

U.S. House Passes Genocide Resolution

WASHINGTON – House Resolution 296, recognizing the Armenian Genocide and opposing its denial, passed by the US House of Representatives by a lopsided majority of 405 to 11 (and 3 present votes).

This non-legally binding resolution states that the sense of US policy is to 1) commemorate the Armenian Genocide officially; 2) reject attempts to associate the US government with its denial; and 3) encourage education and public understanding of the facts of this genocide, and its relevance to current crimes against humanity.

Turkey's recent incursion into Syria against the Kurds seems to have been a final blow to any American support for Turkish genocide denial. The US House also just passed economic sanctions against Turkey, indicating a shift in policy towards Turkey may be occurring, and the genocide resolution was another tool to be used to pressure the latter.

"I think some of us are a little bit annoyed with Turkey, and we want them to know how much annoyed we are," House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., told National Public Radio (NPR) last week.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), according to the *Washington Post* when see RESOLUTION, page 20



Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian at the hearing, with a wedding picture of his grandparents taken in Marash.

Public Hearing Held for Genocide Education

BOSTON – Scholars, politicians, historians and concerned citizens testified on October 7 at the State House at a public hearing before the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Education for a bill that if passed by the state legislature, would mandate the teaching of the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide and several other genocides in the state's public schools.

Among those testifying and answering questions were Dikran Kaligian, a member of the Armenian National Committee of Eastern Massachusetts, and Peter Koutoujian, sheriff of Middlesex County.

Kaligian said the hearing went quite well. Many of those testifying were Jewish survivors of the Holocaust as well as several Ukrainians, whose holocaust, the Holodomor, killed millions through an intentional infliction of famine.

see HEARING, page 20

Armenia Marks 20th Anniversary Of Parliament Killings

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenia's top government officials and politicians attended on Sunday, October 27, an official ceremony to mark the 20th anniversary of an armed attack on the Armenian parliament which left its popular speaker Karen

ly tried and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Throughout their marathon trial Hunanyan insisted that he himself had decided to seize the parliament without anybody's orders. But many in Armenia still believe that he and his henchmen had powerful sponsors outside the parliament building.

Some relatives and supporters of the assassinated officials still suspect Kocharyan and his successor President Serzh Sargsyan (no relation to Vazgen), who was Armenia's national security minister in October 1999, of masterminding the killings to eliminate increasingly powerful rivals. Both men repeatedly dismissed such suggestions during and after a

serious political crisis caused by the killings.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, other government officials as well as leaders of Armenia's main political forces marked the anniversary by laying flowers at a memorial to the victims of the shock attack erected inside the parliament compound in Yerevan. Relatives of the victims also took part in the ceremony.

Vazgen Sargsyan's supporters and comrades-in-arms also visited the Yerablur military cemetery where the slain prime minister was buried. Sargsyan had also served see ANNIVERSARY, page 2



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (R) greets Aram Sargsyan at a memorial to the victims of the October 1999 deadly attack on the Armenian parliament, Yerevan, October 27, 2019.

Demirchyan, Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan and six other officials dead.

They were killed by five gunmen who burst into the National Assembly and sprayed it with bullets on October 27, 1999, six months after parliamentary elections won by Demirchyan's and Sargsyan's Miasnutyun (Unity) alliance. The gunmen led by an obscure former journalist, Nairi Hunanyan, accused the government of corruption and misrule and demanded regime change.

They surrendered to police after overnight negotiations with then President Robert Kocharyan. They were subsequent-

Deputy Minister Visits US in Effort to Combat Poverty, Social Oppression In Armenia

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Zhanna Andreasyan was in Boston at the end of September on a week-long working visit sponsored by the Women's Support Center of Armenia. With her was the executive director of the latter organization, Maro Matosian and its project coordinator Hasmik Gevorgyan. Lenna Garibian in Boston organized the visit in collaboration with local social workers.

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From left, Liam Lowney, Executive Director, Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA), Lenna Garibian, and Zhanna Andreasyan (photo Aram Kaligian)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Diaspora Minister to Request Security from France for Armenian Institutions

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenia's High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Zareh Sinanyan said on October 24 that he will demand that French authorities provide security for French-Armenian educational and cultural establishments following the recent attack on the Samuel Moorat Armenian College in Sevres.

The Mekhitarist school was attacked on October 23, the second time it has been vandalized in 2019.

"I spoke with Archimandrite Harutyun Pztikian (member of the Mekhitarist Congregation). The damages inflicted to the Samuel Moorat College of Paris are far greater than we could've imagined," Sinanyan said on Facebook.

"In the coming days we will demand from French authorities to provide the French-Armenian educational and cultural establishments with duly security," he said.

Earlier, on October 20, the Paris-based Armenian newspaper *Nouvelles d'Arménie's* office was also attacked and vandalized.

Paylan Inquiry Into Istanbul Pogrom Rejected

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The parliamentary inquiry into Istanbul Pogrom submitted by Garo Paylan, a Turkish-Armenian lawmaker from the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), has been rejected on the ground of "not being in accordance with the Internal Regulations of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM)," Bianet reported on October 28.

Paylan submitted the inquiry on September 5, requesting the identification of public officials and civil perpetrators who planned and organized the pogrom against Greeks, Armenians and Jews in Istanbul on September 6-7, 1955.

Paylan had written in his petition that:

- The pogrom of September 6-7, 1955, is one of the gravest events in the history of the Republic of Turkey that has not yet been confronted. According to official data, only 73 churches in Istanbul, 8 *ayazmas*, 2 monasteries, 5,538 houses 3,584 of which belonged to Greeks, and businesses were burned down and looted.

- Also according to official records, 60 women were raped and many were killed. Following the impunity of the pogrom, tens of thousands of Greek, Armenian, Jewish and Syriac citizens were forced to leave the country against oppression and the threat of life security.

- The perpetrators of this pogrom did not receive punishment; on the contrary, the people involved or caused the events were promoted.

INSIDE

AMAA Meets in Watertown

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

New Buses Eyed by Yerevan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Yerevan City Hall has launched the works on attracting and importing new transportation means, Deputy Mayor of Yerevan Hayk Sargsyan told reporters in the Parliament on October 29.

“We have stated that the operation deadline of some of the transportation means has expired, and they need to be upgraded. At this moment by the instruction of the Mayor our team has started the work on attracting and importing new transportation means. There is a goal to at least import a certain bus park before the introduction of the entire network next year so that we can solve this problem”, he said.

In order to introduce a new transportation network City Hall is currently discussing its funding sources with the government. The program will start to be implemented after the final clarification of the funding source with the government.

Russian Defense Minister Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan received on October 29 Russian defense minister, General of the Army Sergei Shoigu and his delegation, the premier's Office told Armenpress.

Welcoming the Russian minister, Pashinyan highly valued the Armenian-Russian strategic relations and stated that the frequent meetings between the top leaderships of Armenia and Russia, the constantly deepening partnership in different areas prove that the Armenian-Russian cooperation is dynamically developing. Pashinyan said the Armenian-Russian cooperation in the defense field contributes to the strengthening of the stability and security in the region and praised the process of military, military-technical cooperation between the two countries, adding that the Russian defense minister's visit will contribute to expanding that.

The Russian defense minister thanked for the warm welcome and stated that the Armenian-Russian allied cooperation in the defense field is developing actively and effectively. He praised the partnership with the Armenian defense ministry and highlighted the signing of the 2020 cooperation program between the two defense ministries in Yerevan.

Armenian Environment Ministry to Cut Jobs

YEREVAN (ARKA) — A regular session of the Armenian Cabinet slated for October 31 is scheduled to look into a draft scheme, designed to streamline the operation of the Ministry of Environment, Minister Erik Grigoryan told reporters on Tuesday, October 29.

He said the scheme calls for cutting a substantial number of jobs. According to him, the structure of the ministry will be completely revised. “The job cuts are aimed to ensure the most efficient operation of the system,” he said, adding that the staff of the ministry should work with such a load and for such a reimbursement, which is comparable with the private sector.

He said the process will begin after receiving the approval of the government.

Serbia Waives Visas for Citizens of Armenia

YEREVAN (ARKA) — Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed on October 29 media reports that the government of Serbia has waived entry visas for Armenian citizens.

“The Serbian government decided to unilaterally waive the entry visa requirement for holders of ordinary Armenian passports,” Anna Naghdalyan, press secretary of the Armenian Foreign Ministry, told Novosti Armenia news agency.

She said the decision comes into force on November 3, (eight days after its adoption), adding that the Armenian Embassy in Serbia has not yet received an official message on this issue.

Armenia Marks 20th Anniversary Of Parliament Killings

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as defense ministers and been one of the founders of the Armenian armed forces. (See related editorial on page 18.)

The anniversary commemoration came less than a week after it emerged that Hunanyan has asked authorities to release him on parole. The attack ringleader, who will turn 54 in December, is

liament killings and bring fresh charges against Kocharyan. The former president is already in jail, standing trial on charges mostly stemming from the 2008 post-election violence in Yerevan. He denies the accusations as politically motivated.

Aram Sargsyan, Vazgen's brother and successor who has for years alleged Kocharyan's possible involvement in

and is trying to cash in on that war.”

Sargsyan, whom Kocharyan sacked as prime minister in May 2000, was also skeptical about the Armenian law-enforcement and judicial authorities' ability to thoroughly investigate and solve the killings.

“I believe that could happen only when we all can be confident that no judicial process can be politicized in any way,” agreed Edmon Marukyan, the leader of the opposition Bright Armenia Party. Marukyan compared the bloody seizure of the Armenian parliament to the 1963 assassination of U.S. President John Kennedy, which also left many unanswered questions.

Artsvik Minasyan, a senior member of the opposition Armenian Revolutionary Federation, went further, alleging that individuals “representing” Pashinyan's government are now effectively offering Hunanyan a politically motivated “deal.”

Pashinyan declined to talk to the press after laying flowers at the parliament memorial.

Meanwhile, Sasun Mikaelyan, a prominent Pashinyan ally who had also been close to the late Vazgen Sargsyan, appealed to Gagik Jahangiryan, the man who led the first criminal investigation into the 1999 killings and at one point indicted individuals linked to Kocharyan.

Jahangiryan implicitly promised to reveal new facts about the killings when he publicly pledged allegiance to opposition leader Levon Ter-Petrosian in the wake of a disputed 2008 presidential election. Like dozens of other Ter-Petrosian loyalists, he was controversially imprisoned afterwards.

“Should you also stay silent now, 20 years on, my friend?” Mikaelyan said at Yerablur. “It's about time Jahangiryan said what happened [in 1999.]”



Former Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan (L) and parliament speaker Karen Demirchyan assassinated in the 1999 attack on parliament.

eligible for parole because of having spent 20 years in prison. Nevertheless, Justice Minister Rustam Badasyan effectively ruled out his release last week.

On Thursday, Arman Babajanyan, a parliament deputy critical of Kocharyan, visited Hunanyan at a Yerevan prison and talked to him for two hours. Babajanyan claimed to have received important information from Hunanyan when he spoke to RFE/RL's Armenian service afterwards. In particular, he hinted that the jailed terrorist implicated Kocharyan in the killings.

Babajanyan's claims sparked speculation that the current Armenian authorities may reopen the probe of the par-

the 1999 plot, cautioned on Sunday that Hunanyan's potential fresh testimony must not be taken at face value. He said that the ringleader could falsely incriminate the ex-president in hopes of regaining freedom.

“Any convict thinks about getting out of jail as soon as possible and [Hunanyan] doesn't care about methods [of securing his release,]” Aram Sargsyan told reporters. “Do you think he is so honest and has so much remorse that we wants to speak up? Of course not. He saw on TV the revolution that took place in the country [in 2018,] can now see the ongoing war before the current and former rulers,

Yerevan Subway Stations Pay Homage to Komitas on 150th Anniversary of Birth

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenpress News Agency and the Yerevan Subway teamed up to pay homage to Komitas by organizing an exclusive exhibition dedicated to the musicologist and composer's 150th anniversary of birth.

The exhibition includes rare photos depicting Komitas himself, as well as other great figures that at any point in time had relation to him.

The exhibition was held at the Yeritasardakan metro station, and President Armen Sarkissian personally attended the inauguration. The opening ceremony on October 17 was accompanied by Komitas State Conservatory students performing works by the late prelate.

The president toured the exhibition and viewed the pictures.

Armenpress director Aram Ananyan, speaking to reporters, reminded that 2019 is marked by the 150th anniversaries of birth of two greats — Hovhannes Tumanyan and Komitas — and this year Armenpress has re-organized two exhibitions which were originally launched 50 years ago by the agency's predecessor — the Armenian Telegraph Agency, dedicated to the two prominent Armenian figures.

“We decided to organize a retrospect exhibition of these exhibitions. We want to show how much their literary and musical legacy was valued

before, how much it is valued now and how much it will be valued in the future. This was also a unique homage to all generations of

the First Armenian International Photo Festival.

“Here, a broader segment of people can see these unique archive photos.



President Armen Sarkissian tours the metro station.

Armenpress employees who had contributed to the accomplishment of these exhibitions,” Ananyan said, adding that the unique photos on display have also been digitized.

Speaking about the selection of the venue, Ananyan said that Armenpress has already collaborated with the Yerevan subway before as part of

It is possible that the exhibition will be presented in many other platforms also. Let me inform that we plan to organize a Tumanyan exhibition in Dsegh and also realize an exhibition in Tbilisi's Tumanyan House where Tumanyan and Komitas will meet. They've frequently met under this roof,” Ananyan said.



ARMENIA

Learning from Kim Kardashian West, Alexis Ohanian, and Gary Vaynerchuk at Armenia's Largest Tech Conference

By Maggie Zhang

YEREVAN (commonplays.com) – From October 7 to 9, Armenia hosted one of the largest tech conferences in the world: The World Congress on Information Technology. It's a big deal—in the past, keynote speakers included the likes of Bill Clinton, Larry Ellison, and Bill Gates, and the venues are usually located in major cities like Toronto and Sydney. The conference's location in Yerevan this year was a huge source of pride for Armenians.

Of course, the location makes a lot of sense when you consider this year's theme: The Power of Decentralization. It's hard to think of a better place to discuss this topic than Yerevan, where citizens mobilized through social media during last year's Velvet Revolution.

During the 3-day conference, the talks dived right into the meaty questions: Where do we draw the line between human-centered technology and technology-centered humans? Is social media the great equalizer, or does it just amplify the same voices from the top? What are the cultural and social implications of machine-made art? This last question was especially relevant, since the conference kicked off with an orchestra performance of a piece that was composed live through AI.

Here are some of the key lessons I learned from the conference.

Kim Kardashian West, founder of SKIMS, talked about activating your community through media.

Kim is recognized for her 100 million+ followers on Instagram, but she doesn't just let them sit there. Although it may not seem like it, she's quite intentional about how she uses her content to activate her community of fans.

Every month, she releases a new product aligned with her personal brand. SKIMS, her new shapewear company, grew out of the fact that she was always dying her shapewear with tea bags so that they could match her skin color. Consequently, she launched her collection in 9 different skin shades, so her products could be inclusive for all who want to wear them.

She also uses her show, "Keeping Up with the Kardashians," to make viewers feel invested in her products. "People want to see the behind-the-scenes," said Kim. "If fans see us fighting over a fragrance, it's likely that they will be more invested in it when it comes out."

At the conference, Kim even used her time on stage to announce she has new beauty products in the pipeline inspired by her time in Yerevan, including a fragrance based on Armenian flowers. Immediately, the audience burst into applause, and it's



Kim Kardashian at WCIT in Yerevan

likely they'll be among the first to purchase it.

Alexis Ohanian, founder of Reddit and Initialized Capital, showed the importance of connecting with your tribe.

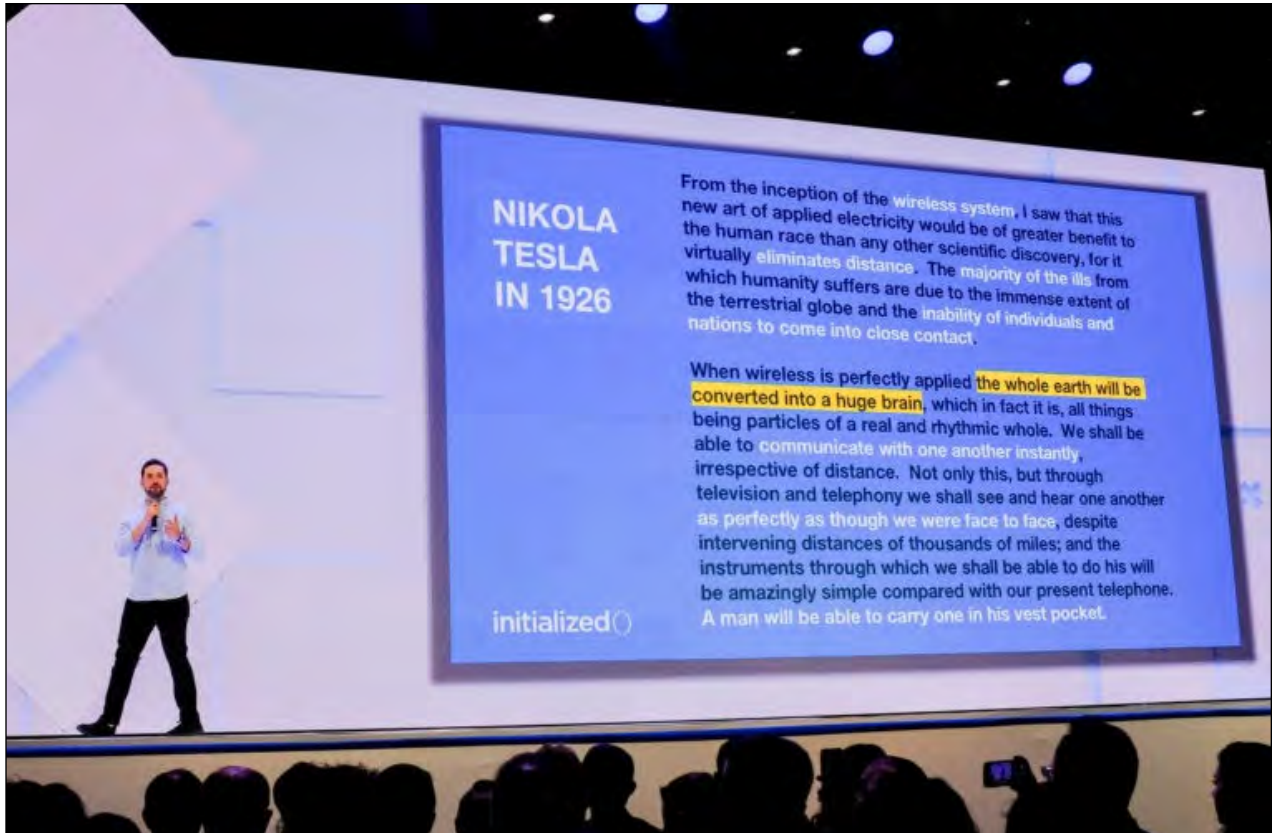
I've seen Alexis speak twice, and both times, I found his personality really charming. He just seems like an empathetic, down-to-earth person. At the conference, he used his keynote speech not to pitch his own venture capital firm, but rather to talk about his 4-month stay in Armenia, to encourage Armenians to innovate, and to talk about how proud he was to be here among his people during such an exciting time of development.

