

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

Volume LXXX, NO. 17, Issue 4610

\$ 2.00

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

## NAASR Unveils New Headquarters

By Alin K. Gregorian  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. – On the blustery afternoon of Friday, November 1, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) finally unveiled its airy and sparkly new building, erected on the site of its previous center.

Hundreds of well-wishers and supporters gathered outside for the opening program, which included comments from the person for whom the building is named, Dr. Vartan Gregorian.

Yervant Chekijian, chairman of the NAASR board, got the program started. He highlighted some of the building's new features, including the main door, crafted by an artisan in Armenia.

Ara Krafian, chairman and president of the firm SMMA, which provided the architectural and engineering services for the new building, spoke next. The new 15,000-square-foot building, he said, came about as a result of the "courageous Board of Trustees and relentless Yervant," adding special thanks to Executive Director Sarah Ignatius and Director of Academic Affairs Marc Mamigonian.

The new building, he said, is much more efficient, larger and full of natural light.

In addition, the floor-to-ceiling glass walls on the third floor have etchings of traditional Armenian design.

Ignatius expressed her delight that the day of the unveiling had finally arrived. "I am incredibly proud to be here. All of you are part of this building," she said.

She paid special tribute to the man for whom the building is named, Dr. Vartan



The custom-made stunning door

Gregorian, and expressed her joy that the building would be a place for the community. "They can come and study and have meetings with colleagues," she said.

During a tour of the building she added that the building will have wi-fi hotspots see OPENING, page 10

## Charents' Iconic Creation Becomes Accessible in 35 Languages

By Gayane Ghazaryan  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – On October 20, a presentation of the newly published *Yes Im Anoush Hayastani* [Ode to Armenia] by Yeghishe Charents, a book containing the translation of the famous poem of this name translated into 35 different languages, took place next to the Aram Khachaturian Opera and Ballet Building as part of the Aurora Humanitarian Forum of 2019. The audience included one of the greatest modern Armenian composers, Tigran Mansourian, as well as the grandchildren of Charents and of his best friends, poet Avetik Isahakyan and painter Martiros Saryan.

see CHARENTS, page 20



Gohar Charents



## Biggest Yazidi Temple in the World Opens in Armenia

AKNALICH, Armenia (*The Independent*) – In the sleepy Armenian lakeside town of Aknalich, crowds gathered for the opening of a new temple on September 30. Inside the vast vaulted stone building, musicians dressed in ivory colored cotton garments and rolled headscarves processed in a circle. Some chanted sacred hymns, while others played the drum and flute. Those gathered around them danced shoulder to shoulder.

These musicians are known as qewwals, singers of the ageless, orally transmitted sacred songs from the Yazidi religion.

Yazidis are a Kurdish-speaking religious minority, whose main population is concentrated in northern Iraq. In 2014, Isis militants killed, kidnapped and displaced thousands from their community. Today, this ancient minority is extremely fragile and scattered across the globe.

Yazidis agree on the ancient roots of their religion, but not on the details of these origins. The religion is monotheistic, and their principal saint is the 12th-century Sufi mystic Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir, who was buried in a temple in Lalish, the religion's main pilgrimage site in northern Iraq. Academics also point to connections with ancient Iranian religions.

see TEMPLE, page 6

## Taner Akçam, Honored By Knights and Daughters of Vartan

Calls for Creation of Genocide Research Center

SEE STORY ON PAGE 8



Dr. Taner Akçam, left, holds certificate from Knights and Daughters of Vartan, next to Vice Grand Commander Kevork Oflazian and Grand Commander Steven R. Adams

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Aronian Receives Prize

BATUMI, Georgia (Panorama.am) – Armenian grandmaster Levon Aronian has stood out with his strong performance at European Team Chess Championship ended in Batumi, Georgia, being awarded with individual medal. According to the report by Chess Federation, Aronian scored 5 out of 8 points in front of Board 1, securing silver medal. Russia's Dmitry Andreikin took the gold on the first board, the source said.

The Armenian team placed fourth with 13 points at the competition.

### Foreign Minister in Sweden for EU Lecture

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Foreign Minister of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan participating on November 5 in a lecture dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the European Union's Eastern Partnership at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs. Armenian MFA spokeswoman Anna Naghdalyan announced on Facebook.

"FM of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, together with FM of Ukraine Vadym Pystaiko, participates in "EaP10 Lecture: A talk with FMs of Armenia and Ukraine" at Swedish Institute of International Affairs.

Mnatsakanyan presented Armenia's foreign policy priorities and prospects of relations with the European Union," Naghdalyan said.

### Armenia Lands 8th Among Countries with Most Internet Freedom

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Armenia has improved its standing in a fresh report assessing the state of internet freedom and personal liberties in 65 countries, prepared by Freedom House, a Washington-based think tank.

Ranked Free in the 2019 edition of the survey, Armenia scored 76 out of 100 in the global internet freedom ranking, to land in eighth place.

Armenia rose from "partly free" to "free" in 2018.

According to the Freedom on the Net report, positive changes were unleashed in Armenia by the 2018 Velvet Revolution continued in 2019 as well.

In particular, the report says, "violence against online journalists declined, and the digital news media enjoyed greater freedom from economic and political pressures.

"Developments in Armenia in 2018 demonstrated once again that digital technology can help generate dramatic democratic change. Citizens effectively used social media."

Neighboring Georgia (with a score of 75) is also ranked Free, Azerbaijan has dropped to join Turkey, Iran and Russia in the Not Free domain.

## INSIDE

### Tribute to Veterans

Page 5

### INDEX

Arts and Living . . . . .	13
Armenia . . . . .	2,3
Community News. . . . .	5
Editorial . . . . .	18
International . . . . .	4





## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Catholicos Karekin II Marks 20th Anniversary

ECHMIADZIN (Panorama.am) — The 20th anniversary of the enthronement of Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians was marked on November 3 at the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

A divine Liturgy was celebrated in the St. Gayane Monastery. Following Divine Liturgy, a special Pontifical prayer service was offered. Diocesan Primates from Armenia and the Diaspora, brotherhood members and pilgrims were in attendance for the services.

The 20th anniversary will be officially celebrated next year when the renovation of the Mother Cathedral will be completed.

## US Increases Funding to Armenia

YEREVAN — The United States Embassy in Armenia announced that the US Government has further increased assistance funding to Armenia in 2019. The figure for this year is more than \$60 million, which represents a 40-percent increase over last year's amount.

The funding includes projects managed by not only the Department of State and the US Agency for International Development, but also the Department of Energy, the US Forest Service, and the Department of Defense.

These funds include US government support to bolster Armenian democratic development in a wide variety of areas, including anti-corruption, security, energy, education, English language, forest service, human rights, civil society, and the strengthening of transparent and accountable government institutions, including the law enforcement, justice and judicial sectors.

"The United States has sought to support the development of democratic processes and institutions in Armenia for the last 27 years, and we certainly do not intend to change that now, at a time when democracy in Armenia is stronger than ever," US Ambassador Lynne M. Tracy said. "That is why we are proud to announce more than \$60 million in assistance funding to Armenia this year."

Since 1992, the US government has provided more than \$2 billion in assistance to Armenia.

## Senior Government Official Resigns

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The head of a government agency regulating Armenia's real estate market resigned on Friday, October 18, citing policy differences and "dilettantism" of senior officials in charge of urban development in the country.

The official, Sarhat Petrosyan, is a well-known architect and public figure who was appointed as head of the Cadaster Committee in the wake of last year's "Velvet Revolution" in which he actively participated. The committee maintains a state registry of real estate and registers property deals.

"I do not agree with our government's policy and existing approaches in the area of urban development which I believe encompasses the cadaster sector as well," Petrosyan said in a statement.

"Despite the unprecedented upswing registered in the real estate market [since the revolution] we have regressed in the area of urban development," he said, accusing the current and former heads of the government's Urban Development Committee of imitating meaningful activities.

Petrosian complained that he has had only minor influence on government policies. "As head of a government agency and urban development architect by education, I can no longer tolerate dilettantism and sectarianism bordering on corruption," he said.

He also thanked Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for appointing him to the post and engineering last year's "incredible change" in Armenia.

"I continue to regard the changes of 2018 as one of the most important achievements in the modern history of the Armenian people which must be preserved, developed and spread," concluded the statement.

Pashinyan's office did not immediately react to the announcement of Petrosian's resignation.

# Armenian Tycoon Expands Textile Business

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Samvel Aleksanyan, a wealthy businessman who was for years closely linked to Armenia's former leaders, inaugurated three new textile factories in the presence of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Friday, November 1.

Pashinyan toured their premises in Yerevan, welcoming the expansion of Aleksanyan's textile business first launched a few years ago. He said the Armenian government is ready to assist in its further growth "within the framework of its legal instruments."

A government statement on Pashinyan's participation in the ceremony said that the new factories employ around 1,000 people and that Aleksanyan plans to create 2,000 more jobs there. The tycoon will also open to two similar plants outside Yerevan next year, said the statement.

Aleksanyan, 51, is one of Armenia's richest men who has long controlled the lucrative imports of sugar, cooking oil and other basic foodstuffs to the country. He also owns the country's largest supermarket chain.

Aleksanyan, who is commonly known as "Lfik Samo," used to have close ties to former President Serzh Sargsyan and his Republican Party of Armenia (HHK). He was a parliament deputy representing the HHK from 2003 to 2018,



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (C) visits new textile factories opened by businessman Samvel Aleksanyan (R), Yerevan, November 1, 2019.

playing a major role in the party's election campaigns.

Opposition politicians and media for years claimed that he enjoyed privileged treatment by the government in return for earning the HHK and Sargsyan votes in Yerevan's Malatia-Sebastia district, his stronghold. The blue-collar district was notorious for vote buying, violence and other election-related irregularities reported by the Armenian media.

Pashinyan repeatedly lambasted the "oligarch" when he was in opposition to

the former regime. In March 2016, for example, he charged on the parliament floor that Aleksanyan may be evading "tens of millions of dollars" in taxes through a fraud scheme allowed by Sargsyan. Aleksanyan denied those claims.

Aleksanyan defected from the HHK faction in Armenia's former parliament in June 2018 just over a month after Sarkisian was overthrown in the "Velvet Revolution" led by Pashinyan. He has not been openly involved in any political activities since then.

## Parliament Urged to Resolve 'Constitutional Court Crisis'

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Judge Vahe Grigoryan has urged the Armenian parliament to step in to resolve what he describes as a crisis in the Constitutional Court whose chairman's legitimacy is disputed by the government.

Grigoryan, whom parliament elected judge of the Constitutional Court earlier this year, immediately called for the election of a new chairman of the high court, arguing that this is the requirement of a new constitution adopted through a nationwide referendum in 2015.

The claim was backed by the Armenian government as Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan accused Constitutional Court head Hrayr Tovmasyan of having struck a political deal with former President Serzh Sargsyan to "privatize" the country's highest court shortly before constitutional amendments were to fully take effect in April 2018.

Tovmasyan hit back at the accusations, claiming political persecution. Last month members of the Constitutional Court rejected the parliament's demand to remove Tovmasyan and elect a new chairman.

Also last month Armenia's law-enforcement authorities launched an inquiry into a possible "usurpation of power" by a "group of officials" that allegedly accompanied Tovmasyan's election as chairman of the Constitutional Court in March 2018. A former senior official has been arrested and charged as part of the investigation but not legal action has yet been taken against Tovmasyan, who claims constitutional immunity and insists he can be prosecuted and arrested only with the Constitutional Court's consent.

Talking to RFE/RL's Armenian Service (Azatutyun.am) on Sunday, November 3, Grigoryan said that in the situation like this the onus is on the parliament to enforce the constitutional amendments that he insists imply the election of new judges in the Constitutional Court. "I strongly believe that the best way to solve the issue of the constitutionality and democratic legitimacy of the Constitutional Court envisaged by amendments adopted in the December 2015 referendum is to elect new judges to that court, which does not exclude nominations from among the

existing members if they so desire. I have spoken openly about this. This will completely solve the problem," he said.

The Constitutional Court has nine members. Only two of them, including Grigoryan, were elected after 2015 constitutional amendments were fully enforced. Grigoryan now believes that new judges should be elected in compliance with the new constitution, as besides him and Arman Dilanyan all others have the status of members rather than judges of the Constitutional Court in accordance with the old constitution.

Other members of the Constitutional Court do not share this approach. Alvina Gyulumian, who has sat on the Court since 2014, says: "There are no vacancies in the Constitutional Court at present." Earlier, in an interview with RFE/RL's Armenian Service Gyulumian said that she saw no "crisis" in the Constitutional Court, but rather a "conflict between personalities."

Still, Grigoryan insists that it is the parliament that must play a key role in "resolving the crisis." "The National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia is the holder of the parliamentary sovereignty of the republic, and the crisis in the Constitutional Court is viewed from the point of view of the protection of democracy in Armenia and the elimination of constitutional security issues that are directly related to the constitutional powers and responsibilities of the republic's parliament," he said.

Grigoryan added that he has proposed some intermediate solutions. "The recognition of the status quo and the elimination of all status differences between the members and the judges of the Constitutional Court, which naturally exist and are recognized even by the chairman of the Venice Commission, up to filling the vacancies of new judges by nominating new candidates and electing judges. The solution can also be found by amending some provisions of the Constitution and by various other means," he said.

Late last month, Gianni Buquicchio, the head of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, expressed serious concern over what he described as the Armenian government's "open conflict" with the Constitutional Court and called for a renewed "normal opera-

tion" of Armenia's constitution.

In a statement released on October 29, Buquicchio said all branches of the country's government should respect each other's "prerogatives, obligations and competences" set by Armenian law.

"If this is not done, if there lacks democratic culture and maturity, the functioning of the state institutions is compromised and the democratic, civil and economic progress of the society is jeopardized," warned Buquicchio.

"I call on all sides to exercise restraint, mutual respect and constructive institutional cooperation in order to de-escalate this worrying situation and re-establish the normal operation of the constitution of Armenia," the head of the Venice Commission said.

## PM Receives UN Delegation

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received a delegation led by UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary A. DiCarlo on October 29.

Welcoming DiCarlo to Armenia, Pashinyan stressed the importance of close cooperation between the Government of Armenia and the UN. Pashinyan praised the United Nations' assistance provided to the country on the way to implementing institutional reforms, including the Electoral Code amendments. He emphasized the importance of amending the Electoral Code in a way to ensure fair and transparent elections. He stressed that the Armenian government intends to push ahead with the reforms aimed at developing and strengthening democracy.

DiCarlo hailed the ongoing democratic reforms in Armenia and reaffirmed the United Nations' willingness to work more closely with the Armenian government. Rosemary DiCarlo congratulated the Prime Minister on Armenia being elected a member of the Human Rights Council and wished the Armenian colleagues every success.





## ARMENIA

# My Forest Armenia Launches In Yerevan

YEREVAN – The official launching and press conference of My Forest Armenia was held on October 25 at the Tufenkian Historic Yerevan Hotel. Armenia's Deputy Minister of the Environment Vardan Melikyan, gave a supportive speech during the event.

My Forest Armenia was created with the aim of planting trees to capture carbon because certain CO2 emissions, for example, from air travel, have no clean alternative yet. Faced with the threat of climate change, everyone needs to act to mitigate global warming and reduce CO2 emissions. If the goal is to arrive at 0 emissions by 2050, we all need to start acting now.

My Forest Armenia offers the possibility to everyone, private individuals, companies, institutions or associations, to offset their carbon footprint by planting trees in Armenia. My Forest Armenia will focus solely on increasing forest coverage. Indeed, aside from capturing carbon, the role of forests are hugely important for any country. Forests produce oxygen, lower temperatures, increase humidity, prevent soil erosion, stop desertification, preserve biodiversity, increase fauna and flora, help rural communities, and much more.

My Forest Armenia will grow its seedlings in its own nurseries in Tavoush and Lori. Particular attention will be given to ensure that young saplings are properly watered and maintained in the crucial six years after planting ensuring a high survival rate. The medium-term objective is to plant 400,000 trees per year. That represents an area of 200 hectares of



reforestation every year.

Although it is an ambitious number, it should be put in perspective.

Armenia's forest coverage is only 11.2%. At 30,000 km<sup>2</sup>, 1% represents 300 km<sup>2</sup> or 30,000 hectares. At 200 ha per year, it would still take 150 years for Armenia's tree coverage to increase by 1%.

