 58th Anniversary of the Consecration of Holy Trinity and

honoring Bruce Newell as the “Parishioner of the Year,” 12:30 p.m., Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Save the date; details to follow.

**OCTOBER 27 — Sunday Cultural Series: Popular Songs by Armenian Composers Performed by renowned singers** Arthur Ispiryan from Yerevan and Nara from California 2-4 pm, Armenian Museum of America Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor, 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA. Please join us at the Armenian Museum as we welcome renowned singers Arthur Ispiryan from Yerevan and Nara from California as they perform popular sons by Armenian composers. Special appearance by Aram Satian, the president of the Composer’s Union of Armenia and Composer Maestro Konstantin Petrosian. This performance is presented by Armenian Museum of America and the Composer’s Union of Armenia, and sponsored by the Dadourian Foundation. Special appearance by Aram Satian, the president of the Composer’s Union of Armenia and Composer Maestro Konstantin Petrosian. Members free. Non-members free with \$15 Museum admission.

**NOVEMBER 1,2 — NAASR Grand Opening and Gala. Friday, November 1 – Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting,** NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, at NAASR’s new world headquarters, 395 Concord Avenue, Belmont, MA. Saturday, November 2 – NAASR 65th Anniversary Gala, at the Royal Sonesta Hotel, Cambridge. 6 pm Reception, 7 pm Dinner and Program. Honoree Dr. Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York; Master of Ceremonies David Ignatius, columnist for the *Washington Post* and novelist; Featuring renowned soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian, accompanied by the Borromeo String Quartet, performing a program of songs by Komitas. Further details to follow.

**NOVEMBER 8 and 9 – Annual Autumnfest Bazaar sponsored by the Armenian Church at Hye Pointe,** at our new location 1280 Boston Road, (Rte. 125) Haverhill, Friday 12 – 7 pm and Saturday 12 – 7 pm. Lamb, Losh, Chicken Kebab and Kheyma. Dinners served all day. Pastry table, Armenian cuisine, gift baskets, raffles for cash and prizes. For more info, visit [www.hyepointearmenianchurch.org](http://www.hyepointearmenianchurch.org) or call (978) 372-9227. Take Rte. 495 N to exit 48, bear right at the end of the ramp.

**NOVEMBER 9 — Armenian Women’s Welfare Association, Annual Luncheon,** Saturday, 12 - 4pm, Belmont Country Club, 181 Winter Street, Belmont.

**NOVEMBER 16 — St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School 35th Anniversary Celebration.** Keynote speaker: Dr. Diran Apelian, Professor of Engineering & Former Provost, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Distinguished Professor, UC Irvine. Entertainment: singer Artur Hakobyan (Mister X). Emcee: Lisa Gulesserian, Ph.D., Harvard’s Preceptor on Armenian Language & Culture.@ The Westin Hotel Waltham-Boston. 6:30pm Cocktails / 7:30pm Dinner and program. More to follow...

**DECEMBER 6 and 7 — Friday and Saturday, Trinity Christmas Bazaar, Friday, 12 noon-9 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.;** Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. For further information, contact the Church Office, 617.354.0632.

**DECEMBER 15 — Christmas Holiday Concert – Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra,** 3:00 p.m., Church Sanctuary, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA. Save the date; details to follow. For further information, call the Church Office, 617.354.0632, or email [office@htaac.org](mailto:office@htaac.org).

MICHIGAN

**OCTOBER 26 — Kef Time Keghi IV 6:30 p.m. Saturday, at St John Armenian Cultural Hall, Southfield,** headlined with Traditional Keghetzi Pagharch feast, full buffet dinner with dancing, music by the Keghi All-Star Armenian Band. Reservations call Laura Negosian Lucassian at 248-376-3794 or email at [Llucassian@TBEonline.org](mailto:Llucassian@TBEonline.org). Donation: Adults \$45, Children under 17, \$20. Cash Bar. Mail checks to Karen Nigosian, 21919 Michigan Ave, Dearborn. MI 48124 Checks payable to Nor Keghi Association. Proceeds to support continuing renovations at public schools and community projects in Nor Keghi, Armenia. Supported by parishioners of the four Armenian churches in Greater Detroit.

**NOVEMBER 16 — The Knights of Vartan, Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge #6 and the Daughters of Vartan,** Zabelle Otyag #12 will celebrate their respective 100th and 70th organization anniversaries. Featuring: Kevork Artinian and his All Star Band at St. Mary’s Cultural Hall, *continued on nexty page*





ARTS & LIVING

# Armen Edgarian’s Photopainting Solo Exhibit Coming to La Cañada, Calif.

EDGARIAN, from page 13  
management paints over it or rips it up. This creates subjects for me, and every day I go and try to see what changes and I take pictures.”