During his talk, he said that chess is integrated into the Armenian school system—all students take lessons as part of their curriculum. As a result, they develop strong logic and problem-solving abilities, which is a great foundation for other skills like computer programming.

We spoke to some of the young volunteers for the event, who said that Alexis walked through the main entrance for the conference rather than from the VIP door and stopped to take photos with the people he passed.

He also used his free time outside of the conference to connect with local Armenian organizations, including female startup founders.

These small gestures of humility made him, anecdotally, a



Alexis Ohanian at WCIT

favorite of the conference.

Gary Vaynerchuk, serial media entrepreneur, encouraged taking advantage of underpriced attention.

It seems like Gary is all over the web these days, from Instagram to Youtube to LinkedIn. He stays true to his philosophy of making rather than debating, and he aims to output 20-100 pieces of content per day. If you don't share posts regularly, he believes that you are wasting a golden opportunity to reach an audience and shape your brand.

However, he doesn't create this content from scratch. Instead, he focuses his attention on creating "pillar content" and then cutting up pieces of it for different platforms—kind of like how chefs use all parts of an animal for different meals.

For example, his keynote speech could be divided in several different ways: the audio could be used for a podcast; video clips can be posted on Youtube and LinkedIn; quotes and photos could be featured on Instagram and Facebook. His team helps him ensure quick turnaround of content.

Gary shared a story about his childhood lemonade stand. He surveyed all the streets in his neighborhood so that he could set up his stand in a spot where he knew there would be the most foot traffic. This mindset of close observation stands true today in his media companies.

"Watch where humans go and understand what you need to put in front of them to create value," he said. He also encouraged the audience to experiment with new platforms, like TikTok, because it's when attention is the most "underpriced" and the supply of quality content doesn't yet fill demand.

Alex Chung, founder of GIPHY, shared the value of connecting your company to a larger mission.

Before this conference, I considered GIPHY as just a delightful form of entertainment. In reality, though, it's a search engine second only to Google. Alex described it as a catalogue for human expression that extends beyond words; consequently, he finds himself considering more philosophical questions like how to best communicate concepts like love and happiness across cultures. "What should the images be when someone searches for these words?" he asked. "We need to work with more philosophers, social scientists, and academics to understand."

The most impactful part of his talk was when he shared a story about his Korean mother, a painter who doesn't speak English well. After using GIPHY, she found new ways to communicate over text, and he realized just how weird, quirky, and funny she could be—she just didn't have the tools to express herself in that way before. It was inspiring to listen to how he envisions the larger impact of GIPHY in a way that feels genuine.

Katherine Sarafian, Senior VP of Talent at Pixar, talked about striking a balance when using technology for storytelling.

At Pixar, one of the most influential companies on childhood imaginations, Katherine's philosophy is to only use technology when it is needed to better tell the story. For example, "Inside Out" is a film that she believes could only have been told

through animation—how else could you communicate "abstract thought" in a movie? Outside of Pixar, she was also impressed by "Spiderman: Into the Spiderverse" and how it depicted multiple worlds through experimentation with animation.

At the core, Katherine says you need to focus on the universally relatable human elements of your story. Ultimately, "Toy Story" is a movie about coming of age, "The Incredibles" is about a family dynamic going through transitions, and "Ratatouille" is about achieving your potential—the technology used is just a vehicle for communicating these themes.

Katherine also said that technology can be limiting at times. Since it takes so long to create a film (it took her 6 years to produce "Brave"), there is always a new technology update or software release around the corner, and it's tempting to constantly download them and "unlock" the current tech to make things better. However, it's important to make sure that technology updates remain as a tool, and not a distraction.

"You don't have to perfect the shininess of a penny, like the one on the bedside table in Boo's room in 'Monster's Inc.'" But it's possible—and that's the part where you need to draw the line and understand how much is too much," said Katherine.

Richard Quest, Business Correspondent at CNN, showed how you can use tension to facilitate engaging conversations.

Although Richard didn't give a talk during the conference, he moderated several panels. Normally, I find panels quite boring; you never know what you're going to get. However, Richard did a great job understanding the backgrounds of each panelist and creating tension between their points of view. He would dart back and forth from opposing speakers, trying to understand where their thoughts converged and diverged.



Gary Vaynerchuk at WCIT

Richard wasn't afraid to provoke, and as a result, his sessions kept me at the edge of my seat. He also showed that it's okay to interrupt thoughtfully. Mild interjections like "But wait a minute..." or "Hang on, what do you mean by that?" really helped to clarify the speakers' main points.

We ended up attending all of his panels, regardless of topics, because they were so entertaining and high energy. It reminded me of the importance of having a good teacher—they can make you interested in any subject matter.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Speaker Mirzoyan Meets Speaker of Austria National Council

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Speaker of Parliament of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan on October 24 met with Speaker of the National Council (lower house of parliament) of Austria Wolfgang Sobotka in Strasbourg.

Mirzoyan congratulated Sobotka on the first session of the new parliament of Austria and expressed hope that it will continue to strengthen and deepen the friendly ties with the Armenian parliament. The meeting touched upon the necessity to boost inter-parliamentary cooperation, including within friendship groups.

Coming to the ratification of the Armenia-European Union Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), Ararat Mirzoyan expressed hope that the Austrian parliament will ratify the CEPA as soon as possible, and in response Sobotka assured him that there is no obstacle to ratifying the agreement.

Speaker of Parliament Meets Mayor of Rome

ROME (Armenpress) — Speaker of Parliament Ararat Mirzoyan had a meeting with Mayor of Rome Virginia Raggi during his official visit to Italy.

The parliament's press service said Raggi presented her vision of development of Rome and the directions for handling the challenges facing the city.

Mirzoyan commended the idea of holding a joint conference with Rome City Hall dedicated to the 2800th anniversary of founding of Yerevan, and expressed the conviction that Raggi will contribute with her experience to the solution of the problems facing the Armenian capital.

During the visit Mirzoyan participated in the Armenian Independence Day reception organized by the Armenian embassy in Italy. During the event the speaker awarded several Italian lawmakers with certificates and medals for their contributions to developing Armenian-Italian inter-parliamentary relations.

The speaker earlier also met with the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies (lower house of parliament) Roberto Fico and President of the Senate (upper house) Maria Elisabetta Casellati.

Armenian PM Meets with Russian Defense Minister

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan received today Russian Defense Minister and General of the Army Sergei Shoigu and his delegation, according to the PM's office.

Welcoming the Russian minister, Pashinyan highly valued Armenian-Russian strategic relations and stated that the frequent meetings between the top leaderships of Armenia and Russia and the constantly deepening partnership in different areas prove that Armenian-Russian cooperation is dynamically developing. Pashinyan said that Armenian-Russian cooperation in the defense field contributes to the strengthening of stability and security in the region and praised the process of military and military-technical cooperation between the two countries, adding that the Russian defense minister's visit will contribute to expand that.

The Russian defense minister gave his thanks for the warm welcome and stated that Armenian-Russian allied cooperation in the defense field is developing actively and effectively. He praised the partnership with the Armenian defense ministry and highlighted today's signing of the 2020 cooperation program between the two defense ministries in Yerevan.

Pashinyan and Shoigu exchanged views on the development of Armenian-Russian strategic relations, the deepening of the mutual partnership in the defense field, regional and international security issues, and the current situation in Syria, including the ongoing humanitarian mission there.

Lebanon's Hariri Resigns After Nearly Two Weeks of Nationwide Protests

By Tamara Qiblaw, Ben Wedeman and Ghazi Balkiz

BEIRUT (CNN) — Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced he was resigning on October 29, succumbing to the demands of protesters who have staged nationwide demonstrations for nearly two weeks.

The three-time prime minister has led a national unity government, which included some of his political adversaries, for less than two years. In recent months, the country saw rapid economic deterioration, ballooning debt and rising prices.

On October 17, the government proposed imposing a tax on Whatsapp calls, along with other austerity measures, sparking nationwide protests that paralyzed the country.

Lebanon has been under lock-down since the protests began. Banks and schools have been closed for 12 days, while protesters blocked major routes throughout the tiny eastern Mediterranean nation.

"I can't hide this from you. I have reached a dead-end," Hariri said in his resignation speech.

"To all my political peers, our responsibility today is how to protect Lebanon and to uplift the economy," he added. "Today, there is a serious opportunity and we should not waste it."

Scores of protesters in downtown Beirut cheered as Hariri announced his departure. At their peak, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to protest government corruption on Sunday.

Over the last week, protests have dwindled in number, concentrating on road closures on the country's main routes as the economic crisis has deepened.

Chaos in downtown Beirut

Hariri's announcement came hours after chaos broke out in downtown Beirut when a mob stormed into the capital's main protest site, setting parts of it alight and tearing up tents on Tuesday afternoon.

Shouting "Shia, Shia" and singing chants in support of Hezbollah and Amal — another Lebanese political party — hundreds of men wielding sticks poured into the site, breaking up protest road closures and attacking demonstrators. Police fired dozens of rounds of tear gas to disperse the crowds.

The military was deployed to the streets of downtown Beirut on Tuesday, and many anti-government protesters have cleared the site. Earlier, female protesters tried to form a human chain trying to separate the demonstrators from the mobs.

Hezbollah's media office could not be

reached for comment.

Calls had grown in recent days for Hariri and his government to resign. The Prime Minister's cabinet included adversaries such as Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Lebanese militant and political organization.

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah last week said the protests were part of an

international politics at the American University of Beirut. "There's an official split in the street right now."

Hezbollah has opposed the government's resignation, with Nasrallah warning that it could lead the country "into the abyss."

Three-time prime minister

Hariri has been a major figure in the country's deeply divided political landscape since his father, former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, was assassinated in



Prime Minister Hariri, right, hands in his resignation to the president of Lebanon

international conspiracy aimed at toppling the group.

Political vacuum and economic crisis

Lebanon is no stranger to political vacuums, having been embroiled in multiple crises over the years that pitted Saudi-backed Hariri against Iran-backed Hezbollah. Hariri's national unity government, first formed in 2016, brought some years of stability as the two foes set aside their differences. But it also presided over a floundering economy.

Decades of government mismanagement and widespread corruption have crippled Lebanon's finances, adding pressure to the currency and causing the debt to swell. The country has one of the world's highest debt to GDP ratios and around a third of the its population lives under the poverty line, according to the World Bank.

Hariri's resignation could deepen the latest unrest and exacerbate the economic crisis. But protesters say it also presents an opportunity to shake off the country's sectarian system and transition into civil governance.

"There's a lot of unknowns. We've moved from a phase of celebration where people were coming together and showing solidarity in one where we don't know what's going to happen," said Karim Makdisi, associate professor of

February 2005. He emerged as a leader of the country's Sunni sect, and became mired in political battles with Hezbollah and its allies. The period was riddled with sporadic violence and stalemates.

In 2011, Hezbollah's coalition, which consisted of Christian and Shia allies, toppled Hariri's government while he was on a visit to Washington, DC. In 2016, a rapprochement between the two sides led to the formation of the national unity government under Hariri's leadership.

Clashes in downtown Beirut on Tuesday

In November 2017, Hariri announced his resignation while in the Saudi capital Riyadh, blindsiding both his supporters and his adversaries. Several figures, including Hezbollah ally President Michel Aoun, accused Saudi Arabia of detaining the prime minister and forcing him to resign. Weeks later, Hariri withdrew his resignation upon his return to Lebanon.

Even if Hariri's resignation marks a possible return to old rifts, it also represents a step forward for Lebanon's protesters.

"The government's resignation is going to be taken by the protesters as a big victory. I don't think that should be underestimated," said Makdisi. "There is a victory on the one hand, and a possible security issue on the other."



Clashes in downtown Beirut on October 29



INTERNATIONAL

Rights Monitors Slam Turkish Plan for Refugee Resettlement in NE Syria ‘Safe Zone’

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region (Rudaw) — Human rights monitors have slammed Turkey's plan to resettle as many as two million Syrian refugees in a so-called safe zone in northern Syria. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International both released reports stating Ankara had forcibly returned refugees to active conflict zones and warned that Turkey's plan for northern Syria would be a violation of international law.

“It is chilling that Turkey's deal with Russia this week agrees to the ‘safe and voluntary return’ of refugees to a yet to-be-established ‘safe zone.’ Returns until now have been anything but safe and voluntary – and now millions more refugees from Syria are at risk,” said Anna Shea, a researcher at Amnesty International, on October 25.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Damascus-ally Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed in Sochi on Tuesday to take control over the border between Turkey and Kurdish areas of northern Syria. Their agreement demands the Kurdish forces withdraw 30 kilometres from the border and that joint Turkish-Russian forces will patrol a 10-kilometre deep stretch of the border.

Erdogan has said that he wants to resettle one to two million refugees in the “safe zone.”

“‘Safe zones’ established during other conflicts have rarely been safe and establishing one cannot be used to justify forcibly returning refugees,” said Human Rights Watch in a report on Turkey's plan.

Both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch documented cases of Turkey forcibly moving refugees to Syria's Idlib province where the Syrian regime is waging a military campaign to retake the province from jihadist groups now in control. The returnees said they were beaten, threatened, and forced to sign documents they could not read.

“Turkish officials’ claim that all Syrians returning to their country are happy to go ring hollow in the face of evidence to the contrary,” said Gerry Simpson, associate crisis and conflict director at Human Rights Watch. “Turkey hosts four times as many Syrians as the European Union, but that does not mean it can return them to a war zone.”

Turkey is hosting 3.65 million Syrian refugees and claims 315,000 have voluntarily returned.

After his diplomatic wins, striking deals with Washington and Moscow that finally give him the control over the Turkey-northern Syria border he has long sought, in a televised interview with state-owned TRT late Thursday, Erdogan appeared to be developing plans to redesign northern Syria.

“This is a large area,” he said, indicating an area around Hasaka, northern Syria on a map. “It is significant to keep such a large area under control and turn it into a livable area. Arabs are the most suitable there. These areas are not suitable for the lifestyle of Kurds.”

Asked what he was basing his assertion on, Erdogan replied “because there areas are usually desert.”

Kurds accuse Turkey of planning to carry out ethnic cleansing and demographic change, uprooting the Kurdish population from their homes, and pushing them away from the border to make way for refugees who come from other parts of Syria.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) were not a party to talks between Erdogan and Putin, and commander of the force Mazloum Kobani Abdi has said they have reservations about the deal.

On Friday, the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), the political wing of the SDF, said they have submitted a “road map to Russia,” one that preserves Syria's territorial integrity.

The SDC and SDF have focused their message on Syrian solutions for Syrian problems, stressing that they do not seek separatism, but want to be a part of building a new Syria.

The Kurds have tried in the past to open a conversation with Damascus, but no direct

talks are ongoing now, spokesperson for the Kurdish armed forces, the People's Protection Units (YPG) told Rudaw in a recent interview.

“We have not had any direct talks with the Syrian government. They are moderated by Russia,” said Nuri Mahmoud. Even Syrian forces recently deployed to SDF areas have been mobilized in accordance with “Russian instructions rather than Damascus,” he said.

According to the SDC, the Russians have given their proposed road map a positive reception.

The Kurds have already made an agreement with Damascus, via Russia, for regime forces to bolster security on the border. On Friday, tens of vehicles – mainly trucks and buses filled with Syrian soldiers – were seen on the road from Qamishli to Tel Tamr, bringing light and heavy weapons in a large mobilization to SDF-held areas.

“Everything is under control and we are going to the border,” a soldier told Rudaw's Halkawt Aziz.

“We are doing our duty by being deployed to all Syrian territory,” said another.

“Our morale is high and we will re-control every inch of Syrian territory,” said a third.

The European Parliament has called for the United Nations to take the lead in northern Syria and establish a security zone.

