

Armenian Leaders Pay Tribute to Baku Pogrom Victims

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) – Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, National Assembly Speaker Ararat Mirzoyan, Secretary of the Security Council Armen Grigoryan, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, as well as members of parliament visited the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex in Yerevan on Monday, January 13, to pay homage to the victims of the Baku pogrom on the 30th anniversary of the atrocity.

A mass pogrom of Armenian population was committed in Baku from 13 to 19 January 1990 as a culmination of the genocide of the Armenians in Azerbaijan unfolded between 1988 and 1990.



Relatives and survivors of the Baku pogroms hold a sign protesting Azeri denial of the events.

After the Sumgait pogroms (26-29 February 1988), persecutions, beatings, particularly cruel killings, public mockeries, pogroms of separate flats, seizure of property, forcible expulsions and illegal dismissals of Armenians started in Baku. Only some 35 or 40 thousand Armenians of the community of 250 thousand remained in Baku by January 1990. They mainly included disabled people, old and sick people and the relatives looking after them.

The pogroms took an organized, targeted and mass nature since January 13, 1990. A large amount of evidence exists about the



Bishop Sahak Mashalyan, center

Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople Enthroned

ISTANBUL – On January 11, Bishop Sahak Mashalian (Masalyan), Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, was enthroned in a ceremony held at Istanbul's Sourp Asdvadzadzin (Holy Virgin) Armenian Cathedral.

Mashalian was elected as the 85th Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople on December 11, 2019.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, established in 1461, is one of the four hierarchical sees of the Armenian Holy Apostolic Church. The other three are the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, the spiritual center of all Armenians and the residence of Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians; the Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia; and the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The congregation included Fener Greek Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians, representatives of other Christian denominations in Turkey and foreign diplomatic missions in Istanbul.

atrocities and killings committed with exceptional cruelty, including gang rapes, burnings of people alive, throwing people out of balconies of higher floors, dismemberments and beheadings.

The exact number of the victims of the Baku pogrom still remains unknown. According to different sources, between 150 and 400 people were murdered, and hundreds were left disabled. The pogroms went on for a week amid a total inaction of

the authorities of Azerbaijan and the USSR, as well as the internal troops and the large Baku garrison of the Soviet Army. Those who managed to avoid death were forced into deportation. The Soviet troops were deployed to set order in Baku only on January 20, 1990.

Pashinyan issued a statement in which he said, "In 1990, as a result of the policy of repression and ethnic cleansing started see COMMEMORATION, page 3

Defendant Sentenced to Prison for 'Conscious and Reckless Killing'

ISTANBUL (Bianet) – The defendant in the case of Sevag Balıkcı, an Armenian citizen of Turkey who was shot dead during his compulsory military service, has been sentenced to 16 years and 8 months in prison this past week.

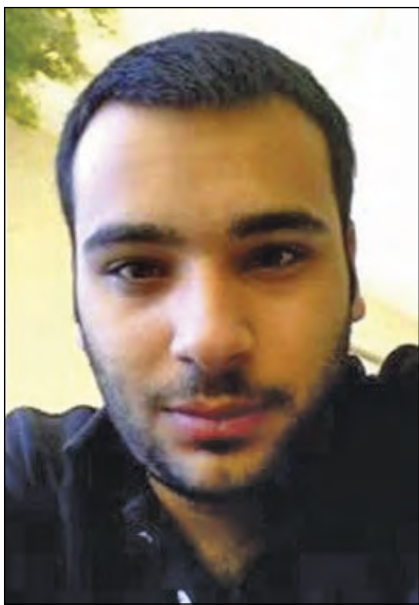
Balıkcı was killed in the southeastern province on April 24, 2011, on the 96th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. When he was killed, he had 20 days to complete his service in Kozluk district of the Batman province.

Compulsory military service applies to all male citizens of Turkey.

A military prosecutor's office wrote an indictment in 2011, stating that the weapon did not have a malfunction that would cause it to open fire by itself and tests showed that the weapon did not fire by itself.

It had requested the defendant, Kıvanç Ağaoglu, to be sentenced from four to nine years in prison for intentional killing. Expert reports also found that Ağaoglu was at fault.

The Diyarbakır 2nd Air Force Command Military Court sentenced Ağaoglu to 4 years, 5 months and 10 days in prison for conscious and reckless killing on March 26, 2013.



The late Sevag Balıkcı

The Balıkcı family appealed the case at the Court of Cassation, which overturned the court ruling on procedural grounds.

While the trial was continuing, the military judiciary was abolished upon Statutory Decree No. 68 after the July 2016

coup attempt.

A retrial began on February 8 at Kozluk Penal Court of First Instance. A witness who was also serving in the military at the time, Halil Eksi, first stated that Ağaoglu deliberately killed Balıkcı but then changed his statement.

After an application by the Balıkcı family, he gave a statement again, saying that he changed his statement under pressure.

The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) MP Garo Paylan commented to Bianet on the court verdict, recalling that Balıkcı was killed on the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

"I attach importance to this. At last, we have seen that a hate crime against Armenians in the country resulted in a court sentencing the defendant," he said.

However, he said, Turkey needs a "climate," where such hate crimes would not happen and it has not achieved this yet. "We must make political openings and create a climate where no one is targeted by hate crimes."

Paylan also mentioned the killing of Hrant Dink, the trial of which has been continuing for 13 years and said he hopes the decision on Balıkcı's killing sets a precedent for other cases of hate crimes.

Armenian, Rwandan Presidents Meet

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian met this week with President of Rwanda Paul Kagame on the sidelines of the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week Forum in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Presidential Office said.

The two presidents agreed that Armenia and Rwanda have many commonalities, similar history and problems, both survived genocide, both are small, but strong, have many advantages which they can turn into success. The sides agreed that the two countries need to reveal each other, get acquainted with the opportunities of one another, and it is necessary to work actively on this path.

The presidents talked about the necessity of closer cooperation of successful, small countries. They attached importance to the full utilization of the existing potential in the bilateral relations. President Sarkissian said the field of e-governance, which is quite developed in Rwanda, can be a promising direction for a mutual partnership.

The Armenian President invited his Rwandan partners to visit Armenia this year to attend several international conferences, such as the Armenian Summit of Minds, the 6th STARMUS international festival.

Mansurian's Requiem To Have Czech Premier

BRNO, Czech Republic (Panoramaam) – Armenian composer Tigran Mansurian's *Requiem* will be performed in Brno Philharmonic of the Czech Republic on January 23-24 for the first time, the philharmonic website reported.

The first part of the concert, titled "Bach and Mansurian," features *Cantata No. 32 Liebster Jesu, mein Verlangen* (Dearest Jesus, my desire) and *Cantata No. 68 Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt* (God so loved the world) by German composer Johann Sebastian Bach, with the *Requiem* set to be performed in the second part of the event.

Mansurian wrote his forceful 2011 *Requiem* at the request of the conductor Alexander Liebreich and dedicated it to the memory of the Armenian Genocide victims.

Co-commissioned by the Munich Chamber Orchestra and the RIAS Choir Berlin, Mansurian's *Requiem* reconciles the sound and sensibility of his country's traditions with those of Western practices, the combination of ancient Armenian religious and secular music with the Latin Requiem text "giving rise to something unexpected," the composer says.

This is profoundly moving contemporary composition, illuminated by the "glow of Armenian modality," as Paul Griffiths puts it in his booklet essay. The work is a milestone for Mansurian. The *Los Angeles Times* has described his music as that "in which deep cultural pain is quieted through an eerily calm, heart-wrenching beauty."

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Tchouhadjian's Legacy

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Ryanair Makes First Landing at Zvartnots

YEREVAN (ARKA) — The Irish low-cost airline Ryanair made its first flight from Italian Milan to Yerevan Armenia on Tuesday, January 14. Tatevik Revazyan, the head of Armenia's Civil Aviation Committee, told reporters that the first flight arrived with a delay because of a strike of Italian flight controllers.

She could not say how many passenger the aircraft brought to Armenia and citizens of what countries they were.

"We need time to analyze and understand all these data. In general, I can say that the plane was full and the passengers were very pleased. We hope that there were both tourists and our compatriots," she said.

According to Revazyan, the arrival of low-cost airlines in Armenia can significantly increase the interest of foreigners in the country.

"When we started talks, we spoke in numbers and were able to convince the other sides that Armenia's market really has great opportunities. Many Europeans are a little tired of flying to the same destinations for years and want something new. And in this sense, Armenia can offer a lot. I think that now, when it has become easier and cheaper to get to Armenia, many will be interested in making even a day flight to our country," she said.

