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Trump Refuses to Back Recognition Of Armenian Genocide

By Clark Mindock

NEW YORK (*The Independent*) – Donald Trump’s administration has rejected a US Senate resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide, just a day after Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to recognize the killing of Native Americans in retaliation.

The Senate measure was rejected by the State Department on Tuesday, with a spokesperson for the department indicating that US position on the matter did not change.

“The position of the Administration has not changed,” said spokesperson Morgan Ortagus, in a statement to the *Hill* on Tuesday, December 17. “Our views are reflected in the President’s definitive statement on the issue from last April.”

The US Senate had passed a resolution unanimously last week to recognize the Armenian genocide as a matter of foreign policy, in a rare showing of bipartisanship on a deeply divisive issue and in spite of the Trump administration’s objections. It marked the first time that the US Congress had formally designated the 1915 killings of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Empire as a genocide.
see TRUMP, page 12

ADL Supreme Council Statement To Senate on Resolution

December 12, 2019 will go down in the annals of the history of the United States as a day of victory of human rights and a step towards the restoration of justice to the memory of the 1.5 million Armenians who perished during the waning days of the Ottoman Empire.



This resolution adopted by the US Senate, S. Res.150, underscores the universality of human rights, which are neither apportioned through geographical demarcations nor the privilege of particular nations.

As the leader of the free world, the United States has adopted and upheld the values of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide unanimously adopted by the United Nations.

The Senate’s courageous act will in the first place vindicate Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, who was one of the first humanitarians to appeal to the conscience of the world and to politicians of all stripes concerning the tragic plight of the Armenian people under Ottoman Turkish rule.

Over the years, key statesmen of both major American political parties stood tall in seeking recognition of the fate of a martyred nation. Senator Bob Dole and William Proxmire continued the battle for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide valiantly against the challenges of political expediency. Their honorable stand is enshrined in the current resolution.

The Armenian Democratic Liberal organization, with its advocacy arm, the Armenian Rights Council of America, has been at the forefront of the struggle to restore justice since its inception in 1921 and in particular spearheaded the 1947 World Armenian Congress in New York to raise awareness of this issue among statesmen in the US, the media and academic circles.

On behalf of the over one million Armenians of the United States and 10 million in total living throughout the world, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for this historic bipartisan statement and look forward to seeing its spirit reflected concretely. We also hope that the overwhelming will of the legislative branch of the US government will be reflected in the acts of the executive branch.

[Note: A similar letter of congratulations was sent to Rep. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives.]

New Istanbul Patriarch Masalyan Courts Controversy with Comments On US Senate Resolution

ISTANBUL (AP, Ahval) – Turkey’s Armenian community on December 11 voted in Bishop Sahak Masalyan (alternatively written as Mashalyan or Mashalian) as its new patriarch, in an election that critics say was overshadowed by Turkish government intervention.

Delegates elected Masalyan, 57, as the

Armenian clergy currently serving abroad would not be eligible. The third candidate dropped out of the race in protest, while some community members boycotted the election process, according to Turkish media reports.

The patriarch is considered the head of the Armenians in Turkey, which numbers an estimated 70,000, and serves as a go-between the government and the community. Turkish officials often rely on the patriarch’s cooperation for their efforts to counter moves around the world to recognize the mass killings of Armenians by Ottoman Turks a century ago as genocide.

Historians estimate that up to 1.5 million Armenians were killed around World War I, and many scholars see it as the 20th century’s first genocide. Turkey disputes the description, saying the toll has been inflated and that those killed were victims of a civil war. Turkey has repeatedly called for a joint committee of historians to investigate the slayings.

Garoy Paylan, a legislator in Turkey’s parliament, was among community members who boycotted the election process.

“I will not consider the chosen one as my Patriarch,” he wrote on Twitter, adding that see MASALYAN, page 4

After the Armenian Genocide Senate Resolution, Quo Vadis?

By Aram Arkun

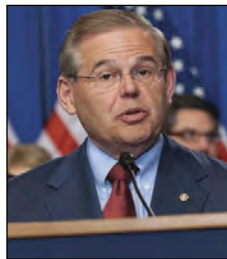
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WASHINGTON – The United States Senate voted unanimously on December 12 to adopt Sen. Res. 150 on the Armenian Genocide after unrelenting efforts led by Senators Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) and Ted Cruz (R-TX).

The House of Representatives had passed a similar bill, H. Res. 296, on October 29.

For the first time both houses of Congress proclaim that it is official US policy to recognize and commemorate the Armenian Genocide and reject its denial, while encouraging education and public understanding on its facts and relevance. The resolution notes that Greeks, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syrians, Arameans, Maronites, and other Christians were also subject to genocide alongside the Armenians in the 1915 to 1923 period.

The Senate vote took place after three failed attempts over the three previous weeks, each blocked by a Republican see RESOLUTION, page 12



Sen. Robert Menendez



Patriarch Bishop Sahak Mashalyan

85th patriarch of the Armenian Orthodox Christians in Turkey, the church announced at the end of an election process that began on December 7. He succeeds Patriarch Mesrob II, who died in March at 62.

Masalyan’s rival, Archbishop Aram Atesyan, had been serving as acting patriarch since 2008, when Mesrob became incapacitated and withdrew from his duties.

Atesyan and Masalyan were among only three candidates who were able to stand for the position after Turkey ruled that

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mirror-Spectator Christmas Vacation Schedule

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will close the week between Christmas and New Year’s.

This current issue will be our last for 2019.

The office will be closed from December 23 to 27.

Our next issue will be that of January 4, 2020.

We wish our readers a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

Pashinyan Thanks Senate for Recognizing Genocide

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan assessed the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide by the US Senate as a historical move.

“This is tribute to the memory of 1.5 million victims of the first Genocide of the 20th century and bold step in promotion of the prevention agenda. US Senate Resolution 150 is a victory of justice and truth. On behalf of the Armenian people worldwide, I express our profound appreciation to the Senate for this landmark legislation,” he tweeted.

The U.S. Senate struck a historic blow against Turkey’s century-long obstruction of justice for the Armenian Genocide, unanimously adopting S.Res.150. Earlier in October, the House of representatives adopted a similar resolution, N296.

Resolution 150 had been blocked by the power of veto of the senators three times in the previous three weeks.

Turkey Could Close Incirlik Air Base in Face of US Threats: Erdogan

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – Turkey could shut down its Incirlik air base, which hosts U.S. nuclear warheads, in response to threats of U.S. sanctions and a separate U.S. Senate resolution that recognized mass killings of Armenians a century ago as genocide, President Tayyip Erdogan said on Sunday, December 15.

“If it is necessary for us to take such a step, of course we have the authority ... If this is necessary, together with our delegations, we will close down Incirlik if necessary,” Erdogan said on A Haber TV.

Turkey can also close down the Kurecik radar base if necessary, he added. “If they are threatening us with the implementation of these sanctions, of course we will be retaliating,” he said.

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Christmas Greetings

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Former President Kocharyan Hospitalized

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The second President of Armenia Robert Kocharyan, who is currently in pre-trial detention, was taken to the Izmirlyan Medical Center on December 11, his attorney Hovhannes Khudoyan told Armenpress.

Khudoyan did not expand on the reasons of transporting him to hospital. “It is expected Mr. Kocharyan will stay there for several days, but the doctor should make a final decision,” he said.

Kocharyan, who is charged with subverting the constitution related to events that took place on the March 1, 2008, is currently remanded into custody, underwent a surgery in early October.

Concert Dedicated to Jazz Great Malkhasyan

YEREVAN – On December 8, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his spouse Anna Hakobyan attended a concert in honor of the 75th anniversary of famous jazzman, composer, People’s Artist Levon Malkhasyan.

The concert featured Israeli jazz percussionist, composer, singer, instrumentalist Avishai Cohen and pianist, Honored Artist of Armenia Vahagn Hayrapetyan attended the concert.

They were accompanied by the State Symphony Orchestra of Armenia led by artistic director and principal conductor Sergey Smbatyan.

Pashinyan and Hakobyan listened to classical jazz performances by renowned jazz musicians and the State Symphony Orchestra of Armenia.

Aronian Loses to Carlsen in Bid for Third At Grand Chess Tour

LONDON (Panorama.am) – Armenian Grandmaster Levon Aronian lost to World Champion Magnus Carlsen in the fight for third place at the Grand Chess Tour in London, the National Olympic Committee reported.

Carlsen and Aronian were playing for the third-place qualifying spot to the 2020 GCT. Aronian and Carlsen both won one rapid game before Carlsen secured his victory by drawing the first blitz game.

Meanwhile, Ding Liren won the 2019 Grand Chess Tour after beating Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 16-12 in the final. Both players automatically qualified for the 2020 Grand Chess Tour together with Carlsen.

President Addresses Message to Pelosi

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian on December 14 addressed a message to Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi.

“I want to express my deepest gratitude to you and your colleagues for the dedication to the fight for justice and for the efforts you made this October at the House of Representatives for adopting a resolution on recognizing the Armenian Genocide. I also highly value the decision of the Senate which is a strong step aimed at preventing the future crimes and the crimes against humanity.

“On behalf of all Armenians I convey you the warmest feelings and deepest gratitude.

I am confident that the development of the future cooperation between Armenia and the US will be in accordance with the long-term interests of the two countries,” Sarkissian wrote.

The US Senate struck a historic blow on December 12 against Turkey’s century-long obstruction of justice for the Armenian Genocide, unanimously adopting S.Res.150 that locks in ongoing US recognition of this crime.

The resolution officially rejects Turkey’s denials of its genocide against Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syrians, Arameans, Maronites, and other Christian nations. Passage of the resolution – spearheaded by Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Ted Cruz (R-TX) – marks the first time that the Senate has recognized the Armenian Genocide.

Armenian to Ban Indoor Smoking in 2022

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The National Assembly voted on Tuesday, December 10, to accept a government proposal to ban smoking in cafes, restaurants and all other indoor public places across Armenia starting March 2022.

Under a government bill passed in the first reading by 83 votes to 15, Armenians will also not be allowed to smoke whiling cars or buses. In addition, the bill imposes a blanket ban on any form of tobacco advertising in the country.

Indoor smoking will be punishable by up fines ranging from 50,000 drams (\$105) to 200,000 drams.

Health Minister Arsen Torosyan promoted the bill when it was drafted by his ministry and submitted to the government for approval in February. “From now on I won’t visit any restaurant or cafe in Armenia

that allows indoor smoking until our new tobacco control law is adopted,” he tweeted at the time.

The proposed restrictions underwent some amendments after being discussed in the government and the parliament in the following months. In particular, it was decided that they will come into force in March 2022. Some lawmakers echoed restaurant owners’ claims that the ban on indoor smoking would hurt their businesses.

Armenia is a nation of heavy smokers with few restrictions on tobacco sales and use enforced to date. According to Ministry of Health estimates, 52 percent of Armenian men are regular smokers. Medics blame this for a high incidence of lung cancer among them. The smoking rate among Armenian women is much lower: 3 percent.

Deputy Health Minister Lena Nanushyan also warned of health risks posed by second-hand smoke when she presented the bill to the parliament on Monday. Citing surveys conducted in 2016 and 2017, she said: “More than 70 percent of pregnant women are exposed to secondhand smoke every day.”

Armenian authorities have already attempted to curb smoking in the past. A law that came into force in 2005 banned tobacco in hospitals, cultural and educational institutions and public buses.

Additional restrictions introduced a year later required other entities, including bars and restaurants, to allow smoking only in special secluded areas. But with no legal sanctions put in place against their violation, those measures proved largely ineffectual.

Restaurant Faces Public Ire, Boycott After Owner Shoots Dog in Public

YEREVAN (JamNews) – Director of the Dilijan National Park and restaurant owner Suren Aghajanyan is facing a public boycott and a demand for justice after publicly shooting a dog on the premises of his establishment.

Facebook users demand Aghajanyan be punished to the full extent of a recently enacted law criminalising cruelty to animals.

Moreover, the bill’s initiator, MP Naira Zohrabyan, demands Aghajanyan resign as the director of Dilijan National Park.

Eyewitnesses of the brutal killing, which occurred on December 1 at Getap restaurant in Dilijan, immediately reported the incident to the police.

However, law enforcement officers who arrived at the scene erroneously stated that the law on the criminalization of animal cruelty had not yet gone into effect.

Zohrabyan, the sponsor of the bill, was one of the first to respond to the incident, and on her Facebook page commented on the law enforcement officials’ statement:

“Mr. Acting Police Chief, your subordinates do not know the law ... I inform everyone, as the author of this law, that it has already entered into force. I have already officially addressed the acting police chief, [requesting he] “launch an investigation against Surik Aghajanyan on the grounds of part two of Article 258 of the Criminal Code of Armenia, which provides for imprisonment of one to three years.”

Zohrabyan said she was informed by eyewitnesses, that in response to their indignation at the event, the deputy police chief of the city of Dilijan said: “Well, it’s his beast – what’s the matter?” Zohrabyan indignantly wrote: “The whole question is still who the beast really is...”

The animal abuse criminalization act came into effect in fall 2019. The bill was authored by MPs from the Prosperous Armenia party, and seeks fines for cruelty to pets and homeless animals to the amount of 100-300 times the minimum wage, as well as imprisonment for up to 1 year.

The new law also provides for punishment when a crime against animals is premeditated, committed by a group of people and with particular cruelty.

In this case, the bill provides for a

fine of 300-500 times the minimum wage or imprisonment for a term of one to three years.

The incident in Getap restaurant in Dilijan has caused a stir; the restaurant’s Facebook page wall has been inundated with photos of the murdered dog and calls for visitors to refrain from frequenting the restaurant.

The police have responded to the incident with an ambiguous press statement: “[It seems] the owner of the restaurant complex on December 1 at 13:15 shot and killed a dog with

a TOZ-16 hunting rifle registered in his name ... An investigation and verification of this information is being conducted.”

The restaurant has offered its own account of the event, claiming that the dog was suffering from rabies, and was a threat to the safety of the visitors of the complex.

Facebook users have expressed doubt over this explanation and continue to attack the restaurant’s page.

Armenian Facebook users have been actively discussing the incident since the evening of December 1.

Opposition Rejects Pashinyan’s Diatribe Against ‘State System’

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Opposition leaders on December 17 dismissed Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s harsh criticism of Armenian government and law-enforcement agencies, calling it an attempt to mask his failed policies.

Speaking at a cabinet meeting in Yerevan last week, a furious Pashinyan charged that “the state governance system” is sabotaging the fight against corruption, economic policies and reforms initiated by him.

“The entire state system is resisting the revolution and I am going to break that resistance,” he declared. He did not name specific state bodies or officials.

“The problem is not resistance but how a particular reform or idea is communicated,” countered Mane Tandilyan, a leader of the opposition Bright Armenia Party (LHK). “And if the government does not succeed in doing that then the problem is with the government.”