Some 300,000 people have been displaced from their homes since Turkey launched its military operation in northern Syria on October 9.



Displaced Syrian children sit on classroom tables at a school turned into a shelter for people displaced by the war, in the northeastern Syrian town of Hasaka, on October 24, 2019. Photo: Fadel Senna/AFP

In Another Bipartisan Rebuke of Trump, House Votes for Sanctions Against Turkey

By Catie Edmondson

WASHINGTON (*New York Times*) — The House voted overwhelmingly on Tuesday, October 29 to impose a series of sweeping sanctions on Turkey over its brutal assault on the Kurds in northern Syria, dealing its second bipartisan rebuke to President Trump this month for pulling back American forces to allow for the Turkish incursion.

The measure drew broad support from Republicans, including the party's leaders, underscoring how Mr. Trump's decision to effectively surrender American influence in the region and abandon Kurdish fighters has provoked the most vocal and intense criticism of the president by his own party since he was elected. The vote was 403 to 16, with fifteen Republicans and one Democrat, Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, voting against the legislation.

Earlier this month, two-thirds of House Republicans joined with Democrats to censure his withdrawal of troops from Syria in a 354 to 60 vote. It was, at the time, the most significant bipartisan repudiation of Mr. Trump since he took office.

Tuesday's vote of 403 to 16 was even more lopsided, with fifteen Republicans and one Democrat, Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, voting against the legislation.

The top Democrat and Republican on the Foreign Affairs Committee — Representative Eliot L. Engel of New York, the chairman, and Representative Michael McCaul of Texas — sponsored the legislation that passed Tuesday, which is an attempt by lawmakers to add teeth to what they consider an insufficient response from the Trump administration to Turkey's bloody offensive into Syria. If enacted, it would prohibit the sale of arms to Turkey for use in Syria, impose sanctions on senior Turkish officials for their role in the military offensive against the Kurds, and require the administration to impose additional sanctions for the Turkish government's purchase of surface-to-air missile systems from Russia.

“Today Democrats and Republicans come together to demonstrate the strong, smart leadership that has certainly been lacking from the White House,” Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California said.

Trump last week lifted the modest sanctions he had imposed on Turkey's Ministry of National Defense and Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources after he announced that Turkey had agreed to a permanent cease-fire in Syria.

“The sanctions will be lifted unless something happens that we are not happy with,” Mr. Trump said.

That comment upset many lawmakers, who believe there is indeed much to be unhappy about. James F. Jeffrey, the president's special representative to Syria, told Congress that same day that American officials were investigating allegations that Turkish-supported forces had committed war crimes.

House Republicans on Tuesday largely did not discuss the administration's decision to lift sanctions, instead focusing their remarks on condemning President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other Turkish officials.

“We let Turkey into NATO to protect them from the Soviet Union,” McCaul said. “And now our NATO ally is buying Russian equipment, Russian military equipment and, through its invasion into Syria, threatening our allies.”

Only a handful of libertarian-minded Trump allies have come to the president's defense.

Representative Andy Biggs of Arizona, the chairman of the ultraconservative House Freedom Caucus, argued in an op-ed for The Hill newspaper on Tuesday that Mr. Trump's decision to “pursue diplomacy” is an approach that “seems to already be bearing fruit.”

For now, the tougher sanctions approved by the House are likely to remain stalled. To enact them, the legislation would have to pass the Republican-led Senate and be signed by Mr. Trump. Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader, has said that, for now at least, he does not intend to bring up any such measure.

“We need to think extremely carefully before we employ the same tools against a democratic

NATO ally that we would against the worst rogue states,” Mr. McConnell said in a speech. He has introduced his own resolution rebuking the president for the withdrawal of troops from Syria, but that, too, is unlikely to draw broad support. It would put Congress on the record warning against precipitous withdrawals of American troops from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, a provision that is intended to politically jam Democrats, who — notwithstanding their criticism of the president's pullback in Syria — have long called for pulling United States troops out of the Middle East.

Some Republican senators, however, hope to press forward with sanctions. Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, and Senator Chris Van Hollen, Democrat of Maryland, have introduced their own package of more punitive sanctions, with provisions that would cut off U.S. military assistance to Turkey and bar President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey from visiting the United States.

Republican senators have also privately pressed Mr. Trump for months to impose sanctions on Turkey for its purchase of a Russian anti-aircraft system called the S-400. Mr. Trump already punished Ankara for acquiring the surface-to-air missile system in July by canceling the sale of F-35 stealth fighter jets, but lawmakers in both parties believe Mr. Trump is legally obligated by a 2017 law to go further and enact sanctions.

“On a strong bipartisan basis, Congress has made it clear that there must be consequences for President Erdogan's misguided S-400 acquisition, a troubling signal of strategic alignment with Putin's Russia and a threat to the F-35 program,” the top Republicans and Democrats on the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services committees said in a joint statement.

In July, Republican senators met with Mr. Trump at the White House in the hopes of convincing the president to impose sanctions on Turkey. But after a freewheeling meeting that often veered off-topic, the lawmakers left with the impression that the president was not interested in such a move, a Republican senator who attended said.

Community News

An Evening with Fr. Vasken Kouzouian: Celebrating 25 Years of Ministry

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The Parish Council of Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston is pleased to announce a special milestone celebration honoring Fr. Vasken Kouzouian on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of his Ordination to the Holy Order of Priesthood. The event will take place on Saturday evening, November 9 at MITs Samberg Conference Center in Cambridge.

Fr. Vasken was ordained to the Holy Order of Priesthood on October 30, 1994. Since that day,



Rev. Vasken Kouzouian

Fr. Vasken has been a devoted and faithful servant and shepherd of the Armenian Apostolic Church, serving as pastor of St. Mark Armenian Church in Springfield, MA (1995-1999), as Director of the Department of Youth Ministry (1999-2001), as Director of St. Vartan Camp (1995 to present), and as pastor of Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge since 2002.

The cocktail reception begins at 6:30 p.m. Dinner and Celebration begin at 7:30 p.m.

Donation for the dinner is \$100. Seating is by advance paid reservation only. MITs Sloan Conference Center (Chang Building E52, Floor 7) is located at 50 Memorial Drive on Cambridge, MA.

Tickets can be purchased by contacting the Holy Trinity Church Office, emailing office@htaac.org, or at <https://aneveningwithfrvasken.eventbrite.com>.

Dr. Ümit Kurt to Speak on Young Turks at Fresno State

FRESNO — Dr. Ümit Kurt will give a presentation on “The Young Turks: Racism and the Construction of National Identity” on Friday, November 8, at 7:30 p.m., in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room 191, on the Fresno State campus.

The talk is co-sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program and The Center for Ethics, Character, and Civic Education at Fresno State.

While there is an extensive body of literature addressing the foundations of Turkish nationalism and its racist aspects in the early Republican Era and contemporary Turkey, a significant gap persists in the critical period between 1911-1916, when the existence of the Ottoman Empire was at stake. This talk sets its goal as displaying the racist streak apparent in the construction of Turkish nationalism in this period. It offers an analysis of the fabric of Turkish nationalism and the racist patterns of this fabric through an examination of essays published in the first nine volumes of the journal of Türk Yurdu (Turkish Homeland), the most eminent of the Turkish journals of the time and the intellectual organ of the CUP. It aims to track down the premises and the origins of the historical evolution and the development of Turkish nationalism by analyzing the content of the journal's writings. Critical scholars of nationalism have argued that race (ırk) and racism are indispensable elements in many forms of nationalism.

Kurt received his PhD from the Department of History at Clark University in 2016 and is currently a Polonsky Fellow at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. He is the author of several monographs and numerous scholarly articles.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

For more information about the lecture visit www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies.



North America's three Diocesan Primates—Abp. Hovnan Derderian, Bp. Daniel Findikyan, and Bp. Abgar Hovakimyan (pictured front center, l-r)—met in mid-October to discuss matters pertaining to the Armenian Church in the Western and Eastern U.S. and Canada. At St. Nersess Seminary in Armonk, NY, they also gathered with clergy from the Eastern Diocese.

Three Diocesan Primates Of North America Meet to Discuss Church Issues

The three Diocesan Primates of the Armenian Church in North America met on Tuesday and Wednesday, October 15-16, 2019, at St. Nersess Seminary in Armonk, NY. Bishop Daniel Findikyan of the Eastern U.S. Diocese hosted Archbishop Hovnan Derderian of the Western U.S. Diocese and Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan of the Diocese of Canada.

It marked the second time that the three churchmen have met formally. A prior gathering took place earlier this year in California.

The church leaders discussed issues of common concern during three working sessions. The occasion also afforded them a chance to interact with the staff and students of St. Nersess Seminary and with Eastern Diocesan clergy from the region.

Topics addressed by the Primates included the ongoing renovation of the Mother Cathedral of Holy Echmiadzin, the creation of a new international Armenian Church youth group, envisioned expansions to St. Nersess Seminary, and the church's role in preserving the Armenian language.

“It was my privilege this week to host my brothers in New York, to continue the work we began in Los Angeles last February,” said Findikyan. “Although our dioceses are separated geographically, we Primates find that we face common challenges. At the same time, living on this continent affords a valuable prospect for tangible cooperation. Archbishop Hovnan, Bishop Abgar and I share a great hope that our example of mutual love, respect, and collaboration can be an inspiration beyond these shores.”

Derderian, who chairs the fundraising committee for the Echmiadzin renovation project, outlined the project as a state-of-the-art renovation by top experts in the field, which will preserve the cathedral for another 200-300 years. The work is expected to be completed in one year.

The cost is expected to be on the order of \$10 million. He added that while the Mother See has mostly pursued a limited number of large gifts to fund the project, all children of the Armenian Church should be encouraged to give whatever they can, based on their relative abilities. The three Primates agreed to take a united approach to contributing to the cause.

By the appointment of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, Derderian also chairs the new “Armenian Church International Youth Organizations.” The group was created in response to the need for guidance among the church youth groups proliferating across the diaspora.

The Mother See will shortly release general guidelines for these groups, Derderian said. Fr. Tovma Khachatryan has been appointed the director of a group.

As part of an update on the operations of St. Nersess Seminary — which serves all three dioceses in North America—seminary dean Fr. Mardiros Chevian spoke about an increasing need for academic programs directed towards men and women who are not pursuing a formal priestly vocation, but who wish to serve the church as youth workers, musicians, deacons, or teachers. Findikyan spoke about faculty development efforts to respond to this need.

‘Body’-Building

Findikyan also addressed questions on the future of the Armenian language — especially Western Armenian—and the Armenian Church's role in preserving. He suggested that the dioceses might join forces with Armenian cultural and educational organizations outside the church, to form an independent body tasked with promoting Armenian language instruction. The three Primates see PRIMATES, page 8

AUA Hosts a Delegation From California

YEREVAN — On October 15, 2019, the American University of Armenia (AUA) hosted a U.S. delegation comprising California Assembly member Adrin Nazarian and Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Krekorian, both accompanied by their Chiefs of Staff. Also in the party was Charles Ghailian, Chair of the Leadership Council of the University of Southern California Institute of Armenian Studies.

AUA Vice President of Operations Ashot Ghazaryan welcomed the guests and accompanied them on a tour of the campus while they learned about the University's history, mission, vision, ongoing and future projects. Sargis Zeytunyan (MS IESM '99), director of the Prototyping Laboratory of AUA's Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center (EPIC), demonstrated the cutting-edge prototyping instruments housed at EPIC. The members of the U.S. delegation also had the opportunity to learn about the EPIC Incubator Program and successful EPIC startup teams.

Continuing the tour, the guests visited the AUA Turpanjian School of Public Health (SPH) and the Acopian Center for the Environment. They met SPH Dean Dr. Varduhi Petrosyan, who presented their current research projects. She particularly expanded on tuberculosis-related projects led by the SPH Avedisian Onanian Center for Health Services Research and Development (CHSR) and trainings conducted with health professionals on patient-centered tuberculosis treatment. Director of the AUA Acopian Center Alen Amirkhanyan briefed them on the environmental projects they are currently engaged in, calling attention to the forthcoming inaugural “Forest Summit: Global Action and Armenia” co-organized by the Armenia Tree Project (ATP) and AUA.

The campus tour concluded at the office of AUA President Dr. Karin Markides where the sides shared thoughts on future collaboration. Dr. Markides told them about the reasons behind her decision to join AUA, her academic and leadership background and aspirations for the University. Members of the U.S. delegation were eager to learn more about the AUA President's recent visit to California, her takeaways from meetings with colleagues at the University of California System and ways in which the California Assemblymember and LA City Councilmember could be of assistance to AUA.

“When I came to AUA on the first of July, I was handed over a study, based on broad stakeholder input and developed over a year by an expert panel from California, AGBU, and AUA to determine the technology future of Armenia. We tackled a number of questions and identified tangible open actions. This was a good opportunity to get an understanding and describe important collaborative efforts,” noted Markides.

“I was a part of the AGBU Young Professionals who've been with this University when it started. Now seeing it in full blossom, seeing the incredible world-class research centers, its extraordinary students is very impressive to me. Also in the short time that I have been here, I have seen the great opportunity for future collaboration between the University and the City of Los Angeles. I am really pleased to have this opportunity to visit AUA,” concluded Krekorian.

Founded in 1991, the American University of Armenia (AUA) is a private, independent university located in Yerevan, Armenia, affiliated with the University of California, and accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission in the United States. AUA provides local and international students with Western-style education through top-quality undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs, promotes research and innovation, encourages civic engagement and community service, and fosters democratic values.



COMMUNITY NEWS

AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian High School to Close

PASADENA – In a letter posted online last week, the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian High School board announced that the school will close as of next year.

“After extensive consideration of a number of factors and, most importantly, thinking about the best interests of our students, we have decided to combine the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian High School (MHS) with our sister AGBU Manoogian-Demirjian School (MDS) on the Canoga Park campus at the end of this school year,” the letter noted.

The board went on to enumerate the reasons for their decision, while noting that they understand there would be questions.

Among the factors they cite declining enrollment and increasing deficits.

“Since its inception, regardless of enrollment numbers, the school has been heavily subsidized by AGBU and the Manoukian Foundation. Those subsidies have grown significantly every year, nearing almost \$2 million this past year, alone. With its policy of keeping tuition affordable, the \$7,980 tuition



Students at the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian High School

covers only about a third of the \$20,000 per student cost. AGBU and the Manoukian Foundation have been subsidizing each student between \$10,000 and \$13,000, annual-

ly. There has also been a steadily increasing demand for financial aid. Given its commitment to maintaining high academic standards and attracting the best quality teach-

ers, MHS is facing a financial reality that has become untenable,” the letter added.

The resources, they suggested could be better used to provide quality education while investing in the local community.

“We respect the strong attachment to MHS and the school community, and all it has offered your children. We truly believe MDS will continue to offer these same values and cultural traditions. With an even more robust and excellent educational experience, MDS offers a dynamic learning environment, a significantly larger student body population, many of whom are friends with MHS students, and considerably more resources for students than MHS,” according to the letter.

The MHS board members and administrators will hold a School Placement Fair on Tuesday, November 5 following the scheduled Parent Teacher Conferences, where families can meet with representatives of MDS and a number of other high schools. Further details will follow in a separate correspondence.

ACEF Welcomes New Members to Board of Directors

By Steve Nigohosian

NEW YORK – The Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF) recently welcomed Greg Amerkhanian and Aline Khatchadourian to its Board of Directors, while acknowledging the close of an eight-year term by legacy Board member Alyssa Keleshian Bonomo. Amerkhanian and Khatchadourian will attend the upcoming November 22 Board of Directors meeting at the Diocesan Center in New York City.

“We are very appreciative of Alyssa’s outstanding contribution to ACEF during her tenure on our Board of Directors, and we look forward to her continued involvement as an ongoing member of the ACEF family,” says Chairman Charles A. Demirjian. “We are also very honored to have Greg and Aline join our

Board, as their professional experience and financial acumen will be of the utmost value to the organization.”

Amerkhanian, a senior vice president at Merrill Lynch Wealth Management, has been a lifelong parishioner of St. Thomas Armenian Church in Tenafly, NJ, and joined the ACEF Board in January. His extensive experience in evaluating investments and their rate of return is the perfect fit for ACEF. “Investment policy statements are critical in that they indicate whether or not the funds, and their managers, are meeting the organization’s financial goals and expectations,” says Greg. “Serving on the ACEF Board gives me the opportunity to help oversee the performance of the funds, with the end goal of ensuring continued financial growth and longevity for the Armenian Church and its programs.”

Khatchadourian, who also joined the ACEF Board in January, is a Certified Public



Greg Amirkhanian

Accountant, with previous positions as Director of Finance at both the Nassau (NY) County Legislature and the Town of North Hempstead, NY. “I am proud and honored to be a part of this wonderful organization,” says Khatchadourian. “Part of ACEF’s unique strength is its ability to

are the launching of the 2017 Annual Report, and the creation of the organization’s new brand identity, including its website and logo. Yet, she is proudest of the ongoing creation of ACEF’s endowments and investment opportunities, which ensure long-term capital is available for Armenian cultural and education programs for the next generation. As a testament to their com-



Alyssa Keleshian-Bonomo and Tom Bonomo

mitment and support of the Armenian Church, the Keleshian family recently pledged a lead-gift of \$250,000 to the Eastern Diocese Our Church, Our Legacy Campaign, which is managed by ACEF. “Armenian youth like my own children will continue to have a church that they can call home. It gives me comfort to know that ACEF’s efforts make it possible for them to proudly carry on their Armenian heritage far into the future.”