In this downtown area, Edgarian said, all the advertising for music groups, theaters and events are posted on these walls, and people put graffiti or other posters on it. This becomes his canvas.

Edgarian likes to call what he does now photopainting. He said, “The thing with the posters and the paint, people come and do graffiti. It is just the combination of everything that creates something new. I get really close. I really zoom in to a section of a wall and then photograph that. What happens is that I am getting closer and closer and closer to my subject. Before, I used to take a photograph, let’s say, of a door in the Village or in New York....Now I get closer and take a picture of the lock that is on the door. This is the comparison. I get closer to those papers, the colorful textures on the wall, the wooden board itself, the paint that the management puts over it so it wouldn’t be an eyesore for the public. Just a combination of everything, it has become this array of colorful and yet beautiful compositions that you pass by and don’t notice. Then you look closely, and you see that there is so much going on.”

Edgarian first takes a photograph, and then makes digital changes to it. He then uses a process called emulsion transfer to place the digitally prepared image on paper, wood or other substances. First, the files are printed on a transparency film. The ink on this film gets released through a certain chemical to whatever substrate, paper, wood, etc., that you choose, so that the image is now on that object. Edgarian then puts paint, water colors, soft pastels, acrylic, dry lines or chalk on the paper or wood to emphasize the lines or color and give it a bolder, more lively look than just a flat photograph. He said that this gives the image a little more texture, and added, “That is why I don’t frame my work—because I don’t want anything touching it. I want to have that connection between the photo and the viewers, so they can see the little details and the texture created by this transfer and the stuff I add to it.”

He defined his style as follows: “I would say it is more like my way of Expressionism. I don’t know how else to describe it. That is the closest I can come up with. That is what I see and what I interpret, from what I see. ... It can be Expressionism; it can be abstract. Sometimes it has to do with just the compo-

sition that may be Cubism in some parts. It is a mixture of everything that I have been interested in art, the history of art, in fine arts. Somehow it is coming back to me, the

of [Pablo] Picasso, I see [Joan] Miro, I see touches, subjects and forms. Not that I am exactly copying them. Some compositions are like other photographs but it has turned into

compositions on walls, and then, mainly in black and white. He was a teacher, but he did photography. I see a little bit of that in my work, if it is black and white, if it is just solid things. What I can say is that throughout all these years you look at these artists, and it comes out some way in your work. Aha, it looks a little bit like that, it looks a little bit Miro, like this person or that person.”

Some more artists whose work Edgarian likes include Kurt Schwitters, Robert Rauschenberg, Wassily Kandinsky, Francis Bott and Manabu Mabe. Concerning Armenian influences in his work, Edgarian noted that there might be a little of Arshile Gorky.

After noting his influences, Edgarian stressed that “nobody can say that, oh, what I do is unique and nobody else does it. There is no such thing.”

He has previously stated that, “I learned to observe the ordinary and appreciate beauty everywhere.... Every landscape, patterns of light, color, texture and still life simultaneously morphed into an abstract image. It was as if the whole world had exploded into form, color and design that all began with a photograph. ... I am hoping that by photographing what I see with my distinct vision and then transforming the static image with painterly technique, I might create something that is different, deliberate and yet spontaneous. It is every artist’s humble hope that, in this way, the image points to deeper truths and the viewer’s heart opens to the insight!”

The spark for the present exhibition was that, Edgarian said, “I am here and I can’t just produce work and do nothing about it.” There will be between 30 and 35 works exhibited. The sizes are either 30 inches by 40 inches or 24 by 36 inches. The size is determined by the size of the transparency film.

The exhibition has something for everyone, for as its description notes philosophically, the the original subjects of Edgarian’s art encompass “all the elements of light, color and design found in formal art, but existing only for a short time before eroding entirely. Transitions that so powerfully evoke the slide from order to chaos—like life itself!”

For more about Edgarian, see <https://www.armenjohnndesign.com/>. The opening of his exhibition will be at 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. on October 5 at Stephanie’s Gallery, 466 Foothill Blvd., Unit C, in La Cañada, Flintridge, CA (telephone 818 790-4905, email [info@stephanies-gallery.com](mailto:info@stephanies-gallery.com))



“Anchor,” by Armen Edgarian

way that I am doing the photography right now. Sometimes I see other photographs, other masters, other painters, I see a little bit of [Wassily] Kandinsky, I see a little bit maybe

my way of doing it.”  
“[Aaron] Siskind,” Edgarian said, “was one of my favorite photographers. He photographed ink on the wall, or sometimes just