“Yes, there have been people [in the government] with different mindsets,” she said in an interview. “But at the end of the day it’s the government and the prime minister that make decisions and give guidance. If he has failed to solve this problem then the government is inept.”

Tandilyan said that she encountered resistance to reforms from some mid-level civil servants when she served as labor minister from May to November 2018 in Pashinyan’s first

cabinet formed following last year’s “Velvet Revolution.” But she claimed that the incompetence of more senior officials appointed by Pashinyan has been a far more serious problem.

Artsvik Minasyan, a senior member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) who served as economy minister from May to October 2018, said that Pashinyan’s diatribe amounted to “self-criticism.”

“There were and there are very good specialists in that system. He should not offend those people,” Minasyan said, accusing the prime minister of seeking to get rid of experienced professionals.

In Minasyan’s words, Pashinyan’s remarks mean that his structural changes and high-level appointments to the government have been a failure. “In order to rectify these mistakes the prime minister needs to take right steps, rather than resort to staff purges. This was an order of staff purges,” claimed the opposition politician.

Hayk Gevorgyan, a senior lawmaker from Armenia’s ruling My Step alliance, defended the prime minister. He also made a case for such purges in the middle and lower echelons of the state bureaucracy, saying that they are now the main source of government corruption in the country.

“The existing system of state governance does not meet our requirements,” Gevorgyan said.



ARMENIA

Arpenik & Isabella

Exhibition Features Two Women in Yeghishe Charents' Life

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Prominent Armenian poet, writer and activist Yeghishe Charents had a unique taste not only in literature but also in women. He was always surrounded by beautiful women. Evidence of this were his two lovers – Arpenik and Isabella. An exhibition named “Arpenik-Isabella” opened on December 6 at the Yeghishe Charents Museum-House.

“It is no coincidence that the exhibition dedicated to the two women in the life of Charents is organized at a same time as the year is a jubilee for both. It marks the 120th anniversary of Arpenik Ter-Astvatsatryan and the 110th anniversary of Isabella Kodabashyan. The exhibition features whatever has been preserved from them,” Anush Tasalyan, the representative of the Charents Museum House said.

Charents lived with Arpenik from 1921 to 1927. Arpenik died after undergoing surgery. “After the death of Arpenik,



A display from the Charents exhibit in Yerevan

Charents was in distressed and burned all her belongings to not see them again and suffer from the great loss. Later, a series of poems were created in her memory and he even asked sculptor Ara Sargsyan to create a plaster of Arpenik's face at a moment of death, as well as her hand.”

The House-Museum preserved Arpenik's

makeup items, perfume flasks, presented by Charents from foreign trips.

“Arpenik was a clever and educated woman at the time. Years later, when Charents married Isabella, he dreamed of having a baby girl and naming her Arpenik and he did so,” Tasalyan said.

After Arpenik's death, Charents married

Isabella Kodabashyan and lived with her from 1931 to 1937 having two daughters – Arpenik and Anahit. The exhibition features also Isabella's scarf and other clothing items and jewelry gifted by Charents.

The museum also keeps one of the canvases by artist Martiros Saryan depicting Charents with his women.

Former Armenian Football Chief Under Police Investigation

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Police raided on Friday, December 13, the home of Ruben Hayrapetyan, a controversial businessman who had close ties to Armenia's former leadership, and companies belonging to him in an apparent criminal investigation into his commercial activities.

Officers of a feared police unit dealing with grave crimes spent nearly five hours searching Hayrapetyan's mansion in Yerevan. They refused to talk to reporters while leaving the villa with what appeared to be confiscated documents.

Also searched were a restaurant and several other businesses belonging to the once-powerful tycoon who headed the Football Federation of Armenia (FFA) from 2002 to 2018.

A spokesman for the Armenian police said that the raids were part of a criminal case opened by law-enforcement authorities. He refused to specify what Hayrapetyan is suspected of, saying that the police will make a statement soon. No such statement was issued as of 8 p.m. local time.

Hayrapetyan was reluctant to talk to journalists standing at the entrance to his sprawling compound in Yerevan's northern Avan suburb when he approached and urged them to disperse after the search. “They are not arresting me,” he said.

Asked what the police officers found in his house, he replied with sarcasm: “One Su-35 fighter jet, one T-90 tank and several BMP and BTR [armored personnel carriers.]”

Hayrapetyan also advised the journalists to



Businessman Ruben Hayrapetyan talks to reporters outside his house in Yerevan, December 13, 2019.

ask the FFA's current deputy chairman, Armen Nikoghosyan, about reasons for the criminal investigation.

“I honestly don't know why he mentioned my name because I'm not a police or National Security Service chief,” Nikoghosyan said later in the day. He said he is not aware of any details of the inquiry.

According to unconfirmed media reports, the police suspect Hayrapetyan of misusing FFA

funds allocated for the construction of pitches and other football facilities in Armenia.

Other media outlets have claimed that the Armenian authorities are seeking to prevent the 56-year-old businessman from installing one of his friends as new FFA chairman during the federation's upcoming congress. They say that

the FFA's acting chairman, Armen Melikbekyan, is the authorities' preferred candidate for the post.

Hayrapetyan was forced to resign as federation head in September 2018 four months after the “Velvet Revolution” that toppled Armenia's former leadership. He was replaced by Artur Vanetsyan, the new head of the country's National Security Service (NSS).

Vanetsyan fell out with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and was sacked in September this year. He also resigned as FFA chairman last month under apparent pressure from government officials and pro-government lawmakers sitting on the federation's Executive Committee.

Hayrapetyan, who is commonly known as “Nemets Rubo,” has long been dogged by controversy resulting from his reportedly violent conduct. In 2015, for example, he avoided prosecution despite admitting that he beat up another entrepreneur.

Hayrapetyan strongly supported former President Serzh Sargsyan and represented the latter's Republican Party in the Armenian parliament. He had to resign from the parliament in 2012 following a brutal attack on several army medics who dined at his Yerevan restaurant. One of them died while two others were seriously injured after arguing with men working at the restaurant.

Budget Airline Wizz Air Expands into Armenia with Two New Routes

Dec 16 (Reuters) – Wizz Air will be expanding into Armenia with new flights from Vilnius and Vienna to Zvartnots International Airport in Yerevan, the low-cost airline said on Monday.

Wizz Air said it expected to start flying the two twice-weekly routes in April 2020.

On Thursday, the Budapest-based carrier said it intended to create a subsidiary airline based in Abu Dhabi, which it expects to launch in the second half of next year.

Wizz Air follows Ryanair, which announced four new twice-weekly routes in October, with flights from Yerevan to Milan Bergamo and Rome Ciampino expected to start in January.

“We have put a great effort in decreasing costs for airlines operating in Armenia,” Tatevik Revazian, chair of the Civil Aviation Committee of Armenia, told Reuters.



Ruben Hayrapetyan, chairman of the Football Federation of Armenia, hands an award to Henrikh Mkhitaryan, the national football team captain, March 22, 2018.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Armenian Embassy in Georgia to Seek to Have Tumanyan Statue Installed

TBILISI (Armenpress) – The Armenian Embassy in Georgia is working toward installing a statue of Hovhannes Tumanyan at Yerevan Park in Tbilisi.

“We definitely want to install the Tumanyan statue in Tbilisi this year”, Ambassador Ruben Sadoyan said at an event in the Georgian ministry of culture honoring the Armenian poet’s 150th anniversary of birth this week.

He said they have an agreement with Tbilisi City Hall and only technical issues are left to be settled.

“The Yerevan Park, where the statue will be erected, is owned by several individuals, and we are trying to negotiate with the owners and install the statue there.”

“We believe it won’t be right for Tbilisi not to have a Tumanyan statue,” he added.

Russia Still Armenia’s Largest Trading Partner

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Russia continues topping the list of Armenia’s main trading partners in 2019, Russia’s commercial representative to Armenia Andrei Babko said at a news conference on December 12.

From January to September, trade with Russia comprised 27 percent of Armenia’s total turnover. The 2nd largest trading partner of Armenia is China, followed by Switzerland, Germany and Iran.

“Mostly there are no changes in the trade turnover structure with Russia: agricultural products, reprocessed goods, natural gas, agricultural equipment and others. I would like to underscore that Armenian products are competitive in our market in terms of price and quality,” Babko said.

In terms of investments, Babko said Russian companies are among the primary investors. According to him, 43.6 percent of the total investments between January and September are from Russia.

Babko said Russian companies are willing to make investments in supplying agricultural, waste collection and road equipment, and active discussions are underway with the government.

Ukraine Deports Azeri Oppositionist to Baku

KYIV (RFE/RL) – Ukraine has deported Azerbaijani opposition blogger Elvin Isayev, who is wanted by the Prosecutor-General’s Office, his country’s State Migration Service said in a news release over the weekend.

The migration service stated on December 14 that Isayev had “violated Ukrainian migration laws” and was deported two days earlier.

Upon arrival in Azerbaijan, he was placed in a pre-trial holding cell on December 14 based on a Baku court ruling from August 22.

The Azeri government did not say on what grounds he was arrested and what charges he is facing.

His deportation comes ahead of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy’s two-day visit to Baku starting on December 16, during which he is scheduled to meet with President Ilham Aliyev.

The Ukrainian government hasn’t commented on Isayev’s deportation.

He had lived in Russia since 1998 where as a blogger he criticized the Azerbaijani president and called him a “dictator,” while also writing about corruption in his home country.

Isayev was granted Russian citizenship three years later.

However, a court in St. Petersburg on August 26 ruled to strip him of Russian citizenship and expel him. Isayev was subsequently placed in a temporary jail for foreign citizens.

His deportation to Azerbaijan in September was suspended based on an interim measure of the European Court of Human Rights called “Rule 39.” He moved to Ukraine that same month.

Ukrainian media started reporting about Isayev’s disappearance in Kyiv, including a dead signal with the mobile phone he was using, on December 12.

Turkey’s Military Involvement in Libya Set to Grow

By Amberin Zaman

ISTANBUL (Al-Monitor) – Turkey is poised to formalize its military support to Libya’s internationally recognized government, that would include dispatching a rapid-reaction force to the war-convulsed North African nation if need be, under the terms of an agreement that will be brought before the Turkish parliament for ratification.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan renewed his pledge to provide the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) with backing in wake of a deal they signed Nov. 27. It covers intelligence-sharing and arms deliveries, among other things.

“We will be defending the rights of Libya and Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean,” Erdogan told the pro-government A Haber news channel December 15. The announcement came a day after GNA Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj met with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and Defense Minister Hulusi Akar in Qatar, his government’s other top mentor.

Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and France are aligned with Khalifa Hifter, the Libyan general turned warlord who seeks to topple the GNA with his Libyan National Army. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi swiftly took aim at Erdogan’s comments, riposting, “We could have intervened in Libya. But we didn’t do this and respected Libya’s circumstances to preserve fraternity.”

The Tobruk-based parliament in Hifter’s eastern Libyan stronghold has called the Turkish security agreement with Tripoli invalid.

Hifter vowed last week to make a final push to take Tripoli, but the steady supply of arms and mercenaries to both sides has resulted in a stalemate since April, when Hifter launched his latest offensive. Ankara dispatched armed drones, which Hifter’s forces shoot down. The UAE supplied Hifter with more lethal Chinese-made drones, according to the New York Times.

A recent UN report showed that supporters of both camps have flooded either side with weapons, in breach of UN sanctions.

Hifter, 76, has waged an intermittent campaign to take Tripoli since 2014. Russian support, however, has allowed his forces to make advances in recent days.

Turkish muscle-flexing – most recently in Syria, where it launched an Oct. 9 assault against a US-backed Kurdish militia – has sparked a torrent

of proposed US sanctions and alarm bells across the region. Erdogan shows no signs of backing down in the face of mounting pressure. He threatened over the weekend to kick US forces out of Incirlik air base and the Kurecik radar station in Malatya, which is used to spy on Iran, should US sanctions go into effect.

In tandem with their security agreement, Turkey and the GNA have also signed a memorandum of understanding on delineating maritime boundaries, which effectively extends Turkey’s continental shelf in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Ankara crafted the move to counter its regional rivals, Cyprus, Greece, Egypt and Israel. All claim drilling rights for hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean and are acting in concert against Turkey. Turkey has raised the stakes, sending drill ships off the coast of Cyprus accompanied by naval vessels to protect them.

Greece has complained to the United Nations, calling the maritime deal with the GNA illegal and even booting the Libyan ambassador to Athens in response. Greece has the backing of its fellow EU members. The Brussels-based bloc has vowed to impose sanctions on Turkey if it doesn’t reverse course.

There are few signs it will.

“Libya’s internationally recognized government and the [self-declared] Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are Turkey’s only allies in the Eastern Mediterranean,” said Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, the Turkey director for the German Marshall Fund of the United States, a Washington DC-based think tank. “It’s therefore not surprising that Turkey decided to seal this agreement with Sarraj.”

Detractors have spun the narrative of Ankara’s backing for the GNA as one of an increasingly interventionist Turkey seized by neo-imperial ambitions and Muslim Brotherhood leanings. Analysts warn, however, that this reductionist take fails to convey the full picture.

Inga Kristina Trauthig, a research fellow at the International Center for the Study of Radicalization in London, told Al-Monitor, “A significant chunk of the war is playing out in propaganda, especially online. No Libyan force wants to be seen as dependent on foreign powers, but all forces have international connections, so it’s important to work on countering and/or framing these connections.”

Trauthig continued, “Instead of being interpreted as a renewed military pledge, the latest [agreements between

Turkey and the GNA] have quickly found their way into the toxic dominating narratives of the current civil war – in this case, that the GNA is a government propped by Turkey.”

In fact, Turkey initially opposed the 2011 NATO-led intervention that brought down Moammar Gadhafi and plunged the energy-rich country into chaos. One reason was Turkey had \$15 billion worth of outstanding contracts in Libya. Erdogan’s pious base also opposed Western military intervention against a fellow Muslim country. Erdogan had urged Gadhafi to step down and allow a peaceful transition. Turkey eventually fell in line behind the international coalition when it was clear Gadhafi’s fate was sealed.

Some argue that the bigger risk in Turkey deepening its involvement in Libya is that it will butt heads with Moscow, as it did in the early days of the Syrian conflict.

While Russia formally disavows taking sides in Libya, it’s an open secret that an army of Russian mercenaries called the Wagner Group is helping Hifter with Moscow’s tacit consent.

Kerim Has, a Moscow-based Turkish expert on Russian affairs, agrees that things could get sticky between Turkey and Russia in Libya, depending on how far the sides push their involvement in direct confrontation with the other.

Has told Al-Monitor, “Ankara’s stance in Libya is a clear portent of a new sphere of tension in Turkish-Russian relations. There are no signs that Russia supports the Turkey GNA deal. Quite the opposite. It’s clearly disturbed by it, in particular with the articles pertaining to military cooperation.”