The Armenian Church Endowment Fund is an independent, separately-incorporated, non-profit entity whose mission is to provide professional, highly disciplined, tightly controlled and cost effective asset management services to the various constituent parts of the Armenian Church, parishes and individuals who are creating a legacy through endowments.

The investment objective of ACEF is to earn sufficient returns through time to support stable and growing income distributions for each individual endowment fund to its designated beneficiary, while preserving and enhancing the principal balance of each such endowment fund. ACEF seeks to accomplish this objective by aggregating the individual endowment funds and investing them collectively in a broadly diversified portfolio managed by institutional quality investment managers.

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OBITUARIES

Irene Eva Ashbahian

Mother, Church Pillar, Armenian By Choice

NEW YORK – Irene Eva Ashbahian passed away on September 29, 2019 at the age of 93 surrounded by family.

She was born in June 1926 in New Bedford, Mass. to Alfred Gagne and Amanda Boulet, both of French-Canadian lineage. Growing up in the Bronx in New York City, she was acutely



aware of the difficult economic circumstances of the late 1920s Depression Era in which her family lived. She looked forward to building a happy and secure life.

She met her future husband, Harry Ashbahian, in high school, and married at the age of 18 on New Year's Eve in 1943. Harry and Irene celebrated 75 years of marriage

this past year.

They raised four children: Stephen, Thomas, Gregory, and Cynthia and welcomed their spouses Jill, Carol, and Janet into the family. They lovingly admired their grandchildren: David and wife Daniella, Timothy and wife Michelle, Kristen and husband Rich, Eric and wife Danielle, Adrienne, Lauren and husband Charles, Kathryn, Nicole, and Craig. They were blessed with four great-grandchildren: Sophia, Victoria, Mason, and Taline.

What made Irene's life so unique was her warm embrace of becoming Armenian. She was a pioneer "ABC" - Armenian By Choice. In the first few years of her marriage, she proceeded to learn the language, cuisine, customs, and most importantly the faith of the Armenian people.

She was part of Holy Martyrs Church in Bayside, NY, where she taught Sunday School, and ensured that her children grew up in the tightly-woven community of Armenians. By providing her children continuous exposure to their Armenian heritage, they all became dedicated members of the Armenian community and raised their own families in the Armenian Church.

Irene was admired by countless Armenians once they came to know her. It was common that upon meeting this blue-eyed, blond-haired "odar," their jaws would drop upon hearing her speak fluent Armenian. They would also smile ear to ear as they savored her handmade paghach, dolma, manti, yalanchi, or lahmajun that she expertly prepared. Alongside her husband Harry, she hosted countless parties, gatherings, and receptions of the Holy Martyrs Mr. & Mrs. Club at their home in Searingtown, NY and later in Southampton, NY.

Once their children were grown, Irene and Harry traveled extensively throughout the world.

Seta (Assatourian) Buchter

Longtime Holy Trinity Church Member

WINCHESTER, Mass. – Seta (Assatourian) Buchter passed away on October 18, at 69 years of age, after a brief illness.

Seta was born on May 17, 1950 in Manhattan to the late Haig & Alice (Husisian) Assatourian. She attended Columbia University and graduated with a master's degree in international affairs. During her studies she met Konrad Buchter and they were married a short time later. Konrad and Seta moved to England shortly after they were married, where they lived for 5 years before moving back to the Boston area. Seta was predeceased by her beloved husband Konrad who died in 1983.

She is survived by her daughter Christina Buchter and her son-in-law Dan McNena of Burlington, and granddaughter Emily McNena. She was the sister of Sona Davidian and her husband Richard of New York, and the late Lora Assatourian and Sina Assatourian. She is also survived by her brother-in-law Thomas Buchter of Ohio and two generations of nieces and nephews and many cousins and friends.

She devoted much of her life to the Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge where she served for 32 years in several different capacities. She worked as church bookkeeper and administrator. She also was the longtime Sunday School superintendent, a role she served from 1987 to 2015. In addition, she held



various other leadership roles within the church and was very devoted and active in the life of the church. Her presence at the church will be deeply missed by the entire parish.

Funeral Services were held at Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge on Wednesday, October 23rd at 11 am. Interment took place on Friday, October 25 at George Washington Memorial Park in Paramus, NJ.

Three Diocesan Primates of North America Meet

PRIMATES, from page 6

intend to appoint experts from their respective dioceses to jointly study the issue.

In a presentation on the Eastern Diocese's "Building Up the Body of Christ" initiative, Findkiyan described the plan's objectives: to educate all segments of the church in the Armenian tradition of following Christ; to inspire new "apostles" – deacons, teachers, musicians, and others – to support the clergy; and to restore the Holy Badarak as the heart of the Christian calling in the Armenian

Church. Hovakimyan and Derderian felt that the basic ideas set forth could be of use in their own dioceses, and could foster closer collaboration among them.

Other topics of note included exchanges of clergy and youth among the three dioceses, and cooperation with the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox churches.

The next meeting of the Primates will take place in the spring of 2020 will be held in Canada, hosted by Hovakimyan.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Clara Bousian Bedrosian Endowment Established at Fresno State

FRESNO — The Armenian Studies Program announces that a \$50,000 endowment has been established at Fresno State through a donation from Clara Bousian Bedrosian of Fowler.

The Clara Bousian Bedrosian Endowed Fund will benefit the Armenian Studies Program in two ways: by supporting qualified students studying in the Armenian Studies Program with scholarships and by supporting the Armenian Studies Program Lecture Series. ASP Coordinator Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian thanked Bousian Bedrosian at a gathering held at her home in Fowler, in the presence of family members.

"This endowment will benefit generations of Fresno State students and enhances the Armenian Studies Program," said Der Mugrdechian. "Mrs. Bedrosian's gift is important in highlighting the partnership between the Program and the community."

Bousian Bedrosian is a 1958 graduate of Fresno State.



From left, Clara Bousian Bedrosian, Kenneth Bedrosian, Moon-Ja Yunouye, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian.

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to donate, see GannonforWatertown.com**

Paid for by the Committee to Elect John Gannon

Architect Alani Among 10 Women Honored by *Boston Real Estate Times*

WALTHAM, Mass. — *Boston Real Estate Times* announced its list of the 10 Outstanding Women of 2019 in Commercial Real Estate who will be honored on November 5 at the Westin Hotel.

One of the 10 is Vickie Alani, Principal, CBT Architects. Alani is nationally and internationally recognized for her artistic, community-oriented, and forward-looking approach to architecture and interior design. An expert in multi-family residential and hospitality design, Vickie's work wholly embraces the fluidity and interconnectivity with which people live today. Regarded for her forward thinking and lifestyle expertise, Vickie is a frequent contributor to the larger discourse on changing residential

peers and the Greater Boston community, her influence extends to several local initiatives, including participation in the ULI Women's Leader's Initiative and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce Women's Network Advisory Board, while serving as a mentor for the BSA Women in Design Mid-Career Mentoring Program, and as host for the "Celebrating Contributions of Our Nation's Immigrants" annual fundraising gala for the care of the Armenian Heritage Park on Boston's Greenway.

"Boston Real Estate Times' 10 Outstanding Women are playing a major role in Boston's real estate market from architecture to construction and from development to finance," said



Vickie Alani

trends and how to design for an evolving culture.

A prominent voice in the design community, she has been featured internationally at conferences and in interviews for her industry-leading insight. Augmenting Vickie's work is her passion for mentorship and cross-discipline collaboration.

Respected for her leadership both among her

Upendra Mishra, publisher of *Boston Real Estate Times*. "When I started to cover commercial real estate industry in Boston in 1993, there were very few women in the industry. Now, they are at the forefront and leading the industry. We are excited to honor them."

The breakfast ceremony to honor the 10 Outstanding Women will take place from 7:15 to 10 a.m. at Westin Hotel in Waltham.

Paul R. Ignatius to Be Honored at Armenian American Museum Gala

GLENDALÉ — The Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California has announced that they will honor former US Secretary of Navy and US Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul R. Ignatius at their 2nd Annual Gala. The highly anticipated event will be held on Sunday, December 8, at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills.

"Paul Ignatius' rise from his hometown of Glendale to his service as US Secretary of Navy is truly remarkable and his support for the Armenian American Museum project has inspired us all," stated Executive Chairman Berdj Karapetian. "We look forward to honoring Secretary Ignatius for his dedicated public service at the 2nd Annual Gala."

Ignatius, the son of Armenian parents who immigrated to the United States, was born in Glendale in 1920. Ignatius' military career began in the US Navy during World War II. He served for eight years in the Administrations of President John F. Kennedy and President Lyndon B. Johnson. He was appointed first as Assistant Secretary of the Army in 1961 and then as Undersecretary in 1964. In 1965, he was appointed Assistant Secretary of Defense (Installations and Logistics). In 1967, he was named Secretary of Navy and served in the position until 1969. In 2019, the US Navy commissioned the USS Paul Ignatius (DDG 117), its newest Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer named in honor of the former Secretary.

Ignatius became president of the Washington

Post following his government service. He later joined the Air Transport Association and served as President for 15 years until his retirement in 1986. He is also the founder of the Harbridge House, Inc., a management consulting firm based in Massachusetts.

The Armenian American Museum recently launched its Square Foot Builders program, an initiative inspired by Ignatius' generous contribution and words of encouragement in the early stages of the developing project.

Hundreds of supporters, community leaders, and public officials are expected to attend the



Paul R. Ignatius

2nd Annual Armenian American Museum Gala on December 8. The signature event of the year will celebrate and support the landmark project as it approaches its historic groundbreaking year.

For more information on the 2nd Annual Gala, visit www.AAMGala.org.



COMMUNITY NEWS

AMAA Holds 100th Annual Meeting in Watertown

WATERTOWN – The 100th Annual Meeting of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) was held at the Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown, on Saturday, October 19. AMAA President Nazareth Darakjian, MD, presided over the meeting. Board member Rev. Ara Guekguezian offered the opening prayer and Rev. Dr. Krikor Youmshajekian, president of the Armenian Missionary Association of Australia offered the closing prayer.

During the annual meeting AMAA Officers, Directors and Committee Chairs, as well as delegates of the Armenian Evangelical Unions, the Armenian Evangelical World Council and affiliated organizations presented their annual reports, shared their joys and concerns.

The general membership of the AMAA elected the following eight members to the Board of Directors Class of 2022 for a term of three years: LindaKay Abdulian, Hrair Steven Aharonian, MD, Rafi Balabanian, DDS, Phyllis Dohanian, Nurhan Helvacian, PhD, Rev. Haig Kherlopian, D.Min., Seta Loshkajian Nalbandian and Michael Voskian, DMD.

In conjunction with the AMAA Annual Meeting, on October 17 and 18, the AMAA Board held a Strategic Planning Session



AMAA members and representatives at the special gathering and Commemorative Worship Service at the Armenian Church of the Martyrs of Worcester, MA, the birthplace of AMAA



AMAA 100th Annual Meeting in Watertown, MA. Seated at the head table are L to R: Dr. Nurhan Helvacian, Treasurer; Zaven Khanjian, Executive Director/CEO, Dr. Nazareth Darakjian, President and Tom Momjian, Esq., Recording Secretary

and a Board meeting, and the Armenian Evangelical World Council held its meeting.

On Sunday, October 20, members and guests joined the congregation of the Armenian Memorial Church for Sunday Morning Worship Service. Rev. Jeremy Tovmassian, pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church of greater Chicago preached in English and Rev. Megrditch Karagoezian, the President of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East (UAECNE), preached in Armenian. A special prayer was offered by Rev. Haroutune Selimian, President of the Armenian

Evangelical Community of Syria in memory of AMAA members and friends who made the transition from this life to life eternal during the past fiscal year. Rev. Dr. Ron Tovmassian, Senior Pastor of the United Armenian Congregational Church of Los Angeles, CA officiated at the installation of the newly elected members of the AMAA Board of Directors.

At the conclusion of AMAA's 100th Annual Meeting weekend, a special gathering and Commemorative Worship Service was held on Sunday, October 20 in the afternoon, at the Armenian Church of the Martyrs, Worcester, MA – The first Armenian Evangelical Church established in the US in 1892 and the birthplace of AMAA in 1918.

The service was led by the pastor of the Worcester Church, Rev. Stephen Carlyle. Messages of Reflections of the past, current and hope for future were delivered by Zaven Khanjian, AMAA Executive Director/CEO, Rev. Megrditch Karagoezian, President of UAECNE and Taline Avakian Borekjian, a member of Worcester Church. During the Service hymns of praise were



AMAA's 100th Annual Meeting Sunday morning worship at Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown and installation of the newly elected AMAA Board members, officiated by Rev. Ron Tovmassian, D.Min.

sung and special prayers were offered praising God for the past 100 years of faithful service of the AMAA and asking God's guidance for the future.

The AMAA thanked Rev. Dr. Avedis Boynerian, pastor of the Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown and its members for hosting the meeting.



AMAA Board of Directors Meeting in Watertown, MA



Armenian Church of the Martyrs in Worcester, MA, the first Armenian Evangelical Church in the United States established on January 1, 1892 and the birthplace of AMAA in 1918.



COMMUNITY NEWS

ACYOA Juniors Gather for 2019 Fall Sports Weekend

WYNNEWOOD, Penn. — Young Armenian Church members ages 13 to 18 came together over Columbus Day weekend for the annual ACYOA Juniors Fall Sports Weekend. At Camp Kweebec in Schwenksville, Penn., 213 participants from 14 parishes across the Eastern

Diocese of the Armenian Church of America gathered for three days of worship, sports, and fellowship.

Tanya Bardakjian and Shake Derderian, youth advisors at the St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Church of Wynnewood, organized and led the weekend,

working alongside dedicated community members.

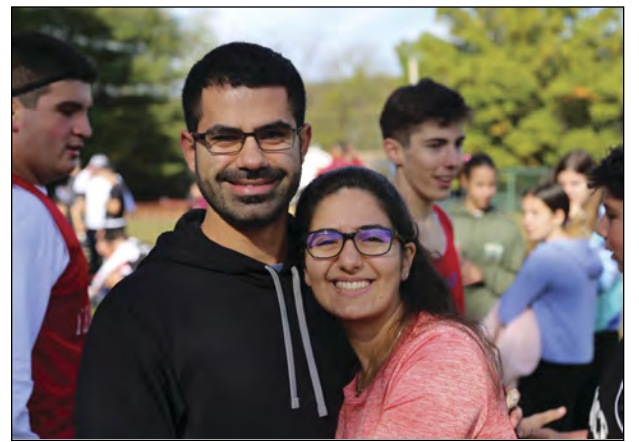
Fr. Oshagan Gulgulian, pastor of the Wynnewood parish, and Fr. Hakob Gevorgyan, pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Cheltenham, visited the youth on Saturday afternoon. Kathryn Ashbahian, of the Diocesan Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, participated and photographed throughout the weekend.

Under the theme of “Living the Hye Life,” the ACYOA Juniors enjoyed the full variety of activities available on the expansive campgrounds. On Saturday, participants played sports and individual games. They had opportunities to zipline and rock-climb. Once the sports concluded for the day, participants gathered for dinner and an evening dance, in an indoor/outdoor setting complete with games and ice cream.

On Sunday morning Dn. Michael Sabounjian, diaconal intern at the Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church in Providence, RI, led the participants in a rejuvenating Morning Hour service. Throughout the day, participants continued to compete in their individual and team sports, and took advantage of the beautiful sunny weather.

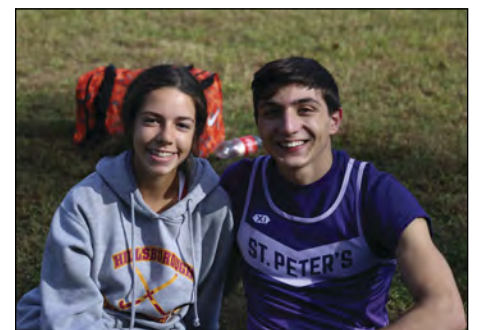


(in green shirt, back row) Chris Chouljian, (front row, from left to right) first person unknown, Allison Misk, Arto Stepanian, Shahe Jebejian.



Dn. Michael and Lucine Sabounjian

That evening, participants enjoyed a dinner and awards ceremony and dance. On Monday morning, everyone gathered for a farewell bagel breakfast before heading back to their parish communities.



Diana Bozoyan and Avo Elebyjian



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2019 SPORT WEEKEND WINNERS

Beginners Chess

1st place: Tigran Safaryan (Holy Trinity, Cheltenham, PA)

2nd place: Andre Ayazian (St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ)

Advanced Chess

1st Place: Hayk Safaryan (Holy Trinity, Cheltenham, PA)

2nd place: Peter Meshkov (St. Peter, Watervliet, NY)

Beginners Tavloo

1st place: Lulu Teager (Holy Trinity, Cambridge, MA)

2nd place: Andrew Zoraian (St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ)

Advanced Tavloo

1st place: Nathan Kefeyan (St. James, Watertown, MA)

2nd place: Armen Setrakian (St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ)

Ping Pong

1st place: Shahe Jebejian (St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ)

2nd place: Michael Nargizian (St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ)

Volleyball

1st place: St. Leon 'A' Team, Fair Lawn, NJ

2nd place: Holy Martyrs, Bayside, NY

Soccer

1st place: St. Leon 'A' Team, Fair Lawn, NJ

2nd place: St. Peter, Watervliet, NY

Girls Basketball

1st place: Philly Team

2nd place: St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ

Boys Basketball

1st place: 'A' Team, St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ

2nd place: Holy Translators/Providence Team

Overall Sports Champion Chapter

St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ

Sportsmanship (Girls)

Isabelle Siounian (Holy Martyrs, Bayside, NY)

Maral Andonian (Holy Martyrs, Bayside, NY)

Sportsmanship (Boys)

Shant Cimenian (St. James, Watertown, MA)



COMMUNITY NEWS

Deputy Minister Andreasyan Visits US in Effort to Combat Poverty and Social Oppression in Armenia

VISIT, from page 1

Andreasyan has a doctorate in sociology from Yerevan State University and has lectured at the latter institution for some 15 years. She also has lectured at Yerevan State Linguistic Sociological University and did research at Socioscope NGO. She worked from 2012 to 2019 at the Center for Education Projects Program Implementation Unit (<http://www.cfep.am/en/>) of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia.