## C A L E N D A R

### MICHIGAN

from previous page

18100 Merriman Rd, Livonia. This is a fundraiser Dinner/Kef Dance to celebrate Knights and Daughters as well as a chance for future members to observe how our community puts our heritage on display. All proceeds to fund renovation of school gymnasium, Knights of Vartan #106, Elementary School, Yerevan, Armenia. For Reservations Contact: Laura Lucassian, (248) 376-3794, Cost \$75 per person, \$40 after 9:30 pm

### NEW JERSEY

**OCTOBER 2 — Mimi Melkonian, author and educator, Nightingales: True Stories of Escape, Hope and Resilience**, a compilation of Syrian refugees’ stories fleeing a country in the midst of a civil war. 7 p.m. Pitkin Education Building, Room A-104, Bergen Community College, Paramus Campus. Free and open to the public. Co-hosted by the Tekeyan Cultural Association-Greater New York, Armenian International Women’s Association New Jersey Affiliate and the Daughters of Vartan. Light refreshments will be serviced and books will be available

for sale and signing.

**OCTOBER 12, 13 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association’s Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group** will present “Caught in the Net,” a comedy in one act, directed by Harout Chatmajian. Oradell Elementary School, 350 Prospect Ave., Oradell. 8 p.m. on Saturday and 4 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets \$35 and \$50. Performed in Armenian with English subtitles. For tickets call Marie (201) 745-8850 or Talar (201) 240-8541.

**OCTOBER 25 — Banquet Honoring Dr. Taner Akcam Abajian Hall St. Leon complex Fair Lawn, NJ** Sponsored by Knights & Daughters of Vartan- Under the Auspices of His Grace Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate. For Reservations please call Sona Manuelian 551-427-8763. \$125 p.p. early reservations recommended.

### NEW YORK

**NOVEMBER 15 — Book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian, editor of her father’s memoir Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army** - Fordham University Armenian Society, Fordham University, 113 West 60th St. N.Y., N.Y. 10023 – Room 602 – 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. For information – [Takoosh@aol.com](mailto:Takoosh@aol.com) Book sales/signing following the

presentation. All proceeds from the sale of the books will be donated to St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

### RHODE ISLAND

**SEPTEMBER 29 — The Armenian Historical Association of Rhode Island (AHARI) will host an afternoon with Susan Lind-Sinanian**, renowned museum curator and educator at the Armenian Museum of America as she presents her upcoming book. Sunday. Refreshments 12.30 p.m., lecture at 1 p.m. Attendees are invited to bring their own family textile treasures with them for an “Antiques Road Show” style evaluation. AHARI, 245 Waterman St., fifth floor conference room, Providence.

**OCTOBER 20 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church**, Providence Presents Meet With The Doctors - Questions & Answers. We invite everyone to avail themselves of this opportunity and “Meet with our Armenian Doctors” Dr. Herman Ayyazyan Internal Medicine. Topic: New Trends in Primary Care Medicine. Ara Boghigian, Moderator. Sunday, 12:30 p.m., Hanoian Hall, 70 Jefferson St., Providence.

*Calendar items are free. Entries should not be longer than 5 lines. Listings should include contact information. Items will be edited to fit the space, if need be. A photo may be sent with the listing no later than Mondays at noon.*





## COMMENTARY

## COMMENTARY

# Pashinyan Extends Golden Bridge To Diaspora

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan assumed power in May 2018 by riding on a wave of populism that he had generated.

On September 22, he tried to extend the momentum of that populism to the diaspora, delivering a masterful speech in Los Angeles. His speech stretched beyond celebrating the 28th anniversary of the independence of Armenia, covering some fundamental issues affecting Armenia and Armenians around the world.

Although these days the Pashinyan administration's revolving door of defections can compete with those of President Trump, betraying some instability at the helm, the prime minister was able to capture his audience through his charisma and seriousness of intent.

In the first place, his speech was a resounding tribute to the diaspora, acknowledging in detail endeavors to support Armenia's revival. Perhaps he went too far, saying that without diaspora help, Armenia could not survive.

Then, he went on to build block by block the golden bridge that he wants to extend from Armenia to the diaspora and vice versa.

He expressed his gratitude for the humanitarian relief programs that the diasporan organizations have delivered to Armenia and turning the tables, he proposed to convert the humanitarian programs to "utilitarian" ones by investing in Armenia. Thus, his recommendation was "enrich Armenia and enrich yourselves."

Touching on some sensitive issues, he tried to gloss over the dire situation of emigration, giving a positive spin to the movement.

He said that many citizens were forced to leave Armenia in order to seek gainful employment in different countries, to support their families back home.

His treatment of the issue of repatriation was also put in a positive light. His earlier contention asking for growth in Armenia's population to five million had raised some eyebrows, therefore this time repatriation was formulated differently. Rather than anticipating or encouraging an inward migration, he extended the moral frontiers of Armenia around the globe, encompassing all ten million Armenians as virtual citizens of the homeland.