On the My Forest Armenia website, aside from explanations about nurseries and future reforestation projects, there is a carbon calculator to help calculate one's carbon emis-

sions...and offset them by making a corresponding payment to plant trees.

My Forest Armenia is partnering with the Agrarian University of Armenia for science and research. Furthermore, students will participate in different projects in the fields and forests.

The Ministry of the Environment and its subsidiaries, Hay Antar and Dilijan National Park are partners as well. My Forest Armenia is partnering with COAF in Debet for one of its nurseries. For more information, see [www.myforestarmenia.org](http://www.myforestarmenia.org).

## Street Performance of Government-Funded Play Raises Eyebrows

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Culture officials in Armenia have been under fire over a government-funded play that sparked a controversy in the country after artists conducted its street rehearsal in Yerevan over the weekend.

A group of young artists that has worked on the modernist play purportedly based on early 20th-century Armenian poetry staged the open-air experimental performance near a metro station in the center of the Armenian capital on Saturday, November 2. The play called "Emotion and Bell" was apparently met angrily by some of the conservative public. One young man who protested the play attacked one of the performers with zelyonka ("brilliant green") dye that takes days to wash off. He was detained by police.

The video of the performance went viral, causing an uproar on social media, with some accusing the performers of promoting Satanism, "non-traditional" sexual orientation and unpatriotic behavior.

The group who are not known to the general public in Armenia said they presented "a modern synthesis of dance and poetry – an experimental rendition of futurist poetry by Armenian poets Charents, Gevorg Abov and Azat Vshuni." Members of the group did not wish to elaborate or comment on the incident.

The news that the play had become possible due to a government grant added to the controversy, unleashing more criticism from opposition circles.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports, which had allocated 2.7 million drams (about \$5,650) for the play, said the application for funding submitted by the artists indicated that it would be based on the works of 1920s Armenian poets.

Minister Arayik Harutiunyan said the ministry will be able to evaluate the efficiency of its spending after the artists present the results of their project.

Decisions to finance projects like this are made by an artistic council set up upon the minister's order. "It is hard to set concrete criteria for a cultural project and specialists arrive

at conclusions based on their experience and knowledge," the minister explained.

Among the specialists that had given a positive conclusion for funding the play were a Yerevan State Conservatory lecturer, several opera, ballet and variety artists as well as a deputy minister.

Explaining the process, Harutiunyan said: "Culture is not mathematics and predicting a precise result is difficult. We should allow for some mistakes. Things are redressed after mistakes and the given direction or field only benefits from this."

The minister said that he himself was dismayed to see some of the plays financed by the ministry, but took it in its stride. "This is a con-

stant process," he explained.

Prominent Armenian actor, director and producer Armen Elbakian said that censorship can never be good for the arts and only time can show what is true art and what is not. "It is not we who should prohibit someone to do something or make them think the way we think," he said.

Hasmik Khachunts, a pro-government member of the Yerevan City Council who is one of the artists involved in "Emotion and Bell," refused to speak on the performance, saying that she was only a performer, while questions about the contents of the work should be directed to the choreographer who is currently outside Armenia.

Meanwhile, lawmaker Naira Zohrabyan, of the opposition Prosperous Armenia Party, added her voice to the chorus of criticism.

Zohrabyan, who is a theater critic, described what happened near the Republic Square metro station in Yerevan as vulgarity that has nothing to do with arts. "I will raise the issue of why taxpayer money has been allocated for this vulgarity," she said.

The lawmaker who chairs the parliament's standing committee on human rights also claimed that the performance violated a number of conventions on human rights protection. "Because, especially if I am with my child, and I want to take the metro, I will be forced to watch something that I don't want to watch,"

## Senior Police Official Fired For 'Political Statement'

By Marine Khachatrian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A deputy chief of the Armenian police has been sacked for publicly objecting to a bill that would allow political appointees to run the law-enforcement agency.

Armenian law has until now required the heads of the police and the National Security Service (NSS) to be high-ranking career officers. Legal amendments drafted by the opposition Bright Armenia Party (LHK) and passed by the parliament in the first reading last month would remove this requirement. They stipulate that any Armenian national who is aged 25 or older and has lived in the country for the last four years could be appointed as police or NSS chief by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Colonel Hovhannes Kocharyan, the deputy chief of the national police service, told reporters on October 22 that the police oppose the proposed amendments because they are based on "political expediency."

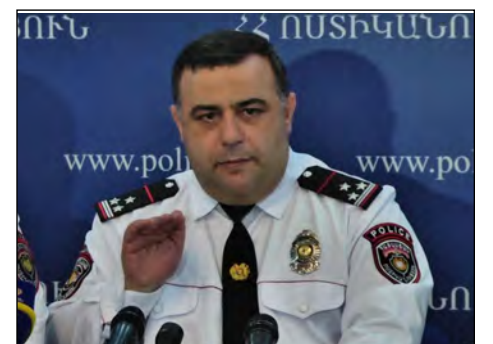
"The view of the police does not correspond to that of the authors of this bill," Kocharyan told reporters. He dismissed the authors' arguments that the police will be more accountable to the parliament if they are run by outsiders.

President Armen Sarkissian relieved Kocharyan of his duties on October 24 in a decree requested by Pashinyan. The prime minister's spokesman, Vladimir Karapetyan, said the police official was fired because of making a "political statement."

"The prime minister has stated on many occasions that the police and army servicemen must stay away from politics and must not make statements of political character," Karapetyan told RFE/RL's Armenian service.

The National Assembly was widely expected to pass the LHK bill in the second reading earlier on Thursday. However, it failed to do so after last-minute objections voiced by Vladimir Vartanyan, the pro-government chairman of the parliament committee on legal affairs.

Vartanyan said that the bill needs to undergo some changes before it can become a law. He



Hovhannes Kocharyan, deputy chief of the Armenian police, at a news conference in Yerevan

did not elaborate on those changes.

The police and NSS chiefs, Valeri Osipyan and Artur Vanetsyan, were forced by Pashinyan to resign last month for still unclear reasons. Both agencies have been headed by interim heads since then. Pashinyan has yet to decide who will run them on a permanent basis.





## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## Turkey Sentences, Then Frees, 2 Journalists Jailed in Crackdown

ISTANBUL (New York Times) – A Turkish court sentenced two journalists to about 10 years in prison for aiding a terrorist group but also ordered them released Monday, November 4, in view of time served, in one of the most prominent cases of journalists jailed in the crackdown after the 2016 failed coup.

The release of the journalists, Ahmet Altan and Nazli Ilıcak, was welcomed by human rights and press freedom groups but was not taken as a sign that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had eased his aggressive prosecution of political opponents and dissenters.

Tens of thousands of people have been detained in the last three years in cases that the government has linked to the coup attempt and to Fethullah Gulen, a cleric whom Turkey has accused of instigating it.

Altan and Ilıcak denied the charge that they had aided a terrorist group or had any involvement in the failed coup. Altan was sentenced to 10 years and six months, and Ilıcak to eight years and nine months; they were released under judicial control, a condition that requires them to report regularly to a local police station.

The court on Monday also acquitted Altan's brother Mehmet Altan, a journalist who had already been released from jail.

The European Union has put intense pressure on Turkey to improve its judicial record and release many of the dissidents, journalists, lawyers and political figures who are currently held in jail. Turkey's business institutions have also lobbied for the same in an effort to ease the strain on the country's economy.

Altan and Ilıcak were previously sentenced to life without parole in a decision that was eventually overturned by the Supreme Court. They then faced a second trial on lesser charges; the case is expected to continue to the appeal courts, and likely to the Supreme Court.

Gulen lives in exile in Pennsylvania and has denied any involvement in the coup.

## Azerbaijan Makes Another Inursion into Georgian territory

TBILISI (PanARMENIAN.Net)

Azerbaijan has strengthened its position on new heights on the peak of the Babakhar (Papakar) mountains, which are situated within Georgian territory, according to an analysis released on November 5 by bellingcat, an investigative website.

The Babakhar mountains include territory from all the three South Caucasian countries - Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.

But this is not the first time Azerbaijan is encroaching into Georgian territory.

PanARMENIAN.Net reported back in January 2017 that Azerbaijan had built defense facilities and strongholds which sank into the territory of Georgia, beginning from the crossroad of Armenia-Georgia-Azerbaijan border and stretching to the Red Bridge checkpoint. Some 6,5 km long, the area covers around 800-1000 hectares.

Armenian political scientist Samvel Meliksetyan revealed back then that Papakar peak, a key military point, is situated in the territory of Georgia, the Azerbaijan border lying south of the mountain. But the Azerbaijanis have gone some 400 meters deep in this area and established a system of strongholds that fully lie on the territory of Georgia.

Azerbaijani media outlets reported back in April 2019 that strategic heights on the border with Armenia have been taken under their government's control.

Azerbaijan's Chief of Staff of the State Border Service, Major General Elchin Ibrahimov, mentioned in his statement that Azerbaijan has "advanced on the contact line in several directions and gained a foothold in strategically important heights". In viewing freely-available satellite imagery on Google Earth, however, it can be seen that the Azerbaijani military advance occurred within Georgian territory.

# Memoirs of an Orphan

By Muriel Mirak Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

POTSDAM, Germany – In the extensive literature of the Armenian Genocide, memoirs of single survivors play a special role. Each story is different, and yet all share certain characteristics; the trauma of the events, separation from loved ones, uncertainty and fear regarding the future. Among the survivors are many whose names have gone down in history. At the same time, there were hundreds of thousands of orphans, many of whom ended up in Turkish families, and their identities were lost in time. The more fortunate managed to retain their identities as Armenians, and to find new homes abroad.

Heinrich Melidonian was one such orphan, who was born in the Ottoman Empire and ended up in Germany and France. Dr. Hayk Martirosyan has reconstructed his fascinating research on the basis of the young man's writings and of research into archives in Germany. Martirosyan, who is a scientific collaborator at the Lepsiushaus in Potsdam, presented the results of his efforts in a lecture there on October 31.

Heinrich Melidonian, born in 1901, was given that name on the request of Sister Paula Schäfer and baptized by the Protestant Father Richard Brunnemann. The infant had been taken in by the orphanage of the German Hilfsbund für Christliches Liebeswerk im Orient (DHLO), a relief organization in Marash. Thanks to donations given by "foster" parents in Germany Deacon Otto Clarenbach and

the orphanage, deportation orders came down; he was sent off with other youngsters to work on the Baghdad railway, but, sick with malaria, had to be sent back. In this way, he survived the massacres and in late 1918 began an

and other students were arrested and released only in May 1923, in the context of negotiations of the Lausanne Treaty. From there he travelled to Greece, then to France, from there to England, then Canada, and when not



Dr. Hayk Martirosyan (Photo courtesy of Ulrich Rosenau, Lepsiushaus, Potsdam)

odyssey which took him to Cilicia, and then Adana and beyond. Thanks to his years in Marash, where he learned German, Turkish and English, he was better equipped than others to seek work, which he found as a translator. In

allowed to settle there, returned to France. In 1927, thanks to the mediation of his "foster" parents, he was admitted to the Johanneum Protestant School in Wuppertal-Barmen, then entered a course at the Karlshöhe Diaconate Institute. He became a deacon but was not allowed to work as a pastor in Germany. He collaborated with the YMCA in various cities.

In the late 1930s Melidonian began to write about his experiences. *Past, ... but Not Forgotten! Memoirs and Experiences of an Armenian Orphan and the Missionary Station at Marash in Asian Turkey* was one book; *By Dangerous Cliffs* was another; and *Light after Darkness* yet another. In these works, Martirosyan said, "he described his wanderings through the Ottoman Empire and the difficult life of the orphan and prisoner that he led. These books," he added, "are still very important today as memoirs of an eyewitness during the genocide with very detailed descriptions and images."

Melidonian also published a book reporting on a visit to the Holy Land, and spoke about his experiences in various cities in Germany. In 1939 he published an intriguing work, titled, *Discussions with an Armenian Christian*, in which he hoped to make Armenians in Germany known. Martirosyan said that the author posed questions, like, "Who are the Armenians?", "Where is Armenia?", "Are the Armenians Christians?", "Why were the Armenians persecuted?" Although he did not succeed in becoming a German citizen, he contributed to making his people and the story of their plight known to the German public.

Martirosyan concluded by saying that Melidonian is one of the few orphans whose life story is documented in at least five European archives. "Hundreds of thousands of Armenian orphans died," he said, "were killed, or disappeared without a trace. Melidonian's example shows how much effort, and often also luck, one needs, how many disappointments one has to overcome and how hard one has to fight, to be able to stay alive."



Dr. Rolf Hosfeld, Academic Director Lepsiushaus (Photo courtesy of Ulrich Rosenau)

Pastor Kuhlo, Heinrich could live and receive medical care in the orphanage until 1915.

The Germans had sent up hospitals, orphanages and schools in various Armenian villages during the Hamidian massacres (1894-1896), a few of which survived the genocide that began in 1915. The Marash orphanage was one of them. Despite the support it received from the German Consul in Aleppo, Walter Rössler, it came under pressure from the Ottoman authorities and had to give the children to relatives, if they had any, or to Armenian families who received financial support from the orphanage. Heinrich was one of these so-called "Kostenkinder" and lived with a certain widow Turwand for a while. Later, when he was allowed back into

1920, he accompanied children under the care of Near East Relief who were evacuated from Adana to Cyprus. There he was able to attend the American College, before going with the children on to Tarsus, where he studied at the American St. Paul's college.

Again, due to political events, he had to flee, this time to Smyrna (Izmir). When their ship was stopped and the Turks hauled passengers out to kill them, he and other children managed to survive by hiding. "I promised Him," Melidonian later wrote, "that I would devote my entire life to Him, if he saved me from this mortal danger." In Smyrna he was able to study at the American college and in 1922 was confirmed in the Protestant church. During the massacres in Smyrna in September 1922, he



# Community News

## Society for Armenian Studies Holds 45th Anniversary Banquet

WINNETKA, Calif. – On Saturday, October 12, 2019 the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) held its 45th Anniversary Banquet at the Organization of Istanbul Armenians Banquet Hall in Winnetka, California. The banquet was sponsored by the Organization of Istanbul Armenians (OIA). Over 130 people attended the banquet, including members of the greater Los Angeles community, as well as participants of the Society for Armenian Studies 45th Anniversary International Conference on the Armenian Diaspora that took place October 12-13 at the University of California, Los Angeles. Academic community members of the University of Southern California and UCLA, which were among the co-sponsors of the SAS conference, also attended the banquet.

Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian (Director of the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno) served as the master of ceremonies of the banquet. SAS President Dr. Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) welcomed the guests and thanked the Organization of Istanbul Armenians (OIA) for hosting the 45th Anniversary Banquet. In his remarks Dr. Der Matossian outlined the initiatives that the SAS has undertaken since 2018. These new initiatives included awarding of new SAS Travel and Research Grants to graduate students, establishing the SAS podcast series, starting a SAS Publication Series, establishing the Nina G. Garsoïan Graduate Research Grant for Ancient and Early Mediaeval Armenian History, and the beginning of e-Entries of the Society for Armenian Studies (e-SAS), a website that was recently launched.

Furthermore, Der Matossian announced that the *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* (JSAS) will henceforth be published by the prestigious Brill publishing house. He concluded his remarks by outlining the future projects of the SAS.

Prof. Hourii Berberian, Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies and Director of the Armenian Studies Program at the University of California, Irvine, spoke on behalf of the Armenian Studies Chairs and Directors of the United States. She highlighted the new collaborative initiatives that have begun between the Armenian Studies Programs and Chairs, as well as the new directions and vision of the field of Armenian Studies.

In a musical tribute to the 150th anniversary of the birth of Komitas, musicians Greg Hosharian and Martin Haroutunian played interpretations of Armenian folk melodies. After the musical interlude SAS Executive Council member Dr. Dzovinar Derderian read from letters sent by former SAS presidents Richard Hovannissian, Dennis Papazian, Dickran Kouymjian, Ronald G. Suny and Joseph Kechichian.

Der Matossian then awarded the Society Armenian Studies (SAS) "Lifetime Achievement Award" to past presidents. Among the awardees present at the banquet were Prof. Kevork B. Bardakjian, Marie Manoogian Professor of Armenian Language and Literatures at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian. Dr. Der Matossian highlighted the unconditional support that Prof. Der Mugrdchian has rendered to the Society for the past several decades.