On February 15 of this year, Andreasyan was appointed as the only female deputy minister, out of four in total in her ministry. Her sphere of work includes family, women and children's issues, social aid, the evaluation of vulnerability of families, allocation of aid, and social and housing funding.

She is not a member of Nikol Pashinyan's political party but as a member of government she is a part of its team. She was not a direct participant in the Velvet Revolution but said she liked the changes.

Efforts to Deal with Poverty in Armenia

The social issues she deals with are connected in part to the widespread poverty in Armenia. Andreasyan said that poverty is defined by the Statistical Committee of the government, which has determined that 25.7 percent of the total population is poor, of which 1.1 percent is extremely poor. The poverty level is set through the cost of a food basket, which at present is approximately 25,500 dram. The general poverty level is a little over 40,000 dram for one person for one month's expenses. The Statistical Committee uses a methodology which it prepared together with the World Bank. In addition to poverty monetarily, the committee also calculates the non-monetary deprivations or consequences.

Andreasyan declared that the government agenda is to eliminate both poverty and extreme poverty through encouraging working. It does



Deputy Minister Zhanna Andreasyan (photo Aram Arkun)

not see providing passive financial aid as a solution. Instead, its approach is to strengthen the individuals and families who are in difficult straits so that they will have stable sources of income through employment. The distinction would be made between those who only temporarily cannot work due to circumstances and those who are physically or mentally unable to work, as well as children.

Andreasyan and Matosian both stated that they believed there was a political dimension to poverty under the prior regime. The system of aid was intended in part to keep families dependent on the government so that during elections it was easy to sway them with small sums of money.

Andreasyan said, "A culture of poverty is reproducing itself." The poverty in Armenia after independence some thirty years ago was of a different nature, but now it has more profound reverberations in society, with greater family issues. It is no longer just financial in nature.

On the one hand, the budget of the ministry of labor and social affairs is the second largest in the Armenian republic, after the defense ministry. Every year the state has allocated a large sum, close to 40 billion drams annually, to help

the poor, with little change in the quality of life of recipients. Some families have been in the same situation, receiving aid, for ten years.

Andreasyan explained: "Poverty is also the feeling of insignificance of your own voice. You think of yourself as someone who can do nothing. I don't think this existed 30 years ago."

Consequently, she said, when we speak of the vanquishing of poverty, first of all we speak of

Existing programs are being reexamined with an eye to using resources more effectively, efficiently and humanely. Andreasyan gave the example of four boarding institutions for children at which her ministry takes care of approximately 260 children, and annually expends half a billion dram. The children actually have families, but were sent to these institutions because of the socioeconomic difficulties of the latter. When they turn 18,



At the Cambridge Police Department, with Police commissioner Branville G. Bard Jr and members of the Cambridge Arlington Belmont High Risk Assessment Team (CABHART) (photo Aram Kaligian)

reestablishing the importance of the person in society, a person who respects himself, who makes his own decisions and takes his own steps. To do this, she said, the government is looking at the issue in a complete manner, from beginning to end, to assess what resources and programs are necessary. Sometimes services to strengthen an individual are more important than financial aid. In this process, social workers are very important, as they are the ones who must evaluate the problems and needs of individuals.

"For this very reason," Andreasyan continued, "we are completely changing the system and want to establish a service with new content, a unified social service." At present there are several different services, one to examine employment needs, another dealing with pensions, a third handling issues of the handicapped, and another to evaluate social vulnerability. Andreasyan said that people should not have to run from one place to another to receive the necessary services and encounter bureaucratic difficulties. Instead, it must be one united structure. This is important for using state resources productively as well as from the perspective of being "human-centered" or anthropocentric [mardakentron], a phrase often used by officials in the Pashinyan government.

Instead of four different services in four different buildings with four different sets of staff in a given province, Andreasyan said, there will be only one, which will be more productive and efficient.

There are already effective programs which exist in Armenia, Andreasyan said, so there is no need to reinvent the wheel. International and domestic organizations have carried out such programs on a small scale. They work one to one-and-a-half years intensively with a family, providing services to strengthen it. They help provide means of employment. For example, they might give a woman who can sew well a sewing machine, plus lessons and then clients, so she can begin to work. Gradually she is able to support her family's financial needs. They help with the children's health, educational and psychological issues. In this way, over half the families aided are able to conquer poverty, Andreasyan said.

A new program in this vein with state leadership is now planned in the field of animal husbandry. There are 29,000 families getting aid who are unable to earn enough to support themselves in this field. The government will support an experiment with 1,000 families this year to turn their work more productive and turn this into a state program on a larger scale.

they are returned to their families and still face the same difficulties.

Instead, Andreasyan said, it would be more humane and effective to return the 260 children to their families and help the latter, spending the same sum of money annual on various services. This sum would be sufficient to maintain services for 4,000 children in 30 centers of population.

US Visit

The purpose of Andreasyan's visit to the United States was to learn about the methods used by American organizations. Various NGOs, government agencies, academics and health specialists shared their knowledge. Matosian explained that the Women's Support Center has limited resources, but wanted to support this trip because the Center's work becomes much easier when the policymaking state body understands the issues in all their aspects. She added, "We are at a turning point now in Armenia because a lot of restructuring is taking place, with new laws and new mechanisms."

Consequently, the trip in a sense was an investment in the future, she said. Matosian said that they were fortunate that after the revolution, the government gained a good minister of labor and social affairs who previously was a member of the coalition to stop violence against women as an NGO.

Andreasyan exclaimed, "It is very interesting to see what a variety of services exist here." Matosian interjected that in the US, the organizations providing social services are specialized and fragmented, focusing on domestic violence, sexual assault, poverty, homelessness, or children's services. She noted, incidentally, that the family structure in Armenia was still strong enough to make homelessness not be a serious problem there.

Andreasyan said that in Armenia, most social issues reach the attention of the state at late stages, requiring great expenditure of resources and uncertain results. Instead, she wanted to see what sorts of services and policies of prevention exist in the US and how the entire system works, in order to see what can be used in Armenia as tools of prevention and early intervention.

She said that it was impressive to see where the American NGOs started and where they are now. She said that, for example, the Cambridge Arlington and Belmont High Risk Assessment and Response Team succeeded in insuring that there have not been any incidents of murder of women in recent years, though the total population in Cambridge, around 700,000, is not a small one. She also liked the model of the Boston

Medical Center and the South Boston Community Health Center, which combines social services together with health and even includes a food pantry. Andreasyan said that Armenia needs to think about this approach and expand traditional approaches to public services.

However, she said that in Armenia's constitution, it is recorded that Armenia is a social state and she said she believed that the systemic solution of social issues is one of Armenia's priorities. She believes a unified approach is necessary with the role of the state as predominant but finds that much can be learned from the American experience of providing services at the community level. The local community knows the individual the best and physically is closest to him.

She said her view is that there is nothing contradictory in this, as "the state defines the agenda and the policy and in the first stage also promotes the development of services. In the next stage it can ensure community services, directly realizing monitoring and assuring the minimum quality."

The Armenian state, she said, is trying to expand cooperation with NGOs and provide services through them instead of expanding state agencies. The model she saw in the US, she said, was similar in this sense, with the state allocating grants to organizations which then provide services. This takes advantage of the greater flexibility of the latter, with less bureaucracy. Matosian said that the NGOs work with greater passion and in the past inspired more confidence in the people.

A key issue requiring more resources in Armenia, Matosian said, was training of social workers to deal with all aspects of a person's problems. The US in this respect has a good model in place.

Education in Armenia

Prior to her new post, Andreasyan worked for many years in different positions at the Center for Education Projects. This center carried out reforms in the educational sphere, in schools and kindergartens, and received funding from international monetary sources.

She said, "The issue of the quality of higher education is simultaneously the issue of its structure, the quality of the retraining of its lecturing staff, the review of the contents of the subjects [taught], and of course the participation of student structures in university life." The center attempted to help the institutions of higher learning make new projects for progress by providing financial grants. They were facing a financial crisis because the numbers of students have been declining and they largely were dependent on student payments. Thus, the existing financial resources were primarily used to satisfy operational needs.

Through the grants, various projects were done in the Yerevan State University, the medical university, the agricultural university, the architectural university and art institutes to establish laboratories and centers with the newest technologies.

The center also tried to increase the international ties of educational institutions, thus providing the possibility of teaching in foreign languages, access to different experiences and a broadening of horizons which is good for both lecturers and students, said Andreasyan.

The center intended to help the Armenian institutions to conduct research and scholarship in addition to pedagogy.

Andreasyan welcomed the student movement which led to students demanding better education in recent years. She said that it is necessary to reevaluate everything and make changes internally. Unions have been created for workers in the educational sphere after the Velvet Revolution. There must be a lecturers' movement to remove people who do not belong there, or in the administration, Andreasyan said. The educational institutions had become politicized, she continued, but after the revolution there are no such issues so that these institutions can turn into true scholarly and educational centers preparing specialists for the public. At the same time, the internal autonomy of the educational institutions must be protected, she said.

Arts & Living

Riga-Based Singer, Dancer Solvita Avakjana

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/RIGA – Solvita Avakjana (Avakian) is a Riga-based professional dancer, pop singer and fitness trainer. Years ago she was a member of the popular Latvian band A-Europa, with whom she toured many countries, including a series of charity concerts for Latvian militaries in Afghanistan. She starred in the feature film “Where the Sea Ends” directed by Arthurs Duboks as the main protagonist, dancer Nadia. Today she is not only a popular Latvian dancer and singer who sing in several languages, but also a successful fitness coach and loving mother.

Dear Solvita, first tell our readers about your family.

My father was Armenian and my mother was Latvian. They met in Sochi in 1969, and immediately after the wedding they left to live in Tbilisi, where first my brother Albert was born in 1971 and later me, in 1979. Since childhood I have lived in two countries – 9 months of the year in Tbilisi and 3 months in Riga. When the war began in Georgia, my parents considered leaving the country. At that time I was a teenager, so I clearly remember the curfew and bread coupons. Mom’s relatives called us to Latvia,



Solvita Avakjana

but unfortunately my mom passed away very young, so I left Tbilisi with my father and brother Albert. When we settled in Latvia, I was 15 years old, and after 3 years, I started working in Riga’s popular night clubs as a go-go dancer... I never attended any dance classes, dancing was always my passion, but my dad resisted my desire to dance, so in my heart I felt myself to be a failed ballerina. But his forbidding me only increased my interest in dance, so I decided to train and study at home.

The dark-haired beauty must be exotic for the public of your northern country.

As you know all the people having Armenian blood are usually very talented and charismatic. Actually I was considered as one of first (and best!) go-go dancers in Riga; mass media interviewed me, and people came to watch how I dance energetically all night. At that time I was really well known among the party people in Riga, who were coming to see especially me and calling me Solla. Dancing was the only job I was doing.

And then you became a part of so-called Latvian Abba – A-Europa.

When I danced in a very popular night club, 7th Heaven, a guy approached me, introduced himself as the A-Europa pop band leader
see SOLVITA, page 17



Maurice Soudjian

Aznavour Musical Bio By Taleen Babayan at El Portal Theatre

HOLLYWOOD – His music became the stuff of legend. His journey to worldwide acclaim the touchpoints of the so-called American Dream. The son of Armenian Genocide survivors, with no formal education or musical training, Charles Aznavour went on to become one of the most popular singers in the world. His remarkable life, pitted with ups and downs, along with his most memorable songs will be on stage in Los Angeles this fall.

On the heels of its compelling cabaret-style debut at the Hotel Café, “Charles: A Bio-Musical on the Life and Songs of Charles Aznavour,” will be on the mainstage of the El Portal Theatre in the heart of the NoHo Arts District on Saturday, November 9.

Written by Taleen Babayan, “Charles” traces key points in the musician’s life, charting the personal and professional struggles the singer faced on his climb to becoming an iconic award-winning entertainer throughout the course of his eight decade career in his beloved France and across the globe.

From his humble beginnings, to his perseverance as a working musician in occupied France during World War II, to overcoming crippling criticism, to his creative spark with Edith Piaf, the 90-minute show serves as an homage to his legacy as an integral member of France’s Golden Age of Music, while capturing the charismatic and shining spirit he embodied as a singer, lyricist, actor, diplomat and humanitarian. Based on Aznavour’s two autobiographies and a number of primary and sec-



(l-r) Ara Babayan, Sonia Babayan, Taleen Babayan, Bernard C. Bayer, Cecile Keshishian and Hermineh Babayan

ondary sources, his unconventional life emerges on stage in a unique narrative punctuated by live musical performances, which was praised by audience members at the Hotel Café debut on October 12.

“The bio-musical play on the life of Charles Aznavour is a deeply felt, heart-warming and inspirational experience,” said attendee Veronica Zorigian. “Taleen Babayan directs this play with grace and deep emotional capacity.”

Produced by Boundaryless Productions under the direction of Taleen Babayan and musical supervision of Harout Sghomonian, “Charles” features Maurice
see CHARLES, page 14

When the Urge To Write Is a Life Sentence

By Rod Nordland

The Turkish novelist and journalist Ahmet Altan is serving a life sentence in prison in his home country, allowed to see his children only occasionally and his writing, in theory, limited to short notes to his family and lawyers. Earlier this month, however, Other Press published the English translation of his memoir, *I Will Never See the World Again*, which was written behind bars, defiantly, and smuggled out to that world he will never see.

I feel a special sort of empathy with Mr. Altan because I too am facing a life sentence – a terminal disease in the form of an often fatal form of brain tumor – but in my case at least I can blame health, God or bad fortune rather than my own vindictive countrymen.

Here it must be said that the title of Mr. Altan’s book is the statement of a brutal fact, rather than a cry of despair. There is not a smidgen of self-pity in the memoir’s 212 pages.



Ahmet Altan

What emerges is this: You cannot jail my mind, and you cannot shut me up. “I have never woken up in prison, not once,” he writes. “I am writing this in a prison cell and I am not in prison. I am a writer.”

If Mr. Altan, who at 69 is in his third year in prison, defies the degradations of prison life, he also doesn’t minimize them. He writes about “the fires of terror,” as he calls them; the pernicious process of dis-individualization; the substitution of his normally unused birth certificate name for the one he is usually known by; and the replacement of his clothing for a uniform. He cannot dress or undress, eat, bathe or exercise when he pleases. But one of the harshest privations is a surprising one: There are no mirrors or even reflective surfaces anywhere in his prison campus, which houses an astonishing 11,000 prisoners, most of them there for political reasons.

He had not previously realized how often one contemplates one’s own reflection, or how important it is. “Making eye contact with yourself is a small miracle,” he writes. “I looked around, searching for myself, and I wasn’t there.”

On July 14, 2016, Mr. Altan and his brother Mehmet, a professor of economics and a political commentator, participated in a television program hosted by Nazli Ilıcak, a prominent journalist. The next day, there was a violent aborted coup against the government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which included an attempted assassination, the bombing of Parliament and nearly 300 deaths. The Altan brothers and Ms. Ilıcak were accused of sending a “subliminal message” to start the coup.

Ahmet Altan and Ms. Ilıcak were arrested and both condemned to life in prison. (Mehmet Altan was ordered acquitted by a higher court.) Ahmet Altan has exhausted every appeal to higher courts, and Erdogan is entrenched in power.

see ALTAN, page 15



ARTS & LIVING

Aznavour Musical Bio by Taleen Babayan at El Portal Theatre

CHARLES, from page 13
Soudjian and Bernard C. Bayer, who both portray Charles Aznavour, alongside Mariette Soudjian, who makes a guest appearance as Edith Piaf.
“Playing the role of Piaf has been one of the most enriching experiences I’ve had as an

guages he recorded in to “modernize and make Aznavour even more relevant to the younger generation.”
The breadth of the bio-musical surpasses all generations and cultural backgrounds, similar to Aznavour’s intention of expanding the scope of his artistry - pushing boundaries and continents.
“The moment the music starts your heart becomes enwrapped in a beautiful and touching embrace of a pure masterful artist,” said audience members Gray Morell and Shane Rasmussen. “The performances by the talented and passionate cast are truly remarkable and this is a perfect tribute to a music legend.”
The story is also personal for the cast, allowing them to connect to the subject matter on a visceral level. Raised on the music of Charles Aznavour and other contemporary French singers, Austrian-born pianist and actor Bernard C. Bayer reflected on fond memories he shared with his father as they listened to Aznavour’s music together.
“I was excited at the prospect of embodying



Mariette Soudjian and Mariette Tachdjian

actress,” said Soudjian. “Singing her iconic chansons and ballads gives depth to the performance.” Soudjian will also sing two numbers by Aznavour in English, Take Me Away (Emmenez-Moi) and She, in reference to the multiple lan-

guages he recorded in to “modernize and make Aznavour even more relevant to the younger generation.”
The breadth of the bio-musical surpasses all generations and cultural backgrounds, similar to Aznavour’s intention of expanding the scope of his artistry - pushing boundaries and continents.
“The moment the music starts your heart becomes enwrapped in a beautiful and touching embrace of a pure masterful artist,” said audience members Gray Morell and Shane Rasmussen. “The performances by the talented and passionate cast are truly remarkable and this is a perfect tribute to a music legend.”
The story is also personal for the cast, allowing them to connect to the subject matter on a visceral level. Raised on the music of Charles Aznavour and other contemporary French singers, Austrian-born pianist and actor Bernard C. Bayer reflected on fond memories he shared with his father as they listened to Aznavour’s music together.
“I was excited at the prospect of embodying



(l-r) Mariette Soudjian, Harout Soghomonian, Blake Shields Abramovitz, Bernard C. Bayer, Maurice Soudjian and Teri Wyble.