Moscow’s discomfort stems in part from its view that the Islamic State, Jabhat al-Nusra and other jihadi elements have joined the ranks of GNA forces, Has said. Moscow would rather do business with the more secular Hifter, who, in any case, would likely give Russia a healthy stake in the country’s energy sector, if he were to prevail.

That said, Has believes that while neither Ankara nor Moscow will switch sides in Libya, they will also avoid a dust-up because larger common interests are at stake. He said, “While efforts are underway for the activation of the [Russian-made] S-400 missiles, when talks have begun for the sale of Russian Su-35 jets to Turkey, when Russian gas from the Turk Stream pipeline [to Turkey] is about to flow, it’s unlikely that either Moscow or Ankara would desire direct conflict in Libya.”

Istanbul Patriarch Courts Controversy with Comments On Senate Resolution

MASALYAN, from page 1

those who interfered in the election process would go down in the “dark pages” of history.

Last year, the Turkish government intervened to halt elections at the patriarchate on the grounds “that the necessary conditions for the electoral process had not been met” and that Mesrob was still alive.

Masalyan stirred up controversy mere days after his election. In response to the US Senate resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide, Masalyan called it an immoral move, as it aimed to corner Turkey over the Armenian issue.

“Such things should not be taken seriously,” Masalyan said in an interview with Turkish daily Sabah. “There is nothing that pertains to us directly that we should get involved with,” he said in relation to the resolution approved by the U.S. Senate on December 12.

“As Armenians, we are saddened to see the suffering that took place on

these lands 100 years ago be used by parliaments of foreign countries as a tool for strategic, economic, political pressure,” the 85th Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul said. “We see it as an inappropriate situation against our ancestors.”

Masalyan said he had hoped the people in Turkey could resolve the issue themselves and Turkey and Armenia could improve their relations.

“When the two sides cannot talk, third parties, fourth parties, those overseas claim a right to speak,” he said. “All of these are issues we should handle. But since this is postponed, it is used as leverage to pressure Turkey,” he said.

“I do not find this to be very moral,” the patriarch said.

Masalyan won the election after receiving 102 votes out of 119 against his rival Aram Ateyan, who served as acting patriarch during the absence of Mesrob II.

The elections came after a long peri-

od of uncertainty and mourning following the death of Mesrob II, the revered head of the patriarchate of Turkey’s Armenians who passed away on March 8 after an 11-year fight against dementia.

Archbishop Mesrob II Mutafyan died at age 62 in the Surp Pırgic Armenian Hospital in Istanbul’s Zeytinburnu district on March 8 where he was receiving treatment.

Born in Istanbul’s Bayrampasa district in 1962, Masalyan graduated from Istanbul University’s philosophy department and decided to become a priest in 1982. After becoming a high priest (ver-taped) in 1984, he was then promoted to deacon (sargavak) in 1986 by then-Patriarch nork Kalutsyan.

After receiving a master’s degree in spirituality in 1999 from Milltown Institute of Philosophy and Theology in Dublin, Masalyan returned to Turkey and began serving as a preacher and spiritual counselor in Istanbul.

Community News

Armenian Christmas Service at St. Vartan Cathedral on Jan. 6

NEW YORK – The Nativity and Baptism of Jesus Christ will be observed at New York's St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral on Sunday and Monday, January 5 and 6, 2020. A special liturgical schedule will be in effect for these "Armenian Christmas" services; please make a note of the times.

This year Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan will celebrate the January 6 Christmas badarak in the cathedral, for the first time since his elevation to the episcopal rank last spring



Bishop Daniel Findikyan

On Armenian Christmas Eve – Sunday, January 5 – there will be an Evening Service at 5 p.m. The Divine Liturgy will immediately follow, beginning at 6:30 p.m., celebrated by the Rev. Davit Karamyan, Vicar of St. Vartan Cathedral.

A reception will take place following the services in Guild Hall of the Diocesan Center.

(Because of the 5 p.m. badarak on January 5, there will be no Sunday morning badarak at the cathedral on that day. Only the Morning Service will take place, beginning at 10 a.m.)

On Armenian Christmas Findikyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), will celebrate the Divine Liturgy. The morning service begins at 9:30 a.m., and the Divine Liturgy follows at 10:30 a.m.

The sacred music will be sung by the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir, under the direction of Khoren Mekanejian.

In Armenian tradition, this feast day commemorates not only the birth of Christ, but also his baptism by John the Baptist. The latter is remembered through the "Blessing of Water" ceremony, which will follow the Divine Liturgy.

After the cathedral's January 6 church services, a Home Blessing Service and Christmas Reception will take place in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium (suggested donation of \$10 at the door).

Armenian Christmas will also be observed at local parishes across the Eastern Diocese. Many parishes will celebrate on the day itself – Monday, January 6. However, Diocesan parishes have also been authorized to celebrate on Sunday, January 12, if local circumstances so demand.

The cathedral's Armenian Christmas Divine Liturgy will be broadcast live over the Eastern Diocese's YouTube channel and Facebook page.

St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral is located at 630 Second Avenue (corner of 34th Street and Second Avenue), in New York City. Armenian Christmas Eve services begin at 5 p.m. on Sunday, January 5. The Armenian Christmas Service on Monday, January 6 will begin at 9:30 a.m., with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy beginning at 10:30 a.m., followed by the traditional Blessing of Water ceremony.



Master of Ceremonies, Mark Roopenian, participated in the Live Auction.

AECP Caps Successful Year With Gala

LOS ANGELES – "You are not only helping those in Armenia, you are helping the world," Armenian EyeCare Project (AECP) Founder and President Dr. Roger V. Ohanesian said as he addressed the crowd of nearly 300 guests at the AECP's Annual Gala on November 23.

Amidst flowing cocktails, a five-course dinner and elegant décor, hundreds of donors and friends of the EyeCare Project gathered at the beautiful Balboa Bay Resort in Newport Beach to support and celebrate the organization on another momentous year. Mark Roopenian, senior managing director at DivcoWest Real Estate Investments in Boston and former Buffalo Bills NFL player, charmed the crowd as the master of ceremonies for the evening with his witty one-liners and thoughtful anecdotes about a recent trip to Armenia with the AECP. As well, Glaukos, a company that has been supporting the EyeCare Project for decades, was the evening's honoree.

With live music from the talented Hosharian Brothers Band, exciting Live and Silent Auctions with opportunities to win items like all-inclusive trips, dining certificates, fine wine and more all for a great cause and even a "Champagne Girl" who strolled around in a large dress that dispensed glasses of bubbly champagne, the night was filled with both fun and meaningful moments.

During the evening, Ohanesian touched on the AECP's biggest accomplishments throughout the year. This included the launch of the organization's Next Generation Fellowship Program, an extension of the AECP's Fellowship Program, which now gives Armenia's second generation of ophthalmologists the same opportunity to receive advanced medical education and training in their specialty as the Fellows before them through fellowships in the US.

Learning early on that training Armenia's physicians and medical personnel is the way to foster true advancement in the health care sector in Armenia, the AECP has prioritized medical education and training of Armenia's local medical staff from the beginning. With the NextGen Fellowship Program, six top-performing physicians from Armenia will soon be traveling to America to study

see AECP, page 7



The guests enjoy dinner.

Three Men Charged With Tampering With Thousands of Gift Cards in Multi-State Fraud Scheme

By Erik S. Hanley

MILWAUKEE (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*) – Three men are facing a combined 24 counts of forgery for a new gift card scam which police say spanned stores throughout Milwaukee and Waukesha counties and crossed state lines.

Gamlet Kazarian, 43, and Gevorg Poghosyan, 41, are each facing nine counts, and Ashot Tamamyian, 42, is facing six counts, of forgery as a party to

Suspects face up to nine felony counts

a crime, online court records show. Each felony count includes up to a \$10,000 fine and/or prison time up to six years, according to a criminal complaint filed in Milwaukee County Circuit Court.

Waukesha police were investigating a report of a Visa card fraud scheme happening at Walgreens and Target stores in Waukesha County. During the investigation, officers discovered Elm Grove Police were looking into a similar scheme.

Suspects would leave Visa gift cards behind with a forged barcode sticker which would transfer money the purchaser loaded on the gift card to a scammer's card instead.

Elm Grove and Greenfield police identified two vehicles involved in the incidents, and used GPS trackers to follow them.

Police followed one of the vehicles to several Walgreens stores and a CVS in Waukesha and found multiple altered Visa prepaid cards in the stores after the suspects left.

Surveillance showed Kazarian entering the stores.

Police conducted a traffic stop of the vehicle and found Kazarian, Poghosyan and Tamamyian inside.

Police identified Tamamyian as the person seen in surveillance video from an Elm Grove Walgreens placing fraudulent gift cards onto a rack. Tamamyian was also spotted purchasing gift cards with gift cards at a Walgreens in South Milwaukee and placing tampered gift cards on a rack.

Poghosyan was identified by police previously through a passport after checking into a hotel in Indiana and using gift cards to pay for the stay.

Police found a duffel bag in the vehicle stuffed with gallon-size plastic bags full of prepaid Visa cards with the cardboard packaging still attached. About 200 prepaid cards were recovered in the bag, some altered with a forged barcode.

After the traffic stop, police obtained a search warrant for a home in Greenfield where the second car was located. Before executing the warrant, a woman came out and got into the vehicle carrying two suitcases.

Police stopped her and searched the vehicle, recovering thousands of gift cards from the suitcases. The woman told police she found the suitcases in her apartment and was going to dispose of them.

Throughout the investigation, police traced gift card purchases as well as purchases of other gift cards with gift cards through various stores such as Walgreens, Target, Home Depot, Kwik Trip and Nordstrom Rack. The purchases were made in South Milwaukee, Oak Creek, Franklin, Wauwatosa, Milwaukee, Brookfield and Waukesha, and in Illinois and Indiana.



COMMUNITY NEWS

The Wag Brigade Is the Paw-fect Stress Reliever at SFO

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. (ABC-7 News) – Traveling can be a stressful experience for many. There are flight delays, cancellations and long lines at security checkpoints.

The San Francisco International Airport has a group of volunteer therapy animals, known as the Wag Brigade, who help relieve the stress and anxieties and make travelling a more enjoyable experience.

SFO launched the program in 2013 and teamed with the San Francisco SPCA to train and certify animals for the airport environment.

“At the present time we have 22 dogs and a pig on the Wag Brigade,” said Jennifer Kazarian, Wag Brigade Program manager. “When we launched the program our main goal was to de-stress our passengers, however what we found was a way to connect with our passengers.”

SFO is the first airport to have a therapy pig. Lilou is a 5-year-old Juliana-breed pig, who likes to play her toy piano and perform for all passengers.

The idea for the Wag Brigade was inspired after 9/11 when a Mineta San Jose International Airport employee brought his therapy dog into work. That day he was able to see how is dog was able to relieve the tension and stress from everyone around him.

Several years later, many airports across the U.S. caught on to the trend and have similar therapy animal programs.

“The reaction from our passengers is really positive,” said Kazarian. “We find that not everyone is traveling for positive reasons. We come into contact with people who are traveling to funerals, they might be leaving home for the first time, they might be traveling on military orders. We also meet a lot of people who have lost pets or can’t have pets so seeing a dog



The airport has gone to the dogs as well as one pig. (San Francisco Chronicle photo)

at the airport is always fun.”

The Wag Brigade can be seen walking around SFO’s gates and terminals. Passengers

can pet, play and take selfies with the therapy animals.

“It has been proven that petting a dog reduces blood pressure and it makes people happy,” said Kazarian. “When a Wag Brigade animal walks into the terminal we see people look up from their devices and they start to interact with each other and they start to interact with the dog and it puts a smile on everyone’s face.”

“The dogs really love it and its rewarding to see all of the people respond very positively to seeing the dogs,” said Eric Espejo, Pet

Caretaker of Benga, a Peke-a-Poo-Tzuzu. “It is pretty incredible; a lot of people are missing their own animals when they are traveling so this provides them with a little bit of comfort. Traveling is stressful so any distraction that you can provide while people are traveling is pretty positive.”

The Wag Brigade volunteers at SFO seven days a week. To join the furry pack, contact the Wag Brigade through their social media platforms.

For more information, visit <https://www.instagram.com/sfowagbrigade/>

St. Leon Choir Participates in Pan-Orthodox Christmas Concert

By Ruth Bedevian

FAIR LAWN, N.J. – On Sunday, December 8, the choir members of St. Leon Armenian Church, Fair Lawn NJ, wore their robes and sang *Khoroot Medz and Oorakh Lehr* at the Pan-Orthodox Christmas Concert sponsored by St. Mark’s Syriac Orthodox Cathedral, Paramus. Proceeds from ticket sales were earmarked to relieve the suffering of Christians in present turmoil in Syria.

This was the first of hopefully more future concerts to share in the spiritual diversity and

which included Greek Orthodox Church, Orthodox Church of America (OCA), the Coptic Orthodox Church, Serbian Orthodox Church, Antiochian Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Armenian Orthodox Apostolic Church and the host church, the Syriac Orthodox Church.

An authentic collection of hymns all praised the Nativity of Christ, including some prayerful hymns of thanksgiving to describe St. Joseph’s Revelation, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, and the Annunciation to Zachariah the Priest (Syrian Orthodox Church) and a Chanting of “Truly We Believe” (Ethiopian Orthodox).

Several hierarchs and clergy were in atten-



Members of the St. Leon Choir

at the same time, unity of orthodox believers. Praise to the Almighty in all languages is to “Sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.” Psalm 96: 1-2

The impressive program booklet contained the printed words to the hymns in the languages of the respective participating churches

and a welcome message was delivered by Mor Dionysius John Kawak, Patriarchal Vicar of the Archdiocese of the Syriac Orthodox Church for Eastern US. Following the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, Archbishop Elpidophoros who is chairman of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the US rendered an “opening word,” expressing the unity of Christian love and the oneness in the body of Christ.



Jennifer Kazarian

Donations

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* received \$636.51 from the Armenian Missionary Association of America’s Koren and Alice Odian Kasparian Endowment Fund.

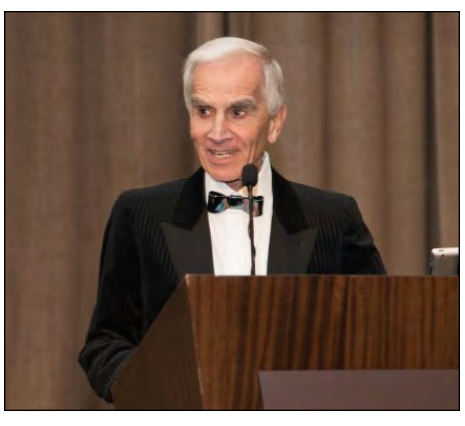
The Haiganoosh Mengushian/Ajemian, Robert Ajemian, Gloria Ajemian and Hrach Mgrdich Ajemian Foundation of Bloomfield Hills, Mich., through estate executor Peter J. Sarkesian, donated \$1,000 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

The Haiganoosh Mengushian/Ajemian, Robert Ajemian, Gloria Ajemian and Hrach Mgrdich Ajemian Foundation of Bloomfield Hills, Mich., through estate executor Peter J. Sarkesian, donated \$2,500 to the Tekeyan Cultural Association’s Sponsor a Teacher Program.