Der Matossian also awarded a "Lifetime Achievement Award" to Dr. Khachig Tölölyan (Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Wesleyan University) and founding editor of the *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, a Zoryan Institute publication.

Dr. Vahram L. Shemmassian (Director of the Armenian Studies Program, California State University, Northridge) gave the concluding remarks.

Archbishop Levon Zekiyian, the Armenian Catholic Archbishop of Istanbul concluded the banquet with his congratulatory words and a prayer.



Harry Keshishian with Edward DerKazarian (David Medzorian Photo)

## Armenian American Veterans of Greater Boston Banquet Honors Oldest Member Harry Keshishian

WATERTOWN – On October 27, the Armenian American Veterans of Greater Boston celebrated its 67th anniversary with a Membership Appreciation Banquet, honoring its oldest member Harry Keshishian, soon to be 98 years old in December. The event, which follows a recent annual tradition, was held at the newly renovated Oakley Country Club.

This Armenian American Veterans organization was formed in 1952, became a part of the Amvets National Organization, a couple of years later, and was known as the Cpl. Paul S. Marsoubian Amvets Post 41, until a couple of years ago when it became affiliated with the AGBU.

Eighty members and guests attended including invited widows of deceased members and enjoyed a delicious menu and music by Leon Janikian and his band that played many Armenian favorites as the crowd got up and danced.

Post Commander George Haroutunian officiated the event as MC. He told about the scholarship program for members of Amvets family and invited Harold Partamian, Scholarship Committee Chairman, to report results to date, totaling \$170,500 awarded since inception of the plan in 2017 to 50 students who are family members of Amvets past and present. He urged that all those who qualify as immediate family apply in the next cycle if they have not already done so, which runs from Jan 1 to Apr 30, 2020.

Haroutunian then mentioned the various donations made during the past year to charities, which included: St. Stephens' Armenian School Scholarship Funds, Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMMA) celebration for its 100th year in the US, Armenian Heritage Park, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) for their grand opening of their new headquarters, Holiday meal for 350 frontline soldiers in Armenia on the Army holiday January 28 (which makes the third year for this project), Armenian Women's Resource

Center in Yerevan, Armenian Nursing Home for additional Hoyer lifts, New England Home for Veterans, VA Veterans' Fund at the VA Hospital, Ararat Youth Conference Center, Armenian Veterans of the four-day war housing damaged during the war, and Orphans of the 4 day war. These donations have been made possible by the funds received from the sale of the building on Grove Street.

Haroutunian introduced his executive committee, consisting of himself as Commander, First Vice Commander Edward DerKazarian, Second Vice Commander, Robert Kaprielian, John Sahagian Finance Officer, and Jack Medzorian, Vahan Berberian, and George Haroutunian as Trustees.

The event was co-managed by Ed DerKazarian and Walter Nahabedian and his wife, who planned and managed all the details of the event. Credit was given to Vahan Berberian, who ran the event for a number of years.

see VETERAN, page 7



Post Commander George Haroutunian (David Medzorian Photo)

## Zohrab Center Director Addresses SAS 'Diaspora and Stateless Power' Conference

NEW YORK – Scholars from Armenia, England, France, Germany, Holland, Mexico, Portugal, and the United States attended the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) conference at UCLA on October 12-13. Dr. Christopher Sheklian, director of the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, represented the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

Under the theme "Diaspora and 'Stateless Power,'" speakers addressed the subject of "social discipline and identity formation" throughout the Armenian diaspora in the 20th century. Papers topics ranged from the status of Syrian-Armenians in the Republic of Armenia, to historical accounts of Armenians in Mexico, Lebanon, and the Soviet Union.

The gathering was also an occasion to celebrate the society's 45th anniversary – and to honor the pioneering work of Khachig Tölölyan, a scholar of worldwide diasporas. Tölölyan gave the keynote speech: "From the Study of Diasporas to Diaspora Studies."

Sheklian's contribution – "Recent Immigration to Established Armenian Communities: The Role of the Church in Shaping Immigrant Identity" – was based on his ongoing research.

"I'm thrilled by the prospect of collaborative projects between the Zohrab Information Center and the Society for Armenian Studies," said Sheklian, who was recently elected to the SAS executive council.

A 45th-anniversary banquet was held on October 12, at the Organization of Istanbul



Dr. Christopher Sheklian of the Eastern Diocese's Zohrab Center (left) with Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian of Oxford U., at the Society of Armenian Studies conference in L.A., Oct. 12-13.

Armenians Hall in Los Angeles. Current SAS President Bedross Der Matossian acknowledged the founders of the SAS and highlighted some of society's latest initiatives.

(See related story on the same page.)

Longtime SAS members and distinguished scholars Kevork Bardakjian, Khachig Tölölyan, and Barlow Der Mugrdchian received "Lifetime Achievement Awards."

The event was co-sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Richard Hovannissian Endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History (UCLA), the Narekatsi Chair in Armenian Studies (UCLA), the Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair (UC Irvine), the Institute of Armenian Studies (USC), the Armenian Studies Program (California State University, Fresno), the Armenian Studies Program (CSU Northridge), and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).





# Biggest Yazidi Temple in the World Opens in Armenia

TEMPLE, from page 1

This arid and sparsely populated Armenian province might at first seem like an unusual place for such a temple and ceremony. Yet Yazidis are the biggest minority in Armenia, where over 80 percent of the population is Christian and ethnic Armenian. In the last census in 2011, the Yazidi population in Armenia numbered at 35,000.

"We don't have a homeland, but our traditions are safe here in Armenia," says Temur Akmiyan, a villager from the province.

The *qewwals* live only in the Yazidi heartland of northern Iraq. But they have come here to Armenia for the opening of Quba Mere Diwane, the biggest Yazidi temple in the world, and only the third modern temple outside of Iraq.

"We've come to sing sacred songs and play music to consecrate the temple. There are no sacred singers in Armenia, that's why we're here," says Qewwal Ziad.

Event organizers estimated that over 20,000 people attended the opening day, from former Soviet Union countries as well as Europe. A delegation from Iraq included members of the Yazidi spiritual council and Yazidi military men. Representatives of the Armenian church, government officials, army veterans and the heads of Yazidi organizations in the US and Germany also attended.

For the visitors from the Yazidi diaspora communities of the former Soviet Union, this encounter with the Iraqi *qewwals* could be the first in generations. Throughout the morning, people approached them to take group pictures. As they processed inside the temple, crowds gathered to film the ceremony.

Yazidis have no holy book, and the religion's sacred texts were passed on orally by members of their religious castes, who keep the details of the religion a secret. In the past, this oral tradition was preserved by close-knit tribal communities. But today this religious knowledge has weakened as a result of ongoing migration, modernity, and conflict in Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

In Yazidi creation stories, the world was created by light. As such, followers pray facing the sun, believing sunlight to be an emanation of God. Their archangel, *melak el tawus*, takes the form of a peacock. They do not accept converts, and are required to marry within the religion in accordance to the strict caste system. Their population numbers today, estimated to be around 700,000 globally, are dangerously dwindling.

Until recently, Yazidis did not build temples outside of their heartland in Iraq. As well as the temple at Lalish, hundreds of smaller shrines also exist in Iraq close to Yazidi villages.

"For a religion that does not have a book, these shrines helped preserve the religion, serving as points of confluence and pilgrimage for their communities," explains Tyler Fisher, of the University of Florida, who researches the reconstruction of Yazidi temples in Iraq.

Now scattered, Yazidis of the former Soviet Union are the first among the community's ever-growing diaspora to build modern temples. A smaller temple with a single spire was first opened in Aknalich in 2012. This was followed by a temple and religious center in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, which opened in 2015. These three temples were recognized by the Yazidi high spiritual council in Iraq, according to their organizers.

Yazidi living in Anatolian provinces of the Ottoman Empire - which today is eastern Turkey - began migrating to Armenia in the 19th century. And then in 1915, entire Yazidi villages fled genocidal campaigns against non-Muslim minorities of the collapsing Ottoman Empire, settling in Armenia.

Up to 1.5 million Armenians are thought to have been killed in these campaigns. Under the Soviet Union, religion was banned, but Kurdish-speaking communities of Armenia and Georgia, who were predominantly Yazidi, received support to develop their culture, language and folklore.

The absence of buildings for worship was par-

ticularly felt in the Caucasus. Yazidi communities were cut off from their main pilgrimage site, Lalish, in northern Iraq for over 100 years.

"I've never been to Lalish, we know it from our songs and its stays in our hearts," says Anahit Sharuef, a Yazidi poet from a nearby village. Instead, Yazidi rituals in the Caucasus centered around the home and their cemeteries.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the church has played a powerful role in Armenia and Georgia, further weakening the religious minority's sense of identity. Many Yazidis often visit churches to light candles, and kept



Statues line the walkway outside the temple (RFE/RL photo)

Christian iconography in their homes.

In the home of Armenian Yazidi villager Murad Usayan, I spotted images of the Virgin Mary. "She's the Khatuna Fekhira, our Yazidi angel," he explains. "Our religions have many parallels."

Further, economic hardship in post-Soviet Armenia is weakening the community's presence. Like many Armenians, Yazidis began migrating to Russia and Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union. By 2011, the Yazidi population of Armenia had dropped by 30 percent. Today, many isolated villages in which Yazidi traditions were preserved are mostly empty.

"If we don't build temples outside of Iraq, we will lose our religion and our culture," says Ruslan Jawoyan, an Armenian-born Yazidi living in Moscow, who was at the opening.

On the week of the opening, a small temple-like shrine was inaugurated in the isolated village of Sorik on the Armenian-Turkish border, and another religious building was nearing completion in the village of Riya Taza in the Aparan region of Armenia.

Yazidi temples consist of one or two conical spires, or quba, each representing a Yazidi saint or angel. The spire has 12 or 24 ridges, and it ends in a circle symbolizing the sun. The temple's base is rectangular or square, with either a flat or vaulted roof.

Hussein Hajji Othman, an Iraqi Yazidi writer who has come to Armenia for the opening, explains the spiritual significance of this architecture.

"The temples are built from the ground to the sky. The bottom has four corners, representing chapters of peace. Above it, the spire simulates the sun beams. Everything above the spire is sunlight. Yazidis say that the sunlight is goodness, it is the source of life."

With its eight spires, the temple at Aknalich deviates from this traditional model. A central spire symbolizes the Yazidi archangel Melak Tawus. It is surrounded by seven smaller spires, each dedicated to an angel. At the top of the entrance is the elaborate stone carving of a sun - a modern invention made specifically for this temple.

The temple's Yerevan-based architect, Artik Ghulyan, was influenced by ancient Armenian churches, whereby a central dome is surrounded by a series of smaller ones. Ghulyan introduced modern elements, such as a series of triangle-shaped motifs along the outer walls, which symbolize sun rays. "It recalls the ancient Mesopotamian cultures of Iraq," he says.

The spire of Yazidi temples is topped with a brass icon, which is traditionally shaped as a crescent moon or a hand. However, all eight spires at Aknalich are topped with a brass sun.

Inside are seven large sun-shaped chandeliers, and the icon of a peacock made of semi-precious stone. Colorful satin fabrics were laid

out on an altar-like table facing the peacock. The visitors gathered around the table, kissing the fabric or tying knots to it. A visionary spiritual leader from Iraq known as a *kocheh* blessed the visitors.

Yazidi temples are often connected to a burial ground. "Where a village does not have a temple, they will construct a small shrine by their cemeteries," says Fisher. Likewise, the first temple at Aknalich was built adjacent to a local Yazidi cemetery.

The grounds also serve as a memorial park for Armenian and Yazidi history. With its stone monuments dedicated to war heroes and intellectuals, it is reminiscent of Soviet-era memorial parks. It includes a sculpture and tombstone for the Yazidi war hero Janghir Agha, who led victorious battles against the Turks in Armenia in 1918. And a monument to the "Armenian and Yazidi Friendship" brings together the symbol of a Yazidi peacock with a Christian crucifix.

A new monument commemorating the genocide of 2014 was unveiled on the opening day. It is the sculpture of Yazidi activist Nadia Murad, a former Isis captive and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. Visitors placed white flowers at the foot of the sculpture and prayed.

The new temple is also part of a wider trend in post-Soviet states, whereby successful businessmen from the diaspora build religious edifices in their home towns and villages. The economic and political vacuum following the collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as lawlessness and organized crime, spelt extreme poverty for most and riches for the very few. Over 200 new churches are said to have emerged in Armenia since the 1990s.

The temple's sponsor, the Moscow-based businessman Mirza Sloyan, who owns a shopping mall in Moscow, was born near Aknalich. "This enormous building is my latest project," he says, pointing back towards the temple that was still under construction, just days before the opening.

In response to the Isis attacks in 2014, he also founded the All Russian Yazidi Congress in Moscow, and the online video channel Lalish TV, which covers Yazidi news and culture globally.

No expense was spared. "We lost track of the budget long ago," says Hamlet Boghossian, who supervised the stone work. A stonemasonry workshop was installed next to the temple grounds, to carve the marble that was imported from Iran. "The temple will stand for hundreds of years," says Boghossian.

"So many of our temples were destroyed in Iraq by Isis militants in 2014. That's when I decided we should have a bigger temple here," says Sloyan.

Sloyan, who is now in his mid-70s, became interested in the Yazidi religion and culture in his later adult life. "Our language is so complex. For example, we have a different word for how humans sit, how dogs sit, how lions sit - and many other animals" he says. "The more I learn, the more it fascinates me."

Today, Sloyan maintains relations with Iraq's Lalish Brigade, a Yazidi militia that is supported by the Iran-backed paramilitaries, known as the Hash'd Al Shaabi. The brigade's leader, Ali Serhan Issa, was among the official guests from Iraq at the opening.

Building the temple in Armenia was essential, Sloyan says.

"Armenia is the safest country in the world for the Yazidi people. I'm happy I built it here, facing Mount Ararat. My grandchildren will also be proud."

"This is an important and historic day for the Yazidi people," says Barfa Tamoyan, an Armenian-born Yazidi now living in France. Despite the heat of the opening day, she wears a voluminous black ball gown and velvet heels to mark the special occasion. "We have built a temple in a country that is not our homeland. I hope we'll have temples in Europe in the future."

In the gardens, well-known Yazidi bands from Russia and Germany played ceremonial songs, while crowds continued to pour in an out of the temple, filming the event on their phones, and taking selfies and group photos with friends and family.

In lyrics composed for the opening day, Aydin Amara sings, "Come to the temple to a place of prayer and worship. To the Yazidi temple, from which heaven blows."

(This article was edited for space considerations.)

Telephone (617) 924-7400

## Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET  
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN  
PAUL BEDROSIAN  
LARRY BEDROSIAN

## Giragosian

F U N E R A L H O M E

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

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

## Nardolillo Funeral Home

Est. 1906

John K. Najarian, Jr.

Rhode Island's Only Licensed Armenian Funeral Director

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

www.nardolillo.com





COMMUNITY NEWS

# ASA Announces Awards

PROVIDENCE, R.I. The Armenian Student Association (ASA) Gold Medal Award is recognized as the highest Scholastic Award within the ASA. Any member of the ASA who is an undergraduate student and is at least a sophomore in an accredited college or university within the United States is eligible for consideration for this award.

Selected to receive the award this year is Matthew Madanian Reppucci of Belmont, Mass. He is a biopsychology (pre-med) student at Tufts University.

Applications for the Gold Medal Awards can be obtained at: [www.asainc.org](http://www.asainc.org). Deadline for submitting applications and documentation is March 15, 2020.

### ASA Silver Medal Awards

The ASA Silver Medal Award Committee selected eight (8) high school seniors to receive the Silver Medal Award.

- Aram Barsom Assadourian, Hoboken, NJ, High Tech High School, he will be attending Villanova University

- Sareen Nairi Balian, Chevy Chase, MD, National Cathedral School, Washington, DC, she will be attending Columbia University;

- Matthew Agostino Brunelli, Ashburn, VA, he will be attending Bridgewater College

- Amara E. D'Antuno, Mapleville, RI, Burrillville High School, she will be attending Salve Regina University

- Ava Samara Gallagher, Hampton NH, The Governor's Academy, she will be attending Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

- Olivia C. Kooloian, North Providence, RI, North Providence High School, she will be attending Catholic University

- Rebecca Anne Masoian, Pawtucket, RI, Tolman High School, she will be attending Johnson & Wales University

- Mark E. Shaghalian, Cranston, RI, Cranston West High School, he will be attending Bryant University.