"The presence of low-cost airlines creates a free and competitive market, opens new and interesting destinations. For example, both Wizz Air and Austrian Airlines will make flights to Vienna, which will undoubtedly affect the price of tickets," she said.

In an interview with reporters, a passenger, who arrived with Ryanair, thanked the airline for this opportunity.

"The ticket cost is only \$36. Of course, we could take aboard a modest hand luggage, but I think the trip was worth it," she said.

Serbia to Open its Embassy in Armenia at End of February

YEREVAN (ARKA) — Serbia will open its embassy in Armenia at the end of February, Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic said during a conversation with Armenian President Armen Sarkissian in Abu Dhabi.

In 2019 October Serbia lifted visas for citizens of Armenia, who can travel to Serbia as tourist and stay there for a period of 90 days. The agreement was reached during Sarkissian's official visit to Serbia.

In Abu Dhabi Sarkissian and Brnabic said the move is an important step in strengthening relations between the two countries. They also agreed that both countries can cooperate in environment protection and use of green technologies.

President Sarkissian spoke also about the ATOM (Advanced Tomorrow) presidential initiative, designed to give a boost to development of science and education. He noted that this multifaceted project calls for creation of the Museum of Future for kids and the first in Armenia Disneyland based on artificial intelligence.

The meeting between the President of Armenia and the Serbian Prime Minister took place on the sidelines of the Abu Dhabi Stability Week Forum.

Armenia Has Seen Record Number of Imported cars in 2019

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — A record number of cars have been imported to Armenia in 2019, the Chairman of the State Revenue Committee Davit Ananyan told reporters at a press conference on Monday, January 13.

The country imported 64,000 cars in 2018. The fees levied on the imported cars have comprised 95 billion drams, which is 58 billion more compare with the sums in 2018.

Speaking on the concerns by opposition that the year 2020 will not bring large number of the vehicles imports, Ananyan pointed to the government decision to return some 56.4 billion drams to tax payers.

Government Denies Bullying Constitutional Court Members

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The Armenian authorities have strongly denied media claims that they will use repressive methods and even blackmail in a bid to force the chairman and other members of Armenia's Constitutional Court to resign.

Citing an unnamed government source, the Hraparak daily said late last week that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has given the heads of Armenia's law-enforcement agencies one week to ensure those resignations. It claimed that at a "secret" meeting in Yerevan Pashinyan discussed with them various ways of achieving that, including pressure on close relatives of the Constitutional Court judges.

Another newspaper critical of Pashinyan's government, 168 Zham, alleged afterwards that the Armenian police possess secretly filmed video evidence of extramarital affairs involving two unnamed members of the court. The police will threaten to publicize that compromising material if the judges refuse to step down, claimed the paper.

A spokesman for Prosecutor-General Artur Davtyan flatly denied those "false reports" at the weekend, saying that they are aimed at "discrediting" the country's top law-enforcement officials.

"I find it necessary to inform that there was no such meeting, especially with such



Prosecutor-General Artur Davtyan

Pashinyan, shrugged off the allegations on Monday. "I don't have time to comment on any fictitious theories," he said.

Davtyan charged Constitutional Court Chairman Hrayr Tovmasyan with two counts of abuse of power late last month. The chief prosecutor's office said Tovmasyan unlawfully privatized an office

sations as politically motivated. He claimed that the Armenian government warned him this summer that he will be indicted if he refuses to step down.

Mirzoyan brushed aside that claim, saying that Tovmasyan would have been prosecuted even if he had resigned. "The criminal case is not to do with his [current] tenure," he told reporters.

The speaker also insisted that Pashinyan's political team is not desperate to get rid of Tovmasyan and six other judges of the nine-member Constitutional Court who were installed by the country's former governments. "It's not that we go to bed and wake up thinking only about this issue and that our supreme goal is to oust Hrayr Tovmasyan from the Constitutional Court," he said.

Pashinyan implicitly demanded the resignation of the high court judges in August. He accused them of maintaining links with Armenia's former leadership and impeding reforms which he says are aimed at creating a "truly independent judiciary."

Pashinyan's critics say that he is on the contrary seeking to gain control over all Armenian courts and thus tighten his grip on power.

Tovmasyan was indicted on December 27 one day after President Armen Sarkissian signed into law a controversial government bill giving the seven Constitutional Court judges financial incentives to resign before the end of their mandate.



Constitutional Court Chairman Hrayr Tovmasyan

an agenda and especially with the participation of Armenia's prosecutor-general," Gor Abrahamyan wrote on Facebook.

Ararat Mirzoyan, the Armenian parliament speaker and a close associate of

in Yerevan and forced state notaries to rent other offices de facto belonging to him when he served as justice minister from 2010-2014.

Tovmasyan was quick to reject the accu-

Armenian Government Pressing ahead with Constitutional Changes

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The government has started forming an ad hoc commission tasked with drafting fresh amendments to Armenia's constitution.

Under an executive order signed by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, the commission will consist of 15 members, including Justice Minister Rustam Badasyan, the government's representative to the European Court of Human Rights, human rights ombudsman Arman Tatoyan and a representative of the country's judges.

It will also comprise six legal scholars, who will be chosen by the Justice Ministry on a supposedly competitive basis, two civil society members and representatives of the three political forces represented in the Armenian parliament.

The government officially announced plans to amend the constitution in October as part of its strategy of reforming the national judicial and electoral systems. The strategy calls for constitu-

tional changes relating to the work of judicial bodies and conduct of elections.

Vahagn Hovakimyan, a senior lawmaker from Pashinyan's My Step alliance, told RFE/RL's Armenian service on Tuesday, January 14, that the commission will also discuss the wisdom of restoring the presidential system of government in the country. Asked whether the current authorities are intent on engineering such a change, he said: "There have been no such discussions."

The current constitution underwent sweeping changes as a result of a disputed referendum held in 2015. They led to Armenia's transformation into a parliamentary republic.

Former President Serzh Sargsyan initiated that constitutional reform in an effort to hold on to power after completing his second and final presidential term in April 2018. He was toppled in the ensuing "Velvet Revolution" led by Pashinyan.

It is not yet clear whether the two opposition parties represented in the parliament would support a return to the presidential system. One of them, Bright Armenia (LHK), has been campaigning for constitutional curbs on sweeping powers enjoyed by the prime minister.

LHK leader Edmon Marukyan said on Tuesday that the constitutional reform process launched by the authorities is an opportunity to reform the existing "super prime-ministerial system." He said his party will therefore accept the government offer to name one member of the commission.

The opposition Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) has yet to discuss its participation in the commission's work.

Deputy Justice Minister Rafael Grigoryan suggested that the commission will likely start its activities as early as next month. But he gave no possible time frames for the drafting of constitutional changes.



ARMENIA

Risks and Opportunities in Planting Millions of New Trees in Armenia

By Arthur Harutyunyan
and Jason Sohigian

YEREVAN — Armenia Tree Project (ATP) and AUA's Acopian Center for the Environment recently conducted the first ever "Forest Summit: Global Action and Armenia" conference in Armenia. The Summit gathered national and international experts from organizations including the United Nations Development Program, Ministry of Environment, Kenya's Green Belt Movement, Woods Hole Research Center, KKL-Jewish National Fund, World Wildlife Fund, and the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan opened the Summit with an impassioned speech pledging Armenia to double its forest cover by 2050 and to start by engaging the entire nation in a massive planting effort during 2020. Against this challenge and backdrop, the forestry experts shared recommendations that provide a pathway for the dramatic expansion of Armenia's forest cover. We convey these recommendations as a way of guiding Armenia's government and ministries toward a successful implementation of these ambitious plans.

The first recommendation was an admonition against the importation and planting of non-native seedlings. Dr. Anthony Davis, interim dean of forestry at Oregon State University, pointed out the significant risks in his keynote address: "It is important to look at the genetic composition of your tree seedlings. You don't want to lose the genetic heritage of the tree seeds that have evolved over millennia here in Armenia."

Dr. Omri Bonne, forester from KKL-Jewish National Fund (JNF) in Israel, made similar remarks. JNF started its reforestation efforts using Central European seedlings and root stock that were not appropriate for conditions in Israel. JNF changed direction, and their plantings have achieved greater success as a result.