Then he further expanded on the issue of pan-Armenianism. Referring to his statement on August 5 in Stepanakert, he stated that no matter in what country Armenians reside, they have to support Armenia and Artsakh, but not at the expense of their host countries. They should feel duty-bound to improve and strengthen the friendly ties between those host countries and Armenia.

All in all, Pashinyan's statement was well structured, offering credit and consideration to all contributions extended from the

diaspora to Armenia. He certainly won the hearts of the majority.

Pashinyan's populist approach won him tangible results in Armenia. He actually used that method to overthrow a well-entrenched regime and took over. But how effective this practice can prove to be in the diaspora remains to be seen. The diaspora does not have a government, it does not even have a structure that can hold the parts together. At best, Pashinyan's hold on power can be a virtual one and that is of an ephemeral nature



which can dissipate easily, if it is not nourished regularly. And that nourishment must be based on learning the true nature of the diaspora.

Thus far, the diaspora has been a cash cow for the Armenian government and that status was generated by naive patriotism on the part of the diaspora. But at this juncture, both parties have arrived at a more realistic approach that could serve as a sound basis on which the prime minister is hoping to expand.

This year, it was a novel idea by the Pashinyan administration to hold the independence celebrations in a depressed region of Armenia, namely Gyumri. Next year, and the year after, other regions will be highlighted. Yerevan's growth came at the expense of the other regions. This policy aims to bring uniform development throughout the country.

At the end of his speech, he issued a challenge to Diasporan Armenians to come and celebrate the New Year in Armenia.

The response to this appeal may be a good yardstick to measure the impact of Pashinyan's spirited speech.

## LETTERS

## Candidates Offer Recognition Platitude but No Sincerity

To the Editor:

As the saying goes "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me." As the community should recall, when former President Obama was campaigning, he swore up and down that he would recognize the Armenian Genocide referring to it as a "moral" issue and not a political one. He even denounced former politicians for using political considerations as an excuse for not recognizing it. Based on that fake promise, our organizations were in lock step encouraging Armenians to vote for him. A letter was also publicly disseminated by high profile prominent members of our community confirming

that Obama, as President, would keep his word by recognizing the Armenian Genocide. We all know how well that worked out...or more to the point... didn't!

Barack Obama, who, by all indications doesn't speak any foreign languages, employed the Armenian words "medz yeghern" to describe the horrific events of 1915 instead of calling it the Armenian Genocide, words that only President Ronald Reagan said. While standing next to Erdogan at a press conference, and in response to a question as to how he would characterize the Armenian Genocide, Obama stated that everyone knows his "views". For someone who sanctimoniously toured the

world apologizing for the so-called "sins" of the West, he certainly didn't "step up to the plate" to keep his promise to our people.

Here we go again...Recently I was sent a newsletter stating that Candidate Biden is promising to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Keeping the aforementioned in mind, all I can say is that everyone should remember whose legacy he wants to promote if elected. Plainly said, Biden like Obama is peddling false promises and no Armenian organization should promote his false narrative or any other candidate's.

Adrienne Alexanian  
New York, NY

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## COMMENTARY



## My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Armin Wegner Asked Franz Werfel Not to Write his '40 Days of Musa Dagh'—Part IV

This is the fourth and final installment of a four-part series and exchange between Armin T. Wegner and Franz Werfel in 1932.

Of course, I do not know your own connection with Asia Minor, and I can be fooled by guessing it. Strangely, I have found that the Jewish soul, in the frame of German and Prussian characters, makes them better able to imagine than the majority of German poets can, that this Asian soul usually stands much further away and stays more alien to the descendant of the European crusaders. This probably has its deep foundation in the law of antagonism.

I have no right to ask you to give up your project. That probably wouldn't help much either. But you will certainly not be grateful to me if I, who from the first moment of our meeting, passionately loved and venerated your poetic work, ask you to consider all my thoughts, which I submit to you here. Precisely because I appreciate you, not only as a writer, but I also know the depth of your humanity, I can do so with a clear conscience. Perhaps it will cause you to drop an unfinished project that has barely begun, or to go beyond to design a shorter novelistic study, as it originally began?

I need not emphasize the immense gratitude and the deep reassurance that would fulfill me, having the opportunity to complete and market my work without fear of competition. Truly, I cannot give up my project, which has become my mission from my deepest, profound experience, for which I have sacrificed laborious years of toil under the greatest hardships and struggles, and for the sake of it, stood in the background

for so long."

