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Former Armenian President Charged With Embezzlement

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Law-enforcement authorities brought on Wednesday, December 4, corruption charges against Serzh Sargsyan, Armenia’s former president who was toppled during last year’s “Velvet Revolution.”

The Special Investigative Service (SIS) alleged that Sargsyan “organized the embezzlement by a group of officials” of 489 million drams (just over \$1 million) in government funds allocated in 2013 for the provision of subsidized diesel fuel to farmers.

In a statement, the SIS said that Sargsyan interfered in a government tender for the fuel supplier to ensure that it is won by Flash, a company which has long been one of Armenia’s main fuel importers. Flash is owned by Barsegh Beglaryan, a businessman believed to have had close ties to the 65-year-old ex-president.

The government paid Flash over 1.8 bil-



Former President Serzh Sargsyan

lion drams (\$3.8 million) as part of the scheme designed to help tens of thousands of low-income farmers across the country. According to the SIS statement, another private company, Maxhur, was ready to sup-

ply the same quantity of diesel fuel at a lower price which would have allowed the government to save 489 million drams.

The SIS said that the government’s see EMBEZZLEMENT, page 2

Wife of Prime Minister Invites Azeri First Lady to Visit Karabakh

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Anna Hakobyan, the wife of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, invited Mehriban Aliyeva, the wife of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, to Artsakh, on December 4.

“A few days ago Azerbaijan’s first lady Mehriban Aliyeva said on her Telegram account that she dreamed of listening to a *mugham* [Azeri folk music] in Artsakh. I invite Mehriban Aliyeva to Artsakh, and she

will be our guest. Our people, the people of Artsakh know how to host, honor a guest, and one of the rules of our hospitality is to honor the guest with music he/she prefers. We can ensure a *mugham*, we can make her dream come true and listen her beloved music in Karabakh. This is an invitation, and if she accepts this invitation, I am also ready in my turn to be hosted in Baku,” Hakobyan said at the conference on the

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution on Women, Peace and Security. In 2000, the UNSC formally acknowledged through Resolution 1325 the changing nature of warfare, in which civilians are increasingly targeted, and women continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes.

“But if Mehriban Aliyeva means that their dream is to come to Artsakh to listen to *mugham* with war, I assure her that in that case this dream will remain unfulfilled,” she added.

Hakobyan added that the only way to reach that dream is through peace, the normal relations with Artsakh and the mutual visits as a guest. She said that different nations of the world managed to overcome wars and hatred over the course of years.

“If this happened to other European nations, why can’t we do that? The Azerbaijani side just needs to show political will and refuse to wage war because it will gain nothing with it. I want to once again state that this invitation is very serious,” Hakobyan said.

N. Dakota Senator Blocks Genocide Bill at Request Of White House

WASHINGTON (Axios) – The White House directed Sen. Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.) to block an effort by Sens. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) and Ted Cruz (R-Texas) on Thursday, December 5, to pass a resolution via unanimous consent formally recognizing Turkey’s genocide of the Armenian people, according to two sources familiar with the matter.

This is the third time that the White House has directed a Republican senator to block the resolution, a symbolic measure already passed by the House that would infuriate Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Cramer said on the Senate floor that he doesn’t think this is “the right time” to pass the resolution, noting that President Trump has just returned from meeting with Erdogan at the NATO summit in London, and that the resolution could undermine the administration’s diplomatic efforts.

see CRAMER, page 10



Zareh Sinanyan at Nor Kyank village, Armenia

Diaspora High Commissioner Sinanyan Works For Armenia-Diaspora Integration and Repatriation

YEREVAN – High Commissioner of Diaspora Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Zareh Sinanyan spoke about the challenges of his office in an interview mid-October of this year.

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

His life has taken an unusual direction, both literally and figuratively. The former mayor of Glendale and his family had emigrated to the US from Armenia when he was a teenager. In his new country, Sinanyan has been able to climb high politically,

including serving on the Glendale City Council. However, he changed course and decided to relocate to his ancestral homeland and take this new position in Armenia on June 14, 2019.

(In summer 2018, Sinanyan had sat down for an interview while he was mayor of Glendale. <https://mirrorspectator.com/2018/08/23/mayor-zareh-sinanyan-working-to-improve-glendale-while-strengthening-ties-with-armenia/>)

see SINANYAN, page 10



NEWS IN BRIEF

Armenia Honors Genocide Victims on United Nations’ Day of Commemoration

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – On the occasion of the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime, on December 9, Armenian President Armen Sarkissian and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan visited the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan Monday morning.

Accompanied by Speaker of Parliament Ararat Mirzoyan and Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, they laid flowers at the Eternal Flame honoring the memory of the Armenian Genocide victims.

December 9th has been declared International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime in 2015 during the 69th UNGA. The resolution was presented by Armenia and was passed unanimously.

Armenian Catholic Church Reopens in Aleppo

ALEPPO (Panorama.am) – The Armenian Catholic Cathedral of Our Mother of Mercy was reopened on Saturday, December 7, in the al-Telal neighborhood of Aleppo after restoration and renovation works to fix the damage caused to the cathedral by terrorism had been completed, the official Syrian news agency SANA reported.

The opening ceremony was attended by Syria’s Grand Mufti Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun, the Papal Ambassador to Syria Mario Zenari, Aleppo Mufti Mahmoud Akkam in addition to a crowd of Muslim and Christian clergymen.

The head of the Armenian Catholic Community in Aleppo, Archbishop Boutrus Mrayati, stressed the importance of celebrating the reopening of the cathedral, which was built in 1840, as a spiritual occasion that aims at preserving Syria’s history, pointing out that renovation works were carried out by national expertise.

The Grand Mufti Badreddin Hassoun said that reopening the cathedral is a message to the world that “we are rebuilding what terrorism had destroyed of churches, mosques and factories.” He stressed that terrorism tools have destroyed the churches and mosques but they won’t be able to destroy Syria.

Other speeches hailed the reopening of the cathedral, emphasizing that it indicates the Christians’ insistence to stay in Syria and contribute to rebuilding what the terrorist war has destroyed.

INSIDE

Hermitage Director

Page 12

INDEX

Arts and Living	12
Armenia	2,3
Community News.	6
Editorial	17
International	4,5



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Vineyard Produces Organic Wine

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – An organic wine has been produced in Armenia for the first time, made of certified organic grapes.

Director of the Vine and Wine Foundation of Armenia Zaruhi Muradyan said on December 3 that the production of organic wine is very important for Armenia.

“Organic agriculture is recording a great progress in Armenia and has been studied in the recent years. This year for the first time an Armenian organic wine made from grapes will enter into the market. Winemaking has started developing quite actively, and our foundation carries out a lot of work in this direction,” she said.

Deputy head of the department of priority production of agriculture at the ministry of economy Varsik Martirosyan said the world is more interested now in organic agriculture.

“Organic agriculture is a mean to recover, strengthen and improve the agro-ecosystem. The production of these goods is welcomed and is important for us, for the healthy agriculture and lifestyle”, the ministry’s representative said.

Organic wines are produced in Armenia by Trinity Canyon Vineyards.

Nephew of Ex-President to Be Extradited

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Czech authorities have decided to extradite former President Serzh Sargsyan’s nephew Narek Sargsyan in pursuance of Armenian authorities’ request, the General Prosecution of Armenia said.

Prosecutor General Arthur Davtyan’s advisor Gor Abrahamyan said on Facebook this week that the prosecution has already tasked the police to organize the transport of Narek Sargsyan to Armenia.

Sargsyan is indicted by Armenian authorities on illegal possession of firearms and drug trafficking charges. He was declared wanted in 2018. In December 2018 Sargsyan was detained by Czech police in Prague on an international arrest warrant issued by Armenia.

Earthquake Anniversary Marked on December 7

YEREVAN – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on December 7 visited the Lori region on the 31st anniversary of the 1988 earthquake.

The first stop of the prime minister’s visit was the village of Shirakamut (Nalband), Lori region, the epicenter of the devastating 1988 earthquake. Nikol Pashinyan paid tribute to the memory of the innocent victims of the earthquake and laid a wreath at the monument-khachkar located near the Shirakamut municipality.

From there he headed to Spitak where he participated in the Spitak Monuments Park commemoration and to lay a wreath at their wreaths. He then attended the inauguration of the bust of Armenian national hero, American-Armenian benefactor Kirk Kerkorian. Artist Levon Tokmajyan had donated the bust of Kerkorian to the city. The prime minister also laid flowers at the khachkar dedicated to the memory of the Japanese earthquake and tsunami victims at the Spitak Monument Alley and in 2016. The monument-khachkar dedicated to the victims of the April war. Pashinyan visited the Holy Resurrection Church of Spitak and lit a candle in memory of 1988 victims.

Pashinyan then visited the Lernantsk community and participated in the opening of new housing for local residents. Within the framework of the Disaster Zone State Housing Program, eight apartments were built by the Fuller Center for Charitable Non-Governmental Organizations at the expense of government funding. Nikol Pashinyan congratulated the residents of the mountain passes on housing, wished them success and progress, noting that the government was consistent in resolving the disaster zone housing problem. According to the government’s decision, another 24 high-quality housing construction has started, 4 of which are again in the Lernantsk community.

Former Armenian President Charged With Embezzlement

EMBEZZLEMENT, from page 1

failure to pick Maxhur amounted to a deliberate embezzlement of public funds ordered by Sargsyan.

The law-enforcement agency stopped short of arresting the man who ruled Armenia from 2008-2018. It said it had him sign a formal pledge not to leave the country pending investigation.

Sargsyan’s Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) rejected the accusation, carrying between four and eight years in prison, as “fabricated and ludicrous.”

“We regard the accusation leveled against Serzh Sargsyan as a blatant manifestation of solely political persecution,” read a statement released by the HHK’s governing body headed by him. “This process is aimed at silencing political opponents against the background of dangers threatening Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).”

The former ruling party also claimed with such high-profile criminal cases the current authorities want to “deflect the Armenian people’s attention” from grave challenges facing the country.

Sargsyan has kept a low profile since resigning in April 2018 amid mass protests against his continued rule led by Nikol Pashinyan, the current Armenian prime minister.

The ex-president claimed to be not afraid of being arrested in rare comments to selected journalists made in late October. He accused Pashinyan’s government of jeopardizing democracy and stifling dissent in a November 20 speech at a congress of the European People’s Party held in Croatia.

Some of Sargsyan’s relatives, cronies and political allies have been prosecuted on corruption charges since his ouster. Also, his predecessor and erstwhile ally, Robert Kocharyan, was arrested in July 2018 on coup and bribery charges which he rejects as politically motivated.

The HHK has also alleged political motives behind most of these high-profile cases. The authorities deny that. They claim to have already eradicated “systemic” government corruption which they say was one of the main foundations of Sargsyan’s regime.

Vahagn Hovakimian, a senior member of Pashinyan’s My Step alliance, also denied on Thursday any connection between the accusation and Sargsyan’s first public speech delivered since his dramatic resignation in April 2018. He said the ex-president addressed a congress of the European People’s Party in Croatia on November

20 in anticipation of his indictment.

“The guy positioned himself so as to say ‘look, there is political persecution,’” claimed Hovakimian. “In Armenia, nobody will be subjected to political persecution anymore, at least as long as our political force is in government.”

Edmon Marukian, the leader of the opposition Bright Armenia Party (LHK), also said that he sees no political motives behind the high-profile case. Instead of alleging such motives, the HHK and its leader should make detailed statements on the embezzlement charge itself, he said.

“They freely speak up and freely engage in political activities and will continue to do so,” added Marukian. He also stressed the fact that Sargsyan was not arrested despite predictions to the contrary made by the ex-president’s entourage in recent months.

But Gevorg Petrosian, a senior parliamentarian representing Prosperous Armenia (BHK), the other opposition party represented in the parliament, did not exclude that Sargsyan is prosecuted for political reasons. He too pointed to Sargsyan’s November 20 speech, saying that it “could not have pleased the authorities.”

‘Tough’ Karabakh Negotiations Yield No Results

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia (RFE/RL) – The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan appear to have made no progress towards a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh during what the Azerbaijani side described as “tough” talks held in Slovakia’s capital Bratislava late on Wednesday, December 4.

According to international mediators, they only agreed to meet again early next year “to intensify negotiations on the core issues of a peaceful settlement.”

Armenia’s Zohrab Mnatsakanyan and Azerbaijan’s Elmar Mammadyarov, who met the sidelines of an annual ministerial conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) member states, exposed lingering disagreements between the conflicting parties in their public statements made on Thursday.

“My meeting yesterday with my Armenian counterpart lasted for three and a half hours,” Mammadyarov said at the conference. “These were quite tough negotiations. Unfortunately, we still have unresolved problems.”

Mnatsakanyan did not comment on the outcome of the talks in his speech at the gathering. Instead, he charged that further progress in the peace process is hampered Azerbaijan’s “maximalist positions” and “preconditions.”

The Armenian minister pointed to an official Azerbaijani “memorandum” outlining Baku’s position on the Karabakh settlement which was circulated at the Bratislava conference.

The document demands “immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan.” It also says that Karabakh’s predominantly Armenian population can only be granted “the status of self-rule ... within Azerbaijan.”

By contrast, Mnatsakanyan insisted on Karabakh residents’ right to “maintain and determine a status outside the jurisdiction, sovereignty or territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.”

“Azerbaijan must assume direct commitment to recognition of the right to

self-determination of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh by way of legally binding free expression of the will of the people living in Nagorno-Karabakh, the outcome of which should have no limitation,” he said.

“The government of Armenia will never engage in any activities which can violate the right of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to freely determine their political status or can deprive them of the ownership of this process,” he added.



Slovakia – Foreign Ministers Zohrab Mnatsakanyan (R) of Armenia and Elmar Mammadyarov of Azerbaijan meet in Bratislava, December 4, 2019.

The US Russia and France, the three world powers co-heading the OSCE Minsk Group, have repeatedly stated that Karabakh’s internationally recognized status should be determined through a “legally binding expression of will.” This is one of the main elements of their so-called Madrid Principles of the conflict’s resolution first put forward over a decade ago.

The proposed plebiscite would be held after the liberation of virtually seven districts around the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast which were fully or partly occupied by Karabakh Armenian forces during the 1991-1994 war.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and senior U.S. and French diplomats attending the Bratislava conference reaffirmed this peace formula in a joint state-

ment on the Mammadyarov-Mnatsakanyan meeting issued on Thursday.

“We welcome the intention of the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia to meet again in early 2020 under Co-Chair auspices to intensify negotiations on the core issues of a peaceful settlement and to facilitate further talks at the highest level,” read the statement.

The mediators also noted a significant decrease in ceasefire violations in the

conflict zone and called on the parties to take “additional concrete humanitarian and security measures.” Those include the expansion of a small OSCE mission monitoring the ceasefire regime along the “line of contact” and the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. Mnatsakanyan reaffirmed Yerevan’s strong support for that.

Lavrov met with Mammadyarov and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku earlier this week. After those talks he spoke of “possibilities of achieving a compromise” on Karabakh.

Lavrov also expressed hope that his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts will issue a joint statement with the mediating powers as a result of the Bratislava meeting. The resulting statement was signed only by the Russian, U.S. and French officials.

(See related editorial on page 17.)



ARMENIA

Rural Villagers Plant ATP's Six Millionth Tree In Lori

By Ani Melkonian

MIKHAYLOVKA, Lori — Following a year of 25th anniversary celebrations and the inaugural Forest Summit in October, the Armenia Tree Project (ATP) planted its six millionth tree this fall.

ATP's six millionth tree, a Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), was sourced from and planted in Armenia's northern Lori region. The pine traveled from the Mirak Family Reforestation Nursery in Margahovit village to a 43.4 hectare (107 acre) forest being planted in Mikhaylovka Village.

Like all the other trees ATP produces, the Scots pine is a native species that commonly grows in the northern and southern regions of Armenia. The seedling was selected and unearthed by Mirak Nursery employee Siranush Harutyunyan. "All the seedlings we grow are special and beautiful to us, but I chose this particular pine because it stands taller and prouder than the rest," explained Harutyunyan.

Unlike ATP's five millionth tree, which is under the care and attention of staff at the Karin Nursery, the six millionth would have to thrive in less hospitable conditions, in the wild. "Its roots are strong and healthy, so it will withstand the elements. We're certain it's going to survive in the front lines. It's a real warrior," concluded Harutyunyan, as her coworkers nodded in agreement and helped her carry the tree to the truck in a bucket full of soil.

About an hour later, the tree was given a great big welcome by ATP's seasonal workers at the new forest site in Mikhaylovka. This northernmost village was almost-entirely covered by fog, but that only added to the drama of the day.

Arevik Zoroghlyan was picked from the crowd to do the honors. She was shy and hesitant at first but quickly decided to accept the responsibility and enjoy the moment. The hole was dug with help from her three young teammates — Sarkis Bezoyan, Armen Khachatryan, and Gevorg Khachatryan. When Arevik completed the task and pressed down on the soft earth with her hands, the planting brigade



ATP provides jobs for dozens of people to plant trees; last week, Mirak nursery worker Siranush Harutyunyan (pictured at left) selected this Scots pine to be ATP's six millionth tree to be planted in northern Armenia

broke into applause.

"ATP has given me work for the past six years. I help them plant forests near our community," said Arevik, flushed with delight. "I'm proud to be a part of the story of the six million trees. It's one of the best gifts I can give my children, my grandchildren, and my country."

This fall, ATP hired 60 people from Lori to help with afforestation and reforestation projects. "Using trees, we're able to improve the quality of life in communities, so it gives people a good reason to plant forests and preserve them," said Forestry Manager Navasard Dadyan. "When we plant forests, we make sure to include different species so that a more complex ecosystem can be formed. The trees store carbon, regulate the water cycle, enrich the soil with nutrients, and promote biodiversity," he added.

The Armenian government has pledged to double the country's forest cover by 2050, and recently announced a campaign to get 10 million trees planted on October 10, 2020. What is being called the "10-10-10 Campaign" will increase Armenia's forests by 1 percent. The long-term survival of these new forests is essential for them to serve their

purpose of offsetting greenhouse gases and fighting climate change.

ATP's forestry and community tree planting programs plant an average of 230,000-250,000 trees and shrubs every year. The organization works with communities across the country for successful survival rates. This fall, ATP's forestry team added 190,651 trees to forests in the communities of Mikhaylovka, Tashir, and Saratovka in Lori.