Local scientists from the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Botany, and Yerevan State University cautioned about the risks of introducing invasive species, insects, fungus, and other plant diseases into the Armenian ecosystem from imported seedlings.

Over its 25 year history, ATP has grown all of its seedlings in its four nurseries within Armenia or in its partner backyard nurseries. ATP has planted only native trees — trees



ATP produces more than 50 species of native trees in its nurseries, in close proximity to planting sites

grown near the locations where they will be transplanted — to help ensure the highest rate of survival and success avoiding disruption to the local ecology.

The second recommendation is to plant mixed species forests in order to allow a healthier forest to evolve. Bonne stated "don't put all your eggs in one basket" by planting large (monoculture) pine forests, again noting mistakes made by foresters in Israel and the Soviet Union when large pine plantations were established.

Pests and disease can wipe out single-species plantings. A single-species forest is less resilient and more susceptible to disasters like wildfires. Finally, mixed-species forests are better able to soak up carbon from the atmosphere and so will provide a bigger climate benefit, thereby helping Armenia's commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The final recommendation is to consider alternative ways of reforesting that don't solely rely upon container plantings. Again, based upon our extensive history of growing and planting in Armenia, consider the following approaches:

- Grow native seedlings in the same elevation and climate zone as the planting areas.
- Plant bare root seedlings during the spring and fall planting seasons. This approach allows for easier growth and transportation and, hence, much larger scale than the use of container trees.
- Explore pilot projects to test new technologies such as planting with drones.
- Plant seeds such as acorns as an adjunct to seedlings.

(Arthur Harutyunyan is ATP's Operations Manager in Armenia and Jason Sohigian is the organization's deputy director.)

Armenian Leaders Pay Tribute to Baku Pogrom Victims

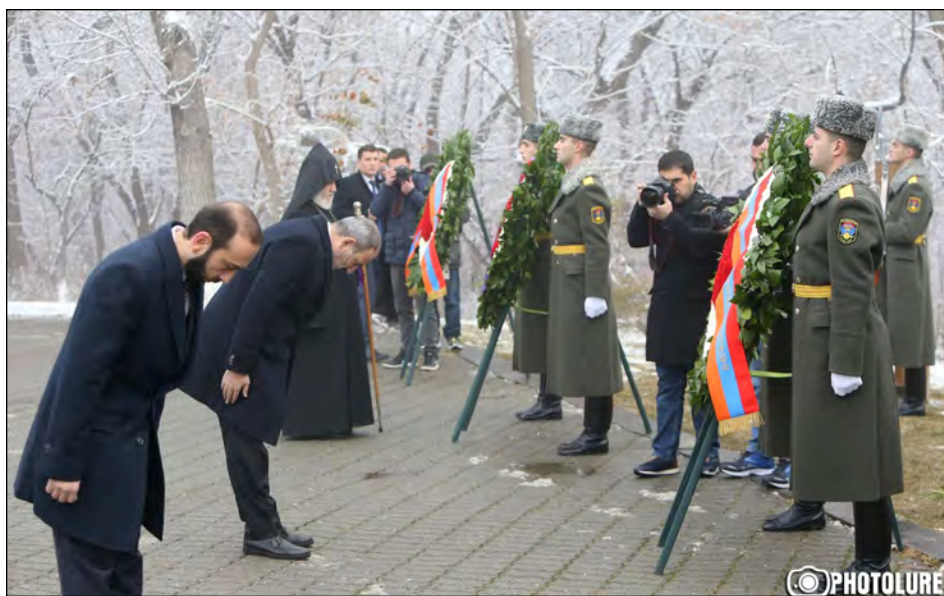
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by the Sumgait massacre, only 35-40,000 out of some 250,000 Armenians remained in Baku, mostly elderly and helpless people. Their fate was even more tragic: hundreds were killed, maimed and went missing; tens of thousands became refugees. This was the outcome of the anti-Armenian pogroms that raged in Baku for about a week.

"The Armenians living in Baku were not a

threat to Azerbaijan, to its authorities or political forces. All they wanted was to continue living in their hometown where their ancestors had lived. However, they were viewed as a threat by Azerbaijan because of their ethnic origin.

"Armenians used to live in Baku for centuries, giving the city a genuine trait of multiculturalism. In the 19th century, they made a major contribution to the development of oil industry in Baku. The Armenians played an invaluable role



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Parliament Speaker Ararat Mirzoyan bow before a monument to the victims of the Azeri pogroms.



A procession to the memorial honoring the victims.

in the development of the city during the Soviet times," he said.

He added, "Even today, perpetrators who committed atrocities against helpless people are regarded as heroes of Azerbaijan, while their crimes are considered a glorious chapter in the fight for Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Armenia President Armen Sarkissian added, "Mass murders of the citizens of the Armenian origin, organized by the Azerbaijani authorities in January 1990 in Baku, had been a result of the

state policies of Armenophobia and forced expulsion of the Armenians. Through the wide-spread carnage and violence, which had lasted for over a week, the Azerbaijani authorities were able to achieve their goal: the Armenian community of Baku, which had survived the Azerbaijani atrocities in 1905 and 1918, in January of 1990 ceased to exist; the people, who considered Baku their native town and which they had enriched with their work and talent, lost their birthplace."

"There is no period of limitation for the crimes against humanity," he said.



International News

Azerbaijani Singer Refuses to Share Stage With Armenian Singer at Opera Ball

DRESDEN, Germany (Panorama.am) — Azerbaijani opera singer Yusif Eyvazov has refused to perform on the same stage with Armenian singer because of the latter's nationality which is said out of political considerations, Hasmik Papian, world-famous Armenian soprano wrote on her Facebook page.

As Papian informed the concert in question is scheduled for February 7 as part of the annual Dresden Opera Ball. Eyvazov, in particular, has refused to share the stage with Armenian singer Ruzan Mantashyan, citing the latter's nationality as a reason.

"I have performed at the mentioned opera theatre on numerous occasions and cannot recall such an incident. I am about to raise a protest over this," Papian added.

Fashion designer, Choreographer Nariman Grigoryan Killed

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan (Panorama.am) — Uzbek fashion designer and choreographer of Armenian origin Nariman Grigoryan was assassinated in Tashkent on January 14, the local Bureau of Sputnik news agency reported. As the source said, the murder took place at Yashnaband neighborhood of capital.

The circumstances of the incident have not yet been released.

Grigoryan in 2015 won the Breakthrough Prize and later Best Designer for Evening Dresses in 2017. His collections has been shown at Fashion Weeks in several locales, including Belarus and Marbella, Spain.

In 2018 he opened his chain of shops for wedding dresses and "bride by NG" beauty salon.

Foreign Minister, Jordanian Counterpart Discuss Middle East

YEREVAN — On January 14, Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan had a phone conversation with Ayman Safadi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan. The phone conversation was held as a follow-up to the meeting of the two Foreign Ministers in Yerevan.

The two foreign ministers touched upon the issues on bilateral agenda and continuity of high-level dialogue, stressing the importance of activating high-level contacts and mutual visits.

During the conversation, Mnatsakanyan and Safadi exchanged views on a number of regional issues, the recent developments in the Middle East and the need for de-escalating the situation through peaceful means.

Short Film 'New Year Piglet' to Be Shown in European Festivals

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The movie "New Year Piglet" by Armenian filmmaker Aleksandr Baghdasaryan has been included in the Fribourg International Film Festival (FIFF) competition in Switzerland.

It was produced by Karine Simonyan.

FIFF this year is slated to take place March 20-28.

Designed to support the next big names and offer spectators a new wave of talent, the three short film categories (fiction, documentary and animation) at FIFF present the opportunity to discover new cinematic movements out of Latin America, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

Before traveling to Switzerland though, "New Year Piglet" will participate in the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, the biggest international film festival dedicated to short films, from February 1 to 8, in France.

As Russia Mediates Syria-Turkey Talks, Can New Idlib Truce Hold?

By Kirill Semenov

MOSCOW (Al-Monitor) — Ali Mamlouk, special security adviser to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, reportedly met with Turkey's intelligence chief Hakan Fidan in Moscow January 13. According to Syrian state-run media, at the trilateral meeting mediated by Russia, the Syrians "demanded Turkey respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity in full and immediately withdraw its forces." The Syrians also allegedly demanded Ankara honor the Sochi agreement signed in September 2018, which would entail "the freeing of Idlib from terrorists and heavy arms" as well as "unblocking the highways Aleppo-Latakia (M4) and Aleppo-Hama (M5)."