COMMUNITY NEWS

AECP Caps Successful Year With Gala

AECP, from page 5
 at some of the best-known medical centers in the US, which include the UCLA Jules Stein Eye Institute, Children's Hospital Los Angeles, Massachusetts Eye & Ear, Wills Eye Hospital and more.



AECP Founder & President Dr. Roger Ohanesian addresses the crowd

These Armenian eye doctors will spend between three to six months in the US learning and receiving surgical training in their specialties before returning to Armenia, where they will have clinics outfitted with the same cutting-edge medical equipment and resources as those they worked with during their fellowships in the US

"It is our best hope that continuing this tradition of bringing over our colleagues from Armenia for a strong educational endeavor will keep their department at the top of their abilities and stay the model of ophthalmology in the Caucasus and elsewhere," Ohanesian said.

Also mentioned at the AECP Gala was the organization's newly launched, large-scale School Screening Program in partnership with Children's Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA.) Dr. Thomas Lee, Director of The Vision Center at CHLA and a dear friend of the AECP, was in attendance at the Gala and spoke to guests about the innovative new program. Using cutting-edge equipment and highly trained staff, the

goal of this program is to screen every school-aged child in Armenia. The purpose is to detect eye diseases found among these children early on in order to save them from severe vision impairment and possible blindness. This is yet another tell-tale sign that preventative care has become a priority in Armenia.

Another huge accomplishment mentioned at the gala is the impending completion of the organization's fifth Regional Eye Clinic in Armenia,

scheduled to open in 2020. Launching its Five-for-Five campaign in 2015 – developing five Regional Eye Clinics throughout Armenia for \$5 million in five years – the AECP has been able to stay on schedule and has completed four Regional Eye Clinics since the launch of its initiative. The Haig Boyadjian AECP Regional Eye Clinic opened in Ijevan, Tavush in 2015; the John and Hasmik Mgrdichian AECP Regional Eye Clinic opened in Spitak, Lori in 2016; the AECP Kapan Regional Eye Clinic opened in Kapan, Syunik in 2017 and the John Ohannes Khachigian AECP Regional Eye Clinic opened in Gyumri, Shirak in 2018. The culmination of the AECP's Five-for-Five campaign will come with the completion of its fifth Regional Eye Clinic in 2020, which will be located in the Vayots Dzor province.

Among the AECP's many accomplishments throughout the year was, however, one great loss to the organization that was spoken of at the Gala – the passing of the EyeCare Project's beloved executive director, Leslie Newquist, who worked for the organization for 17 years. Ohanesian spoke of Newquist and the work she did for the EyeCare Project for nearly two decades, physicians and staff of the AECP shared memories about Leslie in a tribute video shown

at the event and the entire audience of donors and friends toasted to Leslie in thoughtful memory.

But perhaps the most impactful moment of the night was the report that Armenia is now becoming a model of how eye care should be administered in other developing countries. Ohanesian shared that ophthalmologists and other medical staff in Armenia, as well as the Armenian EyeCare Project office, are being asked by physicians from various developing countries to visit their countries to showcase how a similar and effective eye care program can be developed there.

Among many requests from different countries to share with them the approaches and techniques that the AECP is using to establish and sustain eye care and healthcare related programs and projects in Armenia are those from Central Asian and African countries, Armenia's nearby and far-away neighbors. Inquiries and requests relate to programs like the AECP's Center of Excellence for the Prevention of Childhood Blindness, which aims to prevent childhood blindness caused by retinopathy of prematurity and other eye diseases found in infants and children; the AECP's Diabetes Program, which helps to prevent and treat diabetes-related eye disease in patients with diabetes; and the AECP's Mobile Eye Hospital, which travels throughout Armenia to offer care to the country's most vulnerable citizens who live in remote regions.

Thus far, AECP's In-Country Director Nune Yeghiazaryan has already traveled to Uzbekistan and Georgia at the countries' invitations to help in developing projects similar to what the Armenian EyeCare Project does in Armenia as well as to train their specialists. The AECP's focus on various patient care programs, medical education and training, public education and more are utilized to create a cohesive eye care delivery system that works countrywide.

The AECP was also recently approached by the organization, "Traveling Doctors of Armenia," to help establish a similar project in African countries, beginning with Kenya. The organization and the winner of the 2017 Aurora Prize, Dr. Tom Catena, was particularly interested in the AECP's Mobile Eye Hospital that was conceived and produced nearly 20 years ago and has made eight full trips throughout Armenia offering eye care in its cutting-edge, surgical suite on wheels since its inception.

These various requests from other developing countries to help develop a similar eye care delivery system in their countries proves that Armenia's model of delivering 21st century, quality eye care to its own country is not only greatly effective but a structure that has the potential to be replicated and adopted in other developing countries to Armenia's benefit.

"This is medical diplomacy – and it's working," Ohanesian said. "Our donors should be proud of what they have done to improve conditions not only in Armenia but through extension, the rest of the developing world."

With a pleasant and purposeful night at its Annual Gala, the Armenian EyeCare Project turns the page on another notable year for the organization with much to look forward to in 2020.



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.

Sincerely,


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Gloria Deukmejian, former first lady of California and wife of former California Governor Mr. George Deukmejian, right, attended with a friend



OBITUARY

Charlie Davidson

Andover Shop's 'Baron of Bespoke'

By Bryan Marquard

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (*Boston Globe*) – What you sense about what you wear can be more important than what others see, Charlie Davidson believed.

"The lining is the most important thing," the longtime Andover Shop proprietor told John Spooner when the investment adviser celebrated publishing his first book by ordering his first custom-made suit.

"But nobody will see the lining," Spooner countered.

"Ahhh, that's the point," Davidson replied. "No one has to see the lining. But you'll know it's there. Style, not fashion. Remember that."

Davidson, who was 93 when he died December 2 in his Cambridge home, was more than just a Harvard Square institution, quietly holding court while selling menswear in his legendary Holyoke Street store.

He also dispensed wisdom – choice metaphors on how to live a refined life that he cloaked in the finery of men's clothing advice.

For some seven decades, first at the shop's original Andover location, then memorably in Harvard Square, he garbed an array of customers – some of whom became lifelong friends, especially if they were writers or jazz musicians.

Miles Davis and Chet Baker set down their trumpets to let Davidson improvise an outfit. Ralph Ellison became so close that the *Invisible Man* author wrote long letters to Davidson that are included in a just-published collection.

George Frazier, the late *Boston Globe* and *Boston Herald* columnist, used the Spanish word *duende* to confer an ineffable aura of class on people, places, and things he admired – among them his friend Davidson and the Andover Shop.

And the late *Globe* sports columnist Bud

If Davidson sensed he was dealing with someone with whom he didn't care to form a proprietor-customer relationship, he would "finally tell the person who came into the store, 'You know, I don't think we have anything for you,'" Spooner said.

That didn't stop anyone from trying to become one of Davidson's clients. Once admitted to his circle, they stayed.

Word got around. Even *New Yorker* writer Malcolm Gladwell could name-drop Davidson and know his reputation would strike a responsive chord.

"He was known all over the world. He was global," said former *Globe* columnist and editor Sam Allis, who was 10 when he first met Davidson. "He'd send swatches to somebody in London about making a jacket. People would come from Europe. Everybody knew him."

When Henry Louis Gates Jr. hosted the acclaimed PBS series "The African Americans," Davidson's wares merited a production credit for the Harvard professor's wardrobe.

Jazz pianist Bobby Short once told the *Globe* that the Holyoke Street store was one only of three places in the world where he purchased his clothes (the other two were in London and New York City).

"As a matter of fact," Short told the *Globe* in 1967, "Charlie Davidson at the Andover Shop is working up some new things for me right now."

Born in Lawrence in 1926, Davidson was of Armenian descent. His father, Leon Davidson, was an entrepreneur who had co-owned the Andover Country Club. His mother, Agnes Ohanian, was "the most amazing cook and mother and housewife," said Davidson's daughter Casey Farley of Newport, R.I.

The second-oldest of four siblings, Davidson graduated from Andover High School and served as a gunner in the Army Air Forces in the Pacific at the end of World War II. He brought a dry wit to many stories, including

ters, and then to Terry Haller, with whom he had one daughter. Both marriages ended in divorce.

In 1993, Davidson and Joyce Comfort became companions, while keeping their separate homes – he in Cambridge, she in Nahant. They had known each other since 1960.

"He could make you feel like you were the most special person in the world," she said by phone from his Cambridge residence, where she helped care for him during his time in hospice.

In addition to Casey and Joyce, Davidson leaves his three daughters from his first marriage, Stephanie Nicoll of Derry, N.H., Elisabeth of Andover, and Christine Anderson of Georgetown; a brother, John of Atkinson, N.H.; a sister, Rosemary Flynn of Brenham, Texas; four grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

Family and friends celebrated Davidson's life on Sunday, December 15 during an open house in his apartment at 19 Garden St. in Cambridge.

Along with Baker and Davis, Gates and Short, Collins and Frazier, he dressed the likes of Albert Murray, the novelist and critic, and George Wein, who founded the Newport Jazz Festival – a regular stop for Davidson, who kept a home in Newport, R.I., for many years.

In the early 1960s, surgery for cancer of the larynx meant the loss of vocal chords, and that his voice was soft.

"That could have been a huge disability to someone who wasn't as strong as him," Casey said. "Part of the intimacy of knowing Charlie was you had to get close to hear him. And he loved to talk, so he never stopped talking."

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Collins, who sought Davidson's assistance to create the unforgettably loud pants he wore to elite tennis tournaments, put a dazzling backspin on every compliment.

At various times, Collins wrote that Davidson was an "inimitable sartor," the "maestro of Andoverian garb," "the Baron of Bespoke."

As precise with a phrase as he was crafting suits, Davidson repaid such accolades.

"Jazz musicians always know the melody. But they never play the melody. They're always playing the improvisation. It's different every time," he once said while discussing Frazier's writing. "George is like that. People keep searching for the melody, but there is no melody. George was always playing the improvisation."

To longtime customers-turned-friends such as Spooner, Davidson's mere presence turned the Andover Shop into a sanctuary.

"He ran a club," Spooner said. "It was a club, not a store."

And not everyone who passed through the door became a member.

"Money meant nothing to him, really. It was style," Spooner said.

about his military service.

"I asked him recently, 'Wasn't it dangerous?' And he said, 'Only if you got hit,'" Casey recalled.

After the war, he briefly attended Bowdoin College in Maine.

"He always said he never met a test he could pass," Casey said. "But he was an incredible reader. He just loved knowing things and reading things – anything."

Davidson initially ran the first Andover Shop in an Andover building his father owned. That store opened in 1948, and Davidson's renown grew when he began running the Harvard Square shop, which opened a few years later.

As decades passed, he became "the last of a certain breed of American haberdasher from an age more golden than ours," Christian Chensvold wrote in a 2012 essay for *The Rake*.

"Having a business like the Andover Shop meant I never once felt like I was going to work," Davidson said in an e-mail to the *Globe* last year, when he sold his business.

Davidson was married twice – first to Elisabeth Kurth, with whom he had three daughters,

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Keep Up the Good work
Leon and Marion Semonian
 Watertown, MA

Happy New Year
Avedis and Houry Boyamian
 Winchester, MA

Merry Christmas.
Armenians United!
Ara A. Charchian
 Hartford, WI

Joy, Peace and God's blessings for a
Happy and Healthy 2020!
Mary Guleserian Bergoudian
Susan Bergoudian Hazarvartian
 Belmont, MA

Merry Christmas and a Happy New
Year to all Mirror-Spectator
subscribers
Aurelian and Anahid Mardiros
 Lynnfield, MA

Please continue sending news from around
the world to our fellow Armenians and
Americans. We have to express our culture
and history to our fellow Armenian-
Americans.
Alice Aznavourian
 West Chester, PA

Christmas Blessings
Joan Agajanian Quinn, Amanda and
Jennifer Quinn
 Beverly Hills, CA

To My family and friends near and
far, wishing you a Merry Christmas
and a Joyous New Year.
Michele M. Kolligian
 Boston, MA

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
to all of our friends and especially to
the staff of the Mirror-Spectator.
Dr. and Mrs. Gary Zamanigian
 Bloomfield Hills, MI

May the blessing of our Lord and
Savior be upon us all.
Andy and Rose Torigian
 Paramus, NJ

Merry Christmas and a healthy, Happy
New Year!
Agnes Killabian
 Cranston, RI

Reading the paper every week makes
me a better Armenian.
Edward Derkazarian
 Watertown, MA

Merry Christmas!
Ruth and Wil Swisher
 Newington, CT

May the spirit and blessings of
Christmas be with us all throughout
the year!
Richard and Ann Tarvezian
 Watertown, MA

Merry Christmas to the wonderful staff
of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator and
Baïkar.
Robert and Karine Avakian
 Bedford, MA

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
to all our friends and family
Edmond and Nora Azadian
 West Bloomfield, MI

Thanks for all of the good work,
This weekly publication is doing for
all of the Armenians in the US.
Simon Valeti
 Burlington, MA

Best wishes to friends and relatives
for a Happy and Healthy
New Year!
John and Roxie Maljanian
 Newington, CT

Congratulations for continuing this
invaluable weekly newspaper for over
85 years. Merry Christmas and Happy
New Year.
Jirair and Ani Hovsepian
 Belmont, MA

Greetings and Best Wishes for Christmas
and the New Year
Hagop and Maria Vartivarian
 Mahwah, NJ

Good luck with the Baïkar Building
upgrade
Mary and Van Aroian
 Worcester, MA

Happy Holidays to My Relatives and
friends
George W. Haroutunian
 Stoneham, MA

The vision of the Armenian Women's Welfare Association, sponsors
of the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in
Jamaica Plain, Mass., and the Hingonak Elder Clinic, in
Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh, would not be
possible without our wonderful supporters. On behalf of the
AWWA, we wish you and your families a Blessed Christmas and
a Happy and Prosperous New Year.
AWWA
 Boston, MA

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the
obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eager-
ness of the shepherds, the determination of the
Magi and the peace of the Christ Child. |
**Excerpt from the Holy Qur- (Mosaic Christmas) 2018 (Armenian.com)*
Sarkis and Ruth Bedevian
 Wyckoff, NJ

Merry Christmas to all my friends
and relatives.
Love and Peace
George Maksian
 Englewood Cliffs, NJ

Merry Christmas and a wonderful
New Year full of good health and
happiness to all
Charleen Mosesian Onanian and
Peter Onanian
 Wiston, MA

May your Christmas be Merry and Your
New Year Happy and Healthy.
Charles Gazarian
 Brockline, MA

Merry Christmas
Dikran and Maro Meguerditchian
 Lexington, MA

Holiday greetings to all our friends!
Jack and Eva Medzorian
 Winchester, MA

A Healthy and Happy and Merry
Christmas and New Year to all!
Dr. Myron and Mrs. Myron Allukian Jr.
 Boston, MA

We wish all our friends a Merry
Christmas and a Happy New Year.
Kevork and Silva Keushkerian
 Pasadena, CA

Merry Christmas
Asadour and Nvart Hadjian
 Alexandria, VA

Peace on Earth
The Aprahamian Family
 Northville, MI

Merry Hye Tahd
David Boyajian
 Belmont, MA

Happy New Year and Merry
Christmas
Mr. and Mrs. Herman Hintiryan
 West Bloomfield, MI

Happy holidays to all my family members
and friends. May this New Year be full of
abundant health, happiness and joy,
success and peace!! Amen
Annie Simonian Totah
 Potomac, MD

Warmest Wishes to All!
Don and Barbara Tellalian
 Newton, MA

Wishing everyone a joyous Christmas
and New Year
Anne Marie Norehad
 Glenview, IL

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas
Anahid Herosian
 North Falmouth, MA

Best Wishes
Dr. Jacques Gulekjian
 Fort Lee, NJ



COMMUNITY NEWS

After the Armenian Genocide Senate Resolution, *Quo Vadis?*

RESOLUTION, from page 1

Senator at the request of the White House in order to preserve US-Turkey relations. This time no one stood up to object. The context to the success of the two resolutions is the changed geopolitical situation. There is increased tension between the two countries primarily as a result of Turkey's assault on northern Syria, allowing Kurds there to be exposed to ethnic cleansing, and Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defense system, along with several other issues. Consequently, the US has less reason to avoid upsetting Turkey.