"Armenia has a grand objective to double its forest cover by 2050," began Dr. Anthony S. Davis, interim dean of the College of Forestry at Oregon State University during his keynote speech at the Forest Summit hosted by ATP and AUA in October. "Now is the time to define what those future forests look like. By 2050, half of Armenia's forest cover will be based on decisions made today. There should be no greater calling to work together than this piece of information," he added.

ATP volunteer Raffi Paul created a moving two-minute short about the six millionth tree being planted. It's available on ATP's Facebook and YouTube pages: www.tinyurl.com/sixmillionth

PSIA 2019 AUA Conference: Scholars and Specialists Discuss the Velvet Revolution

YEREVAN — On November 14-15, the American University of Armenia (AUA) held the Inaugural Political Science and International Affairs Conference organized by the Zoryan Institute and AUA with support from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

The two-day conference titled Armenia's Transformation in a Comparative Context: Restarting Democratization? brought together 21 scholars and specialists from Armenia and abroad to discuss various aspects of the 2018 Armenian Velvet Revolution and its aftermath in a comparative context.

Dr. Noubar Afeyan, a lecturer at MIT and Harvard Business School, co-founder of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity and the founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering, was the keynote speaker of the two-day conference.

The conference started with opening remarks by AUA President, Dr. Karin Markides; Conference Organizing Committee Chair, Dr. Alina Gharabegian; President of The Zoryan Institute, Greg Sarkissian; followed by remarks from Director of Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Dr. Razmik Panossian; and AUA College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) Dean, Dr. Brian Ellison.

Dr. Markides highlighted AUA's role in providing the Armenian government with research-based data and analysis that support effective decision- and policy-making throughout the government. She placed emphasis on AUA's mission to promote the development of Armenia and Artsakh.

Expressing gratitude to the AUA faculty and

staff, as well as to the participants and attendees, Dr. Gharabegian noted, "The object of today's conference is to shed light on our near and distant political futures in the context of the April 2018 uprisings by a glance backward at the country's political and historical past and through a multi-perspectival, multi-vocal assessment of our current state by experts in various fields. The conference brings together 21 scholars and practitioners, 14 of whom are here from abroad. Their expertise covers an impressive swath of multiple academic fields, and the conversation that will ensue from the exchange of ideas will potentially give rise to conclusions we can draw about directions to pursue, moving forward. Ultimately, as is the goal of a conference of this nature and the stance of the PSIA Program vis-à-vis the government, we hope, in part, to inform policy for the future of Armenia."

In his opening remarks, president of the Zoryan Institute, K.M. Greg Sarkissian, raised several questions regarding the assessment of the Velvet Revolution, he stated: "It is our hope that over the next few days, scholars and specialists who have come together here in Yerevan will be able to raise substantial questions such as: How can we assess both the merits and the flaws of the Revolution?" He continued by stating: "Naturally, the best way of addressing these questions is to look at this process from a multidisciplinary and comparative approach. The Velvet Revolution in Armenia encourages us also to think about its relevance in a larger context, such as historical and contemporary responses in places with increasingly authoritarian regimes, such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech



President of the Zoryan Institute, K.M. Greg Sarkissian

Another panel was about contentious politics, mobilization, and media use, covering comparisons on a wide range of activities from digital engagement to street presence. The third panel attempted to answer the important question of how systemic the changes were that ensued from the Velvet Revolution. This panel continued the next day with other researchers presenting their findings and analyses of the topic. The fourth panel tackled the issues of international relations after a political upheaval and available choices for small states in foreign policies. The final panel dealt with human rights, justice, and the rule of law, tackling issues of stability vs. change in Armenia and beyond.

Each panel was followed by a question-and-

Republic."

The conference was comprised of five panel discussions in two days. The first day touched upon topics related to the post-Soviet heritage: stagnation, democratization and rising aspirations, offering comparisons within the former Soviet space.

answer session that gave the audience the opportunity to pose questions and offer comments and perspectives.

At the conclusion of the first day, a keynote speech was delivered by Dr. Noubar Afeyan, founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering. Afeyan shared several observations about what is needed for Armenia and Armenians worldwide. He had this to say,

"Over the long term I would like to see the effort that has been put into genocide recognition expand to include a parallel effort in genocide reversal, and the only way to reserve the genocide, in my view, is to reconstitute, reassemble, reintegrate and basically, form an Armenian nation of any kind that we collectively desire, but nevertheless do it."

The conference concluded with a synthesis of the conference presented by Dr. Hovhannes Nikoghosyan, adjunct lecturer at AUA Political Science and International Affairs Program. Dr. Nikoghosyan thanked the panelists for their work and readiness to share their findings with the audience and beyond, highlighting the key takeaways of the two day conference.

The live-streamed version of the conference for the first and second days is available online. For more information about the panel discussions and the panelists, visit the PSIA Conference 2019 official webpage.

The Zoryan Institute and its subsidiary, the International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, is the first non-profit, international centre devoted to the research and documentation of contemporary issues with a focus on Genocide, Diaspora and Homeland.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

EU Puts Armenia's Civil Aviation under Scrutiny

YEREVAN (News.am) — The European Commission has put Armenia's civil aviation regulator under heightened scrutiny.

"The Armenian Civil Aviation Committee has been put under heightened scrutiny because of signs of a decrease in safety oversight," the European Commission said in a statement on December 10.

However, European safety authorities did not explain the reasons for their concern.

The European Commission also updated the EU Air Safety List, the list of airlines that do not meet international safety standards.

Dutch Parliament Votes To Allocate Funds for Embassy in Armenia

THE HAGUE (Public Radio of Armenia) — Tweede Kamer, the Dutch House of Representatives, has adopted an amendment to the 2020 Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget, allocating necessary funding for an embassy in Yerevan, the Armenian Embassy in the Netherlands reported.

The four coalition parties of the Dutch Parliament had earlier offered the leadership of the country to provide 2 million euros to the Foreign Ministry for opening an Embassy in the Republic of Armenia.

The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs saluted the news, noting that "the move was a manifestation of support to the democratic developments in Armenia."

"The embassy will strengthen the long-standing partnership between Armenia and the Netherlands," the Ministry noted.

Iran National Orchestra To Perform Works by Armenian Composers

TEHRAN — Iran's National Orchestra will perform pieces by some Armenian composers in a program titled "Armenian Music Night" in Tehran on December 19, Tehran Times reports.

Iranian-Armenian conductor Razmik Ohanian will conduct the orchestra during the concert, which will be held at Vahdat Hall, the Rudaki Foundation announced.

Compositions by Komitas, Aram Khachaturian, Edward Avedisian and Loris Tjeknavorian have been selected to be performed at the concert.

The orchestra will also be performing accompanied by soloists Samvel Galstyan and Vahan Badalyan, and duduk player Saro Poghosyan.

Jordan, Armenia Look For Closer Ties

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Speaker of Armenian National Assembly Ararat Mirzoyan received last week Ayman Safadi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mirzoyan said he was certain the visit would promote the development of the two countries' relations. He noted that the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Jordan recently proposed by letter to increase the number of the Jordanian students studying in the higher educational institutions of Armenia, adding that he and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport were all happy to meet the demand.

Speaking about the inter-parliamentary cooperation Mirzoyan noted that the parliaments of the two countries have Friendship Groups for developing the parliamentary relations. He also talked about sensitive items for Armenia, touching upon the Nagorno Karabakh problem.

Safadi stressed that Jordan and Armenia have genuinely great potential for developing closer relations and cooperation in the following fields: agro-business, tourism, information technologies, also talked about opening direct flights and budgetary avian companies.

Currently 120 Jordanian students study in Armenia.

Rohingya Genocide Showdown

THE HAGUE (Deutsche Welle) — Myanmar's civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi appeared at the United Nations International Court of Justice in The Hague on Tuesday, December 10, to defend her country's military from allegations of committing genocide against the Rohingya minority.

Suu Kyi watched the proceedings on Tuesday without any show of emotion as a legal team for the Gambia detailed accounts of atrocities allegedly perpetrated by Myanmar military personnel in western Rakhine state. They are accused of committing crimes including killings, sexual violence and the destruction of tens of thousands of Muslim minority homes in the state.

Acting on behalf of the 57-country Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Gambia is asking the world court to take "all measures within its power to prevent all acts that amount to or contribute to the crime of genocide."

A series of coordinated attacks by Rohingya insurgents on Myanmar security forces in the north of Myanmar's Rakhine State triggered a crackdown by Myanmar forces that has sent a stream of Rohingya villagers fleeing to Bangladesh. About 400 people have been killed in the clashes in Buddhist-majority Myanmar.

Opening its case, the Gambia's Justice Minister Aboubacarr Tambadou urged the court to "tell Myanmar to stop these senseless killings, to stop these acts of barbarity that continue to shock our collective conscience, to stop this genocide of its own people."

UN investigators have also accused the Myanmar military of undertaking mass killings and committing atrocities against Rohingya Muslims with "genocidal intent."

More than 730,000 Rohingya fled the coastal state of Rakhine after the military launched its crackdown in 2017 and were forced into squalid camps across the border in Bangladesh.

Myanmar has previously denied almost all allegations leveled against its troops.

What Will Suu Kyi Say?

Suu Kyi, who is leading the Myanmar delegation in her capacity as foreign minister, is expected to address the court on Wednesday and defend the actions of the Myanmar military. She will likely argue that military "clearance operations" launched in August 2017 were a legitimate counterterrorism response to attacks by Rohingya militants.

Suu Kyi defending the Myanmar military in an international court would be a remarkable scene, given that she herself spent 15 years under military-ordered house arrest.

Suu Kyi was once seen as a shining

serious international crime, but will focus on the Gambia's request for provisional measures. A decision on that request is expected within weeks. The tribunal has no enforcement powers. Still, its rulings are final and have con-



Aung San Suu Kyi (BBC photo)

light for democracy and a global beacon of hope for human rights. She was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize for championing democracy and rights under Myanmar's then-ruling junta. But her silence over the plight of the Rohingya has tarnished her reputation in the West.

In Myanmar, however, many have rallied in recent days to show support for her. Suu Kyi's decision to personally lead the country's case at the court has also proved popular at home. On Tuesday, flag-waving supporters joined rallies in support of Suu Kyi in several cities across the country, with some 2,000 people marching through Yangon and tens of thousands more in Mandalay.

"We have to stand behind her as she travels to defend our country's dignity," said 57-year-old Yangon resident Thant Zin, sporting Suu Kyi stickers on both cheeks.

The Gambia's lawyers said the appearance of huge billboards across Myanmar in recent weeks featuring pictures of Suu Kyi with three smiling generals showed she was "in it together" with the army that once held her captive. "It can only be intended to show that they are all in it together and that Myanmar has absolutely no intention of holding its emboldened military leadership accountable," lawyer Paul Reichler told the court.

This week's proceedings, before a panel of 17 judges, will not deal with whether Myanmar is guilty of the most

siderable legal weight.

Separately, the US on Tuesday imposed sanctions on four Myanmar military generals, including the commander-in-chief Min Aung Hlaing, in the toughest action taken yet by Washington following the alleged human rights abuses against the Rohingya. The sanctions freeze any US assets held by those targeted and prohibits Americans from doing business with them.

What Is Genocide?

The 1948 act, signed into international law after the Nazi Holocaust, defines genocide as committing any of the following against a national, ethnic, racial or religious group:

Killing members of the group;
Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Punishable offenses under the treaty include genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, attempt to commit genocide, and complicity in genocide.

These current proceedings are only the third genocide case filed at the court since World War II.

sri,aw/msh (AP, AFP, Reuters, dpa)

Turkey Must Free Jailed Rights Activist Osman Kavala, Rules EU Court

STRASBOURG, France (Deutsche Welle) — The Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on Tuesday, December 10, told Turkey to release philanthropist and human rights activist Osman Kavala.

The 62-year-old was arrested in November 2017 and accused of organizing anti-government protests in Istanbul's Gezi Park four years earlier.

The ECHR cited a "lack of reasonable suspicion that the applicant had committed an offense" in its ruling.

The court said Turkey must now "take every measure to put an end to the applicant's detention and to secure his immediate release."

Kavala was accused of making an "attempt to overthrow the government" by organizing and financing an "uprising" with 15 other defendants, charges he denied.

Human rights groups said the accusation was baseless and aimed at silencing civil society activists. The charge carries a potential life prison sentence.

The 657-page indictment against Kavala and the other defendants lists Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan — who was prime minister at the time among the injured parties.

Erdogan has personally attacked Kavala, calling him the agent in Turkey of US financier George Soros.

Kavala is the chairman of the Anadolu Kultur (Anatolian Culture) center, which campaigns for rights and cultural diversity including Kurdish issues.

The 2013 protests began to protect Istanbul's small Gezi Park from development but quickly evolved into wider anti-government demonstrations across Turkey following a brutal police crack-

down against mostly peaceful protesters.

ECHR rulings are legally binding; however, Turkey has frequently not



Osman Kavala

implemented them. Ankara's justice ministry declined to comment on Tuesday's ECHR ruling.

The next hearing in Kavala's trial will take place December 24-25.



Oil Trail Reveals Turkey Funding Syrian Kurdish Rivals

By Amberin Zaman

FISH KHABUR, Iraq (Al-Monitor) — At the Halifax Security Forum, an annual event attended by high-powered government officials, business titans and assorted other movers and shakers from across the globe, national security adviser Robert O'Brien took the stage with PBS' Nick Shifrin and let the cat out of the bag. When the veteran correspondent grilled O'Brien November 23 about President Donald Trump's decision to keep US troops in northeastern Syria "for the oil," noting that the Pentagon's Syrian Kurdish allies were selling it to the Syrian regime in defiance of sanctions, O'Brien responded, "Some of it goes to the regime. Some of it is used locally. Some of it goes to Iraqi Kurdistan. Some of it goes to Turkey. The key, though, is not where the oil goes but where the revenue goes." The main thing, he concluded, was to ensure that none of it got to the Islamic State.

It is by now well established that the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) has been involved in selling oil produced in fields in eastern Syria mainly to regime-held areas. But trade with neighboring Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey has rarely been reported and the parties involved, including the United States, have sought to keep it that way. For one, it flies in the face of US sanctions. But for Turkey, it's even more awkward.

As matters currently stand, Turkey, through oil, is helping to indirectly subsidize the very same Syrian Kurdish administration that it's seeking to crush on the grounds that it poses a threat to Turkey's national security. Turkey's successive military offensives against the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which forms the backbone of the SDF, have cost hundreds of millions of dollars in treasure and at least 100 Turkish soldiers' lives. So why is it beating the Syrian Kurds with one hand while feeding them with the other? The main reason appears to be profit. The others are leverage over the Syrian Kurds, and — according to Iraqi Kurdish officials — pressure from the United States.

But there are growing signs that Turkey's laissez faire attitude may be changing, part of an all-out effort to bring the YPG and its Turkish affiliate, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), to their knees. Russia, which is leaning on the Kurds to reach an accommodation with the regime, knows that it's more likely to do so if financially squeezed.

In a series of interviews conducted over the past year with current and former US, Iraqi Kurdish and Syrian Kurdish officials and with well-informed sources with close knowledge of the oil trade, Al-Monitor learned that oil, mainly from fields in Rmeilan, Syria's second largest field, and Qaytaniyah, near the Turkish and Iraqi borders, is being carried to Iraqi Kurdistan and then on to Turkey. These fields have been in Kurdish hands since 2012, when regime forces redeployed to fight Sunni rebels elsewhere. The sources spoke on condition of strict anonymity, citing the sensitivity of the topic.

A high-ranking Iraqi Kurdish official confirmed to Al-Monitor that "some" Syrian oil from the SDF-controlled fields is carried via Iraqi Kurdistan to Turkey. The Syrian oil is labeled as Iraqi Kurdish when going through the Habur border crossing with Turkey, an oil smuggler from Turkey's southeastern town of Silopi speaking not for attribution told Al-Monitor. A second KRG official who corroborated the smuggler's account insisted that "most of the SDF oil goes to Turkey."

"There's some wheeling and dealing going on," the first Iraqi Kurdish official acknowledged without elaborating.

Because of the secret nature of business with Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey, Syrian Kurdish officials decline to formally confirm its existence. But nor do they deny it's going on. "The oil issue is burning us," said an SDF-linked source.

Oil revenue is what sustains the Syrian Kurds' autonomous administration, allowing it to pay the salaries of its civil and military arms. Control over the fields also strengthens the SDF's hand in negotiations with the regime. "If we lose the oil revenue, our whole system will collapse; it's critical," acknowledged an SDF-linked security official.

Oil revenues have grown even more critical since Trump froze some \$200 million in stabilization funding for Syria in March 2018. The European Union in turn refuses to commit more money, telling the Americans, "We are either in with you or out with you."

Cash injections from Saudi Arabia and the UAE amounting to \$150 million are due to run out early next year. SDF commander Mazlum Kobane's mysterious visit to the UAE in late November is believed to be connected in part to a quest for further funds.

Wheeling and Dealing

"We believe that around 300 tankers worth of oil goes to Iraqi Kurdistan per day," a former Trump administration official told Al-Monitor. "The oil trade is shady. The deals are cut at the top then subcontracted. There are many middlemen. I would imagine that some of the oil ends up in Turkey."

An Iraq-based oil analyst put the volume at 6-8,000 barrels per day. "The oil is very cheap. In July it was less than \$20 per barrel while the world price was around \$60," he told Al-Monitor. The big discrepancy between the analyst and the former Trump Administration official's figures underscore how hard it is to pin down volumes in the illicit trade. In any case, low prices make for huge profits.

The analyst continued, "We know that some oil that goes to Iraqi Kurdistan is sold to small, unlicensed refineries in Dohuk and Erbil. And most of the traders are somehow linked to KDP leaders in the same way that traders for the oil going to regime-held areas are connected to [Syrian President] Bashar al-Assad. And I wouldn't be surprised if some of the Syrian oil ends up in Turkey because the oil traders from both sides are very well connected with government officials from both sides." KDP is the acronym for the Kurdistan Democratic Party led by the powerful Barzani family.

The Iraqi Kurdistan Region's president is Nechirvan Barzani, who in his earlier stint as prime minister oversaw the KRG's oil business, most notably a landmark deal with Turkey in 2013. The agreement, which has been fiercely criticized for its opacity, allowed the Iraqi Kurds to sell their oil independently of Baghdad via a purpose-built pipeline running to export terminals in Ceyhan on Turkey's southern Mediterranean coast.

The deal escalated tensions between Erbil and Baghdad, which is suing Turkey in the International Court of Arbitration for its role in the affair. It's impossible to prove, but a fair amount of oil is believed to go to Israel. In July, a senior Israeli official told Al-Monitor that the KRG was currently its biggest supplier of crude.