Bernard C. Bayer

him and exploring his life, artistry and music in a more in-depth way,” said Bayer. “From the stage of the Hotel Café I could feel the love of Aznavour radiating toward me from the audience.”
Drawing on his real-life experience of seeing a captivating Aznavour perform live at the Greek Theatre, Bayer sought to “honor his legacy, no matter how daunting.”
“Being a part of this project is for me a deeply personal experience,” said Bayer. “It doesn’t just fulfill a lifelong desire to portray Charles Aznavour, but it also connects me to some of my most cherished memories with my family, memories to which he provided the soundtrack.”
Digging deep into the time period and nuances of Aznavour’s life, many unknown details are revealed, from his family life to his artistic influences to his insights on the French Chansons.
“It was a really innovative concept to introduce the side of Aznavour that most of us did-

n’t know about,” said Hannah Pollock. “Meticulously researched, this show portrays the beloved singer in different phases of his life and creative spirit through his most popular songs and music.”
Tying in the music of a “bygone era” to the present-day, Babayan’s aim is to stage a story filled with vivid imagery about a man who tackled the world head-on to make his voice heard, in more ways than one.
“Aznavour felt a calling from deep within and he was brave enough to pursue it despite the odds stacked against him,” said Babayan. “In doing so he made this world a little more cultured, a little more bold and a little more inspiring.”
“Charles: A Bio-Musical on the Life and Songs of Charles Aznavour” will be performed on the mainstage of the El Portal Theatre on November 9, located at 5269 Lankershim Boulevard, North Hollywood. For tickets visit elportaltheatre.com; to view the trailer, visit: [hwww.youtube.com/watch?v=sAMq9iRtKNI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAMq9iRtKNI)

Daring Armenian Women Group Goes On-line to Bring Heroines Out of Obscurity

BOSTON – “Do You Know My Name?” is the first in a series of video montages presented by the Daring Armenian Women (DAW) Project, showcasing Armenian women from all over the world, who are often overlooked, honoring their courage, intelligence, talent, and resilience. The first montage, produced in cooperation with Yerevan-based Bars Media Studio, is a tribute to women from history. The DAW project takes a modest step towards bringing them into the present, giving them voice, place, and agency. On October 25 the montage was launched on the Daring Armenian Women social media sites, along with a panel discussion at the American University of Armenia in Yerevan, Armenia.
The opening frame lingers on an image of the Mayr Hayastan (Mother Armenia) statue asking the question, “Do you know my name?” and then segues to photos of 27 daring Armenian women featured in the montage, whose legacies impacted the social, political, economic, and cultural life of our collective history all over the world. As part of the DAW curation team, Melissa Bilal, Lerna Ekmekcioglu, Audrey Kalajian (creator), Susan Pattie, and Judith Saryan, have researched and identified women’s contributions in fields as diverse as sacred music, boxing, and medicine. This collaborative project is a first step towards expanding our understanding of Armenian women’s place in the history of arts, music, literature, science, sports, politics, and other fields of



Some of the heroines that need greater fame

life, and generating awareness about the importance of preserving women’s history, especially for the future generations.
These women and many others to date, are a reminder that gender justice remains a significant challenge, one that is hindering collective well-being. Today, women are not only finding their voices, but their voices are also

being heard. A powerful example of this were the women featured on the frontlines and in global news articles about Armenia’s recent Velvet Revolution. While project is universal with subtitles in English, the next phase includes a translation into Eastern Armenian.
DAW social media presence creates a space to learn more about these and other Armenian

women and to generate contemporary discussions within the Armenian communities around the world inviting them to nominate other DAW women for future themed montages.
The launch event on October 25 will take place at the American University of Armenia (AUA), with the video screening and panel discussion spearheaded by Dr. Melissa Bilal, Assistant Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences. “Daring Armenian Women: Anonymous No More” is the title and the panelists include: Anna Nikoghosyan, Arpine Haroyan, Gayane Aghabalyan, Elmira Ayyazyan, and Sona Margaryan. Bilal highlights, “the aim of this project is to challenge and disrupt the traditional anonymity of Armenian women in public space and to make their names and lives known in the present.”
The DAW social media audience is welcome to nominate past or present women and suggest themes on the DAW Facebook page.
For additional information about the women featured in the montage, visit or follow Daring Armenian Women on Facebook, Instagram @DaringArmenianWomen and Twitter @DaringArmWomen. The DAW curation team, Melissa Bilal, Lerna Ekmekcioglu, Audrey Kalajian (creator), Susan Pattie, and Judith Saryan, are available for interviews. For further information, please contact, Audrey Kalajian at daringarmwomen@gmail.com



ARTS & LIVING

When the Urge To Write Is a Life Sentence

ALTAN, from page 13

I have been banned from entering Turkey because of articles I wrote about the country's treatment of its Kurdish minority, so over several weeks in June, I interviewed Mr. Altan the same way that he wrote his book: by smuggling questions to him and waiting for his smuggled-out responses, written in hand, with a blue pen. (Our exchange was translated by Yasemin Congar, who also translated his memoir.)

What, I asked Mr. Altan, was the point of this book? Whatever their courage, I suggested, writers like him pose more of an annoyance than a lethal threat to the state, which can swat them away like pesky mosquitoes.

Mr. Altan's reply was testy, which was fair enough. "You can kill writers, you can imprison writers, you can torture writers, but you can't swat them away like an insect. A writer is not his body only," he wrote. "The more you swat at a writer, the greater you help him become, while diminishing your own stature: The swat-ter turns into the mosquito. This fact is one of the fundamental reasons why writers cause so much fury in those who hold power. I think I've earned the right to hope that what I wrote will outlive the political authorities in Turkey today; compared to writers, political authorities are pitifully weak."

What if, I asked Mr. Altan, the authorities deprived him of pen and paper? After all, he was jailed for "subliminal messaging," and his memoir is hardly subliminal.

"Of course they can confiscate one's paper and pen, but they haven't done this," he replied. "My book was published in several European languages before coming out in the U.S., and I haven't faced a ban of my writing, because despite the absurdity of the allegations against me, and the fact that the trial was a farce, they want to keep up the pretense that an independent judiciary condemned me for valid reasons. If they obstruct my writing, they will have an

even harder time defending what they have done."

"But are you not afraid," I continued, "that the publication of this book, even just in foreign languages" — it has so far not come out in

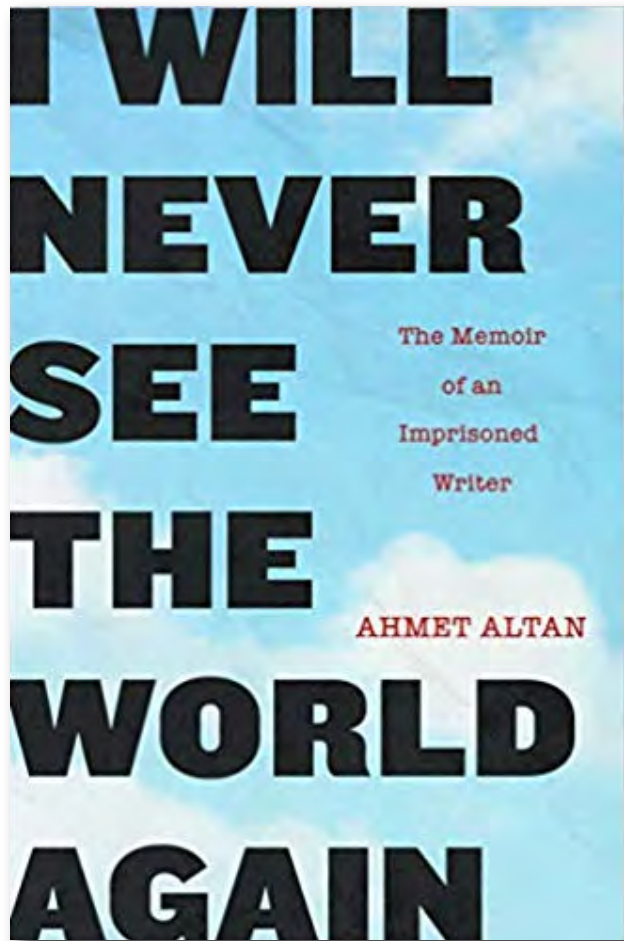
mind,' but don't you also need the freedom to record them? Wouldn't it be devastating if you couldn't?"

"Writing between these thick walls liberates me," Mr. Altan replied. "Fear itself is always more dangerous than the thing you fear. The fear of death is worse than dying. Fear takes you hostage and kills your resistance. Nowhere is fear more fatal than in prison."

He continued: "That said, your fears are mine, too. But since I have been here, I have developed a method to preserve my work whatever happens to me. As I am creating a piece of prose, I pace the prison courtyard while repeating the sentences in my mind until I know them by heart. If they confiscate my papers, the work itself will not be altogether lost. This is not an easy thing to do but I've become used to it in the last three years."

A prisoner of conscience enjoys a certain prestige — including literary prestige — that a writer on the outside doesn't. I wanted to know how Mr. Altan felt about it. I asked: "Will life imprisonment ultimately have been worth it, since it enabled you to create this book?"

His reply was refreshingly frank: "Here is my honest answer: Yes, it is worth it. I need to tell



Turkish — "will provoke more retaliation? You talk about the vital freedom to think, and to safeguard one's thoughts 'in the attic of the

you two things about myself: First, when I don't write, I'm nothing, I'm very ordinary; there's no difference between my presence and absence. I'm a restless person. Writing protects me from my nothingness and restlessness. I need to write in order to protect myself from myself."

When I interviewed Mr. Altan, my tumor had not yet been diagnosed, and in editing our exchange, I recognized an affinity that I hadn't felt initially. We are both terminal cases — his life sentence, my brain tumor — and writing brings both of us solace, for different reasons. On some days, when I have turned a good phrase, or crafted an artful passage, or written an essay many found moving, I feel, as he does, that our sentences may actually be worth it.

His was imposed by a malevolent political authority, mine by some malevolent force of nature. Yet I find myself cheering on his book's concluding lines, paraphrased here: "Because, like all writers, we have magic. We can pass through your walls with ease."

(This edition of the Reporter's Notebook was published in the *New York Times* on October 24.)

Isabel Bayrakdarian Will Perform at NAASR Gala

BELMONT, Mass. — On Saturday, November 2, world-renowned opera singer Isabel Bayrakdarian will perform songs of Gomidas and Sayat Nova at the sold-out Gala of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge, MA. A versatile opera singer, and concert and recording artist, Bayrakdarian has performed to great acclaim with the premier orchestras of the world and will be celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the birth of Gomidas (1869–1935), the priest, musicologist, and choirmaster, with her performance at the NAASR Gala.

Accompanying her will be the Borromeo String Quartet, one of the most important string quartets of our time, and the faculty ensemble-in-residence at the New England Conservatory of Music. They have collaborated with many of today's great composers and performers and work extensively with the Library of Congress, the Chamber Music Society of

ZACH MENDEZ PHOTO



Isabel Bayrakdarian

Lincoln Center, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

"We are honored that one of the foremost sopranos of our time will grace us with her presence," said NAASR Chairman of the Board Yervant Chekijian. "Her performance with the Borromeo Quartet will be part of an evening we will long remember."

NAASR's 65th Anniversary Gala follows the Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting, on November 1, of NAASR's spectacular, new, state-of-the-art global headquarters, named after Vartan Gregorian, president of the philanthropic Carnegie Corporation of New York. The Gala will celebrate NAASR's 65 years of achievement and mark a new era as NAASR looks toward the future and welcomes the next generation to build a prosperous future for Armenian Studies. Vartan Gregorian will give the keynote address, and David Ignatius, *Washington Post* columnist and novelist, will be the master of ceremonies.

Recipe Guest Recipe



by Christine Vartanian Datian

Spinach Borani

Variations of this delicious appetizer dish are popular throughout the Mediterranean region. We like the thick, creamy texture of yogurt in this version. Letting the dip stand before refrigerating it allows flavors to meld.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. fresh baby spinach, rinsed and patted dry
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1-2 medium cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup plain yogurt (not Greek or low fat style)
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 teaspoons dried mint, crushed, optional
- Extra virgin olive oil for drizzling

PREPARATION

Place spinach in a large skillet with 1/2 cup water; place lid on skillet. Cook over medium-high heat until spinach is wilted. This will only take a few minutes. Drain liquid completely; chop spinach and set aside.

Wipe the skillet and use it to sauté the onions and garlic in the butter until softened, but not burned. Add the drained, chopped spinach to the onions and cook for about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Remove skillet from heat and allow mixture to cool.

Place cooled spinach-onion mixture in a bowl; add the yogurt and dried mint, if using. Stir to combine.

Before serving, drizzle olive oil on top. This dish may be served warm or cold with triangles of pita bread, cracker bread, or fresh vegetable sticks.

Serves 4 to 6.



Photo and recipe contributed by Robyn Kalajian at: <https://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/>
Go to: <https://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/search?q=spinach+dip>



ARTS & LIVING

C A L E N D A R

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 — 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, 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, a 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 AECF’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

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

NOVEMBER 1-2 — St. Stephen’s Armenian Apostolic Church Bazaar. 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Armenian Cultural and Educational Center, Watertown. Chicken, beef and losh kebab. Kufteh and kheyma dinners. Pastries and specialty gourmet items. Arts and crafts and auction items.

NOVEMBER 1 — 4-7 p.m., Friday, grand opening of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research: Complimentary Light Fare and Entertainment. NAASR, 395 Concord Avenue, Belmont, MA 02478. Join us as we cut the ribbon symbolizing a new era, celebrating 65 years of achievement while transforming its goals for the future to welcome the next generation and launch a beautiful, new, state-of-the-art research center and gathering place. Open to the public free of charge.

NOVEMBER 2 — National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) 65th Anniversary Gala. Sold Out. Wait list only. Royal Sonesta Hotel Grand Ballroom. 40 Edwin H. Land Boulevard, Cambridge. 6 p.m. cocktail reception, 7 p.m. seated dinner. Performance by Isabel Bayrakdarian, accompanied by the Borromeo String Quartet. Distinguished Honoree: Dr. Vartan Gregorian, President, The Carnegie Corporation of New York. Master of Ceremonies: David Ignatius, Columnist for the *Washington Post* and Novelist

NOVEMBER 4 — St James Men’s Club Dinner Meeting - social hour and mezza at 6:15 p.m. 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 will be George Aghjayan, Director of the Armenian Historical Archives and the chair of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Central Committee of the Eastern United States. Aghjayan’s topic will be “DNA Testing and Reconnecting Family Ruptured by Genocide.” 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.

NOVEMBER 7 — Lecture Series: Lives of the Desert

Fathers and the history of Armenian manuscript production with Earnestine Qiu 6:30 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. lecture at the Armenian Museum of America Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Discussion of the illuminated fifteenth-century manuscript of the Lives of the Desert Fathers (Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate, MS 285). This work was produced in Crimea and belongs to a long textual tradition. However, despite its significance as a rare and early example of an illustrated version of the text, Jerusalem 285 has received very little art historical attention. In addition to its aesthetic value, the quality and production of this manuscript provide a glimpse into the vibrant Armenian community present in fifteenth-century Crimea. Furthermore, the afterlife of Jerusalem 285 testifies to the rich and complex history of Armenian manuscript production. Free to the public. (The museum’s elevator is in the process of being upgraded and is currently out of service.)

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.hypointearmenianchurch.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, honoring Carolann Najarian, MD with AWWA Founders Humanitarian Award on Saturday, 12 to 4 p.m. at Belmont Country Club, 181 Winter St., Belmont. Tickets may be purchased online at www.eventbrite.com/d/ma-boston/awwa/ or by contacting Stephanie Ciccolo at sciccolo@armenain-nursing.com or 617-522-2600 ext. 101, Complimentary valet parking available.

November 9 — An Evening with Fr. Vasken Kouzouian: Celebrating 25 Years of Ministry, 6:30 p.m., Cocktail Reception; 7:30 p.m., Dinner and Celebration, Samberg Conference Center, MIT, Chang Building (E52), Floor 7, 50 Memorial Drive, Cambridge. Donation is \$100 per person. Seating is by advance paid reservation only. Purchase tickets online at <https://aneveningwithfrvasken.eventbrite.com> or through the Church Office, 617-354.0632.

NOVEMBER 10 — Second Sundays! Traditional Armenian Dance Lessons. 2-4 pm at the 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 in our staple program of the Second Sundays Cultural Series! 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 \$15. Register online or call Education Coordinator, Garin Habeshian at 617.926.2562 Ext. 103 today! For more information visit: <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/classes>

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...