The high-level Turkish delegation, which included Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu and Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, arrived in Moscow for discussions on the two key international crises that engaged both Russia and Turkey — Libya and Syria.

The fact that critical intra-Libyan talks took place in the Russian capital on the same day diverted, perhaps not coincidentally, most of the attention from the Syrian angle. Yet the top Turkish officials made the unlikely decision to meet with Syrian colleagues in Moscow, only to have the latter lecture them about their key divergences. The official Syrian media failed to mention that the parties engaged on other, more significant issues, one of which was likely an elaboration of the new Adana agreement to help both address the Kurdish issue in northeastern Syria.

But some remarkable developments between Turkey, Syria and Russia have indeed occurred on other fronts. First, a cease-fire came into effect in the Idlib de-escalation zone at midnight Jan. 12. Russia also suspended its airstrikes in Idlib. The truce must have been agreed on by Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan during their talks in Istanbul January 8.

Moreover, the Russian leader may have deemed it necessary to discuss the issue with Bashar al-Assad during his Damascus visit on the Orthodox Christmas Day, January 7, before departing for Istanbul. Any cessation of a campaign in Idlib is a sensitive issue for the Syrian regime, which brings to the fore Damascus' inability to conduct military operations and regain control over "every inch of Syrian land" on its own, and its need for direct Russian assistance in both matters. Every delay in progress on the ground thus points to

the regime's military dependence on Moscow amid Damascus' recent efforts to display its autonomy in military matters.

The outcome of the recent campaign in the Syrian northeast fell short of Assad's expectations. Damascus failed to reestablish control over the territories held by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The failure can be attributed to Washington's change of heart, as it decided not to withdraw its troops and retained its military presence in northeastern Syria. As a result, it disincantized the SDF — at least for the time being — from discussing the conditions for transferring its forces and territories to Damascus' protection. They only allowed a limited number of the regime's forces and the Russian military police into the border zone under the Sochi memorandum signed in October 2019.

Therefore, the new phase of the offensive, codenamed Dawn of Idlib, which was launched December 19 against the terrorist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and the Syrian opposition, was expected to bring reputational gains to Assad. A resounding military victory in Idlib should have compensated for the dubious "success" — in terms of the outcome — in the northeast.

At the height of the military operation on December 24, the Syrian Army's General Staff released a statement claiming that 40 settlements in the Idlib province had been taken by Damascus.

The takeover of Jarjanaz was the greatest achievement. The government troops reached as far as the outskirts of Maarat al-Numan, a symbol of the Syrian revolution and the opposition's stronghold. The town, located on the M5 highway, is also strategically important. Control of the town paves the way for further advances along the motorway toward Saraqib and full control over this artery. However, the cease-fire agreements between Moscow and Ankara effectively thwarted the headway of Assad's forces and prevented them from entering Maarat al-Numan, which was portrayed as the major target of the offensive.

Thus, another phase of the operation in Idlib ended with a limited, tactical military success for Damascus, just like previous operations.

The Syrian regime may therefore be frustrated that the unblocking of the M4 and M5 highways — if not the complete resolution of the Idlib issue — has been delayed again. However, Damascus has to realize that its forces and the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) are not the only ones that deserve credit for the successful advance. In fact, Turkey just stood by and did not assist the Syrian

opposition in preventing Assad's offensive. Its Operation Peace Spring could not have taken place absent a cease-fire deal secured by Moscow and Damascus.

Consequently, one cannot rule out that Ankara, having achieved its goals in northeastern Syria, offered Damascus a chance to establish control over another part of the Idlib de-escalation zone. All the more so because fighters of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) turned out to be sought-after on a different front, in Libya.

SNA units were deployed to Tripoli to reinforce the forces of Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, of the Government of National Accord, in their fight for the Libyan capital. Yet the Syrian regime's advance deep into Idlib, including the capture of Maarat al-Numan, was not on Turkey's list. The operation ended on the formal pretext of a new wave of Syrian refugees at the Turkish border and Ankara's concern about the situation. At the same time, Moscow and Ankara must have agreed to the Idlib cease-fire in a single package with their joint initiative to cease hostilities in Libya, which was announced at the Putin-Erdogan meeting in Istanbul.

Nevertheless, the Idlib truce is a temporary solution. Despite Russia's success in convincing Assad of its expediency, a longer respite looks out of the question. A source in the Syrian military told Al-Monitor that the 25-day cease-fire deal may be extended if Idlib "sees the problem of radicals solved and other rebel groups cut their ties with HTS and join the [SNA]."

On paper — when it comes to the moderate opposition factions on the ground, including the National Liberation Front — everybody is formally part of the SNA since October 2019. In reality, nothing has been done to integrate those opposition groups into the SNA. Specifically, the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th legions, four new corps supposed to join the first three legions in the areas of Operation Euphrates Shield and Operation Olive Branch, have yet to be formed. Moreover, the Idlib territories where the moderate opposition operates are de facto ruled by the HTS civilian administration, the so-called Syrian Salvation Government. Therefore, the replacement of the Salvation Government with local opposition councils must be another condition that could separate the moderate opposition from the radicals. Obviously, it may cause another military escalation between HTS and the moderate opposition in Idlib. It remains to be seen whether Turkey and the SNA are up to it.

Turkey Continues Arrests, Remains World's Worst Jailer of Journalists

ISTANBUL (IOHR) — Turkey, which arrested four journalists from Kurdish left-wing agencies in December, remains the world's worst jailer of journalists, the International Observatory for Human Rights (IOHR) said on January 7.

Journalist Haci Yusuf Topaloglu, a reporter for the Dicle News Agency (D HA), Sadiye Eser and Sadik Topalo lu, journalists from Mezopotamya Agency (MA), Kurdish-Left journalist Aziz Oruç were added last month to the country's long list of journalists behind bars, the NGO said.

All of the journalists are accused of links to a terrorist organization, namely the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an armed group that has been at war in Turkey for over 30 years.

Turkish media has been particularly hard hit in a government crackdown following the July 2016 coup attempt. Dozens of journalists have been imprisoned or harassed with legal challenges and critical media outlets have been forced into self-censorship or shut down.

"These arrests are part of the Turkish regime's determination to keep the society and the global audi-

ence uninformed, or rather misinformed about the human rights situation in the country," the observatory quoted exiled Turkish journalist Kerim Balci as saying.

On January 38, Turkey will be called to account in Geneva at a meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic review of Turkey, it said.

The country ranks 157th out of 180 in the RSF World Press Freedom Index.

Turkey's continued attacks on Press Freedom, the NGO said, give a clear indication of the major concerns in its human rights record.



INTERNATIONAL

Erdogan Rival and Former HDP Head Demirtas Fights from Jail

ISTANBUL (Deutsche Welle) – Selahattin Demirtas, the former co-leader of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), has been detained for over three years in Turkey’s Edirne high-security prison despite scant evidence against him. Demirtas and nine other members of parliament for the HDP, which advocates for Kurds and other minorities in Turkey, were arrested on November 4, 2016, and charged with 33 counts, which include leading a terrorist organization, spreading terrorist propaganda and instigating violence against the Turkish state. Prosecutors are seeking a jail sentence of 142 years.

Earlier this month, Demirtas testified via video link from the facility and insisted that he is a political hostage and asked to be able to use his testimony to respond to the accusations against him. His demand was refused and the trial was adjourned to May 28, but not before he was mentioned a dark chapter in recent Turkish history. “One hundred and twenty people were imprisoned in the basements of Cizre,” he said. “There was a massacre. Civilians, babies and children died. ... How long will our country continue to hide this?” He said he was accused of offending President Recep Tayyip Erdogan because he had dared to talk about this tragedy.

The tragedy took place in 2015, after civilians in the city of Cizre, in southeastern Anatolia, took refuge in the basement of a building as clashes raged between the Turkish army and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK).

Legal scramble

There are several charges against Demirtas, who was proclaimed innocent in one hearing

before another court sentenced him to four years and eight months in jail for “terrorist propaganda.”

His lawyer Hadi Cin told DW that Turkey’s justice system is arbitrary: “In the legal proceedings against Demirtas and the others from the HDP, the mechanisms are very slow. However, when there’s an arrest warrant, suddenly everything goes very fast.”

Cin said he believed that the state had set up a special regime for Demirtas and the other HDP MPs: a “completely illegal regime.” Each speech and interview that Demirtas has given since 2007 has been held against him, Cin said, calling the trial illegal.