The Silver Medal Awards are given annually to high school seniors who have demonstrated outstanding scholastic ability.

Applications for Silver Medal Awards can be obtained at: [www.asainc.org](http://www.asainc.org). Deadline for submitting applications and documentation is May 1, 2020.

# Gala Banquet to Honor Jack Medzorian

BOSTON – The Knights and Daughters of Vartan in Boston are inviting the public to join them on Sunday, November 17 in honoring Jack Medzorian for a lifetime of service to Armenians, both here in the United States and especially in Armenia itself.

Ararat Lodge Number 1 and Arpie Otyag Number 9 will host the event which will be held in Keljik Hall at the Saint James Cultural Center in Watertown, beginning at 5 p.m. The gala celebration will include dinner followed by a program of anecdotes, entertainment and tributes from Armenia. The party will come just two days after Medzorian celebrates his 93rd birthday.

As a Knight of Vartan, Medzorian has served in numerous positions including twice as Lodge Commander or Sbarabed. He and his wife Eva have together made nearly 100 trips to Armenia since 1972, many of which have been for humanitarian purposes in which they delivered medical equipment, educational supplies and funding to rural areas where such resources were and are badly needed.

He is also a co-founder with his wife of the

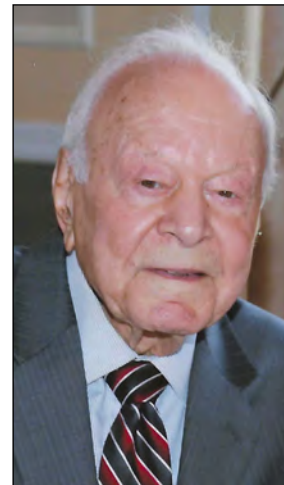
Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) and has been instrumental in bringing Armenian students to America to both visit and study.

Jack Medzorian has also served the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) where he serves on the Board of Directors, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), the Counsel of Armenian Executives and the Armenian American Veterans of Greater Boston, formerly the Cpl. Paul Mesrobian AMVETS Post 41, of which he is a founding member. He is also a former superintendent of the Saint James Armenian Church Sunday School.

He and his wife have four children. Their son David is a member of Ararat Lodge and their daughter Ruth is a member of Arpie Otyag.

All friends are invited to come and join in the festivities on November 17. Tickets may be purchased by going to <https://squareup.com/store/knights-ofvartan-ararat>.

For further information contact David Medzorian at [davalvideo@gmail.com](mailto:davalvideo@gmail.com).



Jack Medzorian



## SPONSOR A TEACHER IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH



SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2001, THE TCA SPONSOR A TEACHER PROGRAM HAS RAISED \$709,500 AND REACHED OUT TO 6,427 TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH.



✂

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

\$200     \$400     \$600     \$Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**TCA Sponsor a Teacher**  
5326 Valverde, Houston, TX 77056  
Your donation is Tax Deductible.

# Armenian American Veterans of Greater Boston Banquet Honors Harry Keshishian

VETERAN, from page 5

Haroutunian then introduced Harry Keshishian, who was a mentor to Haroutunian when he was a teenager, in building scale models of flyable airplanes. Keshishian told about his experience in during World War II. He is a gentle, modest person with a strong love for his national heritage and comrades in arms.



Jack Medzorian (David Medzorian Photo)



Harold Partamian (David Medzorian Photo)

Haroutunian read off the names of the members who had died during the past year and asked for a moment of silence in their memory. These deceased brothers were: Jack Achmakjian, Jack Eordikian, Elliot Vanetsian, Nishan Berberian, Edward Orchanian, Sr., Samuel Zouranjian, Charles Kasparian, and Peter Talanian.

— Jack Medzorian





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Akçam, Honored By Knights and Daughters of Vartan, Calls for Creation of Genocide Research Center

**By Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

FAIR LAWN, N.J. — Historian of the Armenian Genocide Taner Akçam was honored at a banquet organized by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan Times Square Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee on October 25 at St. Leon Armenian Church's Abajian Hall.

Akçam holds the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Endowed Chair of Armenian Studies at Clark University and is one of the first Turkish scholars to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide and write extensively on it.

Dr. Vartan Abdo served as master of ceremonies at the well-attended event. Very Rev. Fr. Sahag Yemishian, gave the invocation, while guests were welcomed by Hirant Gulian, banquet chairman and organizer.

Gulian said, "People often ask me why are you so ardently working for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. The Republic of Turkey will never recognize it." He said that he would respond, "Nothing pursued, nothing gained. ...The world will forget the Armenian Genocide only if we let them forget. Our cause is alive, we are alive, and we are determined to achieve our goal and believe me, we will."

As part of this effort, Gulian stated, "Today we have translated [Akçam's 2018 book] *Killing Orders* into 10 languages. There are 5 more to go. That means over 800 million people have the opportunity to read *Killing Orders* in their respective languages. Our goal is to reach four billion people – b for billion – by 2021, and without your help, we cannot do it." This out-



Dr. Taner Akçam, left, being thanked by Bishop Daniel Findikyan, with Dr. Mary Papazian, seated at right (Vartan Esenyan photo)

## Honoring Legacies of Andonian and Guerguerian

Master of ceremonies Abdo praised Gulian's dedication to the Armenian cause and the support of his wife Ruby before the memories of Aram Andonian (1875-1952) and Rev. Krikor Guerguerian (1911-1988) were honored. Andonian, journalist and historian, escaped the deportations and managed to obtain and publish telegrams by Talat Pasha and other Young Turk leaders after the war. He directed the Armenian General Benevolent Union's Boghos Noubar Pasha Library in Paris between 1928 and 1951 and saved most of these telegrams during World War II's German occupation of Paris. Rev. Guerguerian found and preserved many documents pertaining to the Armenian Genocide, which now are being digitized and made available online (<https://commons.clarku.edu/guerguerian-archive/>).

Abdo asked all to rise in honor of these two senior scholars. Dr. Edmund Guerguerian, nephew of Rev. Guerguerian, was given a certificate of recognition by Tigran Sahakyan, co-chair of the Times Square Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee, and Kevork Oflazian, Vice Grand Commander of the Knights. Dr. Guerguerian kept his uncle's files for decades. Akçam's book *Killing Orders* was



Dr. Edmund Guerguerian receives certificate from Kevork Oflazian, left, and Tigran Sahakyan, right (Vartan Esenyan photo)

reach will include India, China and Japan. He said he believed that the day was coming when the Republic of Turkey would recognize the Armenian Genocide.

Gulian announced that Dikran Cherkian, 99-years-old, was present. He is the son of Vahram Cherkian, who taught art classes in the American Robert College in Istanbul and created the famous signature of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Cherkian came to the stage to congratulate Akçam in person.



Hirant Gulian (Vartan Esenyan photo)



Dr. Khatchig Mouradian (Vartan Esenyan photo)



Dr. Vartan Abdo (Vartan Esenyan photo)

based largely on the latter.

A video presentation was screened with excerpts of Akçam's speech at the Armenian Genocide Centennial commemoration at Times Square in New York in 2015, expressing his shame and apology for the terrible crime of the genocide and condemning its denial, and highlights of the messages about Akçam published in the commemorative booklet the Knights published for this banquet. The booklet includes messages from Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, US Senator Charles E. Schumer, US Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr., New Jersey Governor Philip D. Murphy, US Ambassador John M. Evans, Gladys Berejikian, Premier of New South Wales, Australia, Armenian church leaders at the highest levels starting with Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, leaders of Armenian organizations



Dr. Ümit Kurt (Vartan Esenyan photo)

like the Armenian General Benevolent Union, Facing History and Ourselves, and various scholars and intellectuals from around the world.

## Academics and Clergy Praise Akçam

Prof. Thomas Kühne of Clark University praised Akçam's work, and pointed out the parallels in their work, with him a German studying the Holocaust and Akçam a Turk studying the Armenian Genocide. Kühne was chairman of the Clark search committee which ended up choosing Akçam. Kühne addressed the latter and said, "In you we had identified a perfect candidate for the position...what better way to fight Turkish denial than to appoint a Turkish



Dr. Thomas Kühne (Vartan Esenyan photo)

scholar. This award today proves the wisdom of our choice."

Professor Eric D. Weitz of the City College of New York said that Akçam was a great friend and teacher, who trained as a sociologist but became a great historian. As such, unlike the denialists opposing him, he bases his work on evidence and sources. Weitz coined the phrase "the Sherlock Holmes of Armenian Genocide research" when talking to a *New York Times* reporter, and never imagined, he said, that it would become so popular.

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America in Washington, DC, proclaimed his thanks to the many Turks who are suffering and working for peace and justice. He then exclaimed that Taner Akçam deserves to get the Nobel Peace Prize.

Khatchig Mouradian, the first doctoral student of Akçam at Clark University, said that one of the things that really moved him is the acknowledgment of the role of mentors and scholars who had paved the way, such as Andonian, Rev. Guerguerian and Vahakn Dadrian, in Akçam's case. In turn, Mouradian said he was happy to acknowledge Taner Akçam's help to him. Scholars like Akçam, he said, do not just produce new scholars, but also provide an example of engagement in the life of the community and world, shaping society around them.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Dr. Eric Weitz (Vartan Esenyan photo)





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Making Food Functional: Concord Native out to Transform Nutrition Bar Industry

By Rob Fucci

CONCORD, Mass. (*Concord Journal*) – Sophie Gechijian admits her first days as an entrepreneur were quite scary.

The Concord native, who works as an electronic trader in Boston, felt she could make a difference for those who crave nutrition bars. But without a background in business, she knew it could be a rough road.

“I decided to jump in and start teaching myself,” she says. “I’m figuring out every hurdle and challenge as they come.”

Those first hurdles and challenges happened on October 2018 when she launched her nutrition bar company, f(x) foods. Pronounced “function foods,” Gechijian said the goal is to make nutrition bars that “serve a greater function than just filling you up.”

The Concord-Carlisle 2012 graduate says it was hard to



An f(x) bar and some of the hearty ingredients that go into them

find a good nutrition bar on store shelves that met her requirements. She wanted a bar that was functional, tasty and healthy. She often searched for a bar that would fuel her brain, but those typically came away with an unappealing taste.

“There are tons of bars on the market,” she says, “but no one seems to be satisfied with the current offerings.”

## What’s that name again?

Concord native Sophie Gechijian is an admitted math nerd.

So when it came to time to name her nutrition bar business, she used that math background she honed as a student at Northeastern University.

“It’s a calculus term,” she says of f(x), which is pronounced “function foods.” “I was thinking about a name I wanted ... the whole purpose was to have a snack with a better function than just filling you up. The math nerd in me wanted to spell it in the calculus way. I learned a lot of people don’t think that way.”

The explanation of the company name can be found on the nutrition bar packages.

Gechijian began making her bars in 2018 in her parents’ kitchen. During nights and weekends, she researched and experimented with ingredients, bringing in samples of her granola bar recipes to work for her coworkers to critique each day.

From there, she rented commercial kitchen space and now outsources production, which allows her to scale and grow her distribution.

Despite continuing to work her 8-to-5 finance job, she’s able to put in 25-30 hours for f(x) foods, which has allowed her to expand the business.

Her first product was Brain Food. She says it’s a soft and chewy bar made with just 11 ingredients known to fuel your brain properly. The main ingredients include almonds, dark chocolate and coconut.



Sophie Gechijian

Her second product is Heart Food, which is similarly made with only cardiac-friendly ingredients.

Her ultimate goal, she says, is to create a national brand and disrupt the nutrition bar industry.

“I am selling in over 20 places around Boston in companies, fitness studios, coffee shops, boutique markets and online,” she says. “It doesn’t feel like work because it’s so much fun to build my own company.”

To learn more about f(x) foods, visit <https://fx-foods.com/>.

## Akçam, Honored By Knights And Daughters of Vartan

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Dr. Ümit Kurt, another student of Akçam at Clark, thrilled the audience by speaking in Armenian. Kurt acknowledged Akçam’s personal guidance and help from the very start of his doctoral career. He stressed Akçam’s personal warmth, morality and humanitarian nature. His pleasant nature and encouragement made Kurt want to work all the harder.

Dr. Mary Papazian, president of San Jose State University, California, was the keynote speaker. She said that it was not a foregone conclusion for someone like Akçam to come to the place he is at today. His sense of justice led him, when young, to work for the Kurds in Turkey,



Dr. Mary Papazian (Vartan Esenyan photo)

The encouragement of Vahagn Dadrian played a key role in Akçam’s academic development, Papazian said, and also led to Papazian and her husband Dennis hosting him during his first weeks in Detroit.

Papazian explained, “The wonderful thing about Taner, as I said, is that it never was about him. It was never about the accolades. Taner would actually be more comfortable going through life without the accolades we are giving him. He is a truly humble man who is doing the work because it is the right work to do, because the story has to be told, because truth still is the foundation for building a just and honest society....It is our obligation as a community to say thank you, but it is not a thanks that he is seeking.”

Papazian concluded that Akçam’s work can eventually bring harmony and peace to the current Republic of Armenia, when Turkey accepts the truth concerning the Armenian Genocide and no longer fear Armenians.

### Akçam Gives Thanks, Calls for Creation of Research Center

Akçam took the podium to thank all those who organized the banquet, starting with Hirant Gulian. He said that ironically the celebration of his work that night was a byproduct of the Turkish government’s longstanding policy of denial. Furthermore, the silence of the majority of the Turkish people makes his voice in contrast strong, he said. He continued, emphasizing that he longs for the day that truth-telling is no longer anything out of the ordinary.

Akçam said the simple answer to why he does what he does was his father, who said that if you see injustice, don’t ignore it—you must be the first one to speak out. His father also would say that if you are not willing to pay the price for what you have written, don’t write it.

Akçam said that he was arrested five times as an activist for social justice in Turkey and experienced torture. When he began to research the Armenian Genocide, he received death threats, was subjected to physical attacks, and even in the US had to deliver lectures under police guard as the inevitable price for standing up for his beliefs, as his father taught him. He said that it was thanks to the help of many, many



Taner Akçam

people along the way that he was able to stand before the audience this night.

The first person Akçam mentioned was Professor Vahagn Dadrian. He then noted Dennis and Mary Papazian, Fatma Müge Göçek, Greg Sarkissian, Stephen Feinstein, Eric Weitz, his colleagues at Clark University and the creators of the chair he holds now. The support and love of the Armenian community have energized him, he said, over the years, along with numerous friends in Turkey whose names he could not mention for the sake of their safety. Akçam continued to name many Armenian individuals and organizations whose support were important for him.

He highlighted the name of Hrant Dink, who wanted to live in Turkey as a fully equal citizen of Armenian background together with Muslim Turks. Dink wanted the truth of the Armenian Genocide acknowledged and some measure of justice achieved, Akçam said, so that a shared future could be created for Armenians like him

in Turkey. Dink was murdered because he was an Armenian and because he spoke the truth, Akçam said.

The denial policy of over a century must be eliminated, Akçam exclaimed. As an academic, his duty is to wage a “war of enlightenment” against this by advancing existing and creating new institutions. There is a huge denialist industry operated by the Turkish government which exploits universities. The side of truth is badly underfunded.

An Armenian Genocide research center is badly needed for the truth to prevail, Akçam said. There are many Armenian history chairs, Clark has a great program, but there is not even one Armenian Genocide research institute in North America in an American university. In comparison, roughly 250 Holocaust programs and institutions exist.

While denialism can not only be defeated academically and it must be politically defeated, Akçam said, the power of knowledge is critical too. The creation of a research center is the necessary next step in this process, he concluded.

### Award and Conclusion

Grand Commander of the Knights of Vartan Steven R. Adams and Vice Commander Hopyazian presented Akçam with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) gave the closing remarks and benediction. He thanked the Knights and Daughters of Vartan for their leadership in the Armenian Church, and stated that Akçam’s award was a very well-deserved distinction, not only on the basis of his scholarship but because all his work has been in service to the truth. He said that, “We also know that it is his fearless commitment to the truth that sets him apart from others.”

Findikyan concluded: “Seeing such an individual gives us hope that the larger problems of history confronting us and confronting all people can be approached indeed in a spirit of truth and generosity, and that those larger problems can ultimately be resolved. Professor Akçam, the Armenian people will always honor your dedication and conviction and we will always cherish your warm spirit of friendship.”

and for true democracy. This led to prison, and his famous escape to Europe, where he continued his education. He chose to do serious academic work to bring the truth out in the open. As always, he wanted to bring about a better Turkey.