NOVEMBER 21 — Third Thursdays! Classic Groove with special guest, John Berberian on Oud, 7 p.m. reception, 7:30 p.m., concert at the Armenian Museum of America Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Classic Groove draws on the versatility of its members to perform a diverse mix of music for all occasions. Classic Groove’s repertoire ranges from R&B to Top 40, Smooth Jazz, Latin, Country, Swing, Middle Eastern, show tunes, male and female duets, Blues, and Motown. They are thrilled to have a special guest musician, John Berberian on the oud for this performance! This performance was made possible thanks to the Dadourian Foundation. Members free. Non-members \$15. (The museum’s elevator is in the process of being upgraded and is currently out of service.)

NOVEMBER 22 and 23 — Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church, Annual Food Festival and Bazaar, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. Food and Pastries, and

Vendors, Friday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Live Armenian Music and Dancing, Friday – 6 to 8 p.m. Narrated Slide presentation about Sts. Vartanantz Church history followed by a Sanctuary Tour – Saturday, 11 a.m. Tavloo Tournament - Sartuday, 2 p.m. For information, please call 978-256-7234. Also, possible to include the following picture and short article on the bazaar.

NOVEMBER 24 — Second Sundays Cultural Series: Painting Mt. Ararat. 2-4 pm at the Armenian Museum of America Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Sunday. Led by Artist-in-Residence Arevik Tserunyan, attendees will learn about artist Martiros Saryan and his depiction of Mt. Ararat to guide their own recreation. Members \$28. Non-members \$35. To register, call Education Coordinator, Garin Habeshian at 617- 926-2562, ext. 103 or email at ghabeshian@armenianmuseum.org. Limit 12 per class. (The Museum’s elevator is in the process of being upgraded and is currently out of service.) For more information visit: <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/classes>

DECEMBER 1 — A cappella Christmas Concert by Boston Jazz Voices to Benefit the Armenia Tree Project. 5 p.m. at the Jenks Center, 109 Skillings Road, Winchester. The venue has plenty of free parking. Event will feature an a cappella performance, refreshments, raffle, and silent auction. Tickets are \$30 each and a family four-pack of tickets is available for \$100. Tickets available via Eventbrite at www.armeniatree.org/acappella

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 8 — Candlelit Labyrinth Walk: In Peace & Harmony “Boston’s Newest Holiday Tradition.” Sunday, 4:30-5:30 p.m., Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Meet & Greet. Celebrate. Walk the Candlelit Labyrinth. Tie a Ribbon with Your Wish on the Wishing Tree. Enjoy Hot Chocolate & Luscious Cookies. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

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.

DECEMBER 31 — Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston invites the community to welcome the New Year together, at its New Year’s Dinner-Dance celebration. St. James Church’s Charles Mosesian Center/Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown. Entertainment will be provided by popular singer Arabo Ispiryan and his band from Armenia, and community’s very own DJ Rams! Cocktail hour is at 7 pm, with dinner served promptly at 8 pm. And of course, there’ll be dancing ‘til 2am! Donation: Adult - \$125; children (5-12): \$75 For tickets please call Alina Ashjian (617) 852-1816 or Mike Demirchian (617) 240-8266 or go online SNDCCNYE2020.eventbrite.com Tickets are advance purchase only.

MICHIGAN

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, 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 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 Book sales/signing following the presentation. All proceeds from the sale of the books will be donated to St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

continued on next page

Riga-Based Singer, Dancer Solvita Avakjana

SOLVITA, from page 13
Arthurs Duboks and suggested I work with his band as a dancer. After three months I started living and working with Arthurs. We were four people in the band - two female dancers, the singer and a guy, who was our sound engineer and keyboard player. Our popularity grew very quickly, once we were actually a legendary pop band in all Latvia. A-Europa is my bright past, the great and very fantastic experience of my musical career. I was not only a dancer with the group, but also a kind of generator of many ideas. We shot video clips in warm countries, being the first band from Latvia who did this; after us others also copied this. We had more than 1,000 gigs between 2000-2010, until I left the band.

The reason?
I was very devoted to both the group and my beloved man, living just by that. Yet at some point, I realized that I have to sing and it was not interesting for me to dance my dances again and again! But unfortunately, the plans of the producer did not coincide with mine. Of course, parting with my civil husband Arthurs also played a role, although we had a two-year old daughter Michelle... So I decided to start a new life and moved to London for six months. It was my new school of life, which obviously tempered me and made me stronger. I started from zero again and went back to go-go dancing. For some months I worked in the Bond night club. People were taking photos with me and giving lots of compliments about my own style of dance improvisations. Afterward, for the first time in my life, I started to do another job other than dancing, working as a waitress at Ciro's Pomodoro Pizza in Knightsbridge. It was a difficult period in my life, as all the time I was missing my little Michelle who was staying with Arthurs' mom. So I have a hard, but very interesting life.

And how did the successful dancer become a successful singer and fitness coach?

Since my childhood I always wanted to be a singer. I began my solo career in 2012 with the participation of Latvian producer Sergey Prishvin, recording the song In the Night City in Russian and re-singing it later in English with the title Why love you. I mainly sing songs for which I have written the lyrics. I often tour in Latvia and neighboring countries. As to sports, I established my sports brand FitDance, combining dance and exercise, being the first to start training with this name.

Please tell us about your father.
My father's name was Hrachik (Rachik) Aramovich Avakian. He was born in Armenia (in Leninakan if I am not mistaken) to Aram and Vartanush Avakians and as a newborn baby he migrated to Tbilisi with his parents, 5 sisters

and 4 brothers. My father was youngest in family. I saw just 2 of his sisters – my aunts Liusia (Liudmila) and Seiranush and his 2 brothers Garnik and Sergo: the others had died earlier. My dad was a very strong man both spiritually and physically. He worked as driver and handyman: was a real workaholic (even when he retired!) and loved his life and the life in general. My father loved to dance very much, also sweets, always buying 2-3 kilos of Soviet chocolates. He was very wise, even he had just finished just two classes of school: he said that he had no time for studying, as since 10 years old

power when I remember them. My father was 79 when he died in 2009. I miss him very much. It is very difficult to go through this life without parents and loved ones! Those who have parents - take care of them and love them!

I know in childhood you spoke Georgian fluently. What about Armenian?

In Tbilisi I attended a Russian school. They taught us the Georgian language in 5th or 6th classes. Until now I can write, read and understand good Georgian, but no one taught me Armenian, although my father used to speak Armenian with his brothers. It

tacts with my Armenians relatives is not strong.

By the way, have you ever been in Armenia?
Only once in Yerevan, in 1988 or 1989, to attend my cousin Erik Avakian's wedding. After a year, when he was coming by car from Yerevan to Tbilisi, he totally disappeared. Both him and the car...

I am sorry to know that, Solvita... If it happened in 1989 or 1990, I am almost sure that he was missed while passing the Azeri villages of southern Georgia - in this period many such accidents happened... And are you in



Solvita Avakjana

he worked hard for helping his big family. He had very good sense of humor and was funny. My dad was a big hearted person and always helped people with jobs, money, advice or something else. He never remained indifferent to someone's misfortune, always teaching me and my brother: "Do good and someday it will come to you." And he also always said me these wonderful and powerful words: "You are my Hope for the bright future!" I remember his words and always will remember them; they give me

was Soviet times; in family we were speaking only Russian. I know some words and expressions in Armenian (including some swear words!!!), like "Es kez sirumem" (I love you), "ari pachi" (come to kiss), "Gna eli" (get lost), "Pogh chka" (there is no money), "Aghchik" (girl), etc. I would like to learn to read and write in Armenian, at least the basics, so that later on I will learn Armenian I am really ashamed for not speaking Armenian, but I never had a good teacher for it as the con-

touch with the Riga Armenian community?
No, but I know some Armenians here through my father, who has worked as a security guard in the Erebus restaurant in Riga. I mostly communicate with the Georgian community of Riga.

Please remember, that you are always welcome to your father's land to visit and show your talents. And as you also wish, to study Armenian!

CALENDAR

from previous page

MASSACHUSETTS

NOVEMBER 17 and 24 — Art show sponsored by St. Gregory Enlightener Armenain Church of White Plains. Two Sundays, 12-12.30, Creative art by five local artists for viewing and purchase. 1131 North St., White Plains.

RHODE ISLAND

NOVEMBER 2-3 — Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church 89th Annual Food Fair and Bazaar. 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Saturday, 11:30 a.m.- 10 p.m.-Sunday, Noon – 6 p.m. Daily Raffle & Silent Auction, Kids activities, Balloon man. Armenian Food Market and Armenian Vendor gift shop. Shish Kebab, Losh Kebab, Kufta, Kheyma, Yalanchi, Armenian Pastries, Lahmajoon & many other delicious food available. All are welcome. Handicap accessible. Cash, Check, Visa and Mastercard Accepted. For further information, call church office 401-272-7712. www.ArmenianFoodFairRI.com

NOVEMBER 17 — Armenian Historical Association of Rhode Island presents Ruth Thomasian, Founder and President of Project Save Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc. Program titled "A Look at Ourselves: Armenians through the Camera's Eye." Sunday. Refreshments at 12:30 pm Lecture 1:00 pm. AHARI located at 245 Waterman Street, 5th floor conference room Providence. The AHARI Museum will be open from 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. Everyone is invited to bring family photos for Ruth's "Antiques Road Show" evaluation after the presentation. info@armenianhistorical-ri.org

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.



Kariné Poghosyan in Concert in New York

NEW YORK — Pianist Kariné Poghosyan returns to Zankel Hall, in Carnegie Hall, on Monday, November 4, in a CD release concert with the program of her new "Rachmaninoff and Stravinsky" recording on Centaur Records. The program will include such repertoire staples as Moments Musicaux Op.16 by Rachmaninoff, Petrouchka and Firebird Suite by Stravinsky. A CD signing will be held immediately following the concert.

The program is presented by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations.

The program will start at 7.30 p.m.



COMMENTARY

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Mirror Spectator

Established 1932

An ADL Publication

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

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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Resurrecting the October 27 Parliament Massacre on Its 20th Anniversary

By Edmond Y. Azadian

A whirlwind of political events is plaguing the Middle East and the Caucasus with potential fallout for Armenia, yet the Armenian political establishment and its media are interested mostly in debating domestic issues, sometimes amplifying them into outside problems.

The obsession of Presidents Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan with Zangezur notwithstanding, the political focus in Armenia continues to be directed towards settling scores and spewing rancor. Of course, the domestic issues are important in their own ways, but they have to be viewed and debated within the context of regional political forces, because they may become issues of existential nature for Armenia.

The 20th anniversary of the October 27 parliament massacre has carried the headlines. Almost all the news outlets, pundits and politicians have been passionately debating the issue. The crime that arrested Armenia and delayed its progress for two decades has been resurrected.

Of course, there has been a prevailing sense of suspicion and conspiracy which continues to haunt the public, causing it to feel that true justice has been subverted.

On that day 20 years ago, a band of five terrorists, led by Nairi Hunanyan raided the parliament and assassinated

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

A tip of the Zangezur region was to be exchanged for Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan, cutting Armenia off from Iran and offering Azerbaijan a contiguous territory between its mainland and Nakhichevan.

Kocharyan was in favor of the deal, while the Sargsyan-Demirchyan tandem opposed it adamantly.

The massacre consolidated Kocharyan's power, making him the major beneficiary of the tragedy.

Serzh Sargsyan was then the national security minister, and at the very least was accused of dereliction of duty by allowing five criminals armed with heavy weaponry to enter the parliament building unopposed.

Now that Kocharyan is in jail, awaiting trial, there is tremendous public pressure to revisit the October 27 massacres, to amplify Kocharyan's guilt, in addition to the March 1, 2008 incident during which eight protestors and two police officers were killed.

Well beyond those alleged crimes, Kocharyan is the target of some political forces because, throughout his career, he has symbolized the country's pro-Russian policy.

One of the reason for resurrecting the October 27 events has been occasioned by the appeal of Hunanyan for parole. It is believed that in exchange for parole, Hunanyan may make some revelations to corroborate Kocharyan's guilt.

While the public and the media have been debating October 27, an interesting political sideshow is unfolding.

The former Minister of Justice Artak Zeynalyan has visited Hunanyan behind bars. That visit turned out to be a non-issue. But another visit has caused a sensation. The second visitor was a controversial parliamentarian Arman Babajanyan. The latter has gained prominence through his anti-Russian rhetoric and today it seems that some outside forces are interesting in raising his political profile. One would wonder why Babajanyan is in the limelight as a visitor to Hunanyan, rather than any other legislators.

Babajanyan has been an ordinary journalist with a mission. During the last parliamentary elections, he ran on the slate of the Bright Armenia party. He quit his party affiliation to try his luck on his own. These days, Babajanyan is busy shuttling between the news outlets, offering interviews and claiming to possess privileged information from Hunanyan.

It is interesting to note that most of the television stations and news outlets clamoring to interview him are financed by foreign agencies. It is apparent that there is a deliberate and concerted effort to enhance Babajanyan's profile as a statesman.

Through all those interviews, Babajanyan is pushing to open the October 27 case. His demeanor is calm, his speech is deliberate and articulate and he projects a serious image.

On the other hand, he is suspected of writing commentaries under the penname Sargis Arzruni, with a virulent anti-Russian thrust. In those columns, he has been pressuring the Pashinyan administration to open the October 27 case and he has been accusing as cowards the resistance to open the case in deference to Russia.

Certainly it is intriguing to revisit the massacre because so many questions remain unanswered. But it is also legitimate to ask whether it is the most pressing national issue now, when there are so many domestic and foreign policy hazards threatening Armenia's progress towards a normal and prosperous civil society.

The Velvet Revolution has yet to run its course.



Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan and Speaker of Parliament Karen Demirchyan, who had recently formed a coalition called Miasnoutyun and had tilted the center of power away from President Robert Kocharyan. (Of course, Kocharyan is currently in jail and awaiting trial on charges of subversion of the constitution a few years down the road.)

All in all, eight legislators were killed that day.

There were and still are speculations about the motives behind this shocking crime. The most innocent interpretation was offered by Kocharyan himself, who stated that the crime was committed by a bunch of romantic politicians assuming a messianic mission.

In fact, the coalition between Vazgen Sargsyan and Karen Demirchyan had rendered Kocharyan powerless. Many were already treating him as a ruler in name only, much like the queen of England.

Another underlying factor may have been the Meghri issue, advocated by a former US State Department Employee, Paul Goble, which had already gained traction during the Karabakh negotiations, by the co-chairs of the



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Secret Document Reveals State Dept.'s Interference in Genocide Recognition

The United States government has recognized the Armenian Genocide multiple times in the past. In an official document submitted by the US government to the World Court in 1951, the Armenian Genocide was acknowledged for the first time as an example of Genocide. The House of Representatives adopted two resolutions in 1975 and 1984, acknowledging the Armenian Genocide. Furthermore, Pres. Ronald Reagan issued a Presidential Proclamation on April 22, 1981 referencing the Armenian Genocide.

Nevertheless, recent US Administrations have made repeated attempts to block the acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide by the US Congress and successive American Presidents have avoided using the term Genocide in their April 24 commemorative statements.

For example, the Reagan Administration, after Pres. Reagan issued a Presidential Proclamation in 1981 acknowledging the Armenian Genocide, opposed Congressional resolutions recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

The George H. W. Bush Administration opposed Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole's efforts to have the US Senate recognize the Armenian Genocide Resolution in 1990.

The Clinton Administration blocked the passage of the Armenian Genocide Resolution in 2000, moments before the House was to vote on it.

The George W. Bush Administration objected to the adoption of the Armenian Genocide Resolution by the House of Representatives in 2007.

The Obama Administration opposed the Armenian

Genocide Resolution in 2010, preventing it from reaching a full House vote.

An unclassified "Secret" State Department document, dated October 2, 2000, discloses the length to which the US government went to block the passage of House Resolution 596 in the year 2000, while Bill Clinton was President and Madeleine Albright was Secretary of State. Resolution 596 was approved by the House International Relations Committee on 24 yes, 11 no and 2 present votes on October 3, 2000., but not put to a vote in the House of Representatives.

The "Secret" document contains two letters: the first from Secretary of State Albright to Foreign Minister of Armenia Vartan Oskanian and Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Ipekci; the second letter is from Tom Pickering, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, to Dick Solomon, President of the US Institute of Peace. In an introductory note, Steven Sestanovich, Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for the new independent states of the former Soviet Union, tells US Ambassador to Armenia Michael Lemmon that both Pickering and Solomon "are obviously part of the deal we are trying to put in place to head off the Genocide Resolution. I discussed them today with VO [Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian] and Van Krikorian [Co-Chair of the Armenian Assembly of America] did the same. VO was positively disposed but said he could not speak for RK [Pres. Robert Kocharyan], who had already gone home sick. VO will speak with him tomorrow and get his reaction...."

Secretary of State Albright, in her letter to the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Turkey states: "The US Administration has strongly opposed this resolution, believing that it offers a completely counterproductive approach to the goal of improving relations between Turkey and Armenia and promoting reconciliation between the Turkish and Armenian peoples. I am hopeful that we will proceed in getting this resolution put aside, because we are strongly committed to what we believe could be a more promising approach.... I will be writing in due course with some ideas about how to make this effort a success."

In the second letter, Under Secretary of State Pickering wrote to Solomon, President of the US Institute of Peace, an independent institution founded by Congress: "...Recently,

the Congress has been deliberating a resolution, HR 596 on 'Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide.' As you know, the Administration has opposed this resolution, but we firmly believe that a Truth and Reconciliation process on this subject is needed.... The Secretary [of State] has asked me to write to propose that the US Institute of Peace begin developing ideas for such a Truth and Reconciliation process with the goal of launching it in the near future.... As a first step, we hope you will consider convening a group of credible and recognized Turks, Armenians and others. These should include the representatives of public groups, scholars, archivists, government or former government officials and others. Our hope is that an initial meeting could be held as early as December in Washington, D.C. This initial planning group would review the historical and political contexts and generate a consensus on the scope and timetable of subsequent activities, including creation of a commission to prepare a report."