A guiding light

Demirtas is considered by many as the leading hope of Turkish politics. In the eight years that he co-led the HDP, he was able to transform it into a party that was popular beyond the southeast of Turkey. Its success in the 2015 elections – it passed the 10 percent hurdle for the first time – was largely thanks to him.

“Under Demirtas, the party had more votes than any Kurdish party had ever had,” said Vahap Coskun, who teaches law at Dicle University in Diyarbakir. “He played an important role in this: He united the base voters and also opened up the party to non-Kurds.”

“Today, politics is dominated by the old grandees Erdogan, Kilicdaroglu and Bahceli,” Coskun said. “But their careers are coming to an end because of their age. In future, the gaps will be filled by three people (Istanbul Mayor

novels while in prison.

His imprisonment has drawn attention to the inhumane conditions at Edirne. Late last year, he was not taken to a hospital despite developing a serious illness until his family complained



Selahattin Demirtas (Picture-Alliance Pacific Press)

Ekrem) Imamoglu, (former Foreign Minister Ali) Babacan and, mostly, Demirtas.”

Campaigning from jail

The impact that Demirtas has had from prison is growing. He ran in the presidential elections of 2018, campaigning from his cell via Twitter. He has also managed to publish two

about this in the social networks.

The European Court of Human Rights has called for the immediate release of Demirtas, ruling that his detention is illegal and limits the freedom of political debate. He said the ruling confirmed his view that he is a political prisoner.

Hakan Sukur: How Former Turkey Soccer Star Ended up as US Cab Driver

By Ciaran Varley

SAN FRANCISCO (BBC) – Hakan Sukur is Turkey’s greatest ever goalscorer and once one of Europe’s most prolific strikers. A legend.

So, how did he end up driving taxis and selling books for a living in the US, in exile from his home country?

According to an interview with German newspaper, Welt am Sonntag, the 48-year-old former

World Cup goal coming just 11 seconds after kick-off against South Korea in 2002

After retiring from football, he went into politics. In 2011, Sukur won a seat in Turkey’s Parliament as a member of Erdogan’s Justice and Development Party .

But he was also tied to Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish Islamic scholar and rival of Erdogan, whom the Turkish President blamed for a bloody attempted coup in 2016.

Sukur, by then living in the US, reportedly denounced the attempted coup, but was

“I moved to the United States, initially running a cafe in California, but strange people kept coming into the bar,” he told Welt am Sonntag. “Now I drive for Uber and I sell books.”

He has said that his houses, businesses and bank accounts in Turkey had all been seized by Erdogan’s government.

He also denies any crimes.

“Nobody seems able to explain what my role in this coup was supposed to be,” he added. “I never did anything illegal, I am not a traitor or a terrorist.”

This is not the first time he’s spoken on the subject. In 2018 he told the New York Times:

“It’s my country; I love my people, even though their ideas about me are distorted by controlled media.”

The story throws up more questions about Erdogan’s government. In 2018, Mesut Ozil attracted criticism after posing for a picture with the Turkish President, including from the German Football Federation (DFB), which said “football and the DFB defend values which are not sufficiently respected by Mr. Erdogan.”

Erdogan was subsequently best man at Ozil’s wedding.

Politics and sport, hey? A thorny business.



Hakan Sukur now

striker’s life has taken an unusual and troubling turn since retiring from football in 2008.

He claims that a rift with the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has exposed him to death threats, false accusations and lack of access to funds.

“I have nothing left, Erdogan took everything: my right to liberty, freedom of expression and right to work,” he told the paper.

Sukur scored 51 goals in 112 appearances for Turkey between 1992 and 2007. He was part of the Turkish side that finished third at the 2002 World Cup.

The former Blackburn player spent the majority of his career at Galatasaray and is the all-time leading goalscorer in the Super Lig – the Turkish top flight.

Sukur scored what is still the fastest ever



Hakan Sukur in 2002 World Cup

nonetheless, in 2017, described by Turkish-run state media as a “fugitive member of the Fetullah Terrorist Organisation (FETO).”

That report describes him living in a \$3-million house, running a cafe at Palo Alto, “the richest area of San Francisco Bay Area.”

Sukur tells a less fun-sounding story.

Armenian Students Back from Almaty International Olympiad with 18 Medals

ALMATY, Kazakhstan (Panorama.am) – The 16th International Zhaudykov Olympiad was held in Almaty from January 8 to 14 with 588 students from 20 countries competing for the title of the most talented in exact sciences. The students were competing in the fields of mathematics, physics and computer science tasks.

The Armenian team claimed 1 gold, 7 silver and 10 bronze medals.

As the head of the Higher Qualification Committee of the Republic of Armenia Smbat Gogyan reported, 11th grader Aleks Abelyan, a student at the Quantum College in Yerevan, took gold in the computer science discipline.

Apart from Quantum College, the Armenian team was represented by students of the Physics and Mathematics Specialized School in Yerevan.



Gold medal winner Aleks Abelyan, left, and two other medalists from Armenia

Community News

Zoravik to Commemorate Dink Assassination Anniversary with Film Screening, Discussion

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.— To commemorate the 13th anniversary of the assassination of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in 2007, Zoravik presents a screening of a film about Hrant Dink followed by a discussion of the film and of Dink's legacy. The event will take place on January 19, at 7:30 p.m. in Harvard's Fong Auditorium in Boylston Hall and is free and open to the public.

The evening will feature a screening of the 40-minute long documentary, "Heart of Two Nations, Hrant Dink: Conversation with Nouritza Matossian," filmed and produced by biographer, director, and human rights activist Nouritza Matossian. "Heart of Two Nations" features private interview footage collected while Dink faced several charges for "insulting Turkishness," was prosecuted and sentenced to



Nouritza Matossian

a suspended six-month imprisonment, and was warned to leave the country after receiving death threats for writing about the abuses and rights of disadvantaged ethnic groups living in Turkey as well as his own Armenian compatriots. Attesting to the uniqueness of this first-person footage collected prior to Dink's assassination, Amnesty International has described the documentary as a "deeply engaging and moving" film that stands as "a unique record of a remarkable journalist and editor's life and work." The film won the Public Prize at Toronto's Pomegranate Film Festival in 2008 after its release on the first anniversary of Dink's assassination.

The documentary will be introduced by Matossian via video link from London, England. After viewing the award-winning documentary, Dr. Ohannes Kiliçdagı, a historian and columnist at Agos, will moderate an interactive, open-mic conversation with audience members about the documentary, the assassination, and Dink's impact.

Matossian is a writer, filmmaker, broadcaster, and human rights activist. Her biography of composer Iannis Xenakis was made into a BBC documentary and her 1998 book on Arshile Gorky was the inspiration for Atom Egoyan's award-winning film, "Ararat."

Kiliçdagı completed his postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University. He currently serves as the Coordinator of the Krikor Guergerian Online Archive Project at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University.

For more information visit the event's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1720414451426252/>



Lucy Yeghiazaryan Jazz Quartet

SOAR to Celebrate 15th Anniversary With Gala

SPRINGFIELD, Penn. — The Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) is the only charitable organization whose singular mission is to provide humanitarian assistance to orphaned Armenians around the world. The organization is celebrating its 15th anniversary with a "Crimson and Crystal Celebration" on March 28, at the Springfield Country Club.

Musical entertainment will be provided by Lucy Yeghiazaryan Jazz Quartet and Elie Berberian and Band. Event proceeds are earmarked for the Armenian Evangelical Boarding School (AEBS) in Ainjar, Lebanon; Kharberd Orphanage in Yerevan, Armenia; and the Our Lady of Armenia Center in Gyumri, Armenia.

Founded in 2005, SOAR provides humanitarian relief to orphaned Armenian children and orphaned adults with disabilities around the world. Through our in-country staff and trusted network of global volunteers, SOAR strives to provide this institutionalized population with the same educational and social opportunities as their non-institutionalized counterparts while simultaneously facilitating deinstitutionalization, family empowerment, and reunification.

Represented by 144 Chapters, 6 Junior groups, and more than 600 volunteers worldwide, SOAR supports 43 institutions — orphanages, special boarding schools, day centers, and orphan summer camps — in Armenia, Artsakh, Javakhk, Lebanon, and Syria. In addition to SOAR's institutional-based work, SOAR established the Services to Children in their Own Home (SCOH) Program. The SCOH Program works with residential institutions to deinstitutionalize and reunify children with biological families and provides home-based services after reunification to reduce the economic, social, emotional, and professional barriers within the family dynamic that may trigger reinstitutionalization.