COMMUNITY NEWS

# NAASR Unveils New Headquarters

OPENING, frompage 1

for people to come in and use the building for study purposes.

Of course, the building will host the Mardigian Library, one of the top five Armenian libraries open to the public in the diaspora, with 40,000 books and rare periodicals dating to the 1800s, as well as unique personal archives of prominent scholars, early Armenian-Americans, and religious leaders, including Father Krikor Guerguerian's archive of rare Ottoman documents.

These books and documents will not be allowed out of the building but can be accessed by scholars on site.

The building also features a modern auditorium seating 155.

As the wind was picking up and the sun was setting, Gregorian spoke briefly, joking that he did not want to be responsible for the assembled catching pneumonia. He praised Ed and Pamela Avedisian, who had provided the majority funds for the new building and asked that it be named for Gregorian. He said he



Yervant Chekijian speaks at the opening.

had just come back from Armenia, where he had visited the school the Avedisians are supporting for grades 4-12, in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Yerevan. All expenses are paid for the students and in turn, those students are excelling.

"Ed and Pam are my heroes," he said.



Nancy Kolligian unveils a memorial dedicated to NAASR founder Manoong Young

He praised other "heroes," Carolyn Mugar of the Armenia Tree Project and his fellow Aurora Prize founders, Noubar Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan and their UWC Dilijan College, which is for grades 11 and 12, and has students from 80 countries.

He encouraged greater investment in Armenia. "We have invested all over the world except Armenia," he said.

Gregorian noted it was especially appropriate that in the 400



Michael Aram surrounded by his family, including husband Aret Tikiryan and their two children, Anabel and Thadeus, and Aram's parents, Anita and John Wolohojian. They are joined by NAASR's Ani Babaian.



Dr. Vartan Gregorian

years since Armenians have been in the US, they are now fully establishing themselves and becoming truly part of the fabric of the greater community.

(A full interview with Vartan Gregorian will appear in next week's issue.)

Designer and sculptor Michael Aram spoke next, explaining the meaning behind his intricate statue placed outside the new building. He added that he used the "idea of eternity and how it related to NAASR's mission."

Aram said that he used the traditional Armenian *Arevkhach* eternity design, along with laurel leaves, peacocks and circles in the sculpture, in the center of which is a round box that serves as a "personal time capsule," with loving notes to and from his children. "It is my realization that love is eternal," he concluded.

Several members of the clergy offered prayers before the ribbon-cutting ceremony with Jack Medzorian and Van Aroyan, the oldest members of the NAASR board, as well as the children and nieces and nephews of Gregorian and Aram.

Several guides offered tours of the building. The three-story building has many long windows offering natural light as well as glass walls. In addition, a room will feature the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Archives, which include testimonies of Armenian Genocide survivors.

According to Ignatius, the rare books will move to the building on November 18 and the staff will be fully moved in by the end of November. Since the demolition of the previous building, NAASR staff have used the Watertown offices of the AGBU.

"I have looked at architectural renderings for two years but to actually see it come to life was overwhelming. I was ecstatic. It is almost unreal," Ignatius said after the event.

A light reception was held with food from anoush'ella.

**ALL PHOTOS BY JIRAIR HOVSEPIAN**



NAASR Executive Director Sarah Ignatius



Ed and Pamela Avedisian



The Michael Aram sculpture outside the new building



From left, David Ignatius, and his father, Paul Ignatius, with Anthony Barsamian and Armenia's Ambassador to the US Varuzhan Nersesyan





COMMUNITY NEWS

# ARMENIAN HERITAGE CRUISE® 2020

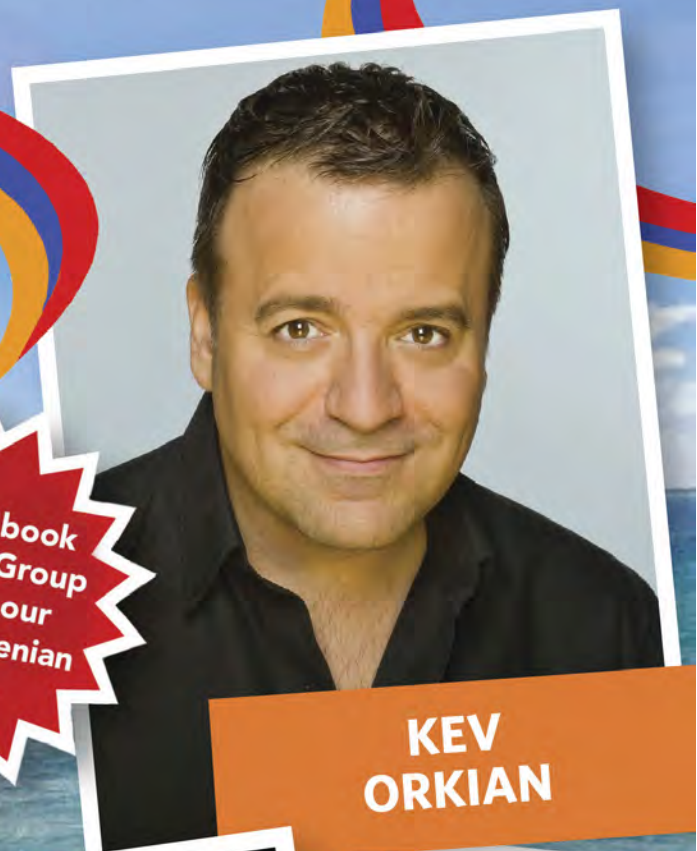
January 12-19, 2020

▪ MIAMI ▪ JAMAICA ▪ LABADEE ▪ COZUMEL

Royal Caribbean's Oasis of the Seas

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

You must book with TravelGroup to attend our private Armenian events.



**KEV ORKIAN**

**SAYAT NOVA DANCE COMPANY**



**ARABO ISPIRYAN**



**NERSIK ISPIRYAN**



**SARINA CROSS**

CABIN OPTIONS	RATES*
INSIDE CABIN	\$1,069
CENTRAL PARK VIEW	\$1,169
OCEAN VIEW	\$1,279
CENTRAL PARK BALCONY	\$1,399
BOARDWALK BALCONY	\$1,399
OCEAN VIEW BALCONY	\$1,539
JUNIOR SUITES	\$2,329
GRAND SUITES	\$3,419

**Rates are per person for double occupancy cabins:**  
 Limited additional luxury suites available upon request. For pricing on triple and quad occupancy cabins, contact TravelGroup. Prices include Cruise, Port Charges and all AHC private events. Government tax of \$127.62 per person is additional. Rates and Information subject to change at any time without notice.



**For Reservations and Information Contact:**  
 TravelGroup International  
 Local: 561-447-0750  
 Toll Free: 1-866-447-0750 Ext 108 or 102  
 AHC@travelgroupint.com  
 125 SE Mizner Blvd, Suite 14, Boca Raton, FL 33432

**JOIN US...**

**Dance Ensemble**

**Best Comedian**

**International Singers**

**Late Night Dance Parties**

**Cultural Lectures**

**CME Medical Program**

**Tavlou Tournament**

Medical Professionals are invited to register for our "Challenges in Global Health" program offering 15.0 ACCME, CDE & CPE credits





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# AMAA 100th Annual Meeting Banquet Inspires, Impresses

By Florence Avakian

WALTHAM, Mass. — The 100th anniversary of any gathering is impressive; the weekend of October 18 to 20 the Armenian Missionary Association of America's (AMAA) 100th Annual Meeting Banquet was especially noteworthy as it celebrated the Armenian Evangelical Church and the 173rd anniversary of its founding.

Its significance was marked by the presence of hundreds of members, friends and faithful who came from as far away as Australia, Armenia, Lebanon, Syria, Greece, France, and the East and West Coasts of the United States.

The highlight of the extraordinary weekend was the grand Banquet on Saturday night, October 19, which began with a cocktail reception, followed by a delicious dinner in the elegantly decorated ballroom.

The more than 300 guests present were warmly welcomed by Banquet Co-Chair Michèle Simourian both in English and Armenian. Skillfully running the program was Master of Ceremonies and Banquet Co-Chair John Simourian, who with the right touches introduced the prominent individuals present, including Armenia's Ambassador to the US Varuzhan Nersesyan, and Rev. Antranig Baljian, representing the Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian.

Following the singing of the National anthems, and the invocation delivered by Rev.



Vicken V Cholakian

Banquet Co-Chairs John and Michèle Simourian

He pointed out the enormous contributions of the AMAA in the last 100 years, including during the devastating 1988 earthquake, during and after the birth of the independent Armenian republic, the time of Artsakh's fight for liberation, and its creation for a better future providing shelter, food and education in 24 countries.

"And during the recent tragic war in Syria, the AMAA has been ready to support any Armenians willing to settle in Armenia in the aftermath of Turkey's recent attack on the north of Syria," he explained.

All these activities demonstrate that the AMAA is a "unique and deeply national Armenian institution," the Armenian diplomat stated. "With such a great heritage, and rigorous determination, the AMAA will continue confidently in its mission in the 21st century," he stated to thunderous applause.

### Serving 24 Countries

AMAA President Dr. Nazareth Darakjian who spoke about coming to the US 43 years ago following "the horrors of the Lebanese civil war," expanded on the AMAA's powerful history which today serves the Armenian Community in 24 countries with a yearly budget of more than \$10 million.

This generation has capabilities that far exceeds those in 1918, he stated. "Our work is not done as long as there is hunger for God's work, as long as there are children who are thirsty for education, and as long as there are families or individuals for whom finding daily bread is a daily challenge. May God make us worthy of this mission."

A video of the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian High School in Yerevan's Malatia-Sebastia district was shown, a school totally funded by the AMAA that has been tuition-free for more than 580 students.

One of the graduates of the Avedisian High School, Lucine Mnatsakanyan, was invited by Dr. Darakjian to come forward, and accept the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certificate and the glass plaque for the Avedisian High School in honor of the Avedisians who were not present. Avedisian High School is the first building in the Republic of Armenia to achieve this status and was also awarded the LEED Earth Designation, given only to the very first building project in each developing country to satisfy the USGBC LEED criteria.

Mnatsakanyan, who is now a third-year student at the American University of Armenia, paid tribute to the great attributes of the Avedisian High School, saying, "We are raised

to be true Christians, and citizens, and have been exposed to all the studies of an exemplary education."

Delighting the audience, two acclaimed world class musicians, tenor Yeghishe Manucharyan, and mezzo soprano Victoria Avetisyan, who had started the banquet program with the American and Armenian anthems, sang several Armenian and international favorites, including the soul stirring *Pari Arakil*, *Habanera*, *Solo Mio* and *Hayastan*.

Manucharyan who has sung at the Metropolitan Opera, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and other concert halls in the US, Italy and Ireland, brought the house down with his rendition of *Pari Arakil* dedicated to Armenia's symbolic beloved bird (the crane). The couple's dramatic singing of *Hayastan* was another crowd pleaser.

AMAA Vice President Dr. Michael Voskian paid tribute to the history of the Armenian Evangelical Church which he revealed has grown and consists of 124 churches and five unions in Armenia, North America, the Near East, France and Eurasia.

Representing the Armenian Evangelical Churches around the globe is the Armenian Evangelical World Council, with its President Rev. Joël Mikaélian who was asked to come forward by Dr. Voskian.

Also honored were Rev. Dr. Avedis Boynerian, host of the Armenian Memorial Church, as well as Rev. Stephen Carlyle of the first Armenian Evangelical Church in North America established on January 1, 1892 the Armenian Church of the Martyrs in Worcester. All were presented with special plaques.

### True Faith

During the joyous evening, a female guest suddenly passed out, and was immediately attended to by attending doctors until the ambulance came. As this was happening, several small groups of *badvelis* (pastors) spontaneously rose making small circles with their arms on each other's shoulders, bending their heads, and silently praying for the ill woman.

Expressing deep appreciation to the "inge-

nious and hard-working" banquet committee, the AMAA staff and all involved individuals for the successful weekend and Banquet, AMAA Executive Director and CEO Zaven Khanjian asked Stephen Papazian, the moderator of the Armenian Church of the Martyrs of Worcester, to come forward to receive a "Sugar Sculpture" donated by Linda Khachadurian.

Revealing the main challenge of his position, Zaven Khanjian stated "a challenge that I strug-



AMAA Vice President Dr. Michael Voskian paid tribute to the history of the Armenian Evangelical Church:

gle with is the difficulty in conveying a well-deserved gratitude to righteous men and women who fly on the wings of goodness in life, and who instead, faithfully direct it to God."

Khanjian also announced that a symposium will soon take place in Armenia on the post-Genocide endeavor to save the remnants of the survivors. It is being organized by the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute Foundation, and is sponsored by the Armenian Missionary Association of America.

"It will honor and bring to light the many heroes who miraculously embraced the orphaned Armenian children and widowed mothers with shelter, healing, food, education and lovingly shielded them from the killing fields of Der El-Zor," he said.

He remembered that today anguished civilians in the towns and villages in Syria, deportation is once again taking place, leaving behind all they possess. "But the clear victims are the Syrian people, including the progeny of the Genocide survivors.

"The AMAA has faced the spiritual and humanitarian challenges of our people, and we have collectively and positively answered the call, and through your righteous giving will continue to make it happen," he said in conclusion to a standing ovation.

The closing prayer and Benediction by Mikaélian, and the singing of *God Bless America* brought an extraordinary and inspiring banquet and weekend to a close.



Armenia's Ambassador to the US Varuzhan Nersesyan

Dr. Avedis Boynerian, Pastor of the Armenian Memorial Church in Worcester, MA, Ambassador Nersesyan was introduced.

Nersesyan recalled the founding of the AMAA in Worcester 101 years ago following the Armenian Genocide when "hundreds of thousands of Armenian men, women and children were still roaming in the deserts in Syria, Lebanon and the Middle East, suffering from hunger, poverty and the lack of any minimal conditions of life."



Avedisian High School Alumna Lucine Mnatsakanyan and AMAA President Dr. Nazareth Darakjian



AMAA Executive Director/CEO presents Stephen Papazian, the Moderator of the Armenian Church of the Martyrs of Worcester, with Linda Khachadurian's "Sugar Sculpture"





# Arts & Living

## Celebrating Armenian Church Music And Musicians

*Eastern Diocese Holds Sacred Music Festival*

By Gevik Anbarchian

EVANSTON, ILL. — Armenian Church musicians from throughout the United States gathered at St. James of Nisibis Armenian Church here on October 4-6, for an innovative weekend of lectures, workshops and performances of the Armenian Church's sacred music. The event was organized by the Sacred Music Council of the Eastern Diocese with the blessing of Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate.

"Our goal is to revive the tradition of magnificent, faith-inspiring Armenian sacred music within our parishes," the Bishop said at the outset of his own presentation on Saturday morning. "I'd like to see the festival become a regular part of our church calendar, being held several times a year both regionally and nationally throughout the Diocese."

Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan, pastor of St. James and Chair of the Sacred Music Council, spearheaded the organization of the weekend together with a small committee led by Deacon Larry and Wendy Farsakian, with the eager participation of a number of his parishioners.

"Father Hovhan, himself a musician by training, immediately understood my goals for the



Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan leading instrumental workshop.

weekend and took up the initiative with great enthusiasm," Findikyan explained.

"This weekend demonstrates how much our diocese can do if we bring together our wealth of talent," Khoja-Eynatyan said.

The Festival began Friday evening with a reception for parish choir directors and clergy hosted by the Primate, followed by Vespers and dinner. After dinner, the weekend got off to a joyous start with a prelude performance by St. James' Narek Bell Choir, an ensemble that Khoja-Eynatyan formed last year as a way for the children of his parish to better connect with the Church.

Deacon Rubik Mailian, music director of St. John Armenian Church in Southfield, Mich., presented a keynote lecture-recital entitled, "Gomidas Vartabed at 150 Years: His Contribution to Armenian Sacred Music." This year marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Gomidas Vartabed (1869-1935), a celibate priest and ethnomusicologist who traveled the Armenian countryside recording and notating the myriad of folk songs that had been passed down orally for centuries. As a clergyman, he also transcribed many *sharagans* (hymns), and composed several versions of the Armenian see WORKSHOP, page 16



Vatche Ghanimian and Mariette Soudjian

## A Groom for Our Times

LOS ANGELES — A revolving door of humorously offbeat yet lifelike characters charmed their way into audience's hearts during the most recent production of "Where Is Your Groom?" II which was staged for the greater Los Angeles community on Sunday, October 6, marking a six-year run gracing stages from its debut at The Players Theatre in New York City's Greenwich Village all the way to the landmark Alex Theatre.