An additional factor may have been the increased public pressure on the senators to vote in favor when celebrity Kim Kardashian West asked her over 150 million followers to weigh in with their legislators on the day of the vote, as she did previously during the House resolution's vote.

The House at the end of October also passed a bill calling for sanctions against Turkey, while the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed a similar bill on December 11 which has yet to come before the entire Senate for a vote.

As these twin resolutions are not bills or official laws, they do not require the signature of the president. Senator Bob Menendez declared that the passage of the Genocide resolution meant "The Senate finally stood up to confirm history: What happened from 1915 to 1923 was – most assuredly – genocide...our foreign policy should always reflect this."

Bryan Ardouny, the executive director of one of the Armenian Assembly of America, said, "It sends a strong message that the United States stands on the side of human rights." He reflected on the process behind the scenes to get the resolutions passed and said, "It has been a long journey, literally decades in the making through educating members of Congress about the proud chapter in America's history in helping to save the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and the importance of affirming the Genocide, especially in the face of Turkey's campaign of denial. We never gave up. We kept fighting even when it looked impossible. We also recognized the changing geopolitical dynamics and prioritized passage of the Armenian Genocide resolution, which was reinforced by our 2018 and 2019 Advocacy Conferences with hundreds of Hill meetings discussing the importance of the legislation." He acknowledged the support of the Armenian Church and all Armenian organizations, as well as non-Armenian coalitions and organizations.

Writer and activist Peter Balakian, Donald M. and Constance H. Rebar Professor of Humanities at Colgate University, pointed out the role of scholars, cultural figures and writers in leading to the resolutions and acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide in broader society. He said, "Although there are always political issues at play when the Armenian Genocide resolution is put forward, and this time those forces were favorable for an ethical statement to be properly made, one thing seems clear: the collective work done by scholars, writers, artists, film makers, and journalists over the past 30 years has made a big difference. Hundreds of scholarly, artistic, literary, and journalistic works and texts created by writers and artists from dozens of nations all over the world have created a rich body of knowledge and public awareness about an event that had been inadequately understood. In 1989 to 1990, when Senator Dole brought the Armenian Genocide commemorative bill to the Senate floor, there was a much scater understanding in the mind of the general public about this history. There has been something like a sea change in the Armenian Genocide discourse over the past 30 years, and this reveals, I think, how the power of knowledge and creativity make an ethical difference in the wider world."

As one example, he pointed out "that Senator Menendez – the cosponsor of the resolution – read a passage from Grigoris Balakian's Armenian Golgotha on the Senate floor in order to convey in vivid depth the slaughter of the Armenians in Ankara in the summer of 1915 also speaks to the power of survivor testimony and how it can be ethically necessary and historically important more than a century later."

Taner Akçam, the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Professor of Armenian Genocide Studies at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University, saw the resolution as positive for both Armenians and Turks.

He said, "Whatever the motives behind the resolution might be, this is a historic decision. It is the end of an old era and the beginning of a new one. This decision is a moral victory for Armenian people and I salute all those individuals and organizations who meticulously have fought over the years for the recognition of Armenian Genocide. Even though they might have difficulty to understand it in its early stage, this is also an important moral victory for the people of Turkey who have been fighting for truth and justice in Turkey. Maybe not in the very short run, but in the long run, this decision will advance the fight of those Turks and Kurds for human rights and democracy."

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of the Republic of Armenia on December 13 declared, after thanking the US Congress, that the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide was important both for recording the historical truth and as part of the process of preventing genocides. He added, "the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide has a security component as it will help thwart potential threats to the security of our country and people. I would like to emphasize that not the Genocide of 1915, but Turkey's policy of denial makes us state

that Turkey continues to be a threat to our nation and to the Republic of Armenia. In fact, Turkey has been keeping the Armenian border closed for almost 30 years, which follows up the logic of genocide denial"

Meanwhile, the Turkish Foreign Ministry condemned the Senate vote as "a shameful example of the politicization of history," while Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu called it a "political show." The US ambassador in Ankara was summoned for a dressing down and several threats of retributive action have been made by the Turkish government.

Armenian Assembly Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian said the resolutions mark an important turning point for the US position on the Armenian Genocide. He declared: "I don't think the US is going to revisit the issue. They are not going to have this fight anymore. The president should use the word and I actually said in an interview in Armenia that he may make a political calcula-



EVEN THOUGH THEY MIGHT HAVE DIFFICULTY TO UNDERSTAND IT IN ITS EARLY STAGE, THIS IS ALSO AN IMPORTANT MORAL VICTORY FOR THE PEOPLE OF TURKEY WHO HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR TRUTH AND JUSTICE IN TURKEY.

TANER AKÇAM
CLARK UNIVERSITY

tion and use the word. I think it is political... Morally the House and the Senate knew they needed to do this but were held up by perceived issues of national interest or foreign policy."

What Lies Ahead

Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Supreme Council member Edmond Y. Azadian said, "The passage of the Senate resolution gives us an historic opportunity which was meant to come sooner or later. This gives Armenians cause for jubilation and also for action. Armenians must capitalize on this to enhance its position in the Caucasus region and the diaspora must move to the next phase of compensation." (See the ADL's statement on Page 1.)

Ardouny similarly stated, "Adoption of these resolutions will present new opportunities and new possibilities going forward." Furthermore, he continued, "The Armenian Assembly of America will also redouble its commitment to genocide prevention and ethnic cleansing, not only for Armenians in threatened communities, but for all nationalities and religious groups subjected to gross abuses of human rights."

Aram Hamparian, executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), the second major Armenian lobbying organization in Washington, said, "Having locked in US legislative recognition, the ANCA is hard at work breaking Ankara's grip over Executive Branch policy on the Armenian Genocide." He specified: "We are pursuing a broad array of strategic policy priorities - institutionalizing national remembrance, promoting genocide education, and rolling back and rooting out remaining forms of official US government denial – all with the long term aim of pivoting American policy from recognition to pro-active justice-based remedies, in the form of returns, restitution, and reparations."

Akçam recognized that it is possible that nothing substantive is going to change after the resolutions. The recognition by France and Germany did not lead to anything concrete. What may make a difference is the response of the American legal system, he said, pointing to the example of Holocaust litigation cases. He concluded, "For me, the most important issue is now to file well prepared law suits in United States. I assume that the law suits will be a game changer in the new future."

Southern California attorney Brian Kabateck, who played an important role in lawsuits against insurance companies withholding money from heirs of victims of the Armenian Genocide (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2018/04/19/commemorating-genocide-kabateck-still-pursuing-legal-remedies-for-historical-injustices-while-advocating-economic-boycott-of-turkey/>), spoke about revisiting the lawsuits rejected in California appellate court in the light of the new situation. He said, "I have given it a lot of thought. It is a hopeful light, but not a guarantee."

The California 9th Circuit Court of Appeals rejected the case of Armenian Genocide victims' descendants against Victoria Versicherung AG, a German insurance company, and two other

German companies, in 2013, and the US Supreme Court struck down a California statue, often called the Poochigian bill after its main proponent, as it supposedly interfered with federal foreign policy, which did not recognize the Armenian Genocide at the time.

Kabateck said that though it is Congress and not the executive branch that has just acted, it is interesting in several respects. At the end of October, Kabateck met Secretary of State Mike Pompeo a day after the House Genocide resolution passed, and asked what the administration is doing. Pompeo, he recalled, with a wry smile, responded "we are looking at it." Pompeo said, "you know, it is a political issue," while Kabateck retorted that he didn't think so.

Nonetheless, Kabateck said, the fact that Sen. Lindsey Graham, who appeared to be working at the beck and call of the president, did not intervene once again, nor did any other Republican senator, may indicate that the president is softening on this issue. "If that happens," Kabateck said, "then this will open the floodgate to lawsuits." It might be possible to get California to reopen the statute of limitations for Armenian Genocide insurance cases.

For now, the official US State Department policy on the Genocide has not changed to recognition, however, and this was confirmed by a terse December 17 State Department statement (see related story on Page 1.)

Barsamian said that at this point, with prominent discussion of the Genocide continuing on all levels, "There is much more penetration into the American psyche. Now America understands the issue. It has been discussed for so long that they understand it is genocide, with politics playing with historical fact." He also predicted new cases in courts concerning the Armenian Genocide and more legislation in states mandating the teaching of the Genocide.

Barsamian said, "Everything is on the table. I think we need to develop a strategy. We have won this round. We feel emboldened, but the question is where we go from here... We need a little time to digest it. Everyone wants a reaction but it may be just to stand back take the wind and decide what we are going to do to go forward." He said that there was a need to make Armenia whole again, but said, "I am not sure at this point that Turkey is there yet."

Barsamian suggested that aside from specific work concerning the Armenian Genocide, Armenians should also try to help Syrian Kurds and Christians in the region who are now under threat. He said, "Our ancestors were on the same roads so we have to make it part of our legacy to stop atrocities in the region. We have a moral obligation to that. Frankly I would like to start focusing on others. The reason why this [resolution] passed is that there are atrocities going on in the region and Congress signaled that what happened to Armenians should not happen to others."

(See related editorial on Page 18.)

Trump Refuses to Back Recognition Of Armenian Genocide

TRUMP, from page 1

"To overlook human suffering is not who we are as a people," said senator Robert Menendez, a Democrat from New Jersey who co-sponsored the legislation alongside Texas Republican senator Ted Cruz, during an emotional speech moments before the legislation was passed. "It is not what we stand for as a nation. We are better than that, and our foreign policy should always reflect this."

The Senate vote came after the House approved the measure last month, with a vote that came while Trump and Erdogan were meeting in the Oval Office.

Following the Senate vote last week, Erdogan threatened to recognize the killing of Native Americans by European settlers in America, as they moved across the country and displaced and killed entire populations.

"We should oppose [the US] by reciprocating such decisions in parliament. And that is what we will do," Mr Erdogan said during an interview on the pro-government A Haber news channel.

"Can we speak about America without mentioning [Native Americans]? It is a shameful moment in US history," he continued.

In its statement, the State Department pointed to Trump's April 24 comments, which fell on the Global Armenian Remembrance Day. During his statement, Trump recognized that over a million and a half Armenians were "deported, massacred or marched to their deaths" under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.

He did not describe the events as genocide. While former president Barack Obama described the events as a genocide as a candidate in 2008, his administration later assured the Turkish government that it did not support a resolution recognizing the killings as a genocide.

Arts & Living

Inside Jewelry Designer Sonia Boyajian's Dream Of an L.A. Store

By Alex Brunswick

LOS ANGELES (*Vogue*) – Sonia Boyajian is an unusual breed of artisan. An unapologetic maximalist, she's long favored statement jewelry and expressive hand-craftsmanship that's elusive in the category. So as the pendulum swings back in the favor of bold baubles, as seen on the Spring '20 runways of Gucci, Brandon Maxwell, and Ulla Johnson, among others, it seems apt that Boyajian is unveiling a Los Angeles flagship. Tucked away on La Brea Avenue, the unadorned storefront belies the compelling artistry happening within its four walls – a window into the fantastical world that Boyajian has created.

When Boyajian began outgrowing her former Hollywood workspace, and decided it was time for a retail venture of her own, she turned



Modeling Boyajian's jewelry (Photo courtesy of Sonia Boyajian's website)



Boyajian's jewelry on display (Photo: Courtesy of Stephen Busken)

to longtime friend Pamela Shamshiri of Studio Shamshiri, whose notable work with designers includes Irene Neuwirth's Melrose Place jewel box. Boyajian and Shamshiri took cues from Georgia O'Keeffe's Santa Fe studio (with subtle nods to Donald Judd), replicating the colors, textures, and angles, sometimes to exacting detail. The six month project was truly collaborative. "The storyboard they presented to me was my jewelry as fixtures and reimagined as elements throughout the space: door knobs, sconces, pendants. They wanted to use it all," Boyajian says. "They added such a sense of refinement to my kookiness."

The cavernous space, which spans over 5,000 square feet, features ample showroom and studio space in which Boyajian can both work and see JEWELRY, page 17



Sona Hakobyan

SPOTLIGHT ON Armenia's Fashion Industry

YEREVAN – Some may think of Armenian fashion as being fairly conservative, especially when they associate it with the traditional famous carpets. Ask a member of the older generation who lived under Soviet rule and they would tell you about extraordinary Armenians they knew who expressed themselves creating outfits from scratch. Later, because of the limited market, every neighborhood in the newly-independent Armenia had its own little fleet of couturiers, the fans of the most popular fashion magazines of the time. Each magazine was virtually priceless and used to travel from fan to fan. The famous Vernissage market in the late 1990s carried some of those well-loved magazines. So what is happening in the local fashion industry today?