SOAR prides itself on collaboration, creativity, cross-cultural respect, fiscal responsibility, and transparency. In 2006, distributions totaled approximately \$60,000. Since 2015, SOAR has exceeded \$1 million distributions annually. SOAR's efforts not only address the major humanitarian constructs of education, emotional and psychological support, nutrition, health and hygiene, dental and vision care, and fundamental human rights, but academic programs offer curricula on a multitude of topics that stimulate intellectual curiosity, empowerment, and enrichment.

For many members, SOAR is their life's work who cannot forget the orphaned children they have embraced as their own. They look forward to more supporters and more people who can embrace the same vision.

Tickets and sponsorship details for the gala can be found at <https://www.soar-us.org/event/crimson-and-crystal-celebration/>. If you have any questions about our milestone celebration, please contact George S. Yacoubian, Jr., at 610.213.3452 or gyacoubian@soar-us.org.

Those interested can also write to the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief, 150 N. Radnor Chester Rd., Suite F200, Radnor, PA 19087 or email: info@soar-us.org or www.soar-us.org.



Elie Berberian

Award-Winning TV Anchor Karapetyan to Keynote Armenian Assembly Annual Calif. New Year Gathering

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian Assembly of America announced that Emmy Award winning television anchor Araksya Karapetyan will be the keynoter at its annual New Year's Gathering in Westlake Village, California on Sunday, January 19 starting at 2 p.m.

Karapetyan has been reporting and anchoring at FOX 11 in Los Angeles for the past 7 1/2 years. She anchors the morning newscasts on FOX 11's "Good Day LA" program.

A native of Armenia, Karapetyan moved to the United States from Gyumri when she was 7 years old. Over the years, she has volunteered her time and talents on behalf of the Armenian community of Greater Los Angeles. In September 2019, she emceed the welcoming ceremony of Republic of Armenia Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at Los Angeles City Hall and had an opportunity to interview him at an Armenia-focused business conference in Burbank.

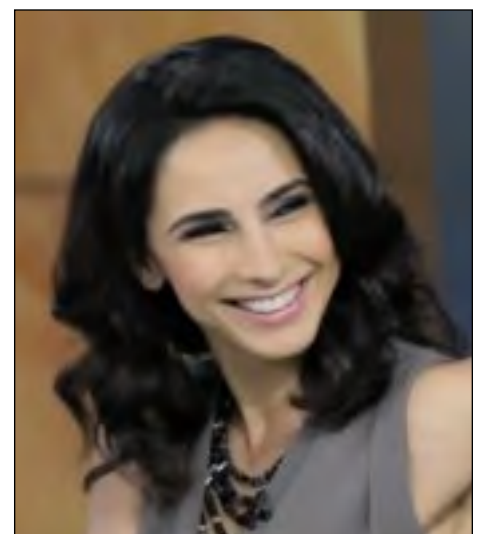
In April 2019, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors recognized Karapetyan for her dedicated work within the Armenian American community. And Pan Armenian TV named Karapetyan "Television Personality of the Year" during its 2019 Armenian Influencer Awards.

Karapetyan began her television career as an intern at KABC-TV in Los Angeles, KFI 640 AM Radio in Burbank, and Torrance CitiCABLE 3. Before coming back home to Los Angeles, she worked in Idaho Falls, Idaho as a reporter, photographer, editor, writer, producer and weekend anchor. She then moved to Portland, Ore., where she spent two years as a general assignment reporter, always leading the evening newscasts with the big investigative stories of the day. Karapetyan also had an opportunity to host a lifestyle show while in Portland, giving her a chance to showcase more of her personality.

"This year's gathering will inform Assembly members and friends on our advocacy priorities and on developments in Armenia from esteemed broadcast journalist Araksya Karapetyan, who will share her insights with us. This event is a fun and informative way to start off the new year, and a wonderful opportunity to answer questions from SoCal-based Armenian Americans," Assembly Western Region Director Mihran Toumajan stated.

Assembly Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian and Executive Director Bryan Ardouny will be discussing the historic passage of the Armenian Genocide resolutions in the House and Senate, as well as the Assembly's advocacy priorities for 2020.

Armenian Assembly members, activists, friends, and family are welcome to attend the gathering, with a requested contribution of \$75 per person. RSVP by Friday, January 17. Tickets are available online at www.aaainc.org/events.



Araksya Karapetyan



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenia Border Community Students Prosper in Newly-Renovated School

SAN FRANCISCO/YEREVAN – With the completion of the reconstruction at the secondary school in the large border village of Nerkin Karmir Aghbyur, in Armenia's Tavush Region, students are experiencing a vibrant newly energized approach to their education. The nearly \$250,000 capital project was funded by Jean-Marie and Lori Atamian and their friends, Michael and Patricia Starzer, through the Paros Foundation's Prosperity on the Border initiative and was completed in phases over four years. The campus consists of three large, two-story buildings and has been reconfigured to accommodate more than 150 students in this growing village.

One of the most modern rural educational facilities in Armenia, the Nerkin Karmir Aghbyur school now boasts bright classrooms and hallways, fully equipped science labs, a robotics room, an auditorium, a dance studio, library, exercise rooms and a state of the art kitchen and cafeteria. The gym has also been renovated and the children are provided with gym clothes at the start of every academic year, which proudly displays the school's logo. Originally an isolated border school in disrepair, the school now serves as a hub of education for the region and attracts many visitors and innovative programming.

This ambitious project is part of a comprehensive initiative undertaken by the Atamian Family to rebuild the infrastructure of this important village and previously saw the complete reconstruction of the kindergarten, medical clinic, emergency services building and water supply system. The Atamians are continuing to fund the reconstruction of homes for large families and various agricultural projects to allow residents to improve their living conditions. The economic potential of this village recently prompted the government to build a modern, asphalted three-mile road connecting this previously isolated village to the main road and



Students, staff and benefactors of the Nerkin Karmir Aghbyur secondary school

to finance an auxiliary water pipeline.

"The annual and long term financial support provided by the Atamians is helping transform Nerkin Karmir Aghbyur into a thriving and growing community," said Peter Abajian, executive director of the Paros Foundation. "This village is serving as a model for our Prosperity on the Border Initiative and is inspiring other diasporan families to support the development of several other border villages, including: Paravakar, Chinari, Baghanis, Varagavan and Artsvabert."

To help support this project, visit www.parosfoundation.org.

UCLA Names Ann R. Karagozian Inaugural Director of Promise Armenian Institute

LOS ANGELES – The University of California, Los Angeles' International Institute announced the appointment of Ann R. Karagozian, Distinguished Professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, as the inaugural director of the Promise Armenian Institute.

Karagozian currently heads UCLA's Energy and Propulsion Research Laboratory and is the director of the joint UCLA-Air Force Research Laboratory Collaborative Center for Aerospace Sciences. She has been a faculty member in the Mechanical and Aerospace Department at UCLA since 1982, having received her PhD in mechanical engineering from the California Institute of



Prof. Ann R. Karagozian

Technology in that year. Her research interests lie in fluid mechanics and combustion, with applications to improved engine efficiency, reduced emissions, alternative fuels, and advanced rocket and air breathing propulsion systems.

Among her many affiliations, Karagozian is a Member of the U.S. National Academy of Engineering and is a Fellow of the American Physical Society, of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, and of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. She twice received the Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service from the US Air Force (2001, 2010), and is a member of Tau Beta Pi, Phi Beta Kappa, the Combustion Institute, and the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics. She is a Past Chair and Division Councilor of the American Physical Society/Division of Fluid Dynamics.

The Promise Armenian Institute is a groundbreaking new entity within the UCLA International Institute. Made possible with a \$20-million gift from the estate of Kirk Kerkorian, the largest gift that the International Institute has received, the Promise Armenian Institute positions UCLA to significantly build upon its more than 50 years of history of Armenian Studies, which currently includes two endowed faculty chairs. This new institute will be the hub for world-class research and teaching on Armenian Studies, and for coordinating new and ongoing research and public impact programs across UCLA, from social sciences to health sciences, from humanities to music, the arts, to engineering, and from public policy to management. The Promise Armenian Institute's size, scope, and interdisciplinary approach make it the first of its kind in the world. The Promise Armenian Institute will include the new Armenian Studies Center, and Karagozian will be involved in the selection of its first director.