There are conflicting accounts of how the oil gets to Iraqi Kurdistan. A second former Trump administration official who spent time in Syria said it was trucked. "There were shitloads of trucks," he told Al-Monitor.

On a recent morning at the Fish Khabur customs complex, there were no tanker trucks in sight.

A reporter's attempt to follow a pipeline that ran along the road to the Sahela crossing to Syria, which lies roughly five kilometers (three miles) south of the main crossing at Fish Khabur, was interrupted by an armed Iraqi Kurdish border guard.

Open-source intelligence mined by Al-Monitor, and as first observed in October 2019 by the researcher known as @obretix on Twitter, revealed that one of the pontoon bridges connecting Fish Khabur to the Semelka crossing on the Syrian side features a makeshift pipeline. This pipeline runs across the southern bridge, where it connects to an oil depot on the KRG side consisting of 22 storage tanks. Some tankers do use the bridge, however.

Oil for Access

An SDF official told Al-Monitor that tanker trucks that cross over the pontoon bridge typically carry Iraqi Kurdish fuel to coalition forces in Syria.

Long before the Trump administration took over, the US-led coalition had been tacitly condoning oil sales to Iraqi Kurdistan. But in the early days of the Syrian uprising, the KRG was squeezing access through the Fish Khabur border crossing and charging high taxes on goods

going into Syrian Kurdistan, also known as Rojava. The hostility stemmed from its poor relations with the YPG and pressure from Turkey.

The State Department did not respond to a request for comment on O'Brien's remarks; Turkish officials did not respond either.

The US brokered a deal whereby the Syrian Kurds would sell some of their oil via the KRG in exchange for unfettered access via Fish Khabur, which is their lifeline for humanitarian and commercial goods as well as military assistance from the US-led coalition. "Getting the deal done was key to keeping Fish Khabur open. The KDP-YPG deal on oil allowed us to keep everything smooth," a former US government official told Al-Monitor. "But it was never publicized," the official noted.

In a recent research note, the International Crisis Group observed, "YPG leaders believe that a continued US presence at the [Rmeilan] oil field in al-Hasaka will compel Washington to keep a land supply route open" through Fish Khabur.

"For Washington, control of the crossing would ensure a steady supply line from US military depots in Iraq. Loss of the crossing would severely harm the local economy, end foreign stabilization and humanitarian funding, and render the YPG more dependent on Damascus."

When the Islamic State controlled oil fields in parts of Al-Hasakah and most of Deir ez-Zor, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was accused of personally benefitting from what was a thriving multi-million-dollar trade at the time. A hacktivist group known as Redhack hacked the emails of his son-in-law Berat Albayrak, the country's current finance minister and former energy minister. The most damning messages in the leaked trove pertained to Powertrans, an energy company that was granted a monopoly on trucking Iraqi Kurdish oil to Turkey before the KRG pipeline became operational. Albayrak denied any connection to Powertrans, but the dump exposed 32 messages with the keyword "Powertrans" in which he appeared to be providing advice on personnel decisions for the company.

Turkish media outlets claimed that Powertrans mixed IS-produced oil into their shipments to Turkey, though they provided no evidence.

In November 2015, after Turkey downed one of its fighter jets, however, Russia jumped in with its own claims that Turkey was buying IS oil and circulated satellite imagery that purportedly proved it. Briefing the foreign media shortly after, Russia's deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov charged that Erdogan was personally involved "in this criminal business." Erdogan issued an angry denial. When Turkey and Russia kissed and made up, the allegations disappeared.

A Barack Obama administration official involved in Syria policy told Al-Monitor at the time they had no proof that the Turkish government was directly engaged in any commercial activities with IS.

Oil for Peace

But Syrian oil was making its way to Turkey, a Turkish official linked to the intelligence community noted in written comments relayed to Al-Monitor. Starting in July 2012, the YPG began allowing oil sales to Turkish companies via the towns of Kobani, Qamishli and Afrin, prompting the Syrian government to accuse Turkey of "stealing" Syrian oil.

The first former Trump administration official reckons that around 100 tankers currently carry oil from SDF-controlled fields to the Turkish-run Euphrates Shield zone in Jarablus.

But the Turkish official said that direct sales to Turkey proper halted when peace talks between Ankara and the imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan collapsed. Peaceful cohabitation with the Syrian Kurdish administration, including oil, was meant to have been part of a grand bargain that would have ended the PKK's 35-year-old armed insurgency against the Turkish state. Yet, lucratively cheap Syrian oil is still making its way to Turkey via the KRG.

Merve Tahiroglu is the Turkey program coordinator at the Project for Middle East Democracy, a Washington-based think tank, who has written extensively on the IS oil trade. She told Al-Monitor, "Open source information on IS smuggling indicates that the oil passed through Kurdish-held territories in Syria and Iraq before reaching Turkey. Regardless of the oil's origin and how many times it changed

hands, it appears to have come to Turkey through Kurdish middlemen and smugglers. This is all part of the war economy we've been tracking along the Turkish-Syrian border."

Tahiroglu acknowledged that the same smuggling networks may well be in play for sales to Turkey via the KRG. "Erdogan will likely deny these reports lest they hurt his political image. That said, Erdogan controls most of the narrative in Turkey thanks to his tight grip on the media. He is able to get away with such political scandals thanks to his outsized power to influence public opinion."

Trump's decision to maintain troops to protect the SDF-run oil fields has upset Turkey's calculations. Its game plan is to unravel the Syrian Kurds' self-governance project and for as long as they have the means to finance and defend themselves under US protection, this cannot materialize.

Turkey's hawkish security establishment recalls how the Iraqi Kurds began building their quasi-independent statelet throughout the 1990s on the back of oil that was smuggled to Turkey in large quantities in breach of UN sanctions. Ankara turned a blind eye. Assorted Turkish military and police officials were widely reported to have benefited.

The last thing Turkey wants, however, is a second Kurdish entity, much less a PKK-friendly one, as it sees things, on its borders.

The message was reportedly relayed to KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani during his recent meeting with Erdogan in Ankara. "The Americans are sure to push back," the first Iraqi Kurdish official predicted, saying Turkey had acquiesced to the trade under American pressure to begin with. Turkey's recent behavior plainly indicates, however, that it no longer cares. It bought Russian-made missiles despite threats of US sanctions and invaded northeastern Syria, triggering a fresh cocktail of sanctions bills.

Ominously, the spokesman for Erdogan's Justice and Development Party, Omer Celik, took a thinly veiled swipe at Trump, saying, "To claim rights over resources belonging to the Syrian people is colonization." He railed at Washington's plans to guard the oil fields so that the SDF may continue to benefit from oil revenues, claiming, "This proves yet again that they are on the side of the terrorists, not the Syrian people."

Russia has been far blunter. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the US plan to protect the oil was "tantamount to robbery" and warned the Syrian Kurds that relying on the US "won't bring any good."

For Russia, any Turkish move that deepens the rift with the United States and forces the SDF/YPG's hand in its talks with the regime is welcome. Curbing the oil trade results in both. Should the regime become the Syrian Kurds' sole customer, it will push prices even further down.

Nicholas Danforth is a senior visiting fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States. He told Al-Monitor, "From Moscow and Damascus' perspective, this would be a more helpful way for Turkey to put pressure on the YPG than continuing its military operations on Syrian territory."

But there are signs that Russia and the regime may already be taking matters into their own hands.

A series of mysterious airstrikes on makeshift oil refineries and oil tankers around al-Bab and Jarablus, reported by Russia's RT, may be the opening salvo in a campaign to pressure the SDF. The RT report was picking up on a November 26 story by Syria's government news agency SANA, which quoted an unnamed "field source" who had investigated "Kurdish organizations in Syria's Jazira area" who were smuggling oil via Jarablus "as well as [via] northern Iraq, to the Turkey regime — which the Kurds claim as their main enemy." SANA asserted that the source had "emphasized that strict measures will be taken against any smuggling operations of stolen oil from Syrian land to outside Syria."

(Dan Wilkovsky and Alexander McKeever contributed to this report. Amberin Zaman is a senior correspondent reporting from the Middle East, North Africa and Europe exclusively for Al-Monitor.)



Community News

Daniel Koushakjian Named Armenian Council of America Rep in DC

WASHINGTON – The Armenian Council of America announced this week the appointment of Taniel Koushakjian as ACA's Representative in the nation's capital.

"We are very proud to welcome Taniel to lead our efforts in Washington D.C." remarked ACA Chairman Sevak Khatchadorian. "His vast experience on Armenian-related issues and his dedication to our community will be of great service for our efforts in the nation's capital."

Koushakjian is the CEO of BreakThru Strategies, a government affairs and strategic public relations firm in Washington, DC. He holds a BA in political science from Florida Atlantic University, an MA in political manage-



Daniel Koushakjian

ment from the George Washington University, and a graduate certificate in PACs and political management from the George Washington University. He previously served as the grassroots director and communications director of the Armenian Assembly of America where he advocated on a wide array of human rights, international religious freedom, U.S. foreign policy, and appropriations issues.

Koushakjian was selected as a 2018-2019 Fellow with the Anti-Defamation League Glass Leadership Institute, as well as a 2019 Fellow with the James Madison Institute.

"I'm excited to work with the dedicated team at ACA," said Koushakjian. "With the House of Representatives' affirmation of the Armenian Genocide this year, the peaceful democratic transition of power in the Republic of Armenia last year, and the steadfast commitment of the Armenian American community to these issues over many decades, the promise and potential of US-Armenia relations in the years ahead is greater now than ever before."

DC Council Adopts Genocide Recognition

WASHINGTON – Following the historic and overwhelming bipartisan passage of the Armenian Genocide resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives, the District of Columbia Council approved a resolution on November 8 affirming the Armenian Genocide, reported the Armenian Assembly of America.

The resolution is "to recognize and reflect on the 104th anniversary of the 1915 Armenian Genocide and on the importance of educating District of Columbia residents on the Armenian Genocide."

"The Armenian Assembly of America welcomes the passage of this resolution, and especially applauds the emphasis on the importance of education," Executive Director Bryan Ardouny stated.

For a complete list of U.S. states that issued resolutions and proclamations recognizing the Armenian Genocide, visit the Armenian National Institute's website at www.armenian-genocide.org.



Dr. Rouben Adalian greeting Jane Stanton and Lionnel Zaragoza, representing the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles

ANI Exhibit on Armenian Volunteers in Armenia at Glendale YMCA

LOS ANGELES – With coverage on local television stations, the Armenian National Institute (ANI) exhibit, highlighting the accomplishments of a pair of YMCA volunteers who were in Armenia in 1918, continues to receive wide attention. Marking its Western United States premiere, the exhibit was on display at the West Gallery on the campus of California State University Northridge (CSUN) from October 26 through November 7 and is presently featured on the premises of the YMCA of Glendale.

News reports on the exhibition were covered by community journalist Gabriela Milian for ABC7 Los Angeles (KABC) and by Maria Cozette for Horizon TV who interviewed Armenian Assembly of America Western Region Director Mihran Toumajan and ANI Director Dr. Rouben Adalian, who curated the exhibition, in addition to other media coverage.

The exhibition explains the role of the YMCA and American relief work during the first republic of Armenia (1918-1920) and focuses on John Elder and James O. Arroll who arrived in Yerevan in January 1918 to open a YMCA center. Neither Elder nor Arroll had anticipated being stranded as the only Americans left in the country's capital city, with all communication to the outside world cut off when the front line faltered. World War I was still raging at the time and Allied forces were in retreat on the Caucasus front. The November 11, 1918 Armistice that ended World War I was many months away. By the time they left Yerevan in August 1919, Elder and Arroll had become responsible for the entire operation set up by US-based charities, which earned them tribute from future U.S. President Herbert Hoover, who, at that time, headed the United States Food Administration.

Participating in the opening ceremonies on October 26 were representatives of the co-sponsoring organizations, including Jane Stanton and Lionnel Zaragoza of the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles, CSUN Office of Government and Community Relations and its Interim Director Rafael De La Rosa, the CSUN Armenian Studies Program and its Director Dr. Vahram

see EXHIBIT, page 9



A group of CSUN ASA students and Armenian Assembly volunteers at the opening of the ANI YMCA exhibit

Dr. Ari Sekeryan Named Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies At Fresno State

FRESNO – Armenian Studies Program Director Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian announced the appointment of Dr. Ari Sekeryan as the 16th Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies for the Spring 2020 semester at Fresno State.

Sekeryan graduated from the Department of Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford, defending his dissertation titled, "The Armenians in the Ottoman Empire after the First World War (1918-1923)." In the 2018-2019 academic year, Sekeryan was an Honorary Fellow at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Institute for Research in the Humanities.

Sekeryan was a Visiting Lecturer in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Yerevan State University (summer of 2018) and a Research Assistant in the Department of Sociology at the University of Oxford in 2016.

Sekeryan's interest in the field of Armenian Studies started to grow while he was working at the Istanbul-based Aras Publishing House. Teaching Armenian history is prohibited in the Armenian schools in Istanbul and there were only Armenian literature classes offered, but the content was limited due to the strict regulations. It was at Aras that Sekeryan became more interested in Armenian literature and history, and then started to read works from famed Armenian authors.

At the same time, he decided to pursue a master's degree at Bogaziçi University, where he had the chance to study the Late Ottoman period and the minorities in the Ottoman Empire. These two institutions, Aras Publishing and Bogaziçi University, had a great impact on his intellectual development.

When Sekeryan was visiting the Bayazid State Library to check on a few issues of



Dr. Ari Sekeryan

Turkish and Armenian dailies for a book project that they were working on at Aras, a librarian, after seeing Sekeryan's name on request forms, brought several volumes of Armenian newspapers, asked him to help them in cataloging. No one knew Armenian among the library staff, and he felt obligated to help them. These were the volumes of *Zhamanag* daily in 1918 and 1919.

Sekeryan helped the library staff in cataloging these volumes and afterwards he visited the library twice a week to read the news items, articles, and editorials. He was surprised when he realized the significant gap that exists in Armenian historiography regarding the Armistice years (1918-1923). Rather than focusing on diplomatic documents, which are not great sources to analyze the inner dynamics of

see SEKERYAN, page 7

COMMUNITY NEWS

Accomplished Armenian Women Celebrated at Portantino’s Women in Business Luncheon

BURBANK, Calif. – On Wednesday, December 4th, California State Senator Anthony J. Portantino (La Cañada Flintridge) hosted the annual 25th State Senate District Women in Business Legislative Update & Awards Luncheon at The Castaway. The Women in Business Awards honor local women who have contributed to the economic vitality and diversity of the 25th Senate District. Women in Business additionally celebrates women who have contributed to the greater good of the community. The honorees celebrated inspire others, stimulate the workforce and run some of the most impressive non-profits, healthcare organizations and businesses in the 25th State Senate District.

This year’s luncheon featured Keynote Speaker Dr. Lucy Jones, founder of the Dr. Lucy Jones Center for Science and Society and Research Associate at the Seismological Laboratory of Caltech. She has been at the forefront of all seismic movement experienced in California and nationwide. Additionally, the event included music performed by the Pasadena Conservatory of Music and Cantor Ruth Berman Harris.

The following prominent and successful women honored include:

Volunteer: Talin Yacoubian

Talin Yacoubian, is the Chair of the AGBU

Western District, which serves the Armenian community through its chapters and special groups. She is also active in AGBU Hye Green, a trailblazing women’s group that is a platform for intellectual and professional women. Talin is a board member of the Armenian Assembly of American and the Armenian Fund, as well as being a trustee of the Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California.

Empowerment: Armenian Relief Society of Western USA

The Armenian Relief Society of Western USA received the Empowerment Award. The ARS is an international non-profit organization which is committed to meeting the social, health, and welfare needs of the community. For thirty-five years, the women at the helm of the organization have provided valuable services and humanitarian assistance to both local and international causes while promoting Armenian culture and language. Today, ARS Western USA consists of more than 1,200 members belonging to chapters throughout California, Arizona, Nevada, and Texas.

Law: Armenui A. Ashvanian and Lucy Varpetian

Superior Court Judge Armenui A. Ashvanian presides over a courtroom in the County of Los Angeles. She is the first Armenia-born Armenian American to be appointed to the bench in the

United States. The Western Diocese of the Armenian Church named her their Professional Leader of the Year and the SEIU Local 721 Women’s Caucus “I AM WOMAN, Visionaries, and Agents of Change” award.

Lucy Varpetian, the co-vice chairperson of the Armenian Bar Association and serves as the Co-Chair of the Association’s Pro Bono and Judicial Evaluation Committees. She is a Principal Assistant City Attorney in the Glendale City Attorney’s Office. Lucy serves on the Boards of the Glendale YMCA and the AGBU Western District Committee.

Medicine: Dr. Srpouhi Gasparyan

Dr. Srpouhi Gasparyan practices the full spectrum of family medicine, including infants, children, and adults. She enjoys teaching and works with residents and medical students to train future doctors. She attended medical school at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia and completed her residency at Kaiser Permanente.

Education: Ani Keshishian & Taline Krikorian Arsenian

Ani Keshishian is the Assistant Director of the Professional Development Center of Glendale Community College. In this role, she has been able to increase student enrollment, develop a comprehensive course catalog, introduce new courses, update and improve infrastructure, and

strengthen community partnerships.

Taline Krikorian Arsenian is the present of the Glendale Teachers Association. She has been in that elected position for the last four and a half years. As an advocate, she works to protect and promote the well-being of educators and students by building trust, having clear communication, and proactively participating in public and education advocacy. She has been a math teacher in the school district since 1999. She is the daughter of immigrants and the granddaughter of Armenian Genocide survivors.

“It is a pleasure to honor successful women in the 25th State Senate District. Having a wonderful spouse who is a thriving business executive gives me a unique window into the challenges, opportunities and success of women business leaders throughout my district. The women we honored this year are impressive and humble servants for their non-profits, businesses and professions. It is important that pause and to thank our deserving honorees for their successful service that touches all of us in such a positive way,” commented Portantino.

The main objective of the event was to celebrate exceptional women whose professional skills and commitment to their community have made them leaders and trailblazers in the 25th Senate District. The careers of the honorees varied across the spectrum of professions, including science and technology, corporate and small business, environmental protection, as well as non-profit organizations. The Women in Business Award Luncheon was initiated by then Assemblymember Jack Scott over two decades ago.