By Gayane Ghazaryan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Three years ago, the very first concept store that was selling different clothing made by more than 50 Armenian designers in Yerevan opened. Now there are 3 main multi-brand designer shops, 5 Concept, Cocos Island and Made. The stores contain clothing lines, jewellery and accessories. The biggest one of them is 5 Concept, which gives opportunities to cooperate and display their creations to every designer wishing to do so.

Another big step forward was in 2017 when the Fashion and Design Chamber of Armenia (FDC) was established, the very first organization aiming to develop the fashion industry and encourage designers to overcome the challenges they face. FDC is also trying to educate the new generation as much as possible by including a lot of assistance from international specialists. It started changing history with the birth of the annual fashion forum in Yerevan in June 2018, which gathered not only designers, but students, journalists and photographers.

Since we lack a proper fashion education in Armenia, it is the greatest chance for all the fashion figures to be involved in the forum and expand their horizons in see FASHION, page 14



Exterior of Cocos Island

Spartak Khachanov

Creating Protest Art from Armenia to Finland and All Points in Between

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/SUOMENLINNA, Finland – Young sculptor Spartak Khachanov was born in Azerbaijan, lived in Armenia and Ukraine, and has now settled on a Finnish island.

Spartak, the first time I read about you was in the *Washington Post*, about how you were forced to leave Ukraine for Finland because Ukrainian nationalists demolished your exposition. In your opinion, was this incident an indirect PR coup for you?

On December 19, 2018, I launched my new project, "Parade of Phalluses." It was of an anti-war nature, a satire on military parades around the world and was not an image of a specific army and state. The project was exhibited at the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture in Kyiv, where I was a fourth-year student. We



Spartak Khachanov

were offered a free theme, and I exhibited my work in the central hall of the Academy. The exhibition took 100 meters in length. The teacher of the design department Vladimir Kharchenko, who was a volunteer in the war in eastern Ukraine, disliked it very much, considering that it a mockery of the Ukrainian army. He threatened and insulted me, and when he understood I was not going to remove the installation, he began to break it down and also invited his friends to the Academy – the neo-Nazi group "C 14" – who attempted to murder me. This situation went far beyond the borders of the Academy and Ukraine, they found out about me in many countries of the world, so that most likely became a PR problem for the entire outdated education system in Ukraine, where deans are 30 years behind, like Fidel Castro and other dictators. Thus, for the first time in my experience I learned that in Ukraine there is no freedom of speech, and neo-fascist organizations consider themselves curators and decide what art is and what is not. They can come to higher educational institutions to the exhibitions of artists and put everything apart. Dissatisfaction with my work and its destruction is not the first case in the last five years. And the citizens of Ukraine are hostages of the war - we are not allowed to express our opinion and we must remain silent.

You lived in different countries, among various
see SPARTAK, page 16



ARTS & LIVING

Spotlight on Armenia's Fashion Industry

FASHION, from page 13

the sphere. For the most part, the industry only exists in the capital; however, the FDC is working on spreading fashion in other cities, too. Recently, new little ateliers have popped out outside of the capital for clothes as well as jewellery. For example, in Vanadzor, there are two young women who carefully choose materials and fabrics to create pieces that mirror their inner worlds. However, it is a bit more challenging for them to put their works out there, since they do not have enough opportunities and products. But on the bright side, the FDC has already started gradually expanding the fashion industry both in and beyond Yerevan.

One of the notable members of the FDC is Sona Hakobyan, who is known for her asymmetrical dresses, baggy pants and iconic Lego bags. She established herself with a powerful image of a woman in the Armenian fashion industry. She has been contributing to the industry since 2008 until now, with a little gap in between the years. Sona's brand, Soncess, is as flamboyant and sunny as her own personality, which plays a great role by reflecting the sparkle inside herself. She sat down for an interview recently.

Have you always been interested in design/art? How did your love and passion start?

Yes! I have always had a big enthusiasm and love towards the fashion world, but I have never thought that I can pursue my career in that specific sphere. Even the degree I possess has nothing to do with what I am doing now. Everything started with my grandmother, who was an incredible tailor. From a young age she would teach me how to sew and choose outfits that fit well together. We would spend a huge amount of time, designing, choosing different fabrics and sewing various pieces of clothing, but I never ever imagined that this will become my profession one day. However, later on it turned out that it just runs in my blood, you know. It is not something that you can learn or get with a degree, if you do not already have it as a part of your inner world.

What is the idea behind your brand name? What does Soncess mean to you?

Since my name is Sona, from a very young age everyone has been calling me (my sun). In Russian the sun is pronounced as "sonce," which sounds very similar to my name that is why I got the nickname "Soncs." When I was struggling with finding a proper name for my clothing brand, one of my close childhood friends actually came up with it randomly, and we thought that it lacks a vowel so we added



Interior of Cocos Island

some years later it became a worldwide trend and that is when the time came for the creation of Soncess. I could finally portray the independence of my own style in my pieces of works. In a nutshell, I want to be able to present the strong image of a powerful woman. My inspirations usually vary from each other depending on the collections I produce, but the main idea that connects them all is the difficult solution that makes them stand out from the crowd.

How does it feel to be a fashion designer in Armenia? Do you think designers are properly treated by society?

I am afraid to tell you that my profession and fashion itself is much underrated. It is not valued at all and is not receiving proper recognition. In my opinion the idea is a bit mixed up in our country, since, usually the demand creates the market, but in our case, it is the exact opposite. If you want to show off your specific style, you will not find a lot of clients wanting to buy what you have created. I am always trying to go

told me anything personally. For me it has much greater value when professionals from other countries give me their opposite opinions about my works. Once they even compared me with much bigger designers, showing that there is a potential to exist right next to them. I do not really pay any attention to the opinions I receive here, since, obviously, there will always be negative comments, however, it is important to take into consideration who you are getting judged by.

What three words would you use to describe

your style?

Free, high quality, fearless.

What are the average prices?

The average pricing starts from \$100 and can reach UP TO \$600. The prices are quite high, since we struggle with the production of the materials and the textile, so everything is being imported from abroad. That is why the prices are high. The creation of a certain clothing or jewellery are done individually and not by a group of people, which also affects the prices.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Exterior of Made

the "e" and it became Soncess. I think it is the best possible option ever, since it perfectly describes my whole nature.

What is the main inspiration for the outfits you create?

The major source of my inspiration is freedom. It has been always present in my soul. There was time when the freedom in my outfits was not very well accepted by others, because it was totally out of the norm, breaking all the stereotypes of what is considered normal. Thus,

against those stereotypes and keep my signature in every piece I make. That is why keeping the business becomes more and more difficult. But, I sincerely hope that one day the whole mentality will change and the people would break free from all their insecurities and will create their own individual styles.

Have your designs ever faced criticism? If so, did it affect you?

Honestly speaking, I have not received that much criticism; it does exist, but nobody has



Son ess outfit



ARTS & LIVING

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Is it easy to source all the necessary materials? If no, what equivalent ways are there?

Finding the materials and the fabrics is a quite serious challenge in Armenia, and that is the reason why very often we are unable to demonstrate us internationally. Occasionally, we are even unable to accept a certain order, because at that moment we might not have or find the exact fabric that we used for the specific collection. Almost all the required fabrics, materials are being imported, since we do not produce them in here, and textiles are also quite expensive for us to get. Nevertheless, if we fail to find the essential materials, that is when our imagination comes to the rescue: we investigate all the possibilities of forming new things that might fit well in the circumstances. This brings up a lot of creativity in us and makes the process of making the clothing much more captivating. For example, last year when we were in Paris, we witnessed how the designers were working there, effortlessly; having all the materials they need right in front of them. Meanwhile, we have to roam around different shops and markets to try to find some materials and transform them into the thing we had wanted initially. It is the same situation with the fabric. There are so many fabrics that I truly like



Art socks

and would like to use in my collections, however it takes a long time to get them. In these situations, we just have to rely on the dressmakers to get something out of an ordinary fabric

piece.

Do you include Armenian traditional patterns or images in your works?

Personally, I am very fond of Armenian tradi-

tional patterns and ornaments, but I have never used them in any of my collections. The reason is that the traditional images have always been in trend and you could easily find them in a lot of places, both in clothing and jewellery. And in order to get something very fashionable and high quality out of them, I would need plenty of different materials with Armenian motives, which unfortunately I am unable to find. In fact, I am thinking of having a boho styled collection where I would allow myself to play around with some Armenian traditional patterns, since they are just unspeakably astonishing.

I have noticed, there are not any Armenian designers creating clothes for men. Is there a reason?

Honestly, I love male fashion more and I would love to create for them as well. But, in Armenia, fashion is more required and popular amongst females and they like to take care of themselves much more than men. Men's fashion pieces are also more complicated to make and cost even more.

Is there a message at all that you want to deliver through your designs?

My main goal is to make people more confident and self-aware. I am certainly looking for people who are brave enough to show their unique character and individuality through the outfits I create.

How close do you think we are with the fashion in the world in general?

The fashion industry in Armenia has a huge potential, because we have quite a few gifted designers and jewellers that can earn their own place in the world's fashion industry. It just requires a little bit more time and practice to achieve the set target. As an example, our neighboring country Georgia, is very well known in the fashion world as "Georgian designers," meaning that they have their own unique style that is specific only to them. I think as a small country, we should aim the same. We should gather all together and think of an element particularly personal to us and occupy the fashion world with it.

Armenian designers have already managed to steal the spotlight in the multifarious world of fashion. They were spotted a couple of times by the world's leading fashion magazines such as *Vogue* and *Marie Claire*. This gives us an immense belief that we will continue climbing up the challenging, yet the most successful ladder of international fashion industry, and why not, be placed on the list of the leaders someday.

Recipe Corner

Guest Recipe



by Christine Vartanian Datian

Roasted Whole Baby Pumpkins



Contributed by Chef David Vartanian* at the renowned Vintage Press Restaurant in Visalia, CA, this festive recipe uses tender roasted chicken, Jarlsberg cheese and pistachios to create a magical winter entree.



INGREDIENTS

- 6 baby pumpkins
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 8 oz. smoked or regular roasted chicken
- 4 oz. Jarlsberg cheese
- 1 tablespoon chopped chives
- 4 oz. roughly chopped fresh pistachios
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons hot chili sauce
- 6 oz. heavy cream

LEMON BUTTER SAUCE

- 2 shallots, diced
- 1 cup wine
- 1 ounce champagne vinegar
- 2 ounces heavy cream
- 6 ounces sweet butter
- Juice of one lemon
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon chives

SAUCE PREPARATION

To create the sauce, combine the shallots, wine and vinegar in a sauce pan. Bring to a simmer and reduce by one half. Add the heavy cream and reduce again. Over low heat whisk in the sweet butter piece by piece. Season with salt, pepper and lemon juice. Add the chives just before serving.

PUMPKIN PREPARATION

Place pumpkins whole into a baking pan, cover with foil and bake in a 325°F oven for 45 minutes or until the pumpkins are soft. Use a sharp knife to remove the tops of the pumpkins, discard the seeds and season the inside of the pumpkins with salt and pepper.

Heat the butter in a sauté pan and cook the onion over medium heat until soft. In a bowl, combine the smoked chicken, Jarlsberg cheese, cooked onion and chives. Mix well and season with salt, pepper, and chili sauce to taste.

Fill pumpkins with the smoked chicken mixture and pour one ounce of heavy cream into each pumpkin. Place the tops back onto each pumpkin, cover with aluminum foil and roast pumpkins in 350°F oven for 15 to 20 minutes. To serve, place one ounce of Lemon Butter Sauce on each of the six warm plates and place a pumpkin on each plate. Top each pumpkin with chopped pistachios.

Serve this dish alongside any meat, fish or poultry or serve by itself on top of a mixed green salad.

Serves 6.

Pass the Caviar, Darling

LAS VEGAS – The Bellagio's 24-hour Petrossian Bar & Lounge has returned to the lobby of the resort after a remodel that started in August. Still part of the scene, live music from the one-of-a-kind Steinway grand and that view of Dale Chihuly's 2000 hand-blown glass flowers, Fiori di Como in the lobby.

The revamped bar offers hand-made infused cocktails, a vodka sampler, and afternoon tea daily from 1 to 4 p.m. That comes with open-faced sandwiches, English tea sandwiches, freshly-baked scones with clotted cream, Baxter's preserves, assorted miniature pastry treats, and, teas imported from around the world.

Live music includes piano favorites from David Osborne, the pianist to the presidents. Osborne has performed at the White House for Presidents Carter, Bush, Clinton, Bush, and Obama.

Newcomers on the drinks list include tea-infused cocktails such as the Knights in White Satin, made with Masala Chai-infused Selvarey White Rum, Chateau Arton Blanche Armagnac, Italicus Bergamot, Cointreau, almond orgeat, and lemon; and the Mariner & Mule with Roku Gin, matcha green tea, ginger and lime, topped with yuzu soda. Petrossian Bar also has revamped several old hotel bar classic cocktails including Le Salty Dog, made with Grey Goose Le Citron, Giffard Pamplemousses, grapefruit, and Himalayan pink salt; and the Conservatory Cup made with Spring 44 Vodka, Pimm's No 1, English cucumber, ginger, and lemon.

Creating Protest Art from Armenia to Finland and All Points in Between

SPARTAK, from page 13

cultures. In your opinion, how can contemporary art reflect what is called a national feature?

Contemporary art – sculpture, installation, graphics, painting, photo, video and sculpture – is one of the languages of art, and in it the concept of a nationality is, as it were, erased. In Helsinki, where I am located, the community of artists consists of different nationalities, and the themes of the works that are touched on in art have the scale of what the society cares about right now – ecology, immigration, gender and every contemporary artist, regardless of nationality, in his works of art, reflects all this. As an artist, I identify myself as a doctor who diagnoses the patient, but does not heal him. I share the message with society and for me the emotional impact of my work on the viewer is important. However, I do not intervene, but I am an observer of what is happening. But in my works, national characteristics are reflected in my themes.

How is life in Finland now?

On February 1, 2018, I arrived in Helsinki on the island of Suomenlinna (Sveaborg), in the former military fortress and concentration camp, which is now under the protection of UNESCO. I lived at the residence of HIAP artists for three months. During this time, I traveled to Berlin and participated in a group exhibition of German and Ukrainian artists dedicated to decommunization and participated in an artist talk in Berlin and at the Helsinki Art Museum (HAM), the international bookstore Arcadia, and then because of my visa expiring, I left for Bulgaria for three months, where I exhibited at the Contemporary Art Week in Sofia, in the Underground Gallery. Three months later, I returned to Finland, to the island where I live now, during which time my wife Anastasia and I created the “Olympic Games: Reloaded” photo project, which was installed on September 21-27 in two locations in the window of the office of the Finland Peace Committee and the Miimala 2 Gallery. Since November 1, I have been participating in the joint exhibition “Artists at risk AR Pavilion Helsinki” with the sound installation “Cage,” dedicated to the civil war in Finland between white and red Finns. In the future, they intend to show this project on the island of Suomenlinna, which after the 1918 war was the largest concentration camp with 13,300 prisoners. I also participated from November 15-21 at the “HIAP Studio Opening Autumn 2019” exhibition with the “Pantheon” installation project. Now I am working on a short film in the genre of fiction, a political satire called “Made on Planet Earth” for admission to the Academy of Moving People and Images in Helsinki. This is a free annual program from the Finnish short



“Olympic Games” by Spartak Khachanov

film studio in Helsinki, and I am also working on a short plasticine animation called “The Triumph of Death.”