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St. Vartan Cathedral Helps the Homeless on Christmas Day

NEW YORK – On December 25, volunteers from St. Vartan Cathedral gathered at the Diocesan Center in New York to host an outreach luncheon for some of the city's more vulnerable residents.

The St. Vartan Cathedral Community partnered with the Community of Sant'Egidio, a Roman Catholic lay association, to serve a hot meal for about 150 people who found

themselves homeless, alone, or in difficult straits on Christmas Day.

Some 30 volunteers from the Cathedral and Sant'Egidio communities prepared and served food in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium. In advance of the day, they had collected warm clothing and other items to be given as gifts to the visitors.

"One of the most important aspects of the



The room was packed.



Fr. Davit Karamyan chats with some of the guests partaking of lunch at the Diocesan Center

gathering was its personal, family-like nature," said Fr. Davit Karamyan, who as cathedral vicar organized the event along with Sona Haratunian and Deacon Eric Vozzy. "Our volunteers sat and talked with the guests, selected gifts suitable to each

one. Earlier, members of the Sant'Egidio group had gone to city shelters, Port Authority, and elsewhere to extend personal invitations to each guest."

"It was a beautiful way to remember our Lord in the season of his birth," he said.



Volunteers wrap warm clothing as gifts to the homeless.

OBITUARY

Chatschik Grigorian Centenarian, Veteran

RACINE, Wis. – Chatschik Grigorian, 101, passed away at home on Tuesday, December 3, 2019.

Chatschik was born on January 19, 1918 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

He came to the United States in 1951 following his service in World War II.

Chatschik married the former Vartiny Levonian on September 12, 1953 at St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church on State Street.

He was employed as a press operator for Western Publishing Company for 29 years, retiring in 1981. Prior to that he worked at Belle City Malleable.

Chatschik was quite the dancer. He and Vartiny would travel throughout southeastern Wisconsin to various dance halls on the weekends. In the summer, you could see him dance at Armenian picnics. He also enjoyed playing cards, tavloo, Armenian brandy and making shish kebob. Chatschik's true passion was soccer. He played as a youth in Armenia and could frequently be found cheering for his favorite Premiere League and Bundesliga teams.

He was a member of St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church where he served as Special Godfather to the Cross.

He is survived by his wife, Vartiny Grigorian; children, Karin (Werner) Freitag of Guxhagen, Germany, Avak (Meline) Grigorian and Ellen Grigorian, both of Racine; five grandchildren,



Ani, Alina, Anoush, Martin and Jorge; and four great-grandchildren. He is also survived by nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

A private family service was held at St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church followed by interment at Graceland Cemetery.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Monasticism Alive and Well in Ancient Times and 21st Century

By Florence Avakian

PARAMUS, N.J. — What is monasticism? What was it like in ancient times? Can it survive in our current world?

This was the tantalizing subject of a recent Diocesan Zohrab Information Center lecture held at the Mor Aphrem (St. Aphrem) Center of the Eastern US Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese in Paramus, NJ.

The speakers included the hierarchs of the Armenian and Syriac Dioceses of Eastern America, Archbishop Mor Dionysius John Kawak, Patriarchal Vicar and Primate of the Archdiocese for the Syriac Orthodox Church for Eastern US; Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) and Dr. Roberta Ervine, professor of Armenian Christian Studies at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

Also addressing the attendees were the Very Rev. Fr. Augeen Alkhoury, a monk in the Syriac Orthodox Church who resides at the Mor Aphrem Center, and Deacon Eric Vozzy, resource developer of the Eastern Diocese's Department of Creative Ministries.

The history of monasticism in the two sister churches, the current state of monasteries, and the potential future for monastic life in America were the main topics of the discussion.

Welcoming the audience, Dr. Christopher Sheklian, Zohrab Information Center executive director, briefly introduced the discussion, a culmination of a season-long Zohrab Information Center series on "monasticism". He described both the lecture series and the panel discussion as an "exploration of what monasticism has been and how it could exist in our 21st century."

Archbishop John Kawak began his discourse on a warm personal note, recalling his education and friendship with Findikyan in Rome when both were deacons. "It was the hand of God that made us the heads of our churches in the Eastern United States," Bishop Daniel interjected to loud applause.

Fourth-Century Syria

Starting in the fourth century, many famous monasteries were founded under the See of Antioch in Syria, and Mesopotamia. They became centers of prayer, research, learning and the virtuous life with thousands of monks and nuns. "The fragrance of their virtue wafted gloriously from their monasteries, caves, her-

mitages and cells," the Syriac Archbishop stated poetically.

"In hard times, the authorities abandoned their cells and monasteries and went into the cities to aid the faithful, and to confirm them in their religion. When heresy arose, they departed to preach to the faithful, to preserve them from the mistaken beliefs of the heretics, and to give them a firm hold in the orthodox faith."

ven in the monasteries, and spearheaded by monks," he said.

"Most Armenians up to 120 years ago lived within walking distance of monasteries," continued the Diocesan Primate. What interrupted that was the Genocide. The Ottoman regime taxed these monasteries out of existence.

"Today the hierarchical centers of our church in Holy Echmiadzin, Antelias, Jerusalem

Without it, chaos will reign. "Monks are the adventurers of the spiritual life. This life changed through the centuries because the community has changed. A monastery is symbiotic with its community," he said quoting St. Nerses.

Crucially Necessary

What is crucially needed today, Ervine stressed, are the elements of education, healing,



Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Dr. Roberta Ervine, and Archbishop Mor Dionysius John Kawak discuss monasticism in the 21st century.

Some of these famous monasteries were mainly found in Syria, Turkey, Egypt, Palestine and Jerusalem. One of the most famous, was St. Matthew's Monastery founded in the late 4th century, with a large population of monks, and still inhabited today, Archbishop Kawak said.

Deep Roots

In his talk, Findikyan noted that there were also deep roots of monastic life in, and outside of Armenia. "Monasteries were truly engines of the Armenian Church. It was in the monasteries within Armenia that the creators of our theology trained future priests and nuns. All phases of art are expressions of faith. They were dri-

and Constantinople have preserved various facets of our church's traditional monastic life. But that is still a far cry from the spiritual and creative dynamism of past centuries."

Emphasizing a significant point, the Primate asked "How can the Armenian Church thrive or even survive without monasteries today? What will drive our church without monks? We should have a revived sense of monastic life, not like in the past, but in today's environment, offering us a profound sense of inspiration," Findikyan stressed.

Prof. Roberta Ervine recalled that 12th century, St. Nerses Shnorhali told the Armenian monks that the monastic life should "infiltrate" the world.

service, hospitality, the preservation of culture and the offering of alternatives. All of these should be combined in the life of the monk, and with individual married priests.

"We live in a world of fragility. Why not give service? There should be a bridge between our past and our future here," Ervine added.

Vozzy shared his thoughts and experiences, by confessing that he has always been "drawn" to the concept of monasticism. This was a major pull in his return to the Orthodox Christianity, noting that the minimal presence of monastic life in the Armenian Church today is a "void."

"We need it because for me it would result in an integrated life," he said with emotion. He wondered "how many lives could of or would have looked different" if there was a monastery here in America for others like him drawn to monastic life. He added that it would be "refreshing," and enhance the "spiritual life of the church."

He referenced conversations throughout Christendom about how difficult it is for a Christian to live an authentic Christian life in today's society. While a monastery might address these concerns, he asked about the challenges of being a monk and running a monastery in America today, including questions of "location, logistics, rubrics, prayer schedules and the responsibility of the communities." "If monasticism is so vital, how much longer do we have to delay?" he asked. "The Armenian Church has the responsibility to allow the opportunity and room for monasticism to flourish.

Also speaking was the Very Rev. Augeen Alkhoury, a young monk in the Syriac Church who described his daily routine which involves prayer, research, service, and activities with the youth of the church. "Being a monk has enriched my life to such a tremendous extent," he said, his glowing face testifying to his words.

During the lively question and answer period, several significant points emerged, including the difference between celibacy and monasticism, the psychological problems of celibates living alone, and the possible lack of understanding of people's problems by celibate priests.

All agreed that the evening's creative ideas should lead to vibrant conversations. Emphasized was the crucial link that must be pursued between education and monasticism, and how the present Christian life should melt in with the Western way of life.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

The following donations recently arrived for our annual Christmas fundraiser:

Dr. Ernest M. Barsamian and Sonig Kradjian, Boca Raton, FL \$250

Ms. Ann Chepjian, Brookline, NH \$250

Emma Sogoian, Bloomfield Hills, MI \$100



Bishop Findikyan Welcomes Christmas at St. Vartan Cathedral

New YORK — On January 6, less than a week into a new decade, the Armenian Church of America welcomed the birth of Christ with an “Armenian Christmas” Divine Liturgy at New York’s St. Vartan Cathedral.