Werfel responded on Dec. 23, 1932 from Vienna: "Let me first briefly tell you the story of the formation of my Armenian novel. Since the war, I have been to the Middle East twice (for several months) – the first time in 1925, the second time in 1929. In Damascus, I had a shocking experience with Armenian children, which, to some extent, made an epic plan virulent in me, which already existed since I first heard of these things; perhaps just after the war. I do not know for exactly how long. Oftentimes, in my method of writing, the dramatic or epic plans grow in the darkness for many years before they are strong enough to entice me to work. (I wrote the Verdi novel part time in 1911 and completed it in 1923.) In the case of my Armenian novel, I started studying and sketching only last year. Of course, the work progressed rapidly during the summer, and today I have already finished more than half of my book. (around 400 printed pages.)

Be that as it may, I naturally like to acknowledge your primary concern and bow to you for being an eyewitness. However, I am almost reluctant to point out that there is no material legitimacy in the field of poetry [creative writing]. You indicate it several times in your letter. There are, perhaps, 'personal' substances that may belong to the peculiarity of a particular writer – the World War, with all its chapters, of which the Armenian tragedy is one, may by no means count on these substances. Fairly considered, you have in your great experience and your fateful connectedness, a tremendous advantage over me, who cannot create his work based on experience, direct exposure, grasp of senses, but only from imagination, inventiveness and thus some historical documents. With such a competition, therefore, the worry should be far more on my side.

But I believe, dear Wegner, that we can both be very calm, because our works will certainly be completely different. Mine uses documented facts of only one single episode that covers a few pages in the Alster collection of Lepsius. The episode serves me as the framework for a universal human happening, for a symbolic development, for figures purely invented, it is not an end in itself but only an occasion. Nor will there be much talk of atrocities and massacres in my book. I will set aside all the documentary stuff. The human destiny of the invented characters alone will be important. The scene I am referring to, the contents of which have become known to

you through the newspapers, has very little to do with the actual novel. The scene I am referring to, the contents of which have become known to you through the newspapers, has very little to do with the actual novel. A multi-volume work like yours will project a gigantic and magnificent painting of the Armenian destiny, with ten thousand details. While mine, I hope, will be a story limited to a certain region and a small fragment of people. The emphasis will be more on the mythical-human side rather than the Armenian cause.

Lastly, I am surprised about the muffled suspicion that sounds from certain lines of your letter.

You are suggesting that I had heard of your correspondence with the Prussian Academy and Paul Zsolnay Publishing House, and might have been inspired to write my Armenian novel. In fact, I entered the meeting room of the Poets Academy for the first time in my life 14 days ago, and, as far as publishing correspondence is concerned, my own stuff is already annoying enough.

But is it possible that you seriously believe that the facts of your work could stimulate my choice of substance and put you off your work? You are a poet and, therefore, you know that it is not us who choose the substance, but the substance chooses us. Nothing is more sensible to me than that everything I write is essential, i.e., dictated from within.

Until yesterday, from your books I had only the beautiful volume 'The Face of the Cities,' which I admire and love very much. Unfortunately, I haven't read any of your prose. Since I work a lot, I read almost no novels or short stories. I just got the mail with your open letter to Wilson. The real glow of your words deeply moved me.

Please do not overestimate the rivalry of our works. They go different ways.

For me, and globally, you are a great authority on the Armenian cause, through knowledge, experience, and connectedness. This was shown to me in just the few pages I went through yesterday. The glow of these pages, however, also suggests that your publisher cannot be unhappy, even when another, be it a layman or artist, tries to serve the same mission."

Fortunately, Franz Werfel was not dissuaded by Wegner to give up his plans to write "The Forty Days of Musa Dagh." On the other hand, Wegner published only the first volume of his planned four-volume book, depriving the world of his precious eyewitness accounts of the Armenian Genocide.

# US Hopes Security Gamble with Turkey in Syria Will Pay Off

Two months after Ankara threatened to launch an operation into northern Syria, where US forces are present, the US and Turkey seem to be working closely on a "security mechanism" that supposedly seeks to fulfill Turkey's concerns about Syria.

On Saturday, the sixth aerial overflight by the US and Turkey took place in eastern Syria. Under the "security mechanism" that was announced in August, the US and Turkey work together with military to military teams in Turkey

that coordinate these flights and other issues in northern Syria.

US Maj-Gen. Eric T. Hill, commander of the anti-ISIS campaign, said these overflights were important for "all involved."

The problem for the US is that it has limited forces on the ground in eastern Syria, and is trying to simultaneously balance several challenges. First, it wants to continue the mission to defeat ISIS. This has been successful because of the partnership with the Syrian Democratic Forces, a group that includes Kurds and others in eastern Syria that the US has helped train, assist and advise during the war on ISIS. The SDF liberated Raqqa in 2017, and in the spring of 2019 ISIS was finally defeated in its last stronghold near the Euphrates River. But ISIS sleeper cells remain a threat.

Second, the US faces a continuing problem in Al-Hol camp, where tens of thousands of ISIS supporters ended up after the defeat of ISIS. The camp's residents are becoming increasingly radicalized as they use their ability to move freely within the camp to reorganize ISIS cells and support ISIS.