During this time I met many artists, directors, actors, musicians, writers, journalists from Finland and around the world, as well as Finnish politicians and many other interesting people.

The surname Khachanov is now known in Russia thanks to tennis player, master of sports of Russia Karen Khachanov. Are you relatives?

Khachanov is a rare surname in Armenia, so Karen and I may be from the same family.

Your family is from Baku who, because of the well-known events, were scattered around the world today. So you became a refugee for the second time?

I was born in 1984 in Baku, and after the Armenians’ massacre in Sumgait in 1988, my parents left Azerbaijan for Armenia, in the city of Kapan, where my mother was from. Then I was four years old. Then my parents and brother left for Ukraine, and I stayed with my grandparents in the village of Vachagan near Kapan. In 1991, my parents took me to Ukraine in the city of Snezhnoye, Donetsk region. War has been haunting me since childhood. While in Finland, I did not seek political asylum. Most likely, for the third time I became an immigrant.

Spartak, you lived in Armenia for a while.



Triumph of Death 2018. Plasticine, metal, wood, fishing line, film



“Forgotten People” by Spartak Khachanov

What are your memories of your historical homeland?

The best and warmest memories of my childhood! When I found out that they wanted to take me to Ukraine to my parents, I ran away from my grandparents to the mountains and hid. My uncle Martin found me and promised that we would go see our parents and come back. I believed him, but I never returned. I even made a wooden sculpture called “Deceived and Taken Away” and wrote a short film script related to the memory of this move. If I could go back, I would do everything to live there, but it did not depend on me. I love Armenia; it is my homeland.

In the year of the centenary of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire in Kharkov, you came up with this topic. Please tell us about that project.

From 2013 to 2016, I studied and worked on a project of sculptures dedicated to the Armenian Genocide. During this time, sculptures were created from various materials from wood, metal, bronze, stone, ceramics, foam block.

In 2014-2015, I worked on a project dedicated to the Armenian Genocide with three sculp-

tures – wooden and bronze sculptures “Immigrant” and “Wheel of Life.” In 2014, I participated in the international competition to create a monument dedicated to the centenary of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire, organized by the Kharkov Armenian community. I presented my plasticine sketch “Wheel of Life” and as a result of the competition I took second place. In 2015, I was approached by the Armenian community of Kharkov and offered to participate in the exhibition dedicated to the centenary of the genocide “One in a Million and a Half” in a local gallery, Buzok. I agreed to participate eagerly and exhibited the above-mentioned works “Immigrant.” Subsequently, my sketch for the “Wheel of Life” monument, became a thesis in the Kharkov Art College, which I defended with excellent marks and for which I received a red diploma.

You have not been to Armenia for a long time. Do you intend to return and come up with some kind of project?

Surely I do not mind if I am offered to participate in some projects or to make a personal exhibition. I am for it, and I would be pleased to make a new project in my fatherland...



ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

FLORIDA

FEBRUARY 2 — Banquet Celebration welcoming our newly consecrated Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan for his first pastoral visit, in conjunction with the 32nd Anniversary of consecration of St. David Armenian Apostolic Church on Sunday following the Holy Badarak at the Mardigian Hall – 12:30pm. For further information, please call St. David Church office – Christine 561-994-2335 Or Sonig Kradjian 607-727-8786”

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!



Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston will host a New Year's Eve dinner-dance at St. James Church's Charles Mosesian Center/Keljik Hall, 465 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. Cocktails at 7 p.m., with dinner at 8 p.m., Dancing 'til 2 a.m. Tickets \$125 for adults and \$75 for children. For tickets call Alina Ashjian at 617-852-1816.

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 pro-

vided 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 [SNDNYE2020.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, rsvptaliab@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.

"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.

Inside Jewelry Designer Sonia Boyajian's Dream of an L.A. Store

JEWELRY, from page 13

entertain. Awash in soothing blush tones, the front room boasts sky high ceilings from which a custom-made Calder-like mobile and one-of-a-kind light fixtures and pendants hang, all of which were created by Boyajian to mimic some of her more elaborate designs. Jewelry is carefully merchandised in cubby holes dotting the walls above custom built-ins and seating that mimic O'Keeffe's own studio benches, down to the fabric. Boyajian even made the ceramic and white porcelain trays, animal figurines, and ring holders that accessorize the space and bring an intimate feel to the oversized setting.

The square footage of the studio has afforded Boyajian the luxury of bringing every last step of her creative process under one roof.

Downstairs, at the far end of the space sits her ceramic studio with two kilns, where all of her pieces get shaped, baked, and glazed by hand. They then travel up a curving flight of stairs to her lofted workspace, which is broken out into equal parts work stations and archival display. The small room where she welds, carves, and assembles the individual parts she's created sits just across from the room that now houses her expansive 18-year archive.

"When I shop for something I want to know who made it, how it's made, and where it's made," she says. "So I think it's important that my customer sees that we're making it right in back and upstairs, and that my customers can come into the ceramic studio."

The Sonia Boyajian store is located at 357 N La Brea Avenue in Los Angeles.



The interior of Sonia Boyajian's new store (Photo courtesy of Sonia Boyajian's website)

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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Armenian Genocide Recognition Crosses a Threshold

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Although some 30 countries have already recognized the Armenian Genocide, recognition by the legislative branch of the most powerful nation in the world has a unique significance and far-reaching impact.

First, the US House of Representatives passed Resolution 296 in October by an overwhelming majority (405-11) and then the US Senate on December 12 by a unanimous vote, passed its own resolution.

The causes and consequences of these actions still continue to reverberate in many political quarters in the world, including in the US, Turkey, Armenia and now, also, in Israel.

This is not the first time that the US government, on different levels, has recognized the Armenian Genocide. President Ronald Reagan did so in April 1981, calling it by its real name. In the subsequent 20 years, the issue had become a political football. Every year in April, the presidential proclamation would dance around the term "genocide," hopes would be raised in Armenian circles and then be dashed, angry words would emanate from Turkey and then, everything would revert back to normal.

There has never been room for any legislator to dispute the documents and veracity of the Armenian Genocide. The only concern was not to anger Ankara to cause a disruption in Turkish-American relations. That is why the only remaining excuse was "it is not the time to take up the Genocide issue." But as Sen. Robert Menendez stated recently on the floor of the Senate, it is always time to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

Governments do not make decisions based on accuracy or humanitarian concerns, even if the latter is touted sometimes publicly. Their decisions are based on realpolitik. Today, Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar are subject to mass murder by government forces. It seems that it is not in the interest of any power to intervene forcefully and stop the carnage. The same scenario unfolded in Rwanda in the 1990s. Despite the alarm sounded by the United Nations Peacekeeping force in that country about the genocide of innocent civilians, no country intervened and later on, President Bill Clinton's apology for not having prevented the genocide was not able to bring back 800,000 souls.

At this time, the US is implementing sanctions on Turkish officials and institutions as a punitive measure against Ankara's transgressions. It is true that the genocide resolution is being used by the US as a political tool to punish Ankara and that, certainly, does not diminish the significance of the action. On the contrary, it confirms that the resolution is in line with US foreign policy and it is part and parcel of that policy.

Granted, the resolutions are non-binding, but the mere fact that the term "genocide" has been used, has political, historical and even legal consequences.

Many legislators in the past have pursued the case in the chambers of the US legislative branch but they have been stopped by the excuse of it is "not the right time."

Senators Bob Dole and William Proxmire deserve to be remembered for their efforts toward their passage in the 1980s.

This time around, Representatives Adam Schiff and Gus Bilirakis in the House of Representatives and Senators Robert Menendez and Ted Cruz in the Senate spearheaded the drive for recognition, which was brought to its successful conclusion.

The passage of the resolutions was met with jubilation in the parliament in Yerevan and throughout the Armenian world, while it caused anger and threats in Turkey. Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan characterized the move by the US Senate as "a victory for justice and truth." He further elaborated that this is a tribute "to the memory of 1.5 million victims of the first genocide of the 20th century and a step in the promotion of the prevention agenda."

During the Cold War, Turkey was considered an asset to the NATO forces and thanks to US largess, it developed its economy and army, and become the second largest power in the NATO structure. But in the aftermath of the Cold War, it has become a liability and drifted away from its benefactors to pursue its own rogue course, most of the times in opposition to the policies of its allies.

Turkey has become entangled in many regional adventures

through unilateral decisions, without the consent and approval of the NATO Central Command, but always cognizant that it can invoke Article 5 of the NATO Charter. Indeed, the key section of the treaty's Article 5 commits each member state to consider an armed aggression against one to be an attack against them all.

After testing US resolve, Turkey made the decision to invade Syria and massacre the Kurdish forces allied with the US. Despite President Donald Trump's flip-flop, even the Republican-controlled Senate lost patience with Ankara. But what seems to have broken the camel's back was Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu's threat that Turkey can evict the US from the air base in Incirlik. Washington realized that Turkey meant business and in collusion with Russia and Iran, was in the process of undermining the US presence in the Middle East, intending to dislodge the US entirely from the region.

Following the resolution, the same threat was repeated by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan himself. At this time, the two countries are on a collision course but if we remember how Erdogan went crawling to Moscow to apologize after shooting down a Russian military jet, we may predict another similar U-



turn in Ankara. Perhaps it is to cultivate such an end that President Trump stated on Tuesday, December 17, that he does not back the resolution.

The successful conclusion of the recognition was a result of the correct lineup of many political stars, although we cannot discount the valiant pursuit of the Armenian advocacy groups, and mainly the Armenian Assembly of America and the Armenian National Committee of America in Washington. But the role of these groups is confined to keeping alive awareness of the Genocide and to take advantage of historic opportunities like this one. Had that endeavor not been pursued, similar opportunities would come and bypass unnoticed.

After crossing a monumental milestone in Washington, due diligence requires that we find out the mood in Israel and by extension the mood among its lobbying groups in Washington, because the future momentum of these legislative actions may be influenced by Israeli policies.

On December 15, *Ha'aretz* newspaper in Israel wrote: "Turkish reaction failed to frighten members of Congress, an attitude that is not shared by Knesset members and the Israeli cabinet, who still can't bring themselves to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Israel's justification has traditionally been based on two grounds. One is concern that recognizing a holocaust of another people would undermine the singular nature of the Jewish Holocaust as a one-time historical event. The other is that it would bring about a total break between Israel and Turkey."

Further down, the paper cites a more ominous course as it states: "Relations between Israel and Turkey haven't really been rehabilitated but now Israel is being careful not to anger Turkey because of the concern over the future of the pipeline between Israeli oilfields and Europe."

This means further hurdles down the road. We must understand that each nation will be engaged in political actions based on their own selfish interests, and not morality.

There is some conditional thaw among Jewish groups in the US and the Israeli lobby. Abe Foxman, the former head of the

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Senate Recognition of Armenian Genocide: Reactions and Next Steps to be Taken

For the first time since the Genocide of 1915, the US Senate adopted a Resolution unanimously on December 12, 2019, recognizing the Armenian Genocide, after it was blocked for three consecutive weeks by different Republican Senators at the request of the White House. Since then, I have received countless phone calls and emails from Armenians asking me if this Resolution, along with its companion Resolution adopted overwhelmingly by the House of Representatives on October 29, 2019, will now go to President Donald Trump for his signature.

I have written about this subject many times before, but it bears repeating that these two Resolutions are “stand alone” Resolutions, which means that they do not go to the White House and the President is not requested to sign them. This is the end of the road for these two Resolutions. If they were submitted to the two Houses of Congress as a “Joint Resolution,” they would then have been submitted to the President for his signature.

Nevertheless, regardless of the type of Resolution, if President Trump so wishes, he can use the term “Armenian Genocide” in his annual statement on April 24, 2020.

Even though the October 29, 2019 recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the House of Representatives was the third time the House has passed such a Resolution, the December 12, 2019 Senate Resolution is historic since it is the first time since 1915 that the US Senate has adopted such a Resolution using the term Armenian Genocide. Furthermore, these two “stand alone” resolutions do not have the force of law, therefore, no legal consequence. They are simply considered the “Sense of Congress.”

Nevertheless, the adoption of these two Resolutions and their international media coverage angered the Turkish government. Several Turkish officials issued statements condemning the US Congress and threatening to expel the US

troops from two air bases in Turkey. Turkish officials also tried to minimize the importance of these Resolutions by stating that they have “no value at all.” The Turkish government went as far as compelling its Parliament to issue a resolution condemning the US Senate for recognizing the Armenian Genocide. The Turkish government also summoned US Ambassador in Ankara David Satterfield, telling him that the Armenian Genocide Resolution would disrupt US-Turkish relations, while claiming that the Resolution has “no value at all.” Why then has the Turkish government spent millions of dollars for years on lobbyists trying to block the Resolution in Congress? How can a “worthless” Resolution disrupt US-Turkish relations and why would Turkey threaten to expel the US from the Turkish air bases?

Just as offensive are the attacks on the Senate Resolution by Azerbaijan’s officials. “The adoption of the resolution ... is an attempt to falsification of historical facts and its use as a means of political pressure,” stated Leyla Abdullayeva, Azerbaijan’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman. The Resolution “serves only the dirty purposes of the Armenian lobby circles,” she added. Armenia’s officials should react sharply by condemning Azerbaijan’s denialist statement which makes Azerbaijan an accomplice to the crime of Genocide after the fact. As a punishment, Armenia should declare that it is temporarily freezing all negotiations with Azerbaijan on Artsakh.

While it was expected that the Turkish government would lash back at the Armenian Genocide Resolutions, we are chagrined that the newly-elected Armenian Patriarch of Turkey, Sahak Mashalyan, gave a lengthy interview to the Turkish newspaper Sabah, calling the Senate Resolution “not very moral.” While it is understandable that Armenians in Turkey are hostages deprived of their basic human rights, nevertheless there was no reason for the Patriarch, who was elected just one day before the adoption of the Senate Resolution, to go to such great lengths to parrot the Turkish government’s denialist propaganda. He not only condemned the US Senate, but said such offensive things as calling for a historical commission to study if a genocide had taken place, falsely claiming that some Armenians sided with Russian troops in attacking the Ottoman forces, accusing Armenians and Turks of massacring each other, urging Armenians and Turks to find a mutual solution without the interference of “third parties,” and supporting the adoption of the infamous Armenia-Turkey Protocols by both countries. All of these are arguments advanced by the Turkish government. Patriarch Mashalyan stated at the end of his interview that “I am not a politician; there is a political dimension to this [issue].” He should have refused to talk to Sabah, stating simply that he is a spiritual leader and does not wish to engage himself in political mat-

ters.