Portantino is the Chair of the California State Senate Select Committee on California Armenia, Artsakh Trade Art and Cultural Exchange. He recently returned from his third trip to Armenia and New York City where he helped launch the historic trade MOU signed by Governor Newsom and the Government of Armenian.

Dr. Ari Sekeryan Named Visiting Professor at Fresno State

SEKERYAN, from page 6

communities, he focused on the Ottoman Turkish and Armenian dailies to track the political and social developments and most importantly the reactions of the community leadership as well as members.

Sekeryan’s PhD dissertation, “The Armenians in the Ottoman Empire after the First World War (1918-1923),” analyzes the transformation of the Ottoman Armenian political stance and the impacts of social and political developments of the period on the post-genocide Armenian community by examining the Ottoman Turkish and Armenian press as well as the Ottoman archives.

Sekeryan is currently working on two projects. One is a book, *An Untold Story of Survival*, which is a significant revision of his dissertation and secondly, he is writing an article about the story of Armenian orphans in Corfu, who were transferred from Istanbul in 1923 following the defeat of the Greek forces by the Turkish Nationalists.

Students will have the opportunity to enroll in a three-unit course, “Armenians in the Ottoman Empire after the Genocide,” to be taught by Sekeryan in the Spring 2020 semester. The course will survey the aftermath of the Genocide in the Ottoman Empire and will analyze the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey after the First World War.

Sekeryan will also give three public lectures in the Spring semester, under the general theme of the Armistice years. Based on a collection of Armenian and Ottoman Turkish press, the lectures provide new research on a neglected period in the history of the late Ottoman Empire and Ottoman Armenians.

The first lecture, on Friday, February 7, 2020, is titled “An Untold Story of Survival: the Armenian Community in Istanbul During the Armistice Years (1918-1923),” and will present an overview of the political and social developments that happened in the Ottoman Empire during the Armistice period and it explores how the Armenian community organized itself while facing political turmoil.



From the Armenian Mirror-Spectator (www.mirrorspectator.com), November 15, 2019

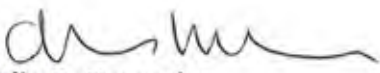
The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is the first English-language Armenian weekly published in the US, and for more than 85 years, it has served the community. Readers can learn of the most important developments in Armenia, as well as international politics, art and culture throughout the world in a convenient and concise format.

With your encouragement, we are broadening the scope of our newspaper. We are securing new correspondents in Armenia while taking advantage of the video abilities of our website. We continue our agreement with Artsakh Public TV to periodically subtitle in English and condense some of its video broadcasts, while our video correspondent in Washington, DC posts coverage of various events. Send us your email if you wish to regularly receive links to articles and videos.

We are renovating our headquarters in the Baikar Building and welcome visitors to see the changes in this historic Armenian building, constructed at the start of the 1960s.

Meanwhile, we continue with our annual tradition of publishing your Christmas and New Year’s wishes, and greetings to relatives and friends in the final issue of the year. In case you wish to give gift subscriptions of the *Mirror-Spectator* for Christmas, for your convenience, we are placing a gift subscription form in the newspaper as well as one below.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Karmanos Cancer Institute Recognizes 2019 Heroes of Cancer

DETROIT – The Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute recognized its 2019 Heroes of Cancer this month, and the lineup includes a number of Wayne State University School of Medicine faculty members.

This year's event, held November 6 at the Gem Theatre in Detroit, celebrated Karmanos' 25th year of honoring individuals and organizations that have distinguished themselves and inspired others as they advocate for and raise awareness of all types of cancers.

"This event is a wonderful opportunity to recognize the extraordinary achievements of those dedicated to making cancer patients and their families," said Katrina Studvent, chief development officer of the Karmanos Cancer Institute. "Each year, we're honored to shed light on the inspirational heroes who, in their own way, help make a difference for those touched by this disease."

"I feel privileged to work with the incredibly gifted team at Karmanos who help develop new cancer therapies that other health

organizations will use in the future," said Gerold Bepler, M.D., Ph.D., president and chief executive officer of the institute and chair of the Department of Oncology at Wayne State University School of Medicine. "Our scientists are world leaders in cancer treatment development. Each is dedicated to the wellbeing of cancer patients, helping to advance treatment breakthroughs that can lead to improved outcomes – not just for those treated at Karmanos but for all cancer patients. It takes all of us working together to provide the multi-faceted support needed for cancer patients and their loved ones to survive and thrive. I am humbled by this year's honorees and truly grateful for all they do to help those impacted by cancer."

The KCI Leadership Awards, which are given for helping to bring about a society that encourages people to speak out about their illness, educate others about cancer and increase funding for cancer research, went to Philip Philip, M.D., Ph.D., FRCP, leader of the Gastrointestinal and Neuroendocrine

Oncology Multidisciplinary Team at the Karmanos Cancer Institute and professor of Oncology and Pharmacology at the Wayne State University School of Medicine, and to Kids Kicking Cancer, founded by Rabbi Elimelech Goldberg, assistant clinical professor of Pediatrics at WSU.

Armenian-American Philip has conducted extensive studies to improve the treatment of patients with GI cancers. This is reflected in his numerous publications that detail some of the best treatments, including more than 200 peer-reviewed manuscripts and more than 50 review articles and book chapters. In 2019, he was named the chair of Gastrointestinal Cancers at the Southwest Oncology Group. In this role, he continues to develop clinical trials at the national level to help bring better and more effective treatments to cancer patients – not only the patients at Karmanos but others fighting GI cancers throughout the country.

Philip specializes in pancreatic cancer.

"I am humbled to be recognized as a Hero of Cancer," he said. "I am privileged to work alongside the dedicated team at Karmanos who support me in my work and serve our cancer patients in the best possible way. This

award is an acknowledgement of teamwork, and I promise to continue to do my best for those battling this disease. I learn from my patients who are true heroes!"

Rabbi Goldberg established Kids Kicking Cancer 20 years ago after losing his 2-year-old daughter, Sarah, to leukemia. Kids Kicking Cancer teaches children about power, peace and purpose through breathing, martial arts movements and meditation. One of its martial artists, Michael Hunt, has endless patience, humor and warmth when connecting with young cancer patients. Hunt is just one of the Kids Kicking Cancer representatives who teaches classes for children on active cancer treatment, as well as their siblings who also face their own challenges and stressors. There is no hour of the day that Hunt won't travel to Detroit, Ann Arbor or beyond to serve the regional children's hospitals and to support their most vulnerable patients through challenging treatments. There are times when he and his colleagues are the only support for children whose parents aren't able to be with them because of transportation issues or other child care or work responsibilities.

Maranian Promoted to Major General

LEAVENWORTH, Kan. – On December 2, Brigadier General Stephen Jack Maranian was promoted to the rank of major general.

Maranian was born in Boston and grew up in Watertown and Natick.

In June 2019, MG Maranian was assigned as Deputy Commanding General-Education, United States Army Combined Arms Center, Provost of the Army University, and Deputy Commandant, United States Army Command and General Staff College, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

His overseas service comprises deployments in Afghanistan, Iraq and Kuwait as well as assignments in Greece, Italy, Germany and Korea.

Maranian holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Bucknell University and a master's degree in human resources development and strategic studies.

He is a graduate of the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, the Army War College in Carlisle, Penn. and also completed a fellowship at the NATO Defense College in Rome, Italy.

He is also a graduate of the Greek Language Institute in Monterey, Calif.

His decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service

Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, and the NATO Meritorious Service Medal. He is also authorized to wear the Senior Parachutist Badge, the Combat Action Badge and the Canadian Parachutist



Major General Stephen Jack Maranian

Badge.

He has been married to his wife, Cynthia, since 1993. He is the son of Jack and Alma Maranian of Natick, Mass. His maternal grandparents were Stephen and Siony Khachadoorian from Kharpert. His paternal grandparents were Aram and Liza Maranian from Aintab.

OBITUARY

Arax Simsarian Pilot, WWII Navy Veteran

NEW YORK – Arax Simsarian, of New York City, died on November 12, 2019, at age 97. She was born in New Jersey in 1922, a daughter of Dicran and Satenig (Tashjian) Simsarian.

She graduated from Fort Lee (N.J.) High School and Mount Holyoke College in 1943. During World War II she served as an officer in the WAVES at the Naval Ammunition Depot in Hingham, Massachusetts, and at the Office of Special Devices and Inventions, later called the Office of Naval Research.

In 1941, during the summer of her sophomore year, she was selected to take part in a conference on International Affairs at the summer home of Eleanor Roosevelt at Campobello, New Brunswick, Canada, under the leadership of Joseph Lash.

Upon her discharge from the Navy, she was a researcher and reporter for the National Industrial Conference Board and for the National Association of Manufacturers, where she wrote a special paper on Social Security and a position paper on forced labor and handicapped employees. These position papers were referred to by both employers and employee unions to support their respective positions. In 1966 she was employed by Standard Oil

Company of New Jersey, now Exxon, and while there, she was invited by George P. Schultz, then director of the U. S. Office of Management and Budget during the administration of President Nixon, to work in the White House, where she prepared reports and charts for the Board of Economic Advisors. She also worked for Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States and became a licensed Chartered Life Underwriter. She later was associated with the insurance brokerage firm of Alexander & Alexander.

She became a licensed pilot for single engine aircraft and was licensed to fly commercial planes, one of about 1500 women with such a license. She was an active member of the Ninety Nines, the International Organization of Women Pilots, having served as a vice governor. She was a world traveler and visited every continent as well as the North Pole and Antarctica.

Simsarian is survived by her brother, Edward, and his wife, Lowerre, of Worcester, Mass., her nieces, Ellen and Sarah, both of New York, and her nephew, David, of Yarmouth, Maine. Her brother, Kenneth, predeceased her.

A memorial service will be held at a date to be announced in the spring of 2020.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

ANI Exhibit on Armenian Volunteers in Armenia at Glendale YMCA

EXHIBIT, from page 6

Shemmassian, the CSUN Armenian Student Association (ASA), as well as special guests Ambassador Dr. Armen Baibourtian, the Consul General of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles, Ms. Mary Chakerian who serves as a Field Representative for Congressman Brad Sherman, and Ms. Nikki Perez who serves as a Field Representative for California State Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel (D-45).

Armenian Assembly of America Western Region Director Mihran Toumajan served as the Master of Ceremonies and introduced a distinguished group of speakers. Dr. Vahram Shemmassian, Professor of Armenian Studies at CSUN, headed the lineup of speakers. He welcomed the audience to the school and introduced the university's plans with the recently announced \$2.1 million gift dedicated to the Armenian Studies Program.

"This exhibit once again demonstrated American humanitarianism in its finest, as well as the close bonds between the American and Armenian peoples that exist until today. Armenians in the United States have contributed to this great nation in many areas including, but not limited to, science, literature, sports, arts and culture, politics and so on. In turn, the Armenian nation will forever be indebted to the American people for their altruism and benevolence shown in times of great catastrophes and tribulations," stated Dr. Shemmassian.

During his remarks, Baibourtian reflected upon the historical meaning of the exhibit with



Organizers, co-sponsors, special guests, and student volunteers at the CSUN exhibit

depicting the life and deeds of two American heroes in Armenia in 1918-1919, this photo exhibition sheds light on unknown pages of American humanitarian undertakings in Armenia and delves into the roots of Armenian-U.S. historical friendship," Baibourtian.

Speaking on behalf of the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles, Stanton cited Elder and Arroll as exemplars of YMCA ideals and called upon viewers to appreciate the volunteer spirit that inspired them to assume so much responsibility.

Director of the West Gallery, Jim Sweeters, welcomed the audience to the exhibit and praised CSUN ASA volunteers, who helped mount the exhibit and welcome the audience attending the opening ceremonies with refreshments and information. Concluding remarks were made by Mary Chakerian, field representative of Congressman Brad Sherman, who bestowed Certificates of Special Congressional Recognition upon Adalian and Shemmassian.

Prior to the opening ceremonies, Adalian gave a brief overview of the exhibit explaining key moments captured by the photography and testimony of the two YMCA volunteers in Armenia.

"While a heroic story, all of this might have been completely forgotten had Elder and Arroll not done something else, which was to take photographs of the situation in Armenia. They effectively are the first documentarians of the rebirth of the Armenian nation and the photographs they made are of a remarkable quality and contain a wealth of information. Some of the pictures are so dramatic that no amount of words can reconstruct the scenes they depict," explained Dr. Adalian.

Maria Cozette of Horizon TV conducted an extensive interview with Adalian about the origin of the exhibit, its unique elements, the importance of the humanitarian undertaking of the YMCA volunteers, and his appreciation of the

Elder family who shared the resources needed to reconstruct this forgotten piece of history.

The exhibit was viewed by student groups over the course of the following two weeks. Seventh and eighth grade students from the Armenian Sisters Academy of Montrose, California visited the exhibit as part of their school program. Separately, KABC was present at the West Gallery when 10th grade students of the AGBU Manogian-Demirdjian School (MDS) of Canoga Park, California viewed the exhibit. In addition to interviewing oumajan, a select group of AGBU MDS students were interviewed by Gabriela Milian during which they voiced their own observations about what they learned by seeing the exhibit.

Toumajan, who spearheaded the exhibit's opening ceremonies, also provided guided tours of the exhibition while it was on display at the West Gallery. "On behalf of the Armenian Assembly, I extend our profound gratitude to our co-sponsors at the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles and at CSUN for their dedicated partnership. We are especially grateful to Mr. Suren Seropian, Director of Development of CSUN's College of Humanities, for facilitating introductions to several stakeholders on the campus of CSUN, and for generously serving as an integral member of our team of co-sponsors," stated Toumajan.

Upon the heels of the opening of the exhibit,

momentous developments in Washington, DC soon put the U.S. House of Representatives on record affirming the Armenian Genocide. Adalian was interviewed by international media, including Voice of America Russian Service and Al-Arabiya News Channel, on this major legislative accomplishment of the Armenian American community and the importance of American



Ambassador Dr. Armen Baibourtian (center) standing with audience at opening ceremonies



Dr. Adalian and Dr. Shemmassian awarded Certificates of Special Congressional Recognition on behalf of Congressman Brad Sherman by his Field Representative Mary Chakerian

his personal thoughts about the difficult days at the start of the Armenian republic as documented in the photographs and testimony of the exhibit.

"The initiative of organizing this important exhibition duly serves its purpose. By means of

policy in the context of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

The YMCA exhibit has become a critical resource for YMCA centers in America and Armenia. The exhibit also served as the bridging point of reference to the partnership agreement struck between the Glendale YMCA and Artsakh YMCA signed in early November.

The exhibit is currently on display until Friday, January 17, 2020 at the YMCA of Glendale and will be traveling to other California-based centers in the new year.

"The exhibition titled 'American Relief in the First Republic of Armenia,' along with all the other exhibits prepared by the Armenian National Institute, are available for free downloading in digital format. An abundance of other instructional resources is available on the

ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA



SUMMER 2020 INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS



WASHINGTON, D.C.



YEREVAN, ARMENIA



Armenian Assembly of America Western Region Director Mihran Toumajan and CSUN Armenian Studies Program Director Professor Vahram Shemmassian

ANI website (www.armenian-genocide.org). In light of the House of Representatives' adoption of the Armenian Genocide Resolution which expressly stated that it 'encourage[d] education and public understanding of the Armenian Genocide, including the United States role in the humanitarian relief effort,' the Armenian National Institute calls on educators to tap the available resources for that very purpose," stated Adalian.



APPLY ONLINE AT AAAINC.ORG/STUDENTS



COMMUNITY NEWS

Diaspora High Commissioner Sinanyan Works for Armenia-Diaspora Integration and Repatriation

SINANYAN, from page 1

Sinanyan had known and supported Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan for several years. After an indirect communication from the prior diaspora minister, Mkhitaryan, broached a possible position, Sinanyan spoke directly with Pashinyan and decided it required a conversation in person. So Sinanyan said he took a plane to Yerevan and after several meetings with Pashinyan came to an agreement.

After this trip, Sinanyan returned briefly to Yerevan and resigned from the city council and all other offices. He then flew out to Yerevan to start living there fulltime. His children, as during other summers, came to spend a few months in Armenia but then returned to Glendale for school.

He said about the move, “You never know in life, but this is it. I am building the foundations for my children’s future here. My family is still in Glendale only because we are building our new apartment [in Yerevan] and because my decision was so quick that we weren’t ready for the school transition and those very important things....The plan is, one way or the other, the kids will start school in September of next year in Yerevan.”

Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs

Some people have viewed the transformation of the prior Ministry of the Diaspora into an office as a demotion of sorts. Sinanyan strongly continues to disagree. He said, “I still sit in on the government meetings. I still sit at the same table. I have been given basically a very broad mandate by the prime minister. The prime minister wanted the office to be associated [directly] with him and he wanted the classical constraints that come with a ministry not to be there.”

He gave two examples of such constraints. First, while Sinanyan is able to participate in cabinet or government meetings, he is not obliged to do so and if he is absent he will not be punished for this. Ministers can send their deputy ministers in their stead, but this can only be done on occasion. “Whereas,” Sinanyan said, “I have been instructed specifically to spend as little time in the office as possible, and to be out in the community, working with the community...That means I won’t be there most of the time physically.”

Secondly, government ministers must go to parliament and report weekly at the question-and-answer session, which, he said, exposes them to a lot of potential hostility. Thus, part of the intent of the change was to safeguard the diaspora office from that.

As a result of the recent reorganization of the

Armenian government, the Office of the High Commissioner will not implement cultural or educational programs. These have all been transferred to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. However, Sinanyan said, “We certainly retain jurisdiction over anything that deals with the diaspora, so that if we believe a program is appropriate and should be implemented, or that one should not, or that one is not being implemented well, we intend to share that [belief] with the Ministry and make the appropriate recommendations.”

Sinanyan pointed out that on any diaspora-related program, “At the end of the day, when they are unhappy with it or they are happy with it, we hear about it. They come to us, especially if they are unhappy with it. We get blamed for it too, forget the fact that someone else is sup-

He defines himself as both. He said, “I consider myself a hybrid. I consider myself a complete Hayastantsi Yerevantsi [native of Yerevan and Armenia] [and] at the same time, a complete diasporan.” He is the first diasporan to run this office or its predecessors (which only have a history of ten years).

When asked what is the positive legacy of the Ministry of the Diaspora prior to the Velvet Revolution that he can use, Sinanyan replied, “I can think of only one thing, to be honest, and that is the Ari Toun program, which has since been renamed Qayl Depi Toun.” This is basically a summer camp program for diasporan Armenian children, who come to bond with each other and with Armenia. Sinanyan said the format is being expanded, and added, “If we had more resources, I would double that pro-

the diaspora done in the past, Sinanyan said, were done even before the ministry was created and will be done after it is gone. Therefore he did not consider that an important legacy of the pre-revolution ministry.