Similar to the previous 15 sold-out performances in different cities across North America, this production entertained the packed audience while tackling a contemporary subject relevant to the Diaspora. Focusing on the themes of Armenian social norms and the potentially thorny issues of assimilation and mixed marriages, the comedy that's written, directed and produced by Taleen Babayan, encouraged dialogue for a community at a crossroads through endless humor and hijinks.

"Every ethnicity and age can find laughter and fulfillment in this play's professional production and story, even my young niece and nephew who are still talking about it," said audience member Dr. Sharis Simonian. "The play was completely transgenerational, impacting my parents who are immigrants, as well as my husband, a third-generation Armenian-American, whose family members immigrated before and during the genocide."



(l-r) Taleen Babayan, Vartan Nazerian and Nora Nazerian

"I'm happy to see original Armenian theater continuing in the Diaspora, especially in the United States," said Soghomonian, an actor, musician and comedian who played the family patriarch. "It's important to be forward-thinking in Armenian theater so our voices are heard during critical times."

By bringing the community together through a multitude of audience members and the 22 cast and crew from all backgrounds and ages, a symbiotic relationship was created by artistic members that centered around the core purpose of preserving a cultural heritage in the modern world.

"I was lucky to have creative freedom with the character Taleen wrote and she ultimately gave me something that doesn't come along that often," said actor and comedian Haig Hovnanian, who played the role of the Armenian-American priest. "Being able to work with such an amazing cast and crew who brought their talents to life was truly wonderful to be around."

Echoing his sentiments, actress and make-up artist Helen Kalognomos, who see GROOM, page 14

## BOOKS

### Art and Artifice In Armenian Manuscript Illustration

By Arthur Hagopian

JERUSALEM — The advent of Christianity and its adoption as a state religion by Armenia provided an unparalleled opportunity for the resurgence of artistic fervor among the newly converted, resulting in the creation of some of the country's most elaborate works of art, particularly in the domain of miniature illustration.

The artists set about their joyous task with abandon, evident in the masterpieces that they have bequeathed to us down the ages, their brushes delving not only into the pages of the gospels, but probing into the non-biblical domain, including the apocryphal, as well.

Scholars of various nations have pored over the rich legacy, but the quest is far from over, as a leading scholar, the late Dr. Nira Stone, points out in a newly released volume, *Studies in Armenian Art*, published by Brill, Leiden, the Netherlands, embodying "collected papers" written earlier.

The 262-page hardcover book, which is edited by Nira's husband, leading Armenologist

#### Studies in Armenian Art Collected Papers

NIRA STONE

Edited by

MICHAEL E. STONE AND ASYA BEREZNYAK



Michael Stone and medievalist Asya Bereznyak, is lavishly peopled with reproductions of manuscript pages and paintings, a large number in full color, but a few unfortunately bereft of their original splendor.

A detailed index helps facilitate one's search, and an exhaustive bibliography points the way to further study.

"The essays here display the great range of her interests and expertise. In them she presents new discoveries and sheds new light on neglected artistic traditions," remarks Christina Maranci, professor of art history, Tufts University.

"Her studies demonstrate a keen eye for divergences from iconographic convention and their potential relation to nonbiblical textual traditions," he adds.

Stone's work has opened up and illumined a very broad field of research, a field in which her untiring efforts have established firm foundations, in the words of Armenian art historian Anna Leyloyan-Yekmalyan. She is fascinated by one particular manuscript, from Kaffa in the Crimea, called "Desert Fathers of Egypt," and not only because it is the only copy among see MANUSCRIPTS, page 15





ARTS & LIVING



The cast of "Where Is Your Groom?"

# A Groom for Our Times

GROOM, from page 13 portrayed the wise and au-courant grandmother, noted she had a "great time performing with our wonderful cast and hope more people have the opportunity to see the play."

This show marked the third performance in California this year, following productions in Pasadena and Fresno, where the story of an Armenian family in America, determined to preserve their ethnic heritage, unfolded. A slew of humorous characters, from the eccentric future

in-laws to the hapless ex-boyfriend to the zany priest partake in the themes of immigration and cultural assimilation through satire.

"I'm grateful to have grown up in a viable Diaspora where I was exposed to Armenian theater productions," said Babayan. "This play not only merges the experience of both American and Armenian theater, it also gave us a chance to learn about different Diasporan communities by taking the production on the road while leaving our own imprint on the genre."

The clever and spirited production reveals substantial layers throughout its nearly two-hour performance that brings to light questions about the ethnic experience in America from all standpoints. Through the stellar cast

Chris Kioudjian, Harven Danielian, Liza Iskenderian, Aleen Khanjian, Asdghig Abadjian, Aleen Vartkessian, Arees Setrak, Hratch Mkhjian, Hannah Pollock and Arevig Abadjian, a congeniality and chemistry was conveyed through the script that reflects the prevalent times while honoring the past.

"Taleen is one of the few, if not the only young Armenian-American writer, director and producer of our times," said Vartan Nazerian,



(l-r) Mado Iskenderian, Helen Kalognomos, Harout Soghomonian



(l-r) Harout Soghomonian, Alina Simonian, Sharis Simonian, Andre Simonian and Arpi Simonian

and crew, featuring Harout Soghomonian, Maro Ajemian, Mariette Soudjian, Helen Kalognomos, Mary Basmadjian, Mardik Iskenderian, Vatche Ghanimian, Henry Abadjian, Haig Hovnanian, Joseph Hovsepien,

President of the Nazerian Group, a supporting sponsor of the production. "Her dedication to the Armenian family and cultural life are unique and unparalleled. We look forward to more of her productions."



(l-r) Maro Ajemian, Chris Kioudjian, Harout Soghomonian



A scene from Where Is Your Groom (l-r): Maro Ajemian, Mado Iskenderian, Harout Soghomonian, Mariette Soudjian, Joseph Hovsepien, Mary Basmadjian & Vatche Ghanimian





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Art and Artifice in Armenian Manuscript Illustration

MANUSCRIPTS, from page 13

several others known to us to be illustrated, with over 500 small paintings by the monk and artist Thaddeus Avramenc of the fifteenth century.

The rich and artistic illuminations are highly original and creative, a fact that, however, poses problems for scholars, according to her.

"The originality of the illuminations in the 1430 manuscript enhances its intrinsic value while at the same time creating those problems that generally accompany such uniqueness," Stone notes.

"We often feel some discomfort where we are suddenly confronted by an artistic work that does not belong, at first glance, to any readily recognizable school, style, atelier or other category."

This warrants further study, she urges.

Although gold remains the paramount medium of pictorial illumination, the incomparable Desert Fathers is noted for the conspicuous use of white in the pictorial style, a reflection

perhaps of the symbolic importance of the color "in the context of monastic spirituality."

The manuscript was written at a time of divergent political upheavals and instability. The medium of spotless and pure representation in white is perhaps meant to reflect a poignant quest for salvation in those troubled times.

The data Stone collected from apocryphal texts has allowed her to propose a new approach in the study of illustration and iconographic reading of gospel or other biblical images that are enriched with new elements, Leyloyan-Yekmalyan observes.

"Through the light cast by apocryphal texts, she was able to show the legitimacy and deeper symbolic meaning of unusual figures and other elements that previously had been misunderstood or simply ignored," she adds.

In her lifelong quest, Stone has had occasion to visit the sites of many of the mosaics uncovered in the Holy Land, and her analysis of these sites, particularly Shellal, near Gaza, come at a

particularly opportune time with the recent announcement of the discovery of a 1,500-year-old Byzantine church near Jerusalem containing what Antiquities Authority sources describe as "some stunning" mosaics.

She notes that significantly, animals portrayed in the mosaics she has studied, like the one in Musrara outside the walls of the Old City, are illustrated in a most naturalistic way.

(One exception is the 6th Century medallion close to the Musrara site, crafted by Yevsdat or Eustathius the priest, which did not contain any human or animal illustrations, but rows of text, perfectly preserved).

Stone dwells at length on the relationship between text and illustration. Some illustrations, such as those in various sorts of Psalters, are tied to the text that stands at their side and in fact themselves form part of that text.

Sometimes the illustration are taken out the text itself and set in the margin. In one especially powerful rendering of Jonah and the whale in the royal manuscript called King

Hetoum II's Lectionary copied in 1286, the great fish is shown vomiting its victim with such force that it is expelled outside the frame encompassing the sea, and encroaching onto the colophon, clear out of the text, as pioneer Armenian art historian Sirarpie der Nersessian points out in her definitive work, "Armenian Art." The frame that was a barrier was broken in order to create a sense of movement and drama.

Some of the paintings in the manuscripts are also characterized by simplicity both of style and iconography.

"In spite of the wealth of color there is no attempt at naturalism, even a stylized naturalism. There is no attempt to convey depth or perception although this is typical of Armenian manuscript painting from earlier periods," she writes.

But the simplicity of execution and style contrast with the richness of these paintings.

The Desert Fathers' paintings reveal both eastern and western influence, as seen in the faces of the figures which are elongated, the hair fair and sometimes even the eyes light.

Stone's discoveries, revelations and insights have enriched our knowledge, appreciation and connection with the national treasures of the Armenian people, an accomplishment rare in scholarship.

Her passing is an incalculable loss for Armenology, but her name and efforts remain enshrined in Armenian culture as a witness of that people's unique, creative identity. And Armenian scholarship is comforted by the thought that her husband, Michael Stone, will be there to continue the work.

## Recipe Corner

Guest Recipe



by Christine Vartanian Datian

### Vezirian Family's Yalanchi Recipe



When it comes to making stuffed grape leaves ("yalanchi"), most Armenian families have their own unique recipes. Robyn Kalajian at thearmeniankitchen.com reports that Vivian Vezirian-Hovsepian, a cousin from the 'Dikranagerdsi' side of her family, was happy to share her family's recipe that was handed down to her by her beloved mother, Victoria Vezirian. Robyn adds that Vivian thinks this recipe originally came from her maternal grandmother, Gadar Najarian, who was from Dikranagerd.

Vivian prepares fresh grape leaves in the following manner: She picks them when they're young and tender, parboils the leaves until they change color, drains and cools them, then takes a bunch, stacks and rolls them, squeezing out excess water. She then puts the stacks of leaves in zip lock freezer bags. She says they store indefinitely. She always dates the year the leaves are picked and uses the older batches first. When ready to prepare grape leaves, Vivian puts the frozen leaves in cold water until thawed; drains excess liquid and lets the rolling begin.

The late Victoria Vezirian and her daughter, Vivian Vezirian-Hovsepian.

#### INGREDIENTS

3 lbs. finely chopped onions  
2 cups olive oil  
1 1/2 cups rice (Carolina rice is the best to use in this recipe, Vivian suggests)  
1 can tomato paste (12 oz.)  
Juice of 3 lemons, to taste  
1-2 tablespoons paprika  
1 tablespoon allspice  
3/4 cup pine nuts, to taste  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
Few dashes cayenne pepper  
1/2 large bunch parsley, finely chopped  
80-100 fresh grape leaves (jarred grape leaves may be used if fresh are unavailable)

#### PREPARATION

In a large pot, sauté onions and rice in olive oil over medium heat until onions are translucent, for 25-30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add more oil or lower heat if mixture sticks or appears like it is burning. When onions are limp, add remaining ingredients except the grape leaves, stir, and cook for another 10 minutes.

Remove pot from stove, stir, and cool ingredients completely, about 20-25 minutes. (Drain any oil from pot into a bowl for later use.)

Remove stems. Lay one grape leaf on a flat work surface, shiny side down. Place two teaspoons of filling at the stem-end of the leaf, depending on the size of the leaf. Spread filling about three-quarters across the width of the leaf. Start rolling the leaf from the stem end away from you, then fold each side of the leaf over the filling and continue to roll away from you. Fold leaf firmly, but not too tightly, so leaf will not unravel during cooking.

Line torn or leftover grape leaves on the bottom of a baking pan or large pot to buffer grape leaves from direct heat of the oven or stovetop. Arrange grape leaves not more than three layers deep. Drizzle grape leaves with any drained oil from pot. Add warm water to fill baking pan or pot about 3/4 full.

Cook on top of the stove on medium heat or bake in a preheated 350-degree oven for about one hour, until most of the liquid is absorbed. Check if rice is fully cooked, and remove from oven to cool completely.

Refrigerate entire baking pan or pot overnight for best results. Serve grape leaves at room temperature with fresh lemon wedges. Drizzle with olive oil and more lemon juice, if desired.

Yield: Approximately 80-100 grape leaves.

\*Recipe and photos contributed by Vivian Vezirian-Hovsepian and Robyn Kalajian at thearmeniankitchen.com. See an informative how-to-stuff-and-roll grape leaves video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OiNsQyPUJ64>

### Survivors Testimony And 'The Promise' at Ararat-Eskijian Museum

MISSION HILLS, Calif. – The Ararat-Eskijian Museum (AEM) and USC Shoah Foundation are sponsoring a presentation, "The Promise: Contextualized with Testimony," on Sunday, November 10, at 4 p.m. at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum/Sheen Chapel 15105 Mission Hills Rd.

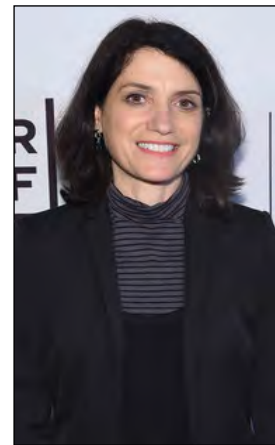
This unique presentation invites the general public to watch key scenes from "The Promise" extended with audiovisual testimony of survivors and witnesses to the Armenian Genocide. Through an interactive guided viewing with Dr. Carla Garapedian and Sedda Antekelian, Education and Outreach Specialist, Armenian Genocide Education at USC Shoah Foundation, attendees will learn about significant details about the production of the film and how testimony extends the historical understanding of the Armenian Genocide beyond the film.

Garapedian is the associate producer and historical consultant of "The Promise," 2016. Garapedian is an accomplished and renowned filmmaker, award-winning director of the film "Screamers," writer and broadcaster. Garapedian continues to produce film and documentaries, consults on diverse projects and programs and serves as an active advocate and researcher.

Sedda Antekelian is the education and outreach specialist, Armenian Genocide education at USC Shoah Foundation. Antekelian develops testimony-based educational content for educators and students and leads educator training workshops on how to teach with testimony in the classroom. Antekelian has experience in the educational sphere for over eight years.

Free admission and open to the public.

For more information call the Ararat-Eskijian Museum at [Eskijian@ararat-eskijian-museum.com](mailto:Eskijian@ararat-eskijian-museum.com).



Dr. Carla Garapedian





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church Hosts Cultural Program

HAVERTOWN, Penn. — On October 6, Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church of Havertown hosted the Inter-Communal Committee's October cultural program. This year, the Committee invited cellist David Bakamjian and actor Nora Armani to present "Evocations of Armenia," a program co-created by the two for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2008.

During the hour-long performance, voice and cello, in turn



Nora Armani and David Bakamjian

and together, captivated the nearly 100 people in the audience with various examples of Armenian musical and literary heritage. Ancient chants and secular songs were interspersed



Philadelphia area Inter-Communal Committee at Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church, Havertown

with the music of Komitas (in recognition of the 150th anniversary of his birth) and 20th-century composer Alan Hovhanness, whose works challenge the virtuosity of any musician. Bakamjian performed these with sensitivity and skill, giving rich context and beauty to the stories and poetry that Nora Armani shared throughout the program.

Bakamjian is a performer and dedicated teacher based in New York. He has recorded on classical and baroque cello, has performed as soloist and principal for various orchestras and offers chamber music workshops for adult amateurs.

Armani is a published poet, playwright and filmmaker. She divides her time between New York and Paris.

# Eastern Diocese Holds Sacred Music Festival

WORKSHOP, from page 13

Divine Liturgy, the Soorp Badarak ("Holy Sacrifice").

Tragically, on April 24, 1915, Gomidas Vartabed was among the more than 200 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders who were deported by the Turkish authorities from Constantinople to holding centers in Angora (Ankara) in what marked the beginning of the Armenian Genocide. While he escaped execution, Gomidas was afflicted with traumatic neurosis. He was eventually moved to Paris in 1919 and died in a psychiatric clinic in the Paris commune of Villejuif in 1935. His ashes were transferred to Yerevan the following year and buried in the pantheon that was named after him.