Meanwhile, other ISIS male members held in detention in eastern Syria remain without trial because their home countries will not take them back, and the eastern Syrian authorities linked to the SDF have not found a way to constitute war crimes trials for the ISIS perpetrators. Hill called the issues in Al-Hol a "wicked problem," according to a tweet by the Special Operations Joint Task Force.

A third challenge for the US is placating Turkey, which continues to threaten to launch a military operation in eastern Syria. Despite the US overflights and getting the SDF to destroy defensive fortifications in areas in eastern Syria, Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that his country could still act if a "safe zone" is not established in Syria. Turkey once again says its "preparations" for an offensive are complete, and that the US is moving to slowly to pave the way for Turkey's safe zone that will extend 32 km. into Syria.

Rather than respond to the constant threats and claims the US is aiding terrorists, the US seeks to work more closely with Turkey.

Washington hopes that it can thread the needle of pleasing Turkey and the SDF by removing the SDF from the border without ending up with a Turkey military operation on its hands that would alienate the SDF partnership.

In short, the US goal increasingly appears to be to get the SDF to keep fighting ISIS in one part of eastern Syria, while other parts of eastern Syria are quietly cleared of the SDF. But will that be enough for Ankara, or is it only phase one before Turkish troops move into northern Syria anyway? The SDF Twitter account says the SDF is committed to both defeating ISIS and the US-backed security mechanism. "The work continues to remove fortifications in the areas that concern Turkey."

There is no evidence Ankara is pleased. Instead, it likely thinks that more threats will get it a larger role in northern Syria, and it understands that eventually it will create daylight between the US and the SDF, damaging the SDF partnership and forcing the US to choose between Ankara and eastern Syria.

For now, the SDF is vacillating in the hope of preventing a Turkish military operation. In January 2018, the SDF watched as Turkey took over Afrin and 160,000 Kurds were made homeless while Syrians from other parts of Syria were settled in Afrin, changing the demographics of the historically Kurdish area. The SDF knows that enabling, even by policy errors, another Afrin in eastern Syria would be seen as a monumental betrayal by locals who helped defeat ISIS.

But the cards are stacked against the SDF. The Trump administration wanted to withdraw from Syria in December 2018. To buy time, commanders noted that ISIS wasn't defeated. The only way the SDF can continue its role is to be seen as essential to defeating ISIS. It is essential. But can it be used to fight ISIS in one area and removed from other areas?

The US European Command is pleased with the joint work by Turkey, seeing it as a way to reduce tensions between Turkey and the US. In a September 18 briefing, Chris Maier, director of the Defeat-ISIS Task Force, discussed the security mechanism.

The US says it has made a bilateral agreement with Turkey, and established a joint operations center in southern Turkey. Through this, the US gets the SDF to remove fortifications while it conducts aerial flights and ground patrols with Turkey. The US says that it is now training more local security forces in eastern Syria, and working for the "safe, voluntary and dignified" return of refugees.

Turkey has declared it wants to resettle in eastern Syria one million Syrian refugees now in Turkey. The US was asked at the September 18 meeting if Turkey will eventually control the "safe zone" it demands. The US said it was working on a military arrangement that ensures security. "As to the longer term implications for the security mechanism, we remain focused on pro-

tecting Turkey security concerns and taking those into account while at the same time maintaining the [Defeat] ISIS campaign."

The US says that its initial steps include an area along the border from Tell Abyad to Ras al-Ayn. The word "initial" indicates more is to follow. The US says it has talked with Turkey, and that "we have an understanding of where the initial steps will occur." However, Washington refuses to provide numbers or guidance on how far the security mechanism will go.

The September 18 news conference indicated the security mechanism could result in Turkish forces moving into northern Syria in areas from which the Kurdish People's Protection forces have been removed. According to the statement, the US is setting up local forces but doesn't want a security vacuum to result.

"That may ultimately result in needing more forces that we would work with, with Turkey and others, to address," the statement said.

The US says it is "inserting US military and Turkish military into an area to execute patrols, aerial reconnaissance, and in some cases removal of fortifications." The US also provides a monthly report to Turkey about supplies, including arms and vehicles, sent to eastern Syria. But the US says that it is convinced "as we work with Turkey, the idea of a Turkish incursion into Syria has gone down substantially."

Time will tell if the US-backed security mechanism is a way for Turkey to achieve a permanent military presence in northern Syria, or just a way to delay another crises with Ankara and keep US partners fighting ISIS. For now, it appears that the mission to defeat ISIS is increasingly focused on trying to manage a complex relationship with Turkey, and that the US is becoming more involved in the minutiae of who controls what at the level of the local councils.