The initiative proposed by the Department of State was finally launched in July 2001 when the "Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission" (TARC) was founded with the participation of six Turks and four Armenians which included Van Krikorian from the Armenian Assembly of America, Antranik Migranian from Moscow, and two Armenian foreign ministry officials.

In the months succeeding the formation of TARC, I wrote several editorials opposing it because it was clear that TARC was a ploy by the State Department to block the proposed congressional resolution to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Even without the knowledge of the "Secret" document disclosed in this article, most observers suspected that TARC was created and funded by the State Department in conjunction with the Turkish government to undermine the pursuit of the Armenian Cause.

Unfortunately, certain Armenian groups and individuals were deceived by this American-Turkish ploy which was naively supported by the Armenian Foreign Ministry. It took a considerable effort on the part of many Diaspora Armenians to convince the Armenian government to drop its support of TARC.

Armenians need to remain vigilant not to fall in the trap of those who pursue their own interests at the expense of the Armenian nation!

Armenian-Greek Military Relations and History of Cooperation By Colonel Samuel Ramazian

By Rev. Fr. Zaven Arzoumanian, PhD

The Volume

Recently, this large bilingual book was presented to me by Yeranouhi Ghazarian, a native of Greece and a brilliant graduate of the Melkonian Institute who has translated this impressive, comprehensive and documentary volume from the Eastern Armenian into Greek on facing pages. It contains over 100 unpublished photos and documents beginning from the ancient Byzantine era to the 20th century, reflecting the military relations between Armenia and Greece. It is written in Eastern Armenian by Col. Samuel Ramazian and masterfully translated into Greek, thus placing the large volume on international stage with corresponding value and significance. The unprecedented book is "dedicated to the memory of those martyrs who fell for their faith, nation, and motherland, to both Armenian and Greek military officers and soldiers." Essentially the volume includes data from before Christianity and later Byzantine relations between the two nations, including Cilicia and Cyprus, and culminating in WWI and Mustafa Kemal who proclaimed the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

The book, published in Athens in 2010, brings honor to both nations, whose valiant representatives emerged in defense of their motherland from ancient times to the more recent invasions of Mustafa Kemal who put Smyrna up in flames in 1922, and later in 1974 his successors occupied Cyprus. Col. Samuel Ramazian, the author of this well documented book is to be praised for his unique and historic publication. Ramazian was born in Armenia in 1971 who served in the army, studied at the Military Academy under NATO in Italy, and following his successful graduation was assigned in 2003 deputy of the Consul General of the Republic of Armenia in Greece.

The Content

Equally important is the Greek translation of this large volume in terms of international relations accomplished tediously by Yeranouhi Ghazarian, a scholar and a linguist, presenting the valuable content of the book to the civic authorities of Greece. The Greek version obviously updates the military activities of those distinguished and honorable brave generals and soldiers for which the author has cited many documentary evidences from the archives of both nations. The available sources com-

prise Greek, Armenian, and English studies in the military field, most of them from the 20th century Byzantine and Armenian scholars, as well as from contemporary Greek specialist professors in political science.

Reading the book one realizes in amazement how political and military relations back from the depth of centuries between the Byzantine-Armenian times down to the present are carefully explored. Sometimes those relations are very sensitive and unstable, but all of them capably and skillfully coordinated, concise and documented in 140 pages in each version, 280 in total, with numerous unpublished photographs at the end. The parallel line begins from the Armenian king Tigran the Great before the Christian era, and passes through the Byzantine centuries with emperors of Armenian origin religiously adhered to Greek orthodoxy. In 1961 Prof. Peter Charanis of Rutgers University wrote an important book on the "Armenians in the Byzantine Empire," with due compliments to Armenia and the emperors of Armenian origin as an addendum to the large volume of George Ostrogorsky's "History of the Byzantine State" (1957).

The Emperor's Book

As early as the 10th century the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (Born in the Purple) had included in his book, known as *De Administrando Imperio*, information on the Eastern provinces of the Empire, including the province of the Armenian Bakratuni kingdom with its territorial and military conditions with personal and place names. Chapter 83 of this imperial document is important for us to verify the name of King Ashot II Sembat, informing that in 914 the King had gone to Constantinople to consult with the Emperor, the author of the book.

I have done research on *De Administrando Imperio* as an important source for the Armenian connection recently published by the Western Diocese in a second edition. My studies for chapters 43-46 of the Imperial Book concerning the Province of Taron and the Armenian Bakratuni Kingdom in general, have noted that while in Constantinople King Ashot II had assumed power and authority from the Emperor and returned to Armenia. He was "accompanied by imperial troops to reestablish his throne in Ani, the capital city of the Bakratuni Kingdom," as reported by Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus.

Chapter 7 of the imperial book is in support of the Cilician

Armenian Kingdom when Princes Toros I and Toros II were awarded imperial honors, while the Emperor's successors were treacherously trying to eliminate the Armenian principality. Emperor Constantine VII records the following regarding the unwise policy: "The way the Byzantine Empire treated the Armenians opened the gates to the Seljuks and the Islam to enter the territories." It is curious to learn from chapter 8 of Col. Ramazian's book that during the Cilician Armenian kingdom military cooperation between Armenia and Cyprus grew stronger for the first time in the 12th century. To me it was something new to learn that King Bedros I of Cyprus, later in 1267 hailed as the Armenian King, was able to rescue Ayas, the seaport city of Cilicia from the attacking Turks.

In the same chapter Ramazian writes about further coordinated military activities between the two nations during the 17th century with the tacit approval of Louis XIV of France that lasted until the 20th century. In the sphere of political activities Armenians living in Greece took position against the oppressions of the Turkish Ottoman Empire which ended in the 1821 revolution of the Greek people where the Armenians are mentioned as "the allied brother people" who obviously stood side by side during the subsequent centuries.

Recent Times

Names like General Andranik Ozanian, Hambartsum Boyajian (Mourad), General Torkom and Karekin Njdeh, are heroic names of our recent past, all of whom are part of this book for their brevity and resistance against the Turks as early as the close of the 19th century. It was in 1877 when Armenian and Greek Members of the Parliament of the Ottoman Empire raised protests openly and in unison for the massacres perpetrated in the provinces of the country. Later in 1895 as Sultan Hamid planned and executed the massacres against the Armenians in Constantinople, and in 1909 the massacres of Adana were cruelly carried out by the Turks, Greek clergy and political members of the community offered helping hand to the Armenians providing them with lodging and food.

The Treaty of Sevres

The outcome of the 1920 Treaty of Sevres in France developed closer relations between Greece and Armenia as allied states, while Prime Ministers Venizelos and Alexander Khatisian were in office. Khatisian paid an official visit to see GREEK, page 20



U.S. House Passes Armenian Genocide Resolution

RESOLUTION, from page 1
asked on October 29 whether President Donald Trump’s green light to Turkey’s Syrian invasion eased the way toward Armenian Genocide recognition, replied, ““There was just an aura of what the Turks could be doing, is engaged again in genocide, by the greenlight that the president gave them. So that was sort of a callback.”

The House of Representatives passed resolutions on the Armenian Genocide twice previously, in 1975 and 1984, but so far none have gone to the Senate to become law.

Tellingly, according to the NPR article, there are no plans at present to bring a parallel resolution to a Senate vote.

Nonetheless, resolution sponsor and House Intelligence Committee Chairman Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Burbank) declared to the Los Angeles Times that the lopsided vote indicated that “The Turkish lobby has few friends and allies anymore.”

Another longtime supporter, Rep. Brad Sherman (D-Northridge), said in the same piece: “It is critical that we counteract Turkey’s genocide denial because genocide denial is the last act of a genocide,” Sherman said. “First, you obliterate a people, then you seek to obliterate their memory, and finally you seek to obliterate the memory of the obliteration.”

Vice chairman of the Democratic Caucus Katherine Clark stated, “If you do not recognize the darkest pages of history, you will never fully learn the lessons that it holds. Today, I am proud to stand with my constituents from Watertown, a thriving Armenian-American community, and support this critical resolution that recognizes the Armenian Genocide.”

No opposition from the US State Department to the resolution has been publicly mentioned, unlike prior instances of lobbying, often at the behest of Turkey.

The two Armenian advocacy organizations in Washington, the Armenian Assembly of America and the Armenian National Committee of America, worked for the passage of this resolution while many other non-Armenian organizations also supported it in

advance of the vote. The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) issued a statement which read in part: “From the 4th Century, the Armenian community has been a living and vibrant witness to the Gospel that is at the heart of our shared Christian faith. This community suffered through genocide at the turn of the 20th century, with the loss of one-and-a-half million lives through persecution by the Ottoman Empire...The Armenian people have provided inspiration by standing against the evil of genocide wherever and whenever it is committed. Now is the moment for the United States of America to recognize the Armenian Genocide.”

The American Jewish Committee’s Executive Director David Harris stated: “This week, US Congress takes up a resolution on #ArmenianGenocide. Starting in 1915, Ottoman Empire decimated Armenian Christian population. 1st genocide of 20th century. To this day, Turkey tries to deny this documented crime. Don’t let it. That’s why we support H.Res. 296.”

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) issued a statement reading: “ADL today endorsed a bipartisan House resolution that recognizes the Armenian Genocide and urges Members of Congress to ensure its passage.”

“This historic Congressional resolution, while long overdue, is an important step toward raising awareness and educating the American public about the horrific genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire against Armenians during the early part of the 1900s,” said ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt. He continued: “The 20th century saw the worst episodes of genocide in recorded human history, beginning with the Armenian Genocide, through the Holocaust and all the way to the atrocities in Bosnia and Rwanda. Indeed, historians note that Hitler viewed the Armenian Genocide and the world’s indifference toward it as inspiration to launch his own genocidal campaign across Europe. We believe that remembering and educating about any genocide – Armenian, the Holocaust, Bosnia, Rwanda, and others – is a necessary tool to prevent future tragedies and begins with recognition.”

Armenian High Court Chief at Risk of Prosecution

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Lawyers for Hrayr Tovmasyan accused Armenia’s political leadership on October 29, of putting “illegal pressure” on the embattled chairman of the Constitutional Court after a law-enforcement agency recommended criminal charges against him.

The Investigative Committee claimed to have collected sufficient evidence that Tovmasyan abused his powers when he served justice minister from 2010-2013. It said that he colluded with a former senior Justice Ministry official, who was arrested recently, and officials from Yerevan’s municipal administration to effectively privatize an office in the city center.

The committee stopped short of indicting Tovmasyan. It announced instead that it has sent the case to another law-enforcement body, the Special Investigative Service (SIS), for further investigation.

The announcement marks the latest in a series of criminal proceedings launched against Tovmasyan following the Constitutional Court’s refusal on October 15 to oust him. The high court chairman is under growing pressure from the current Armenian authorities accusing him of maintaining ties to the country’s former government toppled in last year’s “Velvet Revolution.”

In a written statement, Tovmasyan’s legal team categorically rejected the Investigative Committee’s allegations, saying that he has never had any “direct or indirect connection” to the property in question or been in a position to influence its privatization. It described the

allegations as “yet another example of illegal pressure exerted on the chairman of the Constitutional Court in recent months.”

The statement also alleged “blatant violations” of the due process in “the proceedings against Hrayr Tovmasyan guided by the political authorities.”

The SIS and the National Security Service (NSS) announced on October 17 other criminal investigations related Tovmasyan. Five days later, the SIS effectively declared illegal his appointment as court chairman in March 2018, saying that it was part of a “usurpation of power” by former state officials. One of them, former parliament speaker Ara Babloyan, was indicted on Monday.

Like the Investigative Committee, the NSS is also scrutinizing Tovmasyan’s past activities as justice minister.

The NSS raised eyebrows last week by questions his 75-year-old father and two young daughters.

Tovmasyan again rejected government calls for his resignation on October 24. In a newspaper interview, he also warned that the authorities will violate the Armenian constitution if they arrest him without the consent of most other Constitutional Court judges.

Gevorg Petrosyan of the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) said the criminal cases against Tovmasyan smack of political persecution.

“If Hrayr Tovmasyan is a criminal let him be punished ... But one gets the impression that the authorities want to unseat Hrayr Tovmasyan at all costs,” he said.

Armenian-Greek Military Relations and History of Cooperation

GREEK, from page 19

Athens and met with the Armenians in Athens and Smyrna. They tried to establish diplomatic missions but it was immature for proper application, given the Turk-Soviet alliance in 1919-1920, and the Soviet occupation of Armenia which forced the fall of the Republic of Armenia in 1921.

Dedication of the Book

On December 10, 2010, Col. Samuel Ramazian’s book was officially dedicated in Athens by the Consulate of the Republic of

Armenia at the reception hall of the Old Parliament House. Present were the author, the translator into Greek Yeranouhi Ghazarian, military representatives, and members of the Greek Parliament. Awards were given to the authors and to those who had assisted in the publication. For us, living in Pasadena, California, it is an honor to recognize the translator who lives here and whose work offered the volume an international resource beyond Greece, her native country.

(Translated into Greek by Yeranouhi Ghazarian, Athens, 2010)

Public Hearing Held for Genocide Education

HEARING, from page 1

Kaligian said that some Turkish opponents of the bill were present but that they had taken a new tack; instead of angry outbursts, several complained that the teaching of the Armenian Genocide would have a traumatic effect on their children.

H.566 and S. 327, titled “An Act concerning genocide education,” was filed by State Sen. Michael Rodrigues, D-Westport, and state Rep. Jeffrey Roy, D-Franklin. The bill has 94 co-sponsors from both sides of the aisle.

The bill mandates the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education include the instruction of the Holocaust and the genocide “to address the notion that national, ethnic, racial or religious hatred can overtake any nation or society, leading to calamitous consequences.”

The language of the bill continues, “To reinforce that lesson, such curriculum unit shall include the Nazi atrocities of 1933 to 1945 known as the Holocaust, and other genocides including, but not limited to, the Armenian Genocide, the Famine-Genocide in Ukraine known as Holodomor, the Pontian Greek Genocide, and more recent atrocities in Bosnia, Cambodia, Rwanda and Sudan.”

On October 7 there were three sets of panels which provided testimonies. One consisted of survivors and academics. Prof. Taner Akçam, Professor of History and the Robert Aram, Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and

Marian Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University, was among those that testified. In his comments, Kaligian said, Akçam suggested that it was necessary to expand the knowledge base of the general population, many of whom have heard about the Holocaust but not many of the other mass killings. Akçam also suggested that the help that arrived from the US for the Armenian Genocide was a formative part of modern American history.

Also testifying on that panel were Prof. Ronald Weisberger of Bristol Community College, Eric Cohen of the Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur and Mike Ross, a former Boston City Council member whose father survived several concentration camps during World War II before being rescued by American soldiers from Dachau.

A second panel included educators, including from the Essex North Shore Agriculture School and Kraig Gustafson, the social studies coordinator for grades 6-12 in Watertown. Another speaker was Seda Aghamianz, who is a member of the Genocide Education Project. The organization instructs teachers about the Armenian Genocide so that they can teach students.

Finally, a group of advocates formed the third panel, including Robert Trestan of the Anti-Defamation League, Aaron Agulnek of the Jewish Community Relations Council and Kaligian.

Kaligian said that a mandate is necessary because the teachers, forced to teach the subject, need to learn about it themselves. “The sheer number of teachers that say they know nothing about the genocide” is not reassuring, he said.

Kaligian characterized the hearing as showing “overwhelming support for the bill.” He noted the effect of the “very powerful” testimony by Holocaust survivors and their children.

He cautioned, however, that it is too early to tell what will happen. “That doesn’t guarantee the bill going through.” He noted not many bills get reported out of committee during a calendar year and suggested that voters call their representatives in support of the bill as they often take calls into consideration.

Wedding in Marash

Koutoujian, in an interview after the session, said, “Those who fail to learn from history are destined to repeat it. We have to teach our children so perhaps we can avoid” similar tragedies again.

Koutoujian said he went to Germany with the Vera Institute of Justice and helped create a young adult offender program in Massachusetts based on the German model. While in the country, they visited the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. “As a human, it was very powerful. As an Armenian it was very personal,” he said.

As he had done at the hearing, he recalled

the story of his grandparents from Marash who had been married in the early 1900s, part of a traditional Armenian culture. “A few short years after this, their lives were torn apart,” he said. His grandmother was stranded in Syria and his grandfather in France. Eventually, through sheer luck, they found each other again and started their new lives in the US. “They didn’t speak of the horrors that they experienced. They were the greatest of patriots. They came as refugees and found opportunities for their children.”

Now, it is his turn, Koutoujian said, to put his children front and center, this time to make sure they know what happened not only to their family but to the families of so many others.

Their wedding photo, which took its place next to him during the testimony, came courtesy of Project Save.

Koutoujian was happy with the public hearing. “They were very warm. They were getting it. A lot of different cultures that had suffered a genocide and didn’t ant any other people to suffer that grim fate.”

Already, Rhode Island, California and Michigan mandate the teaching of genocides.

The ANC of Eastern Mass., the Anti-Defamation League of New England and the Jewish Community Relations Council are leading a coalition of 25 organizations and religious institutions that are advocating for passage of the Genocide Education Act.