Smaller Budget than Glendale

The office has a budget of about \$1.5 million for next year, which must be approved by the parliament. Sinanyan exclaimed that this is a “far cry from the \$900 million of the city of Glendale.”

At present, unlike the office of the previous Minister of the Diaspora, he has no advisers. He said, “I am taking it slow. Once we announce the new structure of the office, I think that is when I will commence appointing advisers.” Among them will be his representatives in vari-

GIORGIO GOGUA (RFE/RL) PHOTO



Zareh Sinanyan

posed to do it. This is our business. I have that absolute, explicit authority.”

The Office of the High Commissioner of Diasporan Affairs has a staff of 52 including Sinanyan. A good part of the staff is new, some are from before the Velvet Revolution of 2018. He said that this was not his final lineup or configuration however. His chief of staff is a diasporan and he said that he intends to hire as many as he can, while keeping a balance between them and natives of Armenia.

gram in size because, again, it is very effective for kids at that impressionable age. They learn two things. They first learn how vast the Armenian world is. They are not limited to their little communities or their church or even Armenia. They learn that we are a small but global nation. They get to know each other. Secondly, they bond with their homeland, because that is the glue that puts everything together.”

The yearbooks, publications and research on

ous diaspora communities. Furthermore, he said, “In the future, I see clearly that we will have an attaché at the embassy from our office, especially in the larger communities, who will deal with nothing but diaspora affairs.”

To make up for limited resources, Sinanyan said, “Since I came, we started partnering up with organizations which have been in the diasporan Armenian space—in the business of the Armenian diaspora, such as Birthright Armenia,

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

North Dakota Senator Blocks Armenian Genocide Bill at Request of White House

CRAMER, from page 1

Cramer’s objection is especially noteworthy given that he was a co-sponsor of a similar resolution during the last Congress.

Cramer tweeted a picture in September 2017 thanking actor Dean Cain for visiting Capitol Hill to “raise awareness on the Armenian genocide.”

“Once a Superman, always a Superman. Thank you @RealDeanCain for coming in yesterday to raise awareness on the Armenian genocide,” he wrote under the picture of himself with Cain.

As Axios has previously reported, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) was asked to block the resolution on November 13 after meeting with Erdogan at the White House.

Graham told Axios at the time that he was trying to “salvage the relationship” between the U.S. and Turkey, which has been under considerable strain in the wake of Turkey’s military invasion of northern Syria.

He added: “I’m not going to object next time.”

The following week, the White House asked Sen. David Perdue (R-Ga.) to block the resolution.

A Perdue spokesperson told Axios: “Senator Perdue objected due to concerns that passage of the resolution would jeopardize the sensitive negotiations going on in

the region with Turkey and other allies.”

Trump clashed with France’s Emmanuel Macron at a NATO summit in London this week over Turkey’s role in the military alliance. Macron criticized Turkey for its assault on U.S.- and French-allied Kurdish forces in northern Syria, as well as its purchase of a Russian S-400 missile system over the objections of its NATO allies.

Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) both called on Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to sanction Turkey over the S-400 purchase.

Trump said at the NATO summit that he has a “very good relationship” with Erdogan, dodging a question over whether he’d approve the sanctions.

Sen. Cramer’s office and the White House did not provide a comment.

In related news, for the third time, Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Ted Cruz (R-TX) issued a bipartisan call for Unanimous Consent for Senate Adoption of S.Res.150 – the Armenian Genocide Resolution.

The passage of a resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide in the US Senate is “very likely” in the coming weeks, Cruz told NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

“We are likely to finally acknowledge the horrific Armenian Genocide, which I have been fighting for years to do,” the senator said.



Sen. Devin Cramer (D-N.D.) with actor and supporter of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide Dean Cain



COMMUNITY NEWS

One-Day Retreat at St. Nersess Aims to Revive Spirits

ARMONK, N.Y. — On Saturday, November 23, St. Nersess hosted its first-ever one-day retreat focusing exclusively on one's faith journey.

Jointly sponsored by the seminary and the Eastern Diocese's Department of Christian Education, the retreat, titled "A Time for Prayer," attracted 27 participants from the greater New York and New Jersey region as well as New England.

Participants received advanced readings on the topic by contemporary theologians/teachers prior to the retreat so the first order of the day was to discuss these readings in small groups. Then attention was focused on a selection of verses in Scripture that described or depicted prayer, notably by and about Jesus Himself.

After examining these passages, retreat facilitator, Fr. Yeprem Kelegian, seminary spiritual director, polled the group for favorite Bible passages or stories. "So often," he noted, "this choice sheds a lot of light on where we are in our relationship with God."

After a lunch prepared by Wilma Petrossian, Manager of Food Services, the

day continued with a nurturing introduction to silence in prayer. Participants engaged in a brief period of focused stillness and then dispersed for a session of quiet time, time which, many reported later, was a welcome respite from the "noise" of everyday life. The final retreat session, led by Elise Antreassian, explored resources for creating a disciplined approach to spending time with God and surrendering "me time" to Him. These included a 4-week challenge to incorporate Scripture and prayer time in one's daily schedule, an evening prayer exercise, and a journal to keep notes on daily encounters and experiences.

At day's end, all gathered for worship in the chapel. The service, conducted by Fr. Mardiros Chebian, dean, added contemporary litanies and participation to the traditional Armenian "jhamerkootiun" format. Group members wrote their own prayer petitions and placed them in a basket on the altar from which they were drawn and read by Der Hayr. It was a poignant moment as the cares of each member of the group became the prayer of all.

More one-day retreats will be offered by the seminary and the Eastern Diocese.



Some of the attendees at a session

Diaspora High Commissioner Sinanyan Works for Armenia-Diaspora Integration and Repatriation

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Repat Armenia and others, and using their knowhow and their resources to do those things that otherwise we would be unable to do at this stage." Teach for Armenia is another partner in certain projects. He said, "We are unashamedly, unabashedly using them to further our agenda, and I think they don't mind at all."

On the other hand, Sinanyan said, he did not specifically plan to do fundraising in the diaspora for his office. He said, "But I may resort to it. I am not sure yet." He said that he has received many offers of help in terms of funding and has some ideas on how to attract talent and get things done, but has not yet found the proper legal format for it.

Diasporan Goals

Sinanyan and the Pashinyan government have two major goals for his office. In the short-term, it is, he said, "to achieve the highest level of integration between the diaspora and Armenia possible. And I mean integration on every level, professional, economic, cultural, etc. — easier said than done."

He said that "we must do it because Armenia, in order to thrive and to survive and to get its economy to grow as fast as we need it to grow, has to go for the low-hanging fruit, and the low-hanging fruit is its diaspora." "This integration," Sinanyan continued, "will also bring with itself the restoration of the sense of trust between Armenia and the diaspora, where the diaspora does not view itself as a milking cow for Armenia. And Armenia does not view the diaspora as a relatively foreign element that didn't come in large numbers, en masse, to fight during the Artsakh War." The achievement of this goal will help Armenia attain the second strategic goal, which is important for national security.

This second, ultimate goal, Sinanyan said, is to achieve repatriation on a massive scale over the next 25 to 30 years. Sinanyan said, "This country [Armenia] does not have a sustainable economy. It needs to provide for itself a market." It needs to be able to draft people into the military in sufficient numbers to defend the country, to have taxpayers, and do everything else a successful country does. When asked what the population of Armenia was at present, he replied frankly, "No one knows."

Sinanyan said, "The magic number that we are going to set for ourselves, and it is a part of our Vision 2050 [plan], is five million people at least. Frankly, I think it is a modest goal and I think we can do better. But five million is certainly way better than what we have now. I would like to have a million and a half growth, and then natural growth, whatever is there, and achieve that number."

Prime Minister Pashinyan publicly announced some of the goals of the Armenia

2050 Vision plan in August 2019 (<https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30093797.html>) while a preliminary draft was discussed in July.

Sinanyan did not find any immediate physical limits to increasing Armenia's population dramatically. He emphasized that "any time I refer to Armenia, Artsakh and all the liberated territories are part of it." Together they compose 42,000 square kilometers of land. He said Israel is half that size and includes territory that used to be considered barren, but it sustains a population of 8 ½ million.

He said that first integration must be carried out and then repatriation. Internal reforms in Armenia have to progress, he said, "to a point where we can tell folks with a straight face, come, we are ready to accept you, this homeland wants you, and you will have a quality of life that will be better than the one you are



Zareh Sinanyan with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

abandoning in your host countries."

Sinanyan said the recent revolution in Armenia has provided an opportunity to do this. While "better than" is relative and a subjective standard, Sinanyan said it must have some objective and measurable benchmarks. Education, health care, and a non-monopolistic, free economy arose among the foundational qualities he said a state needs in order for its citizens to be content with it and others to want to possibly live there. Secondly, he said, Armenia must make sure that the diaspora remains healthy in this time period. This is all ultimately in the interest of the Armenian people, he concluded.

Travels

Sinanyan took his first trip as high commissioner to Russia. When asked whether this was to balance his US connections, he said that in some ways, yes, but more importantly, Russia is where the largest Armenian diaspora is located. He said that it is so vast not only demographically but also in its geographic spread. He took his first two trips there, but afterwards went to many other countries with Armenian communities. His near-native Russian language knowl-

edge serves as an asset on his travels (as does his English fluency).

He said that he inherited no analysis or policy for dealing with the Russian-Armenian communities. Therefore, he said, "First of all, I am trying to understand what the Russian community is. When I say it is a vast and complicated community, it truly is. The difference that I have seen between Moscow and St. Petersburg, between St. Petersburg and Sochi, is tremendous. These communities are so different that they might as well exist in different countries. So for each, there has to be a different approach." It is too soon to say what that will be, he said.

Sinanyan agreed that quick and easy assimilation within a generation in Russia was a problem. He said, "Certainly, the language problem [loss of Armenian] is very relevant to Russia, though it is very relevant to all of the diaspora. I want to step away from this language-centric concept of what or who is Armenian and move more towards self-identification. Hopefully that way we circumvent the problem of folks not really speaking Armenian within a generation or two."

Though communities still should be encouraged to establish Armenian full-time or Sunday schools, Sinanyan said that the creation of schools in Russia apparently was problematic. He admitted that in places like Moscow, where there are sufficient numbers of prosperous Armenians who could afford to pay for private Armenian schools for their children, it is unclear why this is so. His explanation for it is that "the value associated with being Armenian or raising your child as an Armenian had diminished to such an extent that the average Russian Armenian didn't see the need for it...Why make sacrifices, why spend money and resources just so my kid can speak Armenian if I don't see my kid's future in Armenia?"

During the Soviet period, Sinanyan said, Armenia at least was industrialized and was in some ways an interesting country, with science and arts. Since independence, Sinanyan said, and until recently, "Armenia had become a place from which people are leaving and not the other way around. At least a million people have left Armenia. Why would the average diasporan want to go to a place that people are leaving or even dream about their kids going there?"

However, the revolution in Armenia provides an opportunity to change this attitude, he said. Adding value to their future and yours, he said, "is how you fix the language and assimilation problem."

He added that while Russia might be more

top-down, "the same concept exists in the United States. It is must softer, but certainly, a guy with the name Zareh Sinanyan is going to have a much tougher time than a dude named John Smith. That is just the reality of it." Assimilation is the same in France too, although Sinanyan has not yet visited there.

In the Middle East, Sinanyan said, "Traditionally we held on to our language and our culture because there was this hope of return that Western Armenians always dreamt about. They lived in the Middle East all around Western Armenia." That has changed too.

Sinanyan was going to visit Los Angeles the next day. He said that though Moscow had Armenians from all over the former Soviet Union, it did not compare with Los Angeles in its degree of cosmopolitanism, with Armenians from around the world, all in comparatively large numbers. As in other communities, he said, "We are still trying to figure out how do we achieve the goals we are setting for ourselves."

When asked how he would attempt to reach the majority in Los Angeles, who were unaffiliated formally with organizations, he replied that many of the former have connections with Armenian cultural groups, like dancers or singers, or with student groups. These groups can be used to reach people, along with social media and any other resource available.

Ultimately, Sinanyan went back to his formulation of success attracting those who are generally uninvolved in Armenian affairs. If Armenia can provide "an attractive product to the diaspora...they will find a way to communicate with us. It is kind of like the 'if you build it, they will come' mentality."

Politics

Sinanyan's appointment was criticized by the Social Democrat Hunchak Party and some others in Los Angeles, who felt that because of his prior Armenian National Committee/Armenian Revolutionary Federation affiliation, he would be partisan as high commissioner (<https://massispost.com/2019/06/sdhp-statement-on-the-appointment-of-zareh-sinanyan-as-the-chief-commissioner-for-the-diaspora-affairs/>). Sinanyan commented: "I don't really see a need to respond to that. They are entitled to their opinion. All I need to do is work and I intend to do that."

He declared that he was not involved in Armenian politics or in Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party. Sinanyan added, "I try to stay out of politics as much as I can because the Office is kind of nonpolitical. It involves the diaspora and the diaspora shouldn't be political, if you think about it."

However, when asked if he foresees becoming involved in Armenian politics at some later point, after this position, he replied, "I will not exclude the possibility of that happening."

Arts & Living

Hermitage Director Piotrovsky Comes From Russia with Love (for Armenia)

By **Aram Arkun**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

YEREVAN – Prof. Dr. Mikhail Piotrovsky, director of the world-famous State Hermitage Museum of Saint Petersburg for almost three decades, was in Armenia in mid-October to explore projects of museum cooperation, meet with government officials, and participate in some Aurora Forum events. He gave a Russian-language talk on October 19 as part of the Aurora Dialogues in the Ararat Challenge festivities and is an Aurora Forum Goodwill Ambassador.

Piotrovsky and the Hermitage have profound ties with Armenia. The Hermitage is the only museum in the world which has a special department of Armenian and Urartian antiquities. Prior to Piotrovsky, it had an Armenian director, Hovsep (Joseph) Orbeli from 1934 to 1951.

Piotrovsky was born in Yerevan in 1944 to an Armenian archaeologist and Armenologist mother, Hripsime Janpolatyan, while his father Boris Piotrovsky (1908-1990) was a famous specialist on Urartu and himself a director of



Mikhail Piotrovsky (Aram Arkun photo)

the Hermitage for nearly 40 years. With a doctorate in history specializing in Arabic studies, Piotrovsky participated in archaeological excavations in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Yemen. He has published widely, teachers as a professor at Saint Petersburg State University, and is a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Russian Academy of Arts. He is a foreign member of the Armenian Academy of Sciences.

The Hermitage and Armenia

Piotrovsky wanted Armenian-American readers to be aware of these connections. He said, in fluent English, “The Hermitage is really one of the places that is very much connected with Armenia, a museum outside Armenia that has a big department of ancient and medieval Armenia. The Hermitage for more than 70 years was run by people connected with Armenia—Orbeli, my father, and me. And the Hermitage is one of these important outposts of Armenia, as Saint Petersburg in general is, and it is very important. I think that the Armenian presence all over the world and relations between Armenia itself and all the outposts of Armenian culture around the world are very important.”

Piotrovsky explained that “as a museum director, I am very much involved in all the prolongation of the cooperation between the Hermitage and Armenia.” As part of his trip, he visited the Urartian site of Karmir Blur or Teishebaini together with the mayor of Yerevan, Hayk Marutyan. Piotrovsky’s father Boris directed the original excavations there in
see PIOTROVSKY, page 14



Mariette Soudjian

‘Charles’ Makes Appearance in North Hollywood

NORTH HOLLYWOOD, Calif. – The mainstage performance of “Charles: A Bio-Musical on the Life & Songs of Legendary Singer Charles Aznavour,” came to life at the notable El Portal Theatre on Saturday, November 9, transforming the storied space into a nostalgic ambiance to highlight one of the most industrious and memorable singers in the world.

Created, written and directed by Taleen Babayan, the performance featured singer Maurice Soudjian, pianist Bernard C. Bayer, who portrayed a younger Aznavour, and Mariette Soudjian, who guest starred as Edith Piaf. Musicians Harout Soghomonian accompanied on guitar and accordion and Levon Ghanimian on bass.

The audience was intrigued by the narrative story that unveiled little known details about the singer’s life, in addition to the live singing and instrumentation.

“This brilliant show provided great historical and cultural insight into an exciting era of French music,” said Mariette Tachdjian. “It’s a must-see as we discover and rediscover the great legend through stories and songs, alongside the spirit of Aznavour that was alive and present with us.”

The bio-musical debuted last October at Hollywood’s the Hotel Cafe in a cabaret-style setting that brought to the forefront the striking resemblance, vocally and
see CHARLES, page 13



Performers on stage at the El Portal Theatre

Armenian State Symphony Orchestra to Perform in London On January 14

YEREVAN – The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra (ASSO) will perform at the Barbican Hall in London on Tuesday, January 14, with its 2019-20 Artist-in-Residence Maxim Vengerov.

Artistic Director Sergey Smbatyan, who founded the ASSO 14 years ago, conducts the orchestra in a program which includes the long-awaited European premiere of Armenian composer John Ter-Tatevosian’s Symphony No. 2 The Fate of Man (1959). They will also play Composer-in-Residence Alexey Shor’s Barcarolle for Violin and Orchestra and Bruch’s Violin Concerto No. 1 with Vengerov as the soloist.

This performance is a rare opportunity for UK audiences to hear one of Europe’s newest and most distinctive symphony orchestras, under the leadership of Smbatyan, who founded the ASSO at age 18.

The 32-year-old conductor has not only been recognized in Armenia, being recently awarded the title of “Honored Artist of the Republic of Armenia” by the President of the republic, but has also received international recognition with the title of Chevalier of the “Order of Arts and Letters”, granted by the Minister of Culture and Communication of France, making him the youngest and only Armenian recipient of this title.

One of Smbatyan’s and the orchestra’s key missions is to share Armenian culture and history internationally. Their decision to bring Ter-Tatevosian’s work to new audiences stems from a wish not only to introduce people to Armenian composers and their music, but to spread the message of hope that many Armenians have felt since the recent revolution.

Composer and violinist John Ter-Tatevosian (1926-1988) based his second symphony on Soviet writer Mikhail Sholokhov’s text “The Fate of Man,” which tells the emotionally fluctuating tale of a soldier enduring trials and devastating times throughout the Second World War, but who eventually finds hope in adopting a young boy, also ravaged by the horrors of war. This premiere comes at a pivotal point in Armenian history following their 2018 revolution, alongside continuing, and occasionally violent, tensions with some of their neighboring countries.