Given the US record at trying to manage state-building and these kinds of controversies elsewhere, it would be surprising if the security mechanism doesn't merely put off deeper questions for the next few months until a new crisis emerges.

There doesn't seem to be any way to both satisfy Ankara's view and continue to get the SDF to fight ISIS. In the long term, Ankara understands the more it pressures the US, the more the US will work with Ankara, and the more the SDF will come to realize it is fighting to keep Raqqa safe while being asked to hand over other parts of eastern Syria to another Afrin-style incident.

Should the SDF provokes a crisis with the US, it will be seen as an unreliable partner, accused of working with Damascus and fueling Turkey's claims for northern Syria. For ISIS sleeper cells, nothing could be more pleasing than to watch this policy chaos unfold two years after losing Raqqa.

(This article originally appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* on September 22.)





# Biden, Warren, Harris, Gabbard and More Emphasize Affirmation of Armenian Genocide in Letters in Honor of Speier

AFFIRMATION, from page 1  
Award for Public Service. The letters were sent to the Armenian Assembly for its 2019 National Advocacy Conference and Gala, which was widely attended by Armenian American leaders and activists from throughout the United States.

“The United States must reaffirm, once and for all, our record on the Armenian Genocide. As a co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, Congresswoman Speier has been an unfailing champion on this important issue. We must never forget or remain silent about this horrific and systematic campaign of extermination that resulted in the deaths of 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children and the mass deportation of 2 million Armenians from their homes,” former Vice President Joe Biden wrote. “I’m proud to join the Armenian Assembly of America in honoring Congresswoman Jackie Speier’s steadfast commitment to advancing U.S.-Armenian relations. Representative Speier has demonstrated incredible leadership in Congress on issues ranging from women’s rights and national security to global human rights and the support of free and fair democracy. The people of California and the American people are fortunate to have her fighting for justice and equality at home and abroad – the world is truly better for it.”

“Please accept my warmest greetings as you gather for the Armenian Assembly of America’s Advocacy Conference and Gala,” Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer stated. “I would like to spotlight this year’s honoree. I am proud to acknowledge Congresswoman Speier for her dedicated and passionate work in the Armenian community and for her commitment to strengthening United States and Armenia relations.”

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Robert Menendez said, “It is a moral imperative for us to recognize the atrocities committed against the Armenian people during the Armenian Genocide, and I will take every opportunity to advocate for American recognition of the genocide. I proud stand with the Armenian-American community on many critical issues, such as fighting for continued humanitarian support for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.”

“Congratulations to you on being honored at the Armenian Assembly of America’s 2019 National Advocacy conference & Gala!” Senator Dianne Feinstein said. “California is lucky to have such a passionate leader, and I look forward to continuing to work with you in the future.”

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“It is a great joy that I join the Armenian Assembly’s 2019 National Advocacy Conference in congratulating my colleague Congresswoman Jackie Speier for her enduring commitment and support for the Armenian American community and U.S.-Armenian relations,” Senator Kamala Harris said. “Jackie and I also understand the importance of recognizing the Armenian Genocide. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of Senate Resolution 150, which ensures that American foreign policy appropriately reflects and acknowledges the horrors of the Armenian genocide. When it comes to crimes against humanity, we can never be silent – we must always speak uncomfortable truths about the past, lest we repeat it.”

“I also commend Jackie for her leadership in securing robust aid to help protect free and fair elections, the rule of law, and good governance across Armenia. Her efforts represent a powerful bipartisan consensus in Congress to affirm our shared democratic values with the people of Armenia. I am certain that with Jackie’s continued leadership in Congress, we will only strengthen U.S.-Armenian relations moving forward and continue building a better future for our children and ourselves,” Harris added.

“Please accept my heartfelt congratulations to the Republic of Armenia on its 28th anniversary. As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I have worked closely with colleagues such as Representative Jackie Speier, who is a great friend to the Armenian people and who I am honored to call my colleague and friend,” Senator Elizabeth Warren said. “Like California, Massachusetts is blessed with a strong and vibrant Armenian community. As a Senator from the Bay State, I have consistently supported robust assistance to Armenia and a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Importantly, I have affirmed the Armenian Genocide, which is an atrocity that the world must never forget. I believe that if we do not recognize the horrors of the past, we risk those horrors being repeated in the future. That is why I am an original cosponsor of a bipartisan Senate resolution that recognizes the Armenia Genocide and encourages widespread education of this tragedy. I was honored to speak at the Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day centennial ceremony in April 2015 at the Armenian Heritage Park in Boston, and I will continue

supporting efforts to bring recognition to the genocide.”