The festival continued in earnest on Saturday morning with morning worship followed by Findikyan's keynote address entitled, "When Armenians Sing with the Angels," in which he spoke about the power of the liturgical tradition, with its combination of music, theology and prayerful poetry, to create a sacred space that draws us into communion with God and with one another, "a space where we can perceive the true mystery of God's presence in our midst."

He recalled his experience in Rome as a doctoral student when, "My Catholic Jesuit professors often stated publicly in the classroom that the Armenian Church's liturgical tradition is the most sublime in all of Christendom. For many reasons — antiquity, simplicity, theological sophistication — but in addition because of the beauty and power of our sacred music, our liturgical music. I was usually the only Armenian in the classroom."

The day continued with a variety of simultaneous workshops for vocalists, altar servers, choir members, choir directors and organists. Deacon Rubik presented a fascinating workshop on the aging voice, or what he prefers to describe as "the evolving voice." He detailed what singers can do to maintain their voices in spite of age-related changes in such things as posture, breathing and sound production.

"You shouldn't become disheartened by the natural aging process. Just like the muscles you work out at a gym, the human voice can be maintained by various exercises that become even more vital as a person ages. Nutrition and regular exercise are also key to maintaining your voice."

New York-based Argentinian-Armenian mezzo-soprano Solange Merdian conducted a vocal training and technique workshop for singers

focusing on visualization and technical exercises for key choral skills such as phonation, posture and breath support.

"It's a fantastic initiative to bring our community together through musical education and studying our musical tradition," she observed.

Also participating was the Very Rev. Mamigon Kiledjian, the Diocesan Instructor of Sacred Music. He led a series of workshops and tutorials on the history and role of the organ in the Badarak. He also spoke about techniques to

perform sacred music.

Sevag Derderian, Chair of the Association of Armenian Church Choirs of the Western Diocese (AACCWD), focused on weaving the thread of sacred music into the lives of our youth. The AACCWD has developed an innovative Sunday School music curriculum, that includes a set of instructional videos, to teach our young people the hymns of the Badarak.

Before dinner, attendees rehearsed two key hymns of the Gomidas Badarak, Hayr Mer ("Our

Karinne' Andonian, choir conductor at Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cheltenham, Pennsylvania, found it encouraging "to learn ways to help our choir members grow in their musical and spiritual expression. It's been validating and encouraging to my own expression of the Badarak as a conductor."

For John Paklaian, subdeacon at St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church in Chicago, the festival was a continuation of an endeavor he had begun as a child. "As someone who grew up in the Armenian Church and learned from an early age our liturgical music tradition, I have always sought a better understanding of the interaction between altar servers, choir members and the organist during Badarak. This festival was helpful in raising the level of consciousness of those who serve the Armenian Church through song. We were blessed to have such wonderful presenters!"

Pat Der Matosian-McCoy of the host parish described the experience as, "A wonderful opportunity to work on our singing and learn new vocal techniques. Daniel Srpazan's keynote was particularly instructive and inspiring."

Varya Petrosyan, parent of two Narek Bell Choir performers, sees Khoja-Eynatyan's initiative as a great way to encourage kids to attend church. "Children feel they have a role and a purpose at church, and coming to church becomes more natural. Parents don't have to convince them to attend, especially as they get older."

Khoja-Eynatyan considers the weekend a great success. "Every generation has to do its part to preserve and add to the rich history of music in the Armenian Apostolic Church, and we were blessed that St. James could host the first gathering of this festival."

A number of individuals made contributions to make this first Sacred Music Festival possible: Bishop Daniel (In memory of Diramayr Ursula Findikyan), Haig and Nadine Ariyan (In memory of Levon Ariyan), Melanie Dadourian (In Memory of Haig Dadourian), Der Hovhan and Yn. Narine Khoja-Eynatyan (In Memory of Dn. Socrates Boyajian), Komitas Choir of St. John's Armenian Church (Southfield, MI), Dr. Sam Mikaelian, Hayr Simeon Odabashian (In memory of Diramayr Zabel Odabashian) and the Tatosian Family. The Festival was also supported by the Bishop's Ministries Fund of the Diocese.

(This article is the more detailed version of a piece that ran in the October 19 issue.)



Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan conducting St. James' NAREK Bell Choir.

assist altar servers, the choir and even the celebrant to stay in tune with the organist. He further discussed the role of organ improvisation in the Badarak.

"It was inspirational to be part of this first such festival, especially as it coincides with the one-hundred fiftieth anniversary of Gomitas Vartabed's birth," Kiledjian said.

In other sessions, Khoja-Eynatyan surveyed the numerous digital resources that the Sacred Music Council has recently created, including sharagans with full musical notation and audio recordings, as well as the Giragatsooyts, which provides choir directors and others with all of the musical and liturgical variables for each Sunday of the year. He and his son Alexander, both trained percussionists, later offered a session for instrumentalists, in which they explored how other musical instruments might be used to

Father" (i.e., the Lord's Prayer) and Soorp, Soorp, ("Holy, Holy"), in preparation for Sunday's episcopal Badarak.

The evening concluded with a screening of the documentary, "Singing in Exile," featuring the AKN Armenian Choir of Paris, which is reviving an ancient style of Armenian sacred chant. The screening was followed by a question-and-answer session via Skype from Paris with Aram and Virginia Kerovpyan, co-founders of the AKN Choir, which was organized and moderated by Deacon Kavork Hagopian, choir director and organist at St. James.

Clergy and lay people alike expressed much joy for attending the weekend festival. "I was moved by the enthusiasm of the participants and their eagerness to learn as much as possible," said Fr. Avedis Kalayjian, Pastor of St. Mesrob Armenian Church in Racine, Wisconsin.





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## CALENDAR

## 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 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.hypeointearmenianchurch.org](http://www.hypeointearmenianchurch.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/](http://www.eventbrite.com/d/ma—boston/awwa/) or by contacting Stephanie Ciccolo at [sciccolo@armenain-nursing.com](mailto: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-Sinanian 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 — Saturday, 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](mailto: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 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](http://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](mailto: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 [SNDCNYE2020.eventbrite.com](https://www.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 Scholar in the Ottoman Turkish Army* - Fordham University Armenian Society, Fordham University, 113 West 60th St. N.Y., N.Y. 10023 - Room 602 - 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. For information - [Takoosh@aol.com](mailto:Takoosh@aol.com) Book sales/signing following the presentation. All proceeds from the sale of the books will be donated to St. Neerds Armenian Seminary.

**NOVEMBER 15 — Community forum on "Diaspora Cooperation with the Republic"** Friday, 6 p.m., Fordham University, 113 West 60th St., Room 602. Moderator Harold Takooshian of Fordham University; Allen E. Berber on engineering and science; Dr. Lawrence V. Najarian, medicine and healthcare; Ani Kalayjian, mental health and trauma; Alkesandr V. Gevorkyan, economics, with discussant Lernik Essayei. Hosted by the Fordham Institute. All are welcome. Refreshments served.

**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 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](mailto:info@armenianhistorical-ri.org)

**November 30 — Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church ACYOA Alumni - Providence Chapter - 48th ANNUAL HOLIDAY KEF.** Evagian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson St., Providence. 8:30 PM - 1 AM. Featuring Johnny Berberian, Mal Barsamian, Jay Baronian, Kenny Kalayjian.. Cash Bar, Raffle, Coffee, Dessert — Adults \$25, Students \$20 For reservations contact Rena Megrdichian (401)573-5731, Dorothy Martiesian (401)749-0269 or church office 401-272-7712 [Office@sahmes.org](mailto:Office@sahmes.org) Sponsors & Donations accepted if you cannot attend.

## Mirror-Spectator

*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.*



# Mirror Spectator

Established 1932

An ADL Publication

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Marc Mgrditchian

## SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:

Edmond Y. Azadian

## CONTRIBUTORS:

Florence Avakian, Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian, Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, Philip Ketchian, Kevork Keushkerian, Harut Sassounian, Hagop Vartivarian, Naomi Zeytoonian

## CORRESPONDENTS:

Armenia - Hagop Avedikian  
Boston - Nancy Kalajian  
Los Angeles - Taleen Babayan  
Berlin - Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

## Contributing Photographers:

Jirair Hovsepian

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

## Baikar Association, Inc.

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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

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

Baikar Association, Inc.

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

# Visible and Invisible Factors that Led To House Victory

By Edmond Y. Azadian

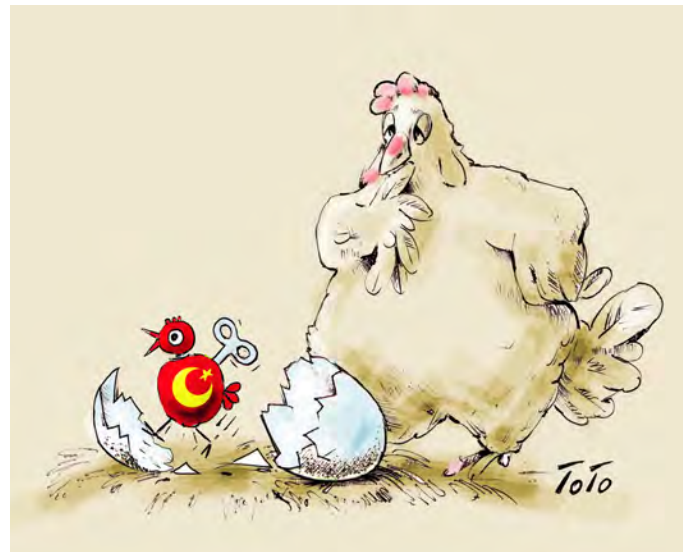
At long last, one branch of the United States government recognized the Armenian Genocide.

Indeed, the House of Representatives adopted HR 296 with an overwhelming number of votes (405-11). For more than 35 agonizing years, the hopes of the Armenians were hanging over the unstable political relations between the US and Turkey. The latter's continuing bullying and threats and the US's hesitation made the passage of the resolution all the more valuable.

The significance of the resolution is enhanced even more because of its inclusive content: it sums up all the previous legislative and commemorative acts, including the United States government's May 28, 1951 to the International Court of Justice, President Reagan's Proclamation 4838, House Joint Resolution 148 of April 8, 1975 and others, as well as the fact that 49 out of 50 states have extended recognition, as have 30 countries and the European Union.

These items expand the political and legal scope of the measure to universal parameters.

It was also very dramatic to watch one representative after another giving testimony and arguing for the passage of the resolution, reverberating the voices of Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, US Consul Leslie Davis (who wrote The Slaughterhouse Province), sometimes with emotional overtones.



Political pundits and the general public have been wondering why the resolution passed now, at this very moment, after dangling for 35 years.

One explanation is that the stars were in proper alignment to yield a positive result. Those stars are certainly the political factors which were almost always at odds to force friends and foes in Congress to confess that "it is not the time to pass the resolution in order not to offend our ally Turkey."

But as Rep. Adam Schiff stated in his testimony, it is always the right time to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

Several times in the past, the votes were lined up and were tantalizingly close to passage but once Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House, delayed the vote. Another time, the White House intervened through President Bill Clinton to Republican Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert; the two were at odds with each other on all issues except when it came to holding a vote on the Armenian Genocide.

Later on, Mr. Hastert's cover was blown to reveal him as a corrupt official on the payroll of the Turkish government.

Samantha Power, President Obama's ambassador to the United Nations, is part of the story. She had endeared herself to the community as a humanitarian, publishing her powerful book, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, on the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust and the Cambodian genocide. That book also propelled her all the way to the White House, despite her run in with another powerful woman, Hillary Clinton.

Ms. Power had convinced the Armenian community through a letter that Barack Obama would recognize the Armenian Genocide if elected, which of course, turned out to be false.

Her opinion piece in the New York Times (October 29, 2019) comes belatedly to absolve her as she writes: "I have written about the Armenian Genocide and argued for recognition, including (unsuccessfully) as a member of the Obama Administration. I have joined Armenian-Americans at numerous commemorative events."

Given the Machiavellian nature of realpolitik, Armenians can

forgive Samantha Power's transgressions, although Rabbi Shmuley Boteach had taken her to task in the *Jerusalem Post* (November 5, 2019) for breaking her pledge.

Many factors contributed to generate such a powerful momentum for the passage of the resolution, some of them obvious, while others are subtler.

Of course, the two Armenian advocacy groups, the Armenian National Committee of America and the Armenian Assembly of America, worked relentlessly to educate the legislators and galvanize their grassroots forces.

But all these factors and organizations were in motion before, yet nothing had resulted. The fact of the matter is that other political developments came to empower the movement and wrench success. One was the deterioration of American-Turkish relations.

Turkey's authoritarian rule at home only cost that country a slap on the wrist; it was President Erdogan's arrogance and challenge to the White House that brought the situation to a head.

Ankara, in its drive to carve a security zone inside Syrian territory, began slaughtering the Kurds, including members of the YPG forces who had valiantly fought alongside US forces in defeating ISIS. That infuriated the American public and President Trump, who resorted to puerile arguments to discount the contributions of the Kurdish forces. He imposed sanctions on Turkey and lifted them within 24 hours. Yet, on the same day as the Armenian Genocide vote, the House concurrently passed another resolution to impose its own sanctions, again with an overwhelming bipartisan support.

We have mentioned that this combination of factors led to the passage of the resolution. However, each factor has a relative potency; we mentioned the deteriorating US-Turkish relations and Turkey's defiance of NATO's leadership in purchasing Russian military hardware.

We have also to factor in the Turkish-Israeli relations. President Erdogan is intoxicated with power. No one can challenge his harsh authoritarian rule at home but his intoxication has blinded him as he has crossed some red lines in his foreign policy.

It may sound ironic, but the fact that the passage of the resolution is indirectly Mr. Erdogan's gift to the Armenians. In order to trace that intricate combination of politics, we have to further delve into Middle Eastern affairs.

First, Israel has punished all authoritarian rulers in the region which have posed existential threats through the US's military muscle – Libya, Iraq, Syria and now Iran is on the radar.

That policy can work also in reverse to reward Israel's friends.

Turkey has challenged Israeli hegemony in the Middle East. It has opposed independence for Kurdistan from Iraq, citing concerns over Iraq's territorial integrity, as if Turkey cared about any nation's territorial integrity. (Cyprus and Syria provide ample evidence to the contrary.)

On the other hand, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was the only head of state to call for Kurdish independence because Israel has set up shop in autonomous Kurdistan, having its intelligence, military and political assets there, close to the Iranian border. And yet, Turkey is worried that an independent Kurdistan will inspire and inflame all Kurds in the region, including the 25 million in Turkey, to fight for independence.

The Kurds in Syria were about to carve out another autonomous enclave in Syria, near the Turkish border. That is why Erdogan took the risk of routing the Kurds from their historic habitat under the guise of creating a safe zone.

As the Kurds were chased out, they were chanting slogans including "Long Live the Kurdistan-Israeli Friendship." That was more than a symbolic gesture.

Therefore, Israel lost another base in Syria.

In the meantime, Turkey has been supporting the Palestinians, Hamas in Gaza, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and Islamists in Libya.

It was also on the wrong side in the standoff between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, siding with the former, while Israel supports the Saudi Kingdom. To top it all, Turkey sent its warship to the Eastern Mediterranean to disrupt oil and gas exploration by a consortium set up by Israel, Egypt, Lebanon and Cyprus. Turkey's claim was based on defending the supposed rights of Northern Cyprus, a country illegally carved out of Cyprus, by invading Turkish forces in 1974. Thus, it is clear that the increasing Turkish-Israeli tensions have been impacting Israel's transatlantic relations.

It is a fact that every time the Genocide resolution was brought to the House floor, Israeli advocacy groups, certainly in

*continued on next page*





## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Genocide Resolution: A Major Victory, But Facts Should not Be Ignored

On October 29, 2019, Armenian Americans scored a major victory in the halls of US Congress. For the first time in 35 years, the US House of Representatives adopted Resolution 296 affirming the facts of the Armenian Genocide.

I used the term affirming because contrary to many Armenian and non-Armenian commentators, this was not the first time that the United States has recognized the Armenian Genocide. In fact, this was the fifth American governmental recognition. As I have reported dozens of times in past years, the United States Government first recognized the Armenian Genocide in 1951 when it sent an official document to the International Court of Justice (World Court) presenting the Armenian Genocide as an example of genocide. The US House of Representatives recognized the Armenian Genocide in two Resolutions adopted in 1975 and 1984, and Pres. Ronald Reagan issued a Presidential Proclamation on April 22, 1981 mentioning the Armenian Genocide.