Smbatyan said: “The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra is composed of extraordinary musicians, not just in their virtuosity and dedication to the highest level of music making, but in their belief in music to spread messages of hope and joy, even in turbulent times. We hope our first ever Barbican performance, and indeed the rest of the European tour, brings a beacon of light from Armenia to the rest of the world.”

Smbatyan has been praised for his conducting with “great dignity and nobility” (Hessisch Niedersächsische Allgemeine) and continues to guide the orchestra from strength to strength as it approaches its 15th year.

The Armenian conductor champions innovation in music. In 2015 he founded the 24/04 World Orchestra to commemorate the centenary of the Armenian genocide, comprising of 123 musicians from 43 countries. Earlier this year, Smbatyan also brought members of the ASSO together with musicians from all five continents for the World Congress of Information Technology, where they performed the first ever piece of music composed by artificial intelligence in real-time.

The ASSO’s Barbican performance is part of a European tour, which takes the Orchestra to cities across Germany, Austria, Russia, the Czech Republic and the UK. The ASSO is supported by the European Foundation for Support of Culture (EUFSC), who are organizing this European tour.



ARTS & LIVING

Premiere of 'One Province, One Song' Project on YouTube

YEREVAN — On November 11, the first episode of the “One Province, One Song” project by Argentine-Armenian singer-songwriter Alin Demirdjian was released. After this first episode, a new one will be released every Monday on Demirdjian’s YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/alinmusica.

The videos are a musical tour of Armenia and Artsakh, each one with its identity and its musical style: diverse styles of music, different local artists and variety of landscapes and customs. Every Monday a new song is released to help discover a new region of the beautiful and interesting Armenian lands. Detailed information about each song, each band and each province

around Argentinian provinces, singing and meeting new local artists.

That’s why last year while she was visiting Armenia for the fourth time, she had the idea to do the same in Armenia and Artsakh, and she developed a project called “One Province, One Song, which she is carrying out with the support of Birthright Armenia organization, My Step Foundation and AGBU Armenia.

The project is aimed to share the current musical scene of Armenia and Artsakh while showing it’s landscapes and traditions. It consists of exploring every province and searching for a local musician or a band with whom she can sing a song in Armenian and record a music video.

Regarding the songs, the goal is to record artists of all ages, styles, -both in traditional and modern genres. All videos will be filmed on-site and, later on, edited and shared individually (in YouTube and all social media platforms) as episodes. In total there will be 19 episodes (all regions of Armenia and Artsakh and its capitals, Yerevan and Stepanakert) which will be published every Monday

Demirdjian’s YouTube channel.

The tour began on August 2019 and ended in September. To discover the adventures of Alin and her team on social networks visit her Instagram Stories Highlights: www.instagram.com/alinmusica

The months before her trip to Armenia, Alin offered concerts and informative talks in the 7



Singing in Armenia



Alin Demirdjian (first from left) performs with the Tiezerk band.

Armenian schools of Buenos Aires, in 2 Armenian schools and in 2 scout groups of Uruguay, and with the Armenian youth of Chile. The main objective is to involve young people in the project, so that they can be more connected to the current situation in Armenia and Artsakh, through their music and their provinces.

Demirdjian is a singer-songwriter from Buenos Aires, who has composed and performed songs accompanied by guitar from a very young age. In December 2014 she released her first album with her band called “Buscando el Ámbar,” performing all the songs she wrote: a selection of songs that described her as an artist and defined her original musical proposal. In 2017 she released her second solo album titled “De Leones y Deshielos.” This album was officially presented at the “Sala Siranush” in Buenos Aires. In November 2018 she released a new single, *Hola*.

During these years the singer-songwriter has been invited to sing with artists across South America and Armenia.

The artist is also part of the music duo for children in the Armenian language called “Alin & Talin” with Talín Leylek, created in 2012. The duo released an album with some songs of their own and others of the popular songbook. Alin & Talin gave numerous concerts in a large number of Armenian institutions in South America, in theaters, and also participated in festivals such as the “Buenos Aires Celebra” organized by the government of the city of Buenos Aires and the “Homage to Father Komitas” organized by AGBU, among others.

During 2009 and 2010 she was also part of a duo of Argentine folk music with Mariano Zagari. The duo played in several traditional “peñas” of the city of Buenos Aires and surroundings.

‘Charles’ Makes Appearance in North Hollywood

CHARLES, from page 12

physically, of its lead singer who always dreamed of embodying Aznavour.

“In a sense I’ve been preparing for this role throughout my lifetime,” said Maurice Soudjian, who spent a considerable amount of time living, studying and working in Paris. “It was a natural progression for me since I’ve been passionately listening to and studying Aznavour’s captivating music for decades.”

In response to his performance, attendee Mark Olivas said, “Maurice blew my mind.”

“Bernard Bayer nailed the role of the younger Aznavour, especially with his skills on the piano, and Mariette brought another talented dimension to the show as Piaf,” said Olivas. “The show was genius.”

The concept of the bio-musical was based on primary and secondary sources, including Aznavour’s two autobiographies, to depict the artist accurately as the three dimensional figure



Maurice Soudjian



From left, Harout Soghomonian, Levon Ghanimian, Maurice Soudjian, Mariette Soudjian, Taleen Babayan and Bernard C. Bayer

that he was and the rich life he led. Each vignette tied into the performance of one of his hit songs, from *La Boheme* to *Les Deux Guitares* to *La Mamma*. Highlighting the generational enthusiasm for Aznavour, singer-actress Mariette Soudjian performed Franco-English versions of *Emmenez-Moi* and *Hier Encore*.

“As a diasporan musician, performing in this show was a historical learning experience as

well as one of personal growth,” said Ghanimian. “Aznavour’s music was not only a portrayal of love, but also a story of healing for a people who have suffered great loss.”

The son of Armenian Genocide survivors, Aznavour’s climb to becoming a chart-topping singer across the globe was one filled with determination, grit and ambition. Born into an artistic family, Aznavour embraced his passion

for music and led an acclaimed career without ever forgetting his roots.

“I now see Aznavour in a different light because of this up close and personal performance of amazingly talented artists,” said Gladys Saroyan. “I’m so happy that Taleen is enriching our community through these live theatrical plays and I just wish Aznavour saw the performance.”



ARTS & LIVING

Hermitage Director Piotrovsky Comes From Russia with Love (for Armenia)

PIOTROVSKY, from page 12

a joint expedition of the Armenian Academy of Sciences and the Hermitage and in this way strengthened ties between Yerevan and Saint Petersburg (then Leningrad) at the same time.

Piotrovsky exclaimed, “Frankly, it is not in very good condition.” However, a lot of work had been done during the last year, and Piotrovsky participated in discussions of how to make it, he said, into “a very special kind of museum.” Instead of building or rebuilding something, he said that everything would be cleaned and modern technology would be used, so that “people can really get the proper feeling of what was the history and also what was the archaeology, because the digs there at Karmir Blur had been sensational – every day a find, which never happens in a normal excavation...the history of it is also a very important part of the cultural heritage.”

The Hermitage has some choice pieces of Armenian and Urartian art. According to the Hermitage website, there are 1,500 Armenian artifacts from the 9th to 17th centuries alone. Piotrovsky said that most of these are gifts of the Armenian government to the Hermitage, while other items were bought on the market like the famous Skevra reliquary from Cilicia. Furthermore, expeditions in the Tsarist period obtained various items, such as small parts of frescoes from Ani obtained by Orbeli. Most Armenia-related artifacts either are on display or on small shelves and published on the internet.

Piotrovsky said that in his October 19 talk, “Armenian Lessons of the Hermitage,” he referred to the Ani material. One of the “lessons” was that Ani items were saved, and, he said, it was an example of how archaeologists and excavators have to work in very difficult conditions, which are not stable. In addition, when World War I began, Nikolai Marr and Orbeli went anyway to Van to excavate Urartian materials. Piotrovsky said, “You have to save...art is not saved even if it is on the site and even if it is underground.”

At present, the Hermitage is working with



Mikhail Piotrovsky speaking at the Aurora Dialogues before an image of Hovsep (Joseph) Orbeli, one of his predecessors as Hermitage director

Armenia on various projects, and specialists come to Armenia regularly, he said. Agreements have been reached about work at other archaeological sites like Erebuni. The focus on Armenia and Urartu, he said, “is not on the same level as it was before, in Soviet times, but we are now educating new young people.”

Piotrovsky noted that there is also “a very important tradition in Russian studies of the Caucasus and the medieval period, which was founded by Orbeli, who was the director of the Hermitage and a great scholar. It is about

cultural unity at a time when the world was divided among different religions. When you take the upper classes, their cultural unity is very strong, and so sometimes you have the same architectural style, the same style in applied arts too, of the Christians and Muslims if they are of high social level. You can see this clearly in the Caucasus, where you have Georgia, Armenia and all the Seljuks [Turks], and all the others, and you have the very clear feeling of the same culture, more or less.”

He said that the sociological importance of this should be promoted, and that in general, “Our work of museums is to change the wars of memory into dialogues of culture. We are in a place that has a lot of wars of memory. It is very difficult to change them but it is still our mission.”

Role of Museums

Piotrovsky declared, “Museums are reserves. Museums are not galleries for display. Museums are for taking objects of memory, storing them [and] studying them, because without study, to present a thing is nothing.” A treasure is only recognized as such, he said, after it is studied and properly explained. Then it can be displayed, he said.

For this reason, the Hermitage is building two large buildings only for reserves, Piotrovsky said. These will be open reserves.

He said that though museums are for the public, they are not only for the public. He said, “The interference of the public or the interference of the government in museum life is forbidden because we work for the next generation and for art, our priorities. It is...very much contested today because everybody thinks all over the world now that a museum is entertainment, a service.”

Piotrovsky has a more far-reaching view of the museum’s role. He said, “No, museums have a very important mission of keeping historical memory, and part of this mission is to educate people about this historical mission. Certainly, in the case that ...it brings you [there], or makes it nice, and people love it, it is entertainment, but it is [really] edutainment.”

The Hermitage is able in part to do this because it is a Russian state institution. Piotrovsky said, “We have a special status of being under the patronage of the president and we have a special separate line in the state budget, but in general we are part of the Ministry of Culture and we are living with state subsidies.” The remaining fifty percent or so of the budget, he said, comes from ticket sales, donations and other revenue.

The Hermitage Abroad

Piotrovsky said that the Hermitage puts on many exhibitions around the world. Three days earlier he was in Saudi Arabia, and before that in Venice. Armenian and Urartian ties form part of exhibitions on the medieval period. However, he said, it did not present exhibitions solely on Armenia, as that was the realm of Armenia’s museums.

The one place the Hermitage does not send exhibitions is the United States. Piotrovsky said



Urartian statuette at the Hermitage Museum

that this was due to the decision of an American court that the Schneerson library, which was always in Russia, and was nationalized, must be given to Hasidic Jews in the United States. If it is not, state property, such as that of the Hermitage, could be seized, in a sense as hostage to force compliance. This collection at present is in the hands of the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow.

In general, Piotrovsky said, lawsuits are a danger for museums, so for each exhibition abroad, the Hermitage must obtain the guarantee of the host government or some executive body that even in the case of lawsuits, the exhibited items would be returned in a timely fashion.

Under the above circumstances, Piotrovsky said, as the American government cannot provide such guarantees, the Hermitage cannot exhibit in the United States.

Piotrovsky in Armenia

While in Armenia, Piotrovsky met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Speaker of Parliament Ararat Mirzoyan and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II to discuss the role of museums in public life. He was presented with the symbols of the title of honorary citizen of Yerevan by the Yerevan municipality on October 19.



Mayor Hayk Marutyan, left, and Mikhail Piotrovsky visit Karmir Blur



Mayor Hayk Marutyan of Yerevan, left, welcomes Mikhail Piotrovsky.



ARTS & LIVING

Finding Humor in the World, One Cartoon at a Time

By Marietta Khachatryan

YEREVAN (Azg) — Cartoonist Sukias Torosyan, known as Toto, has been the cartoonist for *the Armenian Mirror-Spectator* and its sister publication, *Azg*, in Armenia, for a long time.

Earlier this month, two events were held to celebrate the rare talent of this cartoonist, painter and opera director.

First, at the Tekeyan Cultural Association, on the occasion of his 60th birthday, the opening of an exhibition of his cartoons took place.

And second, the same locale was the site of a celebration for the launch of his new book, whose title translates to *Great Events of a Little Country*.

The book contains a collection of cartoons referring to political events in Armenia as well as in the region and the world.

Azg editor Hakob Avedikian opened the exhibition, saying: "Enjoy, if you can, of course, the sharp barbs of Toto," adding that satire is a sign of health. When presenting the book, he mentioned the sponsors, the Tekeyan Cultural Association and Mihran Minassian, a member of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada



Sukias Torosyan signs a copy of his book.



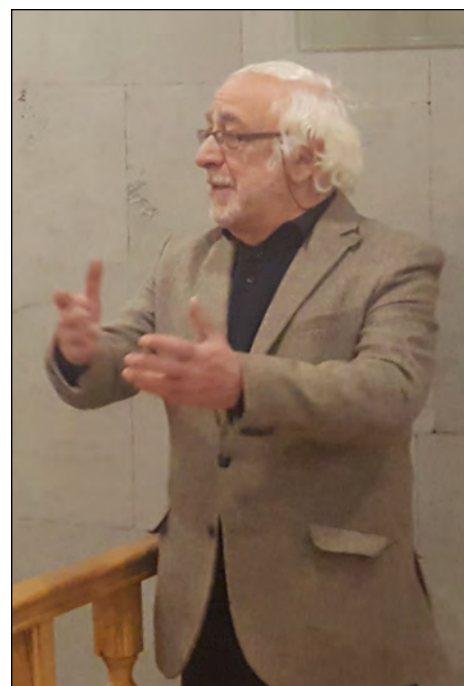
Sukias Torosyan, AKA Toto, in front of some of his cartoons

and one of the founders of *Azg*. Minassian, he said, aimed to make the publication one that offered satire and analysis and that Torosyan's cartoons delivered on both fronts.

Avedikian added that Toto's art follows the tradition of diasporan Armenian satirical cartoonists in the Middle East.

TCA of USA and Canada representative Gayane Muradyan presented the book and thanked Minassian and Central Board President Edmond Y. Azadian for the opportunity to organize a book printing and

Torosyan also received a certificate of appreciation from Yerevan Tekeyan Center Director Armen Tsulikyan.



Azg editor Hakob Avedikian

Hamlet Gasparyan, from the office of the President of the Republic of Armenia, also spoke about the post-independence beginning of political satire

Torosyan successfully collaborates with the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* in Boston on international issues and uses bold satire to skewer world politics. He and the *Mirror-Spectator* editor work well through email.



Armenian Mirror-Spectator correspondent Artsvi Bakhchinyan, left, with Toto



Sukias Torosyan, right, receives a certificate of appreciation from Armen Tsulikyan.

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian

Armenian Farina Cake

INGREDIENTS

- 6 eggs, beaten
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 quart plain white yogurt or madzoon
- 1/2 pound butter
- 1 cup flour
- 2 cups farina
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 cup brandy
- Ground cinnamon and choice of garnish

SYRUP

- 5 cups sugar
- 5 cups water
- Boil sugar and water together in a medium pan for 10-12 minutes, stirring until thickened; set aside.

PREPARATION

Melt the butter, add the beaten eggs, yogurt, sugar and brandy. Sift the flour with the baking powder and baking soda. Add the flour and farina to the butter and egg mixture. Mix all together.

Pour into a greased shallow baking pan and bake for 30-35 minutes in 325°F oven. Take the cake out of the oven, cut the cake in diamond shapes, pour some of the syrup over the cake, and put it back in the oven until syrup is absorbed. Serve extra syrup on the side, if desired.

*Recipe courtesy of Treasured Armenian Recipes, published by the Detroit's Women's Chapter, Armenian General Benevolent Union, Inc., 1949. Treasured Armenian Recipes is a collection of some of the most well-known Armenian recipes of all time. Member of the Detroit Women's Chapter of the Armenian General Benevolent Union gathered and published this cookbook of Armenian recipes to perpetuate and honor old customs and pass them on to the growing generation of young Armenians in the United States. To order, go to: <https://www.amazon.com/Treasured-Armenian-Recipes-Marie-Manoogian/dp/B0033QFP1A> or <https://agbubookstore.org/products/treasured-armenian-recipes-simple-directions-but-delicious-food-i-by-agbu-detroit-women-s-chapter-i> or <https://naars.org/collections/on-line-books/products/treasured-armenian-recipes>.





ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

FLORIDA

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.

FEBRUARY 15, 2020 — SAVE THE DATE for the Annual Dinner Dance hosted by the Women’s Guild of St. David Armenian Church, 2300 NW 51st St, Boca Raton

MASSACHUSETTS

DECEMBER 1-22 — Saturdays and Sundays, December 1-22, Members-only Holiday Gift Shop Sale. 12-6pm, Armenian Museum of America , 1st floor, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Join us Sundays in December for afternoons of Christmas cheer! We welcome members of all levels to enjoy a special sale each Sunday before Christmas in which they receive an additional holiday discount of 25 percent (some exclusions apply)! Find that special gift or book to make this an extraordinary Armenian Christmas as you enjoy holiday music and refreshments. Renew, sign up, or give a gift membership to those you love.

DECEMBER 5-29 — Thursdays – Sundays, December 5-29. End of the Year Book Sale. 12-6 p.m. Armenian Museum of America , 1st floor, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Looking for the perfect gift or a treat for yourself that won’t break the bank? Come to the Armenian Museum Gift Shop and explore our End of the Year Book Sale. Great titles on sale for \$20, \$10, \$5 and \$1!