Regarding the Patriarch’s suggestion that third countries should not involve themselves in the Armenian Genocide issue, he is completely wrong. If it weren’t for the Diaspora’s lobbying efforts for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, this issue would have been forgotten by the world long ago. Rather than taking the side of the denialists and liars, Patriarch Mashalyan should have worked tirelessly to establish the truth inside Turkey. This is the least one can expect from a man of God. Finally, even though the Patriarch is parroting the Turkish denialist talking points, we are not sure that the Turkish government has actually pressured him to give the interview to Sabah. He may have done it on his own to score points with the Turkish government, expecting that Ankara will shortly approve his election as Patriarch. “No one in this congregation would want to vote for a patriarch without approval from the state,” Mashalyan told Sabah. The Patriarch is scheduled to meet with Turkish President Erdogan this week.

Since Catholicos Karekin II and Aram Catholicos rushed to congratulate the newly-elected Patriarch of Turkey, I wonder if after Mashalyan’s cowardly statements to Sabah, the two Catholicos would retract their congratulations and denounce the Armenian Patriarch’s denialist statements.

Armenian government officials, including the President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister issued statements thanking the US Congress and Armenian Americans for their support of the Genocide Resolution. While Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated that the adoption of the Resolution would reduce the Turkish threat to Armenia’s security, he regrettably added that he supports the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations “without preconditions.” If the recognition of the Genocide defends Armenia’s security, why would the Prime Minister say that “for us recognition of the Armenian Genocide is not on the agenda of our relations with Turkey?”

In terms of next steps, it is high time that the Armenian government apply to the World Court (International Court of Justice) demanding from Turkey everything that Armenians lost as a result of the Genocide. These are:

- 1) Pay monetary compensation for the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide;
- 2) Return to victims’ heirs all personal properties, such as houses, farms, bank accounts and valuable items in bank safe deposit boxes;
- 3) Restore churches, monasteries, schools and cemeteries to the Armenian community in Turkey;
- 4) Liberate and unite Western Armenia with the Republic of Armenia.

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

ADL, had turned himself a controversial figure in the debate of genocide recognition, by making reckless statements. Today, he seems to have mellowed down, stating that “there were several reasons for neutrality. Chief among them, however, was their not wanting to damage the Israeli-Turkish relationship or putting Turkish Jews at risk. ... Things have changed. Turkey is no longer an ally of Israel.”

The *Times of Israel* has approached both Jewish groups, the reluctant ones and the ones who have decided to support recognition publicly. However, referring to past Jewish conduct, the paper reveals some facts that were already obvious: “Shai Franklin, a senior fellow at the Institute of Religion and Policy, said that the Israeli government often directed US Jewish groups to stay out of the push for recognition.”

Today, there is a shift, hopefully a long-term one. Following the House Revolution, the Anti-Defamation League and Religious Center of Reform Judaism, the political arm of the Reform Jewish Movement, have issued statement supporting the passage of the resolution.

The *Times*, quoting again Shai Franklin, writes: “There is a division of labor in the American Jewish community. If the ADL has come out in support of recognition, a lot of groups may see them covering the wider community on this issue.”

Beyond rectifying historic justice, the US recognition has also acknowledged Armenia’s current political status. In addition to recognition, the US has increased aid to Armenia. These moves have not gone unnoticed in Moscow, which thus far had taken Armenia for granted. A shift in Moscow’s treatment of Yerevan raises Armenia’s political significance in the region. The youthful government, which has garnered an absolute mandate and legitimacy through the last parliamentary elections, hopefully shies away from introverted domestic policies, to capitalize on this news enhanced opportunity that it enjoys through a historic accident.

LETTERS

Armenia Attacked. Who’re You Going to Call?

To the Editor:

Most Americans do not understand the repercussions of high-level government decisions taken in Washington DC and how they may affect countries, regions or entire parts of the world.

One of those was President Trump’s recent decision to pull US support from the Kurds and allow Turkey enter and get militarily aggressive in Northern Syria. Albeit the President has claimed his satisfaction that “the oil” is saved, that one overnight decision has had tremendously traumatic effects in the entire region.

The Kurds joined the Syrian army backed by the Russians giving the latter a free and unexpected entry in the region. The Turks displaced some 200,000 Kurds and Syrian Arabs from their border villages also gaining a long-term foothold in their southern border with Syria. The Iranians gained prestige in the region by supporting the Kurds. The Iraqis got to demand a new government.

The unfathomable damage of that decision, however, was how every country in the Middle East and Europe, a bit later, looked at the United States and the isolationist conduct of its foreign policy. Suddenly, all regional countries started rethinking their relationships with the USA and how they could reinforce their alliances with other powers in order to maintain their future sovereignty.

Albeit State Secretary Pompeo ran around the region assuring countries of US support, they all reacted pensively and won-

dered who would come to their help if they ever found themselves in similar conditions as the Kurds. Being supported by the USA one day and then, suddenly and overnight, being left vulnerable and in the cold.

Let us ponder about Armenia’s situation under similar conditions. Several months ago, former National Security Advisor John Bolton had demanded of Armenia to become more aggressive towards Iran. He also promised more financial and other support, even by building one of the largest US embassies in the world to be located in Yerevan.

Meantime, President Trump laid out the red carpet in Washington for a visit by Sultan Erdogan stating unabashedly that ‘he likes Turkey and is very good friends with Erdogan’. This after some days when the US House of Representatives had voted to recognize the Armenian Genocide for what it was with a vote of 411-5.

As the Sultan during his November US visit bluntly castigated America’s representatives for that vote, the President had his ‘buddy’ Senator Graham block a similar resolution on the US Senate floor. Obviously, the southern Senator, in whose constituencies there are very few Armenian voters if any, had nothing to lose but instead gain favor with his President by making that move. More recently the blocking maneuver was repeated by Sen. Kevin Cramer of N. Dakota, another state where American-Armenian voters are nonexistent.

Given these events Stateside, Turkey became even more aggressive in the last

week with some bold and baseless claims of the Mediterranean Sea. Through a bogus agreement with the unofficial government of Libya, Turkey is now trying to develop positive conditions for Turkey to sit at the table with the regional countries (Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel) sharing what is expected to be very large deposits of gas and oil in the Mediterranean. Greece and Cyprus have vehemently objected to such moves while Turkey has also been condemned by the EU and NATO.

When asked what he thought the US would do to support Greece in an eventual crisis with Turkey, former US ambassador to Greece Nicholas Burns stated, maybe prophetically, that ‘Greece should not necessarily expect an automatic support from the United States’.

So, I ask a hypothetical question. If tomorrow, Azerbaijan or Turkey mounted an offensive against Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh and quickly occupied some land with Turkey’s military forces, who would Armenia call on for support?

Impossible for something like that to happen, says the reader, but we live in the era of “impossibilities” becoming realities. Yes, there are some 9,000 Russian troops on the Armenian border with Turkey soon to be doubled, but what about the Armenian-Azeri border?

To use a turn of phrase from the 1984 movie, “Ghostbusters,” “who’re you going to call?”

Miran P. Sarkissian
Athens



Armenian-Americans, Leaders, Gather in Glendale to Celebrate US Recognition of Armenian Genocide

By Marianne Love

LOS ANGELES (*Daily News*) – A crowd of about 200 people packed the Glendale Central Library's auditorium on Saturday, December 14, for a celebration that even a week ago might not have been predictable.

But, when the political winds blow in a certain way and world events come together, sometimes a long-fought struggle can lead to a win. And that's what happened on Thursday, when the U.S. Senate unanimously approved a resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide, the mass killing of 1.5 million Armenians beginning from 1915 to 1923 at the hands of the Ottoman-Turks. Despite major pushback and lobbying from the modern-day Turkish government, the senators joined their counterparts in the House of Representatives (who approved an identical bill in October).

"(The resolution) was a culmination of a lot of hard work ... a long struggle against the odds," said Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Burbank, principal co-author on the House bill.

For years Schiff has tried to bring similar legislation to the House floor, sometimes getting really close, but also being rebuffed by political forces that on this issue have prompted Democratic and Republican lawmakers and presidents to shy away from calling the history a genocide.

But observers say recent events, including Turkey's recent invasion of Syria, where once American ally the Kurds were attacked, helped shape a new political dynamic. With that, even allies of President Trump were willing to defy him and swiftly (and surprisingly) consent to the resolution. And with these independent resolutions not vulnerable to Trump's veto pen, incredulous advocates in Glendale were touting the maneuver.

"The most recent resolutions, H.Res 296 and

S.Res 150, differ (from past resolutions) in that they were standalone resolutions, meaning neither requires the approval of the other house or the president," said Alex Galitsky, a spokesperson for the Armenian National Committee of America Western Region. "This is recognition by the House and the Senate in their own right. These initiatives have been spearheaded by the Armenian-American coalition and our allies in Congress."

For years, Armenians in Glendale and across L.A. have pushed not only Congress, but the Turkish government, to recognize the genocide. They've marched. They've erected memorials, and they've told the stories of their ancestors, lost to what they and scholars say was the deportation and slaughter of 1.5 million of ethnic Armenians from the Ottoman Empire.

The crowd greeted Schiff and Rep. Judy Chu, D-Pasadena, with a standing ovation.

Despite the goodwill, the event took a turn for about 20 minutes when protestors disrupted Schiff by shouting profanities and getting into tussles with some of the audience members as they pushed and shoved each other to get their messages across.

The arguments appeared to be between those in attendance and Trump supporters carrying "No to Impeachment" signs and a Trump flag. Schiff has been a leading figure in efforts to impeach the president over the past few months, drawing the ire of Trump and his supporters.

Glendale police officers were called and some of the audience members left and did not return to the 2-hour presentation.

There were no arrests made, according to police.

Upon calming down the audience inside the library earlier and restarting the program, Chu said the recently passed resolutions put the genocide issue on the right side of history.

"This is a day to celebrate ... a day to commemorate... around this country finally doing the right thing," Chu said.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Approves Turkey Sanctions, Condemns Invasion of Syria

WASHINGTON – The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) applauds the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) and its approval with a vote of 18-4 of U.S. sanctions against Turkey for its military invasion of northeast Syria. The next step is approval by the full Senate.

The legislation on Turkish sanctions, S.2641, was introduced by SFRC Chairman James Risch (R-ID) and Ranking Member Bob Menendez (D-NJ), along with Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL), Doug Jones (D-AL), Cory Gardner (R-CO), and John Barrasso (R-WY).

"Turkey's support of ISIS and its attacks on ethnic and religious minorities are unforgivable. The killing last month in which ISIS militants took great pride of an Armenian priest traveling to Deir el-Zor in northern Syria to visit the Armenian Catholic Church is beyond reprehensible. As we have previously expressed, Turkey needs to stop supporting terrorism and should be immediately removed from NATO," stated Assembly Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian.

"We commend Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Menendez for this much-needed measure," they added, as a New York Times headline this week stated: "Turkey and Russia Judged Bigger Risk Than ISIS for U.S. Troops in Syria."

"Turkey's actions over the past year are truly beyond the pale," Ranking Member Menendez said on Twitter. "This bill makes clear to Turkey that its behavior with respect to Syria is unacceptable, and its purchase of the S400 system is untenable."

The legislation states that "Turkey's military invasion of Northeast Syria is an unacceptable and unnecessary escalation of tensions with the potential to cause a severe humanitarian crisis" as well as "undo the collective gains made in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)." It also calls for sanctions against Turkish government officials and Turkish Armed Forces who are responsible or complicit in "a violation of the law of armed conflict" or "a gross violation of internationally recognized human rights."

As a member of NATO, "Turkey is treaty bound to safeguard the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law," according to the legislation, and "should be united with other NATO allies in efforts for collective defense and the preservation of peace and security."

Instead, Turkey's actions continue to undermine the alliance and destabilize the region as outlined in a recent bipartisan letter led by House Foreign Affairs Chairman Eliot Engel (D-NY), wherein the lawmakers wrote: "President Erdogan's decision to invade northern Syria on October 9 has had disastrous consequences for U.S. national security, has led to deep divisions in the NATO alliance, and caused a humanitarian crisis on the ground."

Last week during the NATO summit, Turkish forces killed 8 children in Tal Rifaat in northern Syria, with reports of more casualties while Turkish President Erdogan ignored the concerns from the NATO alliance, and threatened to veto NATO's defense plan for the Baltics. Erdogan demanded that NATO member states endorse his own false claim that Syrian Kurdish fighters on Turkey's borders are terrorists, a definition

Former PM Karapetyan to Serve On Medvedev's Advisory Body

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) – Russia's Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has appointed his former Armenian counterpart Karen Karapetyan as a senior member of a body advising the Russian government on key economic and social policies.

Karapetyan will sit on the newly formed presidium of the Expert Council along with 14 other members. Among them are three former Russian prime ministers, two prominent bankers and the president of Russia's main business association.

Karapetyan remained in government as first deputy prime minister serving under a new, parliamentary system of government. The 56-year-old technocrat took over as acting prime minister on April 23, 2018 immediately after Sargsyan resigned amid mass protests against his continued rule.

Armenia's former parliament reluctantly chose the protest leader, Nikol Pashinyan, as the country's new leader two weeks later. Karapetyan has kept a low profile and made no political statements since then.

Karapetyan resigned as first deputy chairman of the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) in June 2018 and left the HHK altogether last December. Shortly afterwards he was appointed to the board of directors of a state-owned Russian oil company, Zarubezhneft.

The decision signed by Medvedev revealed that Karapetyan now also works as an adviser

to the chairman of Russia's Gazprombank. It is not clear whether the former prime minister, who put forward an ambitious economic reform agenda during his tenure, now spends most of his time in Armenia or Russia.

Karapetyan lived and worked in Russia from 2011 to 2016, holding senior positions in Gazprombank and other subsidiaries of the Gazprom energy giant. He managed Armenia's Gazprom-owned natural gas distribution network from 2001-2010.



Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan (R) and his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev meet in Yerevan, 24Oct2017.

In an executive order reported by Russian media on Thursday, Medvedev also named Aleksandr Voloshin, Russian President Vladimir Putin's former chief of staff, to coordinate the work of the broader council comprising hundreds of members.

Karapetyan was appointed as Armenia's prime minister in September 2016 by then President Serzh Sargsyan. He held that post until Sargsyan served out his final presidential term and controversially became prime minister on April 17, 2018.

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