Among the misrepresentations made by various commentators were statements like:

1. "The October 29, 2019 recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the House of Representatives was the first time in a century that the United States has recognized the Armenian Genocide." It was not! In fact, the text of Resolution 296 itself lists all the previous US recognitions of the Armenian Genocide and describes it as affirmation, not recognition.

2. "Resolution 296 set a policy on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the US government." It did no such thing. This Resolution, like the others before it, is a non-binding Resolution, expressing simply the will of Congress. It is not a law and it has no legal consequences.

3. "Resolution 296 obligates Pres. Trump to use the term genocide in his next April 24 statement." It does not. The President can still use other euphemisms to describe the Armenian Genocide, if he wishes to, as he and other US

Presidents have done since Pres. Reagan.

4. "Resolution 296 will allow Armenians to file lawsuits in US courts against Turkey demanding restitution for damages suffered during the Genocide." This is not true. As mentioned above, two similar Congressional Resolutions were adopted in 1975 and 1984 and neither one helped Armenians win a single lawsuit against Turkey in US courts.

5. "After the passage of Resolution 296, if the US Senate adopts the counterpart Resolution (SRes.150), and if Pres. Trump signs it, then the Resolution becomes a law." This is untrue, since both the House and Senate versions are "stand alone" Resolutions. Should the Senate version also be adopted, the Resolution will not go to Pres. Trump for his signature, since the House and Senate versions were not submitted as a "Joint Resolution."

Nevertheless, none of the above clarifications are made to minimize the value of the adoption of Resolution 296 on October 29, 2019. Here are the reasons why this Resolution was a major victory for the Armenian Cause:

1. After trying to pass a genocide resolution in the House for 35 years, it is a major accomplishment for the Armenian-American community to be able to finally score such a victory. It is not possible to continue demanding that the Armenian public support a cause for decades without a concrete result from time to time. This victory will energize Armenian-Americans to continue their commitment to the Armenian Cause and work harder to attain greater accomplishments.

2. While the passage of Resolution 296 does not obligate the President of the United States, it will increase the pressure on him to properly acknowledge the Armenian Genocide in his April 24 statement.

3. Resolution 296 also makes it more difficult for the Turkish government to continue its denials of the Armenian Genocide.

4. Paradoxically, the harsh reactions of the Turkish leaders to the adoption of Resolution 296 helped remind the Turkish people and others worldwide about the Armenian Genocide.

5. Thousands of articles, TV reports, and social media posts on the adoption of Resolution 296 helped further publicize the Armenian Genocide around the world. Over 100 years after the Genocide, the cry for justice remains alive thanks to the activism of Armenians and their supporters.

6. The passage of Resolution 296 is another step in Armenia's struggle to pressure Turkey and the world community to take further steps to undo the damage caused by the Genocide, albeit delayed over a century!

7. Beyond setting straight the historical record, the effort over the passage of the genocide resolution is a political bat-

tle between the Armenian American community and the Turkish government and its paid lobbyists as to which side has more political clout in Washington. The overwhelming victory (405 to 11 votes) is a clear indication of the smashing defeat of Turkey and the total victory of Armenians.

8. The Turkish government has wasted tens of millions of dollars over the years hiring high-powered American lobbying firms in a failed attempt to block the approval of Armenian Genocide Resolutions by the US Congress. It is impossible to misrepresent genocide as a humane act no matter how many billions of dollars Turkey spends on lobbyists!

9. Turkey's defeat also sends a message to the Turkish public that the taxes they have paid are being squandered by their government to deny the undeniable.

10. Some have made the excuse that Congress took advantage of the souring relations between Turkey and the United States to pass Resolution 296. While this is true, there are several counter-arguments:

a) Congress is a political body; hence all its deliberations and decisions are of a political nature;

b) If it weren't for the diligent efforts of Armenian-American organizations and the Armenian community, there was no guarantee that this Resolution would have appeared on the agenda of the House of Representatives. Since the US Congress was unhappy with Turkey's invasion of Northern Syria, the House of Representatives would have been satisfied by passing a Resolution on October 29, 2019, placing sanctions on Turkey for its barbaric attacks against Kurds. However, because of Armenian activism, the House also adopted on the same day the Resolution on the Armenian Genocide.

c) We cannot be so naive as to expect that any government would defend the Armenian Cause if doing so would have been contrary to its own interests. It is perfectly reasonable that the condemnation of the Armenian Genocide happened to coincide with Congress's anger at Turkey for other reasons. In fact, the more Armenians can find reasons to match their interests with those of other countries, the more successful they will be in their pursuit of the Armenian Cause.

For the next step, I hope the US Senate will shortly pass Senate Resolution 150. This is important, since the US Senate has never adopted a Resolution acknowledging the Armenian Genocide. And maybe next year, the Armenian Genocide Resolution could be reintroduced, but this time as a "Joint Resolution," which would mean that should the Resolution pass both Houses of Congress and the President signs it, the Armenian Genocide would become US law, not just a "non-binding" Resolution. This would obligate all future American Presidents to use the term Armenian Genocide in their April 24 statements or on any other occasion.

## Visible and Invisible Factors that Led to House Victory

from previous page

coordination with their government, were mobilized to stop the momentum. Turkey has never failed to mention that Jews will be safe in Turkey as long as they keep to the government line.

This time around, many Jewish organizations who formerly had opposed the resolution, supported the Armenians. The Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish American Resource Council and other Jewish organizations were publicly supportive of the passage of the bill and indeed advocated for it. It was obvious that the Israeli government had released all the stops. We should recognize and appreciate the fact because that was the most powerful factor which eliminated the hesitation of all the members of the House, even if it was an unintended consequence.

The reaction in Israel was also favorable. The *Times of Israel* states that "two prominent Israeli politicians on both sides of the aisle independently call for Jerusalem to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide after the US House of Representatives overwhelmingly voted to recognize the World War I era crime."

The reference is to Yair Lapid, a longtime supporter of recognition, who says "I will continue to fight for the Israeli recognition of the Armenian Genocide," and former Likud Minister Gideon Sa'ar.

There are statesmen and scholars who genuinely wish to have Israel recognize the Armenian Genocide. But the Israeli government has held the Genocide issue like sword of Damocles over Turkey's head and it brings it to the floor of the Knesset every time it has an interest to extract from Turkey. Therefore the

government will not give away that prize easily because it may come in handy in case of another confrontation.

At the present time, SR 150 sponsored by Senators Robert Menendez and Ted Cruz, has garnered 20 votes in the Senate. With 18 Democrats and 2 Republicans on board, it seems the resolution, at this time, does not enjoy bipartisan support.

Armenians around the world hailed the passage of the House resolution jubilantly. President Armen Sarkissian and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan thanked the US House of Representatives just as the Turkish government predictably reacted angrily.

President Erdogan's communications director Fahrettin Altun stated: "Those who voted for this resolution will be responsible for the deterioration of a critical relationship in a turbulent region."

Turkey's parliament also condemned the resolution while the Foreign Ministry protest had cited another resolution, mistakenly criticizing another resolution about forced abortions. Erdogan himself, talking to his AK party members, stated that "These efforts ... were passed by the House of Representatives, using a negative atmosphere formed against our country among the American public. In a sense, they were being opportunistic." He also shed some doubt on his scheduled forthcoming visit to Washington.

In response to Turkey's reaction, Samantha Power wrote, "When bullies feel their tactics are working, they generally bully more." And in conclusion, she added, "If Mr. Erdogan turns further away from a relationship that has been immensely beneficial for Turkey, in favor of deepening ties with Russia and China, it will not be because the House voted to recognize the Armenian Genocide. It will be because of his own repressive tactics are coming to resemble those of Russian and Chinese leaders. The House vote was overdue. Now the Senate and President Trump should follow suit. The facts of what occurred a century ago demand it."

Let us find out if this time around the stars are aligned, again.

## LETTERS

### When Power Counted for Genocide Recognition

To the Editor,

They say that if you can afford to lose money you're not really gambling. By the same token, if you're not willing to suffer the consequences by telling the truth then you can't call yourself a principled person.

Ambassador John Evans, a career diplomat, paid the ultimate price when he defied U.S. policy by calling the mass murder of 1 1/2 million Armenians by its real name, Genocide, and was then relieved of his position as U.S. ambassador to Armenia which was also the demise of his career. He truly sacrificed for his principles by speaking truth to power.

Samantha Power, one of the most prolific advocates for recognition of the Armenian Genocide, had the opportunity to distinguish herself in the same way in her position as Director of Human Rights in the Obama administration but chose not to use the word genocide declaring that she was afraid she "would cause a diplomatic rupture." The reality is that she might have been fired, a sacrifice she wasn't willing to make in order to keep her promise to our people and hence being considered principled. So too, when Power realized that Barack Obama used her to garner Armenian votes by making the false promise to recognize the Armenian Genocide if elected President and then reneged, she could have publicly invoked the words Armenian Genocide but instead chose to sell out by accepting the position of U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and kept silent. The question is was Power duped as were Armenians or did she knowingly, as Senior Advisor to Obama during his first campaign, promote a false narrative to garner Armenian votes?

Her opinion piece in the *New York Times*, albeit well written, gives a comprehensive background about events regarding genocide recognition, and is a rationalization when she says that she "tried" to get the administration to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide. However, Samantha Power had no problem referring to Hillary Clinton as a "monster" which resulted in her departure from the Obama administration but as a human rights activist stopped short of fulfilling her promise to the Armenian people by using the word genocide. It seems that many of our people give her a pass because we don't have a plethora of non-Armenian advocates championing our cause and unlike other ethnic/religious groups, we'll take what we can get...an example of selective ethics on both our parts. I hope to see the day when principled powerful people on both sides of the aisle are in the majority and considerate it a badge of honor to freely advocate for recognition of the Armenian Genocide just because it's the right thing to do as opposed to recognition being a retaliatory tool either against Turkey or between political parties.

Adrienne Alexanian  
New York, New York





# Charents' Iconic Creation Becomes Accessible in 35 Languages

CHARENTS, from page 1

Charents was merely 23-24 years old when he wrote this great poem. It was dedicated to his first wife Arpenik, who died when she was 27. The creation story behind the poem is unknown, but it was always obvious to everyone that Charents' love for Armenia was above everything else. As only one example of this, Charents volunteered to fight against the Turks

directly from its original Armenian. "The process of finding the translators was quite tough," she admits. "We had to keep the correct format and the word count so the poem sounds right. The translators also had to have a decent knowledge of Armenian literature, history, Charents, and have the spirit of the poem inside themselves."

The task that awaited them seemed to be



Gohar Charents, Tigran Mansourian, Hratch Djerrahian

when he was just 17. He dedicated his whole life to his country and his people, and his writings from prison indicate that he was still thinking about his people at the very last moments of his life. Unfortunately, he did not manage to do everything he planned in his lifetime for his country, yet his legacy is an indelible part of Armenian literature.

His granddaughter, Gohar Charents, started the presentation by telling the story that inspired the creation of the book. It turns out that four years ago, a young Indian tourist entered the house/museum of Charents (where

quite difficult one, but very promising. Gohar told us that the design of the book was as important as its contents. This is precisely why the team that worked on the creation of the book chose Martiros Saryan's paintings that portrayed Charents' "summer sun" and "Nairi maidens," and placed them next to every translation as a visual representation of the passion and beauty of Armenia.

"Yes Im Anoush Hayastani" is undoubtedly considered to be a masterpiece, but how does the Armenian nation perceive and see it? Saryan once expressed his thoughts about the poem by saying,

"Yes Im Anoush Hayastani' is both a prayer and an oath. You can whisper it in your mind or sing it on the streets as a hymn to freedom. And, finally, it is the stamp of affirmation and perpetuation of the Armenian race. Charents is immortal. In order to bring such an opus to the world you have to be at least a semi-god."

Another noted representative of the Armenian nation, the writer William Saroyan said, "I love the sun-savouring words of

'Yes Im Anoush Hayastani' ... to this day I consider it the most beautiful song about our country, our soil, and our history, a prayer close to *Hayr Mer* [Our Lord].

Participating at the event with a very similar idea about "Yes Im Anoush Hayastani," the sponsor of the book, Hratch Djerrahian, spoke about the role he foresaw for it.

"First of all, we are all aware that this book is more than a reference point of greatness. It is like a prayer book for us," he declared. He asked the audience if they agreed, and the answer of the crowd became obvious through their cheers.

Djerrahian continued: "In reality, we all must have this book in our households as a prayer book. But we also have to believe that this greatness is not only for Armenians, but everyone else in the world. So how can this happen? Once, we had a meeting and a discussion with some of our friends, Khachik Vardanyan, a close friend, and Gohar Charents, about the book that was about to be born. We all came to an agreement that the



Mariam Movsisyan (Representative of Aurora Forum/Chief Communications and Marketing Officer of Idea Foundation)

Gohar works), and approached her to ask about different translations of "Yes Im Anoush Hayastani." Not long after, he showed translations of the poem done by him and his Indian friend into Hindu and Bengali. Gohar admitted that it was quite a big surprise for her, since she has never heard of the Bengali language before, but he told her that it was one of the most widespread languages in India.

The young tourist also explained the reason behind their desire to know and understand better what the poem was about. The Indian boy once asked his Armenian friends to guide him to find the most beloved poem by Armenians, and the answer he received was "Yes Im Anoush Hayastani." This inspired Gohar and planted a fresh idea in her mind, to find the best translators all around the world in order to give the opportunity to understand the poem to more than 30 different nations around the world. She determined to find translators who were Armenian, since she felt that the best way of achieving this was to translate the poem



Armen Charents (Charents' grandson)

book needs to be like a gift, a present that will change lives. It has to be a serious book, that by having it in your hands you could feel the same power and energy as that radiating from a prayer book. This all belongs to Charents. We had to make sure that all these things will become reality and a part of the "Yes Im Anoush Hayastani" book. Every single one of us realized that imagining [and] speaking about these things are very different from working and making them come true. It was only a week ago, when I first held this book in my hands and I felt it, that I had the right feeling about it. So I thought to myself, and said, 'it is good!' It is definitely worth it! This book has a

what some of the translators had to say about "Yes Im Anoush Hayastani" and the translation process through video recordings. It did not really matter whether the specialists were Armenian or of other nationalities. They all stated one thing collectively: this poem is a true definition of an immense love for a homeland, lovely Armenia, and it also sparks a fire of interest towards this country.

It is unbelievable how strongly Charents was attracted to literature from a young age. A

Gohar Charents, Tigran Mansourian, Armen Charents



The cover of the book

crucial mission to travel from generation to generation, and besides, it is important for Armenia to have something, a gift, to give to our visitors, a part of ourselves, our souls and true emotions that Charents depicted in the poem."

The entire event was emotional. All the beautiful words and thoughts managed to reach everyone's hearts and play on the most gentle strings of love and patriotism. It got even more emotional when Khachik Vardanyan, the founder of Bookinist, one of the most popular bookstore chains in Armenia, who played a substantial role in the creation of the book, was about to start his speech. He stopped for a moment and wiped away his tears with his hands. Then, after apologizing, he started telling us about the effect the process of the creation of the book had on him.

He said: "It is a call of spirits; it is a prayer for millions of Armenians. We have decided that the only benefit we want from this project is, with the help of Aurora, to awaken humanity and love towards it. This is why I want to thank every single person that played a role in the creation of the book and made it special."

During the event we all had a chance to hear

proof of this statement is a story that happened when he was but a five-year-old boy. His father gave him money to go and buy some new shoes for himself, but instead he went to a bookshop and bought a book. When Charents returned home, his father was not very happy about his son's choice, and told him, "You totally lost your mind and ate it with bread! You are going to remain barefoot now!"

Charents could not say a word, and left the house silently. He went out to the yard and told his friend about what happened. He proudly stated, "I would rather have my feet barefoot, than my brain."

Could this little boy imagine that one day one of his creations would become so iconic for his nation? On the very last page of the book, behind the back cover, there is a short but powerful message concluding the book in the best possible way: "The iconic poem for all Armenians..."

As composer Tigran Mansourian said, "There could be absolutely no doubt that "Yes Im Anoush Hayastani" has the most appropriate lyrics worthy of becoming the new national anthem of Armenia. What is left to do now is to find a deserving melody."