DECEMBER 14 — Children’s Christmas Workshop. 1-4 p.m. at the Armenian Museum of America Adele &

Haig Der Manuelian Galleries, 3rd floor. This year we are welcoming children ages 7-12 to celebrate the season of giving by making Christmas ornaments and cards decorated with traditional Armenian motifs. Armenian Christmas Workshop allows kids to express their creativity by designing Armenian ornaments to adorn tree, and heartfelt cards to give to family and loved ones. After all, this is the true meaning of Christmas! Guiding the children through the spirit of sharing will be Artist-in-Residence Arevik Tserunyan. We will also be making cards for seniors at the Armenian Nursing Home and Rehab Center. The class will conclude with a tree lighting and decorating party in which the children help decorate the Museum’s Christmas tree and enjoy refreshments. Members \$16. Non-members \$20. (Note: 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 15 — St. James 88th Anniversary Name Day Celebration - Honoring Hripsime Parsekian and Leslie Cristello, Parishioners of the Year. 10 am Divine Liturgy. Name Day Banquet to follow. Keljik Hall. St. James’ Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center. \$45 per person. \$15 for children 12 and under. Advanced Reservations Required – purchase tickets online at www.stjameswatertown.org. 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown 617.923.8860 info@stthagop.com

DECEMBER 15 — Christmas Holiday Concert — Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra. 3 p.m. Church Sanctuary. Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston. 145 Brattle Street Cambridge. Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston and the Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra, founded by the Very Rev. Oshagan Minassian (1930-2008) and now under the direction of Konstantin Petrossian, Music Director and Conductor, will present their annual Christmas Holiday Concert. The program will consist of a variety of beloved Armenian and Western sacred and holiday music. The public is warmly invited to attend this complimentary

concert which is a gift to the community. For further information, contact the Holy Trinity Church office at 617.354.0632 or e-mail 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.

NEW JERSEY

JANUARY 11, 2020 — Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York presents “A Children’s Song and Dance Show,” starring Joelle. 2-4 p.m., Saturday, the Hovnanian School, 817 River Road, New Milford. Tickets \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door. Children 2 and under free. Joelle of Montreal will perform her first children’s show in New Jersey. Light reception to follow. For tickets text or email Talia, 917-238-3970, rsyptaliab@gmail.com or Salpie 516-413-4178, Salpimegerian@gmail.com.

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.

Popular Armenian Songs Are a Hit in Watertown, Providence

WATERTOWN and PROVIDENCE – Two Armenian pops concerts were recently organized by the Armenian Museum of America jointly with the Composers Union of Armenia. The Artistic Director of the concert program was conductor Konstantin Petrossian. The soloists of the concert were the popular Armenian singer Arthur Ispiryan from Armenia, and the winner of many international competitions Nara (Narine Harutyunyan) from California.

The concerts were held at the Egavian Cultural Center in Providence, and at the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown, and attracted great interest among the public.

Numerous admirers of Armenian popular music enjoyed the songs of Babajanyan, Ajemyan, Orbelian, Heqimyan, Khachatur



Arthur Ispiryan

Avetisyan, Vartazaryan, Ayvazyan, as well as composers Aram Satian and Konstantin Petrossian, who performed in the concert and accompanied their own compositions.

The interesting concert program was warmly received by the audience.

In Providence, the concert in the form of an “Armenian Cafe Night,” was organized by the Cultural Committee of the Saints Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church. Arthur Ispiryan and Nara introduced each song and composer, and had a lively dialogue with the audience. The same concert format was successfully hosted by the Berj Chekijian, director of the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown, where more than 200 listeners warmly received the soloists.



Nara

“This new Armenian CD, **“Echoes of the Past”** features the exciting sounds of the New Mugrditchian Band. The artists are, Mark DerMugrditchian-Clarinet/Def; Greg Krikorian, Oud/Vocals; Kevin Magarian,Guitar/Vocals, Arthur Chingras, Dumbek.

The smooth and mello sounds of the songs played on this CD for your listening and dancing pleasure will bring back memories of the past.



A CD can be purchased by contacting Mark at 508-887-2847, or by E-Mail at mdermugrditchian@gmail.com.

or Greg at gregkrikor@aol.com.

The band is available for bookings by calling Mark at 508-887-2847 or Greg at 508-485-1506.

Read News in Armenian at:





COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Bratislava Offers Road to Nowhere On Karabakh

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan and Elmar Mammadyarov, respectively, met for the 26th time in Bratislava, Slovakia, on December 4, under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Statements were issued and news appeared which indicated that the ministers had been spinning their wheels, as usual.

The ministers have made contradictory statements while the OSCE statement has tried to paper over the differences, counting among their contributions to the parties prisoner exchanges, journalists' visits between the two countries, the relaxation of tensions on the border and the willingness of the two ministers to meet again in the future.

After considering many plans over the years and contemplating solutions, the Azeri foreign minister has reverted to Azerbaijan's original demands which allow no room for compromise. (See related story on Page 2.)

Mammadyarov's delegation has distributed a memorandum to the participating delegates, outlining Azerbaijan's conditions for a solution: "Immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan."

The memorandum also is recognizing the right of the predominantly Armenian population to have the "status of self-rule within Azerbaijan."

A party which has lost a war is asking for unconditional surrender from the victor. Where does Azerbaijan derive such a degree of unrealistic arrogance if not from its association with Turkey? Azerbaijan has enlarged the scope of the conflict to bring in Turkey.

Indeed, Ankara has made a condition of the settlement of the Karabakh issue on Azeri terms to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia and to lift its blockade.

Another reason is Azerbaijan's internal transformation, which began with the recent dissolution of the parliament, the elimination of the old guard from key government positions and the transition of power from Ilham Aliyev to his wife, Mehriban Aliyeva, who already holds the position of vice president.

Interestingly, Armenia seems to be offering another diplomatic channel to break the stalemate. Anna Hakobyan, the wife of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, last week invited Aliyeva to Karabakh. In an earlier interview, the Azeri first lady had expressed her desire to listen to Azeri folk music in Karabakh. Hakobyan said she would be welcome there like a guest of honor if she came in peace and that she herself would welcome a reciprocal visit. No answer has been received from the Azeri side.

Armenia's foreign minister has also put forward Armenia's position in seven points. It basically says, "Azerbaijan must assume direct commitment to the recognition of the right to self-determination of the people of Nagorno Karabakh, the outcome of which should have no limitation."

It is unfortunate that the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, Russia, France and the US, as well as the United Nations have adhered to the Azerbaijani interpretation of the definition of territorial integrity, while the Armenian position has been that Karabakh ceded from the Soviet Union with the same legal avenue that Azerbaijan did. Therefore, the concept of territorial integrity must not become a component of the solution to the conflict. Perhaps Armenia's representatives have been maintaining this position during the negotiations but we seldom witness its public manifestation.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov had met Mammadyarov and President Aliyev in Baku before arriving in Bratislava and as a result of his discussions with them, made some positive statements about the "possibilities of achieving a compromise" on Karabakh which unfortunately were not reflect-

ed in the public statements and discussions in Bratislava.

The Kremlin, and particularly Mr. Lavrov, seem more accommodating in recent months towards Yerevan's position. When Mr. Lavrov visited Yerevan earlier, he stated that no settlement is possible without the participation of the people of Karabakh. That was a welcome addition to the "Lavrov Plan" and in a way echoed Prime Minister Pashinyan's position on the issue.

The Russian position is more realistically explained in an article by Aram Sargsyan. The headline of the piece says it all: "Russia is dreaming to integrate Azerbaijan in the structure of the Collective Security and the Eurasian Economic Union; Azerbaijan's price tag is Karabakh."

In the ebb and flow of international politics, odd bedfellows have been congregating based on their national interests. Russia believes that Azerbaijan can become a convenient nexus for Russia, Turkey and Iran. At this time, Russia is not ready to pay the price Azerbaijan seeks, because it believes that Yerevan is already slipping through its fingers, with Washington's sudden generosity towards Armenia and the passage of the Genocide resolution in Congress, which sent out many signals to different quarters.

Along with Azerbaijan's integration into Russian structures, Moscow has been coveting the possibility of stationing its peace-keeping forces in Karabakh to complement its military base in Gyumri.

In addition to Mr. Lavrov's private initiative to mediate between Baku and Yerevan, other voices from the Russian Duma offer hope. Constantin Zadulin, a Duma member, has



come up with a plan which involves Azerbaijan's recognition of Karabakh's independence in return for the transfer of five regions out of the seven that were captured by Armenian forces during the war as a security guarantee. Of course, these are simple statements; otherwise the parties would have requested further elaboration of the specifics, since the devil is in the details.

The director of the Caucasus Institute, Alexander Iskandaryan, does not see the possibility of the long-term or even short-term resumption of hostilities. Nor does he find realistic the OSCE statement that the "status quo is unacceptable." He believes the status quo will remain at the expense of continued losses on both sides. Iskandaryan states: "The parties are not ready for a compromise. Armenia's concept of compromise does not match that of Azerbaijan. For Azerbaijan, a compromise solution is a return to the situation before 1988, which actually is a non-starter. Armenia calls a compromise the preservation of the current situation and in addition the recognition of Karabakh, which Azerbaijanis are not ready to discuss."

Although Azerbaijan does not accept the status quo, in the final analysis the status quo works in its favor, weakening Armenia through attrition over the years.

On the other hand, the status quo saves lives for Armenia, allowing hope that someday political developments may pave the way for a more equitable solution.

The meeting at Bratislava has not led anywhere and future similar meetings will not amount to anything but spinning wheels in the sand.

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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

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FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

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Baika Association, Inc.

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



COMMENTARY

Would Turkey Really Allow Historians to Judge the Armenian Genocide?

After the U.S. House of Representatives last month recognized the mass killing of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 as genocide, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said historians, not politicians, should decide on the issue, and that Turkey's archives were open to researchers.

The idea is not a new one. It was first put forward by Levon Ter-Petrosian, Armenia's first president, after the country gained independence in 1991. He suggested forming a commission of historians to discuss the question of genocide. Turkish politicians

later embraced the idea and have frequently called for the matter to be left to academics.

In all, 152 countries are parties to the United Nation's "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide". The convention obliges countries to prevent and punish genocidal acts and does not say a consensus by historians is required to recognize an atrocity as genocide.

Of course, political decision makers can base their decisions on the available research, and international scholars have produced a vast literature concluding that the events of 1915 onwards can be classed as genocide. Most Turkish studies, however, have focused on finding excuses and mitigating the massacre of Armenians.

But if a commission of historians were set up, is it possible it would not become politicized, given the likely state interference in the selection of the academics involved? Is there any guarantee that a historian who accepted the events as genocide would not then be charged with the crime of "insulting Turkishness"?

In 2000, secularist-nationalist journalist Emin Çölâsan warned the then president of Turkey, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, about moves to set up just such a commission.

"What if those historians say 'yes it is true, you committed genocide'? What will we say then?" he asked.

Despite such concerns, a year later, the U.S.-backed Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission was established with a panel of retired diplomats and public figures from both Turkey

and Armenia. It asked the International Center for Transitional Justice, a U.S.-based non-governmental organization, to facilitate an independent legal study on genocide claims. But when the center said in a 2003 report that the events of 1915 indicated genocide, Turkey rejected the report and the commission was dissolved.

Since then, many in Turkey and in Armenia have tried to openly discuss the events of 1915. In 2005, Istanbul's prestigious Bogaziçi University backed out of hosting a conference on Ottoman Armenians after the then-Justice Minister Cemil Çiçek called the organizers traitors and accused them of stabbing the Turkish nation in the back. Istanbul's Bilgi University then held the conference, but protesters threw tomatoes and

THE OFFICIAL ARCHIVES IN ARMENIA ARE OPEN, BUT TURKISH ACADEMIC CANDAN BADEM SAID IN 2012 THAT ONLY TWO RESEARCHERS FROM TURKEY HAD USED THEM.

eggs at participants outside the venue.

Then, in 2007, officials and researchers from Turkey were invited to Armenia for an event on the problems and the future of Turkish-Armenian relations. Turkey declined the invitation, saying there was nothing to discuss.

Scholars attempted to organize another conference on the Armenian genocide at Bilgi University in 2015, but the university administration cancelled it.

For scholars seeking to research the genocide, the official archives in Armenia are open, but Turkish academic Candan Badem said in 2012 that only two researchers from Turkey had used them.

Turkish nationalist historians such as Yusuf Halaçoğlu have complained for years that the archives of the Armenian nationalist Dashnak Party in Boston are closed. Dashnak Party offi-

cial Vache Brudyan, who oversaw the archives, said in 2016 that they were not closed, but were temporarily unavailable as they were being digitalized. He also said that all the archive materials had already been published in 1934 and later as a book of two volumes.

But researchers have complained they have been unable to effectively use Turkey's Ottoman archives, as they have not been properly indexed. Some who could access the archives were later interrogated by authorities and barred from access.

In recent years, the condition of the Ottoman archives has significantly improved, but problems persist. Some documents of communication between the central and local authorities during the genocide have somehow evaporated.

There are similar problems in other official archives in Turkey. "The archives of the Foreign Ministry are totally closed," political scientist Ayhan Aktar said in 2014.

"The archives of the Office of the General Chief of Staff, known as ATASE, are only open in theory," he said. "You are not allowed to see the originals of the documents. There is pre-inspection. They show you what they want to," he said.

Another key source for studying the Armenian genocide is the Ottoman land registry archives. In 2006, when authorities were considering transferring the documents from the Land Registry to the state archives, the military advised the National Security Council against the move. "The information there can be abused for unfounded genocide claims and claims on the properties of Ottoman foundations," a general said in an official note to the council.

Political scientist Baskın Oran said the council had blocked the move as the documents would prove that many properties transferred by the state to Muslims had been seized from Greek and Armenian Christians.

Given the failure of previous efforts to allow historians access to open key source material and the hardening of the Turkish government's stance since then, what can Armenians do other than demand official recognition that the killings constituted genocide?

(This commentary originally appeared on the website Ahval on November 20.)

LETTERS

Friends and Foes: A Lesson in Realpolitik

To the Editor:

With reference to last week's editorial "A Deadly Dilemma" by Edmond Y. Azadian, the author is absolutely right in his assertion that "Now that Nzhdeh's legacy has become a political hot potato, it is not up to the Azeris and for that matter, the Russians, to dictate which hero Armenians should nor should not honor."

Russians, Azeris, Turks, or any other nation should make no attempt to conceal the fact that states and non-state actors conduct politics, and especially wars considered to be a continuation of a political discourse in a different language, as a game where you have no permanent enemies, no permanent friends, and the only permanent reality is your focus on protecting your nation's interests.

It seems that Azeri President Ilham Aliyev is suffering from a "selective amnesia" when he accuses, in international forums, Armenians of promoting anti-Semitic sentiments by honoring heroes who decided to partner with the devil to save a nation from obliteration. Perhaps it will be a good start to highlight the critical role the Russian air base at Lipetsk, located about 250 miles south of the Soviet capital Moscow, played between 1924 and 1930 in training the future pilots of the Luftwaffe, the very pilots who provided the critical air cover for the blitzkriegs of the Nazi Army into Poland and Eastern Europe. Soviet cooperation with Hitler and his Nazi regime did not end in 1930. On August 22, 1939, Nazi Germany's Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop had a lengthy face-to-face with Stalin and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov. The details of a non-aggression treaty were finalized, and on August 23, 1939, Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia shocked the world by announcing that they had concluded a non-aggression pact, that became known as The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

Taken at face value, the pact seemed like a garden type variety of an agreement between two sovereign states reassuring each other that no military aggression will target their respective territories. But "The Pact" had a more horrifying and sinister dimension. A long list of secret claus-

es and addenda that disgusted so badly communist party members in Europe, a substantial number of party card holders dumped and burned their membership IDs in front of buildings housing communist parties' offices. Based on the terms of the secret clause of "The Pact", Germany provided to Russia military hardware in exchange for raw materials such as oil-mostly from the oil fields of Azerbaijan, grain, iron and other minerals critical for the Nazi's weapon production programs. Soviet deliveries of oil to the fuel-starved Germans improved substantially the operational efficiency of the Nazi Army. Fuel from the oil fields of Azerbaijan was used in SS trucks that rounded up Jews in the territories conquered by the Nazi army. Fuel from the oil fields of Azerbaijan was used in locomotives that shipped thousands of Jews to concentration camps where gas chambers and specially designed ovens guaranteed a horrifying industrial type of mass destruction.

"The Pact" was used also by Stalin's Russia to cater to the whims of Hitler who wanted all communist party members from Germany and Austria — most of them Jews, who fled Nazi persecutions since 1933 and settled down in Russia — to be returned to the Gestapo's custody in Germany. Soviet authorities arrested and shipped back to concentration camps every communist from Germany and Austria who had taken refuge in The Soviet Union. Last but not least, let us review "the honorable" role Turkey played in maximizing the efficiency of the Nazi war machine during WWII, and turning the extermination camps into a fine tuned complex mechanism enjoying the precision of a Swiss mechanical watch.

Turkish nationalism during WWII and its attachment to the ethnic purity of Turkey was in harmony with the Aryan racial superiority pursued by Nazi Germany. And nowhere this point is more obvious than in the preamble of The German-Turkish Treaty of Friendship/Türk-Alman Dostluk Paktı signed on June 18 1941.

"The Treaty" proclaimed: "The German Government and the Turkish Republic, inspired

by a desire to place relations between the two countries on a basis of mutual confidence and sincere friendship, agreed without prejudice to present obligations of both countries to conclude a treaty." Article II reiterated the critical bonds between Turkish Turanic fanaticism and Nazi Supremacist aspirations by pointing out that: "Germany and Turkey bind themselves in the future to communicate with each other in friendly manner on all questions affecting their common interests in order to bring about understanding on the treatment of such questions." Based on the key conditions of the treaty, reintroduced and consolidated in the "Clodius Agreement" (named after Hitler's henchman/negotiator, Karl Clodius, who signed the agreement on behalf of Nazi Germany in October 1941), Turkey agreed to export to Nazi Germany in 1941 45,000 tons of chromite ore, 90,000 tons in 1942, and 90,000 tons in 1943. In return Nazi Germany committed itself to supply military hardware to Turkey, as many as 117 railway locomotives, and 1,250 freight rail cars to transport the ore.

No one managed to emphasize better than German Munitions Minister Albert Speer the critical role Turkish chromite export to Nazi Germany. He pointed out to Hitler "that much of Germany's manufacture of armaments would come to a halt within 10 months if Turkey's chromite exports to Germany were ended."

Needless to mention that without the manufacturing of armaments, the Nazi Army would have failed to conquer Eastern Europe, the SS would have failed to round up Jews in conquered lands, and the gas chambers and incinerators of concentration camps would have been the subject of a grinding halt.

Turkey did not only benefit from the exports of chromite over a period of several years, it profited also of what was known as "Blood Gold" the equivalent of modern day "Blood Diamonds" used to finance war activities by different state and non-state actors. German banks (the Deutsche Bank and the Dresdner Bank) took advantage of the largesse and open arms of the Turkish political establishment to sell on

the Turkish market looted gold provided by the Reichsbank (Nazi Germany's Central Bank). A crucial point to keep in mind is the fact that the provenance of the gold sold on Turkish market originated mostly from the "Melmer account" in which the SS deposited the gold, jewelry, coins, gold bars looted from Jewish victims, and gold dental fillings extracted gassed Jews before their corpses were conveyed to the incinerators of the concentration camps.