“As you gather for the Armenian Assembly of America’s 2019 National Advocacy Conference and Gala, it is my distinct honor and gives me tremendous pride to extend a heartfelt and well-deserved congratulations to my colleague and dear friend, Congresswoman Jackie Speier. Jackie embodies and epitomizes the values we all hold so dear – she is a fighter, a survivor and a tireless advocate for truth and justice. There is no one more deserving of being honored by the Armenian Assembly with the Deukmejian Award for Public Service,” said Senator Ed Markey.

“Jackie is a legislative force on so many critical issues facing our country. The Armenian community is truly lucky to be able to call her a friend and fellow Armenian. We are so fortunate to have such an amazing ally in the House fighting every day to deepen the longstanding friendship between the United States and Armenia, properly recognize the Armenian Genocide and for every issue critical to Armenian Americans and Armenians all over the globe,” he continued.

“It is a joy to join you in celebrating my friend and colleague, Congresswoman Jackie Speier, as she receives the Deukmejian Award for Public Service: a wonderful tribute to an iconic leader of our beloved state of California!” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said. “Congresswoman Speier has been a persistent, effective champion of the United States-Armenian relationship for decades, and her leadership has been critical in forging ever-stronger ties between our governments and people.”

“We would like to start by congratulating our colleague, Co-Chair of the Congressional Armenian Caucus, Congresswoman Jackie Speier from California for receiving the Public Service Award for her exemplary leadership and long-standing support of Armenian issues. Her support of a democratic Armenia aligns with America’s fundamental values, as well as the Assembly’s mission,” Reps. Frank Pallone, Jr., Gus Bilirakis, Adam Schiff, and Peter King wrote. “As leaders of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues and strong supporters of the Armenian American community, we look forward to continuing our special relationship to advance our shared values.”

“As her colleague on the Congressional Armenia Caucus, I have been fortunate to have

a front seat at Congresswoman Speier’s tireless advocacy supporting US-Armenia relations. During her ten years in Congress, Congresswoman Speier has led the charge to reaffirm the United States’ recognition of the Armenian Genocide, and pushed for aid funding for Armenia. Just this year Congresswoman Speier was successful in providing Armenia with an additional \$40 million in democracy aid funding. I am pleased to see her fervent advocacy be recognized,” Rep. Chellie Pingree stated.

“In addition to her critical work on issues important to the Armenian American community, Congresswoman Speier has also been a strong and passionate leader for women’s rights. From her efforts to end the epidemic of sexual assault in the military and on college campuses, to closing the gender pay gap, the Congresswoman has been a powerful champion for women during our time in Congress,” she added.

“As an Armenian-American, [Jackie Speier] has championed the United States-Armenia relationship throughout her years as a public servant from her time as a County Supervisor in northern California through her tenure in the California Legislature, and now as a senior member of the House of Representatives. She has helped advance humanitarian assistance to Armenia and Arsakh, steadfastly supported Congressional affirmation of the Armenian Genocide, and promoted projects to bring together American and Armenian civil societies. I have seen, first-hand, the impact U.S. engagement has meant to Armenia and the region,” Rep. Tulsi Gabbard told the Assembly.

“Today, young Armenian-Americans can look to her example of determination and dedication to America and the communities she has and continues to serve. It is the same spirit that brings you together today – from across the country – to make your voices heard in the hall of Congress. Your activism empowers the Armenian Assembly to continue its mission of promoting public awareness of the important issues impacting Armenian-Americans and ensuring Congress take an active role in building stronger bridges between America and Armenia,” she continued.

In addition to elected officials in the House and Senate, the President of the Republic of Armenia, Dr. Armen Sarkissian, and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, extended their congratulations.

# THE STATELESS DIPLOMAT

ダイアナ・アプカー  
ステートレス外交官

## Diana Apcar's Heroic Life

A Documentary by  
Mimi Malayan

Organized by The Armenian Cultural Foundation and co-sponsored by  
Amaras Art Alliance, Arlington International Film Festival, Armenian International Women's Association,  
Armenian Museum of America, Armenian Women's Welfare Association, National Association for Armenian Studies  
and Research, Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, and Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater Boston

**Sunday, September 29 at 6:00 PM**

Reception and opportunity to meet the Director to follow the screening  
**MOSESIAN CENTER FOR THE ARTS • 321 ARSENAL ST., WATERTOWN, MA**  
Tickets \$10 (\$20 at the door) available through the MCA website ([www.mosesianarts.org](http://www.mosesianarts.org))  
or Box Office at 617-923-8487

## ԹԵՐԵԿԱՆ Մշակութային Միութեան

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Կիրակի, 6 Հոկտեմբեր 2019-ի երեկոյեան ժամը 5:00-ին

Ալթադենայի ԹՄՄ-Պէշկէօթիւրեան Կեդրոնի Սրահին մէջ:  
(1901 N. Allen Avenue, Altadena, CA 91001)

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