Also the archives and declassified documents of The US State Department indicates clearly that Germany's foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, smuggled 15 tons of gold out of Berlin before the city's fall to the Red Army. The US Army took custody of 6.5 tons, some 2 tons were delivered to the British Army in the German province of Schleswig-Holstein, and the balance (6.5 tons) ended up in the hands of neutral countries such as Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, and an estimated 2 tons in Turkey. After years of close cooperation and collaboration with Nazi Germany, under Soviet threats and Allied pressure, on February 23, 1945, Turkey declared war on Nazi Germany. Not a single Turkish soldier joined the Allied operations in Europe, but it paved the way to the Turkish narrative that since it had been at war with Germany, no one, including Holocaust survivors should expect the return of whatever Nazi loot it retained. Briefly I should point out that Turkey knowingly allowed Nazi war criminals to use its territory as a transit point to reach Syria and Egypt, in the same way it allowed ISIS fighters to use its own territory as a transit point for the transfer of military hardware, logistical support, and medical treatment of wounded ISIS field commanders determined to topple The Assad regime in Syria. Now for Azerbaijan, Russia, and Turkey to argue that erecting the statue of Garegin Harutyunyan/Garegin Nzhdeh anywhere on Armenian soil is a sure sign of anti-Semitism, is nothing but an absurd maneuver designed to bury under the rug the collaborationist role each of these countries played in supporting Nazi Germany and the fanatical anti-Semitism that colored and shaped the political landscape of Europe from 1933 to 1945.

—Noubar Serabian



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Erdogan's Backers Threaten to Commit A New Genocide Against Armenians

A group of extreme nationalist Turkish lawyers, members of the Istanbul Bar Association, published an article in their November 2019 Bulletin threatening “to deport” all Armenians from Turkey once again. The author of the article, Mustafa Chalik, writes that the “deportation” would be “the mildest action” against the Armenians. Since the Turkish government denies the occurrence of the Armenian Genocide, the author refers to it as “deportation.” The article describes the Armenian Genocide as “a crowning achievement.”

To make matters worse, Chalik blesses the memories of the chief henchmen of the Armenian Genocide: “the great martyr Talaat Pasha,” Enver Pasha, and Bahaddin Shakir, saying that “we bow in front of the saintly memories of all Unionists [Young Turks] and kiss their blessed hands.... We wish God’s mercy and eternal bliss in Heaven to all unnamed [Turkish] martyrs who lost their lives in the Armenian massacres.”

Chalik goes on to write that “If the Committee of Union and Progress [Young Turks] committed ‘a crime,’ their only ‘crime’ was to prevent the catastrophe that occurred to us in the Balkans from happening to us in Eastern Anatolia.”

The writer states that “we support the Armenian deportation of 1915. Those who call the deportation a genocide are making a declaration of war. Armenians and others, who call it a genocide, are threatened with a new deportation which will be the lightest measure against them.”

“Our ancestors entered the World War to defend their sacred homeland and honor. It is our honor and the crown of our heads in all our struggles from Sarikamish to Chanakkale and from the Armenian deportation to Independence War. We will carry this crown with eternal pride,” writes Chalik.

Chalik continues “If we believe that there is no other way to defend our homeland and national existence, whoever we are, the smallest gratification we will resort to is a new ‘deportation.’”

In the preface of his book, Armenian Genocide Claims, Chalik describes the Armenian demands regarding the 1915 Genocide as “a crying literature.... Great nations with deep roots do not manage to cry and whine. They regard pity and seeking pity for themselves as demeaning. For this reason, ‘weeping and crying literatures’ are either not developed or have disappeared. This is one of the serious issues. From time to time, we, too, are influenced by the richness of the Armenian crying literature, and unnecessarily accuse ourselves for not publishing as much as they do. As a matter of fact, we can’t compete with them even if we wanted. We have such a vast ‘mourning literature’ that is not only related to the Armenian atrocities, but other catastrophes we are experiencing. In fact, it is said that the silence that the Turks came to exhibit in the face of Tashnak propaganda, which has been carried out for decades with a full cry, has been seen as ‘denial’ of the crime of slander and genocide.”

In addition to Chalik’s article, there is a second article in the extreme nationalist Turkish lawyers’ Bulletin, written by Faruk Ulker, titled: “1915 Events and Armenian Atrocities.”

Ulker writes that “the Armenian issue and the claim of the Armenian Genocide still remain one of the most important problems of our nation in the last century.” He calls the genocide, “self-defense.” The article also quotes Yusuf Halacoglu, a former member of the Turkish Parliament and a denialist of the Armenian Genocide, as stating: “the 300,000 Armenians who died during the deportations lost their lives due to disease in the Caucasus.”

As if such denialist lies were not enough, the Turkish newspaper Daily Sabah published an article on December 8, 2019, titled: “Turkey to boost efforts to fight defamation campaign.”

The Turkish government’s Directorate of Communications formed a website, “1915.gov.tr,” posting materials that deny the facts of the Armenian Genocide. Daily Sabah states that “Turkey objects to the presentation of the 1915 incidents as a ‘genocide,’ rather referring to it as a tragedy in which both Turks and Armenians suffered casualties amidst the throes of World War I.... ‘This website will respond to Armenian genocide slander used against our country at every possible opportunity in the international area, by putting historical information and data to the fore,’ said Presidential Communications Director Fahrettin Altun on Saturday during a training program in the coastal province of Antalya.”

Daily Sabah further reports that “In 1915, the Ottoman Empire relocated Armenians in eastern Anatolia following revolts in which some sided with invading Russian forces. There were many Armenian casualties during this relocation process. Armenia has demanded an apology and compensation, while Turkey has officially refuted Armenian allegations over the incidents saying that, although Armenians died during the relocations, many Turks also lost their lives in attacks carried out by Armenian gangs in Anatolia. The Turkish government has repeatedly called on historians to study Ottoman archives pertaining to the era in order to uncover what actually happened between the Ottoman government and its Armenian citizens. Rebuffing the ‘genocide’ allegations, Turkey has officially acknowledged past experiences as a great tragedy in which both parties suffered heavy casualties, including hundreds of Muslim Turks.”

Altun was also quoted by Daily Sabah as stating that Turkey will step up its efforts against Armenians targeting the country. “We should wage a stronger fight against dark propaganda.”

More importantly, Altun added that Turkey’s negotiating power in the international arena has been increasing as a result of its growing regional strength. “Our aim is to conduct high-quality, valuable work to equal to the upsurge of our country, which has a voice in the region and in the world,” Altun stated.

We should make two conclusions from the above materials:

1) Those who say that the ‘Bloody Turk’ has not changed much in the past 100 years are right, except that we should not generalize to all Turks. There are many Turks who are righteous and readily acknowledge the crime of Genocide against Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks. However, there are many other Turks who are the blind followers of Turkish officials who intentionally deny the Armenian Genocide. Good examples of the denialist Turks are the authors of the two articles referenced above, and the website set up by Erdogan’s Turkish Government to deny the Armenian Genocide.

2) The Presidential Communications Director Fahrettin Altun claims that with the increasing prestige of Turkey, it has become a stronger country. While this is unfortunately true, it should encourage all truth and justice loving people in the world to work tirelessly to expose the true barbaric nature of Turkey not only 100 years ago, but also today in Northern Syria against Kurds and Christians. Countering and diminishing Turkey’s clout in international relations should be one of the main objectives to establish historical justice.

Why I Marched in The NYC Veteran’s Day Parade

By Anoush Ter Taulian

I marched in the Veterans Day Parade in New York City on November 11 with my Artsakh War Veteran sign because we need US citizens to protest any US government attempt to stop aid to Artsakh. I made a map because few Americans know the location of Armenia and Artsakh. I wanted them to know Artsakh Armenians are not allowed to live in peace on their ancient land because Azerbaijan is currently violated ceasefire agreements firing at Artsakh border guards.

I marched with Veterans For Peace a global organization of military veterans dedicated to heal the wounds of war on veterans and educate about war making around the world. Many Americans now know how Turkey unethically, with many human rights abuses, grabbed control of land in Northern Syria. It was a good time to talk to the media and public about Erdogan’s denial of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, his support of Azerbaijan’s attack on Armenians and his continuing anti-Armenian policies that allowed Islamic militant groups to damage Armenian towns in Syria.

Turkey and Azerbaijan’s theft of the Armenian homeland and murders of Armenians under the guise of Jihads and fake histories they created has profoundly affected my life. I have had to figure out what effect intergenerational trauma has had on me. It took me a lifetime to find out hidden family history involving those violent conquerors. My paternal Aintab grandmother never talked about being a sex slave in a Turkish harem and all the horrors she saw. My maternal grandmother’s family was from Julfa, Nakhichevan. Later Azerbaijan forced out Armenians out of the area and bulldozed the ancient Armenian Julfa cemetery over which they put up a military base where their trucks are now driving over my ancestors’ bones.

When I attended U.C. Berkeley in the 1970s, immersed in the peace movement, I never imagined I would end up a soldier in an Armenian self-defense struggle against Azerbaijan attacks. I

had joined women of color groups because I knew I wasn’t white European. I told them about the 1915 Armenian Genocide because it was never being mentioned. I identified as a light skinned Near Eastern women of color. There were few maps that showed the Near East and Western Asia categories of Armenians or how Eastern Turkey was really the stolen land of my occupied Western Armenian ancestry. I appreciated everyone who could understand my path of resisting assimilation.

When I went to Eastern Armenia in 1991 it was fate (jagadader) that I met Monte Melkonian in the youth hostel in Yerevan. In 1978 we had been in Armenian Students Association protest of UC Berkeley taking down an exhibit of Armenian Genocide photos out of the library because of Turkish pressure. Monte asked me to come with him to Artsakh (I had never heard of Artsakh) to videotape his soldiers who lacked proper shoes and equipment and I agreed.

He didn’t tell me his soldiers didn’t want a woman with them because they thought I would slow them down and they couldn’t relax at night in their underwear. Going to the first battle he told me not to bring anything with my Armenian name in case I was captured by the Azeris.

After we won the battle I was told it was safe to go to the liberated village but I was surrounded and attacked by some of our soldiers from another battalion who didn’t know who I was. Monte reprimanded them but I had to deal with the burden of their shame of attacking an unarmed

Woman.

After seeing so many destroyed Armenian villages and headless Armenian bodies in Artsakh, I came to realize how important armed self-defense was for the survival of my homeland. I decided to become a soldier. I gave up someone in the US who really loved me, and redirected my life to do my duty as a volunteer in the Artsakh liberation struggle. Even though I learned how to use an avtomat I never used one, I was never involved in direct combat, but tried to help however I could.

I was proud to meet kind and pure hearted leaders like Authur Mkrtchyan, the first president of Artsakh, who was mysteriously killed. I was fortunate to meet Arkady Ter-Tadevosyan a kind and brilliant leader military leader that allowed me join the Artsakh liberation struggle.

In February 1992 I was in the village of Khojaly when the battle occurred. The Azeris who are master propaganda manipulators passed it off as the Azeri Genocide which unfortunately is acknowledged by 21 states in America. There were many suspicious circumstances. Enough to wonder if the deceitful Azeris created a scene of misinformation.

Ter-Tadevosyan was the commander of the “Wedding in the Mountain Operation” Armenian retaking of Shushi. After read-

ing so many depressing stories of the Genocide it was exhilarating to be there in May 1992 and see Armenians outwitting enemies trying to kill us.

I went to battlefronts in every region of Artsakh and documented some of the stories of the Artsakh women soldiers I met because so many Armenian women’s stories have been left out of Armenian history.

Like Marguerite Sarkissyan, a sniper who hid in trees and had excellent aim. She saved an Armenian village that was being attacked by Azeri tanks. When the Azeri commander who thought he had won, stuck his head out of the tank she shot him and his soldiers fled.

In Artsakh so many people couldn’t believe I had come to help. Because I was a woman alone with a camera, I must be a spy!! I was even captured by the Russians who interrogated me at their military base to find out who I was. The constant mislabeling coupled with the discrimination against women was very stressful.

Thank goodness there were so many helpful Armenians without whose emotional support I couldn’t have done anything. Because while I met the best commanders there was also the reality of having to get permission from the worst. It was good to know Alvard Bakhudarian, a compassionate and hard working writer/journalist understood how hard it was to deal with corrupt leaders like Samvel Babayan who was the NKR Defense Army Commander. He stole a lot of aid and took many bribes. Reports suggest greed was not among his worst vices.

Soldiers are supposed to protect the population, but like all military around the world women soldiers can face harassment, abuse and discrimination. After the ceasefire in 1994 one of the Martakert commanders decided that women should be eliminated from the military base because they were a temptation. Fortunately the soldiers themselves knew that wasn’t right and eventually the women soldiers were allowed back in.

At a certain point I knew I had to leave because fighting against corruption can be dangerous. When I exposed the head of a hospital for selling the aid and charging wounded soldiers a hundred dollars under the table to sign their pension papers he said “Anoush you are a bad woman and you aren’t allowed in the hospital again.” That decision was reversed but he became very rich owning a lot of the town.

Also many women don’t report cases of sexual violence because they would be looked upon as damaged goods or unwanted troublemakers. I decided to take an officer to court for attempted rape for all the women who felt they couldn’t speak out. Even though I won the case who knows if the abuser I took to court might seek revenge if I return.

see PARADE, page 20



Abu Dhabi Firm Plans to Invest in Armenia’s Renewable Energy Sector

ABU DHABI (RFE/RL) – A renewable energy company based in Abu Dhabi has pledged to finance the construction of large solar power plants in Armenia that would ease the country’s dependence natural gas and nuclear power.

Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company, also known as Masdar, signed a “joint development agreement” on December 2 to that effect with the Armenian National Interests Fund (ANIF) in the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Armenian President Armen Sarkissian and UAE’s Energy Minister Suhail Al Mazrouei attended the signing ceremony.

In a joint statement, Masdar and ANIF said the deal envisages the launch of solar energy projects in Armenia with a total capacity of 400 megawatts, which would nearly match the design capacity of the Metsamor nuclear plant . They said this will require between \$300 million

and \$320 million in investments, the bulk of which will presumably be made by Masdar.

Masdar’s chief executive, Mohamed Jameel Al Ramahi was quoted as noting Armenia’s “considerable untapped potential for both solar and wind power.”

“Armenia is a fast-growing economy with an increasingly open and supportive environment for inward investment,” said Al Ramahi. “That is an important reason why we have been able to move forward in our partnership.”

“I am happy to report that we have sent a highly competitive written proposal to the government of Armenia which outlines the details of the 400-megawatt of solar PV that we are jointly proposing,” David Papazian, the head of ANIF, said for his part.

Papazian, runs a state agency tasked with attracting foreign investment in Armenia.



Members of the Guatemalan parliament delegation with Catholicos of All Armeniabs Karekin II

Guatemalan Parliament Delegation Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress,News.am) – First Vice President of the Guatemalan Parliament Felipe Alejos Lorenzana visited the Armenian Genocide Memorial on December 6 in Yerevan.

Deputy Speaker of the Armenian Parliament Lena Nazaryan accompanied the delegation, which also included senior MP Juan Ramon Lau.

The Guatemalan delegation laid flowers at the Eternal Flame and observed a moment of silence in honor of the Armenian Genocide victims.

Then, the lawmakers also toured the Armenian Genocide Institute and signed the guest-book.

Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians on the same day received the delegation at the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

During the meeting, the Supreme Patriarch expressed joy for the first steps aimed at establishing partnering ties between Armenia and Guatemala, and in this context, he attached importance to the signing of an agreement on friendship and parliamentary cooperation between the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala and the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

The catholicos drew the delegation’s attention to the importance of condemnation of the Armenian Genocide and shed light on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the need for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The Supreme Patriarch voiced hope that the Guatemalan authorities would express their position on these issues which are important for the Armenian people.

Lorenzana expressed gratitude for the reception and stated that his visit to Armenia serves as a major step for further development of the relations and cooperation between the two countries. The Vice-President also presented the developments that have unfolded in the Republic of Guatemala over the past years and attached importance to exchange of experience and further strengthening of relations with Armenia.

Why I Marched in The NYC Veteran’s Day Parade

PARADE, from page 19

In 2016, Azeri attacks against Artsakh intensified in the Four-Day War and the Armenian National Committee of America held a demonstration in front of the UN. The was a big photo banner of Artsakh war heroes with no photos of women. Another Artsakh war veteran and myself were present but they wouldn’t acknowledge us. I also felt bad when I saw a photo exhibit of the war at the AGBU and there wasn’t a single photo of all the women soldiers. Without all the sacrifices by all the people and soldiers in Artsakh the 1990s would there even be an Artsakh today?

Having seen so many body parts and mutilated dead bodies I have wartime PTSD. Many veterans experience flight or fight anxiety and have a hard time waiting. I feel part of priest training should be how to deal with PTSD. One of the best books on this is Complex PTSD by Pete Walker.


I have spent a lot of time and money trying to repair the damage to my health from the toxic metals in the bombs and mine explosions. I have purchased years of detoxification supplements and treatments. I am very fortunate and

grateful to have found an Armenian energetic healer that for years has been helping me heal from PTSD.

I was fortunate to experience Artsakh when there were indigenous values of sharing before capitalism created more differences between the haves and have not. Ironically now after devoting my life to the Armenian cause many Armenian events in NYC are too expensive for me to attend.

After 17 years of my life involved in helping Artsakh I, I still spend a lot of my time letting the world know about the Artsakh Freedom Struggle and good hearted courageous people I met who are persevering to take care of our ancient land despite all the obstacles.

(Anoush Ter Taulian is a graduate of the University of California Berkeley. In 1992, she decided to relocate to Artsakh where she volunteered in the liberation struggle alongside Monte Melkonian. She has depicted the Armenian struggle for freedom in poetry, paintings, videos, and radio. She is a lifelong activist speaking in schools, churches, and at anti-racism conferences.)



TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
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Captain Hrair Hawk in Cilicia

Video presentation of his travels

Thursday, December 19, 2019
Tekeyan Center, 7:30pm
560 Sylvan Avenue
Englewood Cliffs NJ 07632

Hrair Hawk’s published works and his new book **“Armenia: Heaven on Earth”** will be available for sale.

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Children ages 2 and under free



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