Celebrating the Feast of the Nativity and Theophany of Jesus Christ for the first time since his elevation to the episcopal rank, Bishop Daniel Findikyan led an inspiring badarak before a crowded sanctuary and thousands of viewers watching an online broadcast.

In his sermon, the Primate spoke on the theme of darkness and light. He began by invoking the words of the Prophet Isaiah: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, and you who dwell in the world and in the shadow of death, light has shown on you” (Isaiah 9:2). “Those words capture the heart of today’s Christmas celebration,” Findikyan said.

He went on to describe how the surrounding world — whether in the news headlines or in one’s personal life — is still a place of where people walk in darkness much of the time. “But,” he added, “the light has shown on us: the light of that manger 2,000 years ago. The Light of Jesus Christ.”

Affirming that God has “come into this world and illuminated it permanently, and irreversibly,” he compared Christ to “a divine sun that never sets, never weakens; that only gives power — and love, joy and hope.” That light is there, waiting for us to accept it, he said.

On Christmas day, “the church and the Lord call on us to open our eyes, and open our hearts, to the Light of God.”

Findikyan delivered his Armenian Christmas homily with passion and conviction, in English and Armenian. To conclude, he invited to the altar the Rev. Fr. Davit Karamyan, whom the Primate formally introduced to the public as the new Vicar of St. Vartan Cathedral. In an affecting moment, Findikyan honored Karamyan by presenting



Worshippers in St. Vartan Cathedral

him with a pectoral cross.

Gregory Badishkanian served as godfather for the *churorhnek* (Blessing of Water) ceremony, which commemorates the baptism of Jesus by the hand of John the Baptist.

For the fifth consecutive year, the Diocese broadcast the Armenian Christmas liturgy over the Internet. The live broadcast with a running narration was watched by thousands

on YouTube and Facebook.

The sacred music of the Divine Liturgy was rendered beautifully throughout the service by the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir, under the direction of Khoren Mekanejian. Accompanying on the organ was Florence Avakian.

Following services on January 6, a traditional home blessing and Christmas reception

were held in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium.

An Armenian Christmas Eve service was held on the evening of January 5. The celebrant was Karamyan.

Parishes across the Eastern Diocese also held Christmas services on Monday, January 6.

(All Photos by Albin Lohr-Jones)



Those at church pick up blessed Nshkhars (Wafers)



Members of the clergy at the altar.



Blessing the water



The faithful kiss the cross as it is held by Bishop Daniel Findikyan.



COMMUNITY NEWS



Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate, raises the chalice.



Members of the choir



A member of the faithful kisses the cross.



The procession entering the church



At prayer in the cathedral



A deacon swings the censer.



A reception after the church services



Bishop Daniel Findikyan with the censer



COMMUNITY NEWS

Gourgen Manoukian Preserves Armenian Traditional Costumes and Creates New Art

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN – Gourgen Manoukian is a multitasking artist. A painter, he has not only created watercolors and oils, but also done set design for films and graphic arts.



Gourgen Manoukian (photo Aram Arkun)

Born in Yerevan in 1937 from a family of refugees from Van (his grandfather participated in the battles for the defense of Van during the Armenian Genocide), he graduated middle school in 1954 and from 1956-63 worked at Yerevan’s Russian Theater as a set designer.

He studied from 1965 to 1970 at Moscow’s Applied Art Faculty of the Textile Institute. After graduation, he began work in 1971 at HayFilm, the Armenian state film company, and Armenian television studios, as art director. As such, his artistic credits extend to around 40 art films and television productions. His artistic interests extend to Armenian traditional costumes, graphic arts, and cinema.

His best known films include “Hayrik,” “Kaos,” “Hetsyal, orin spasum ein,” “Depi Sasuntsi Davit,” “Spitak aper,” “Jur mer hana-pazorya,” and “Hrazhesht sahmanits ayn koghm” but he also has created many paintings and watercolors.

Manoukian declared, “My paintings of the

great figures of Armenian culture are my favorites, like Komitas, Aram Khachaturian, or Khrimian Hayrik.” When asked how long it takes him to complete a painting, he said, “Some are created over years, stopping and starting, others very quickly.”

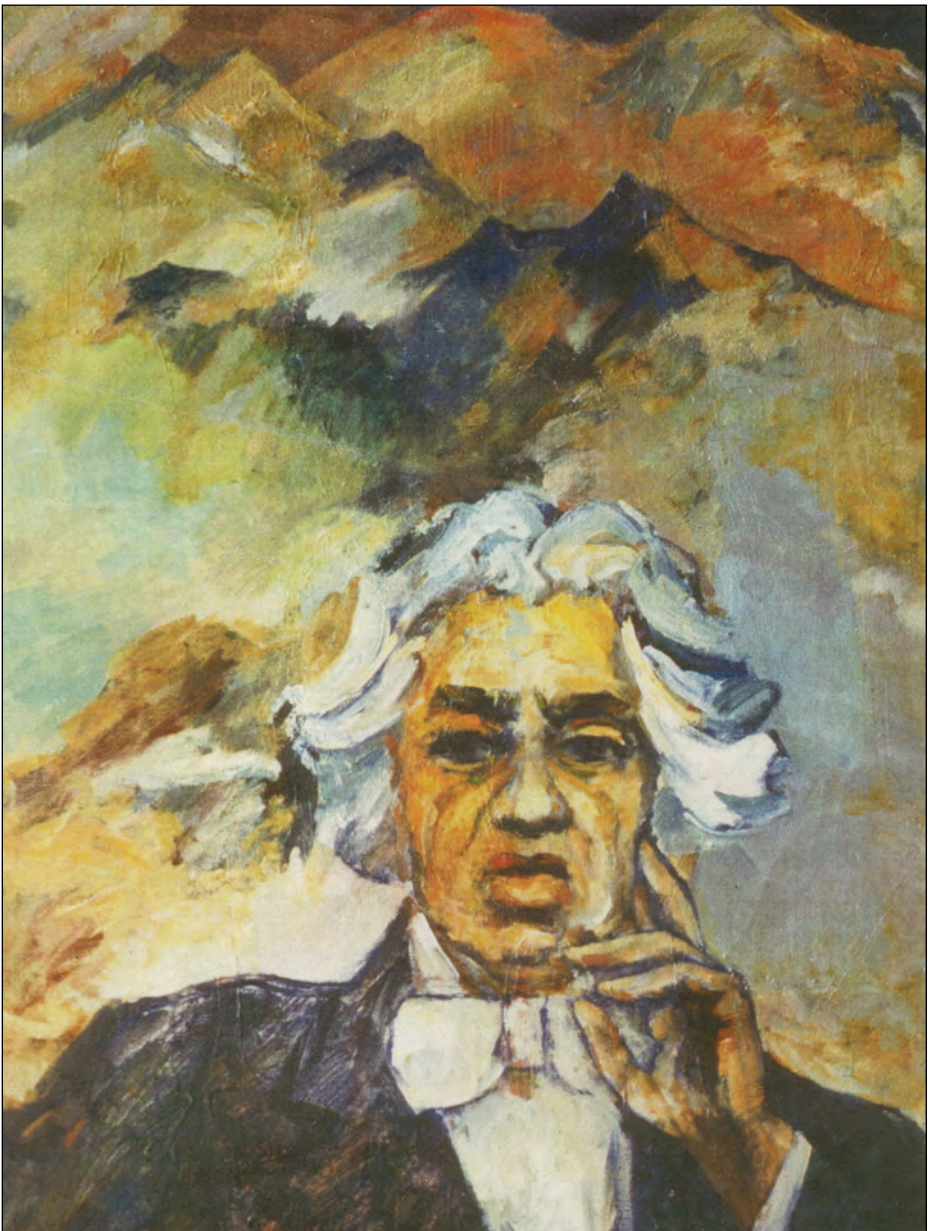
Manoukian immigrated to the Boston area in the 1990s, after having two exhibitions of his work here, including a big one at the Armenian Museum of America.

Last year, he published the art book *Haykakan taraz* [Armenian Costumes] through Antares in Yerevan. This work is the culmination of decades of research and labor. Back in 1972, when he was working in Moscow on the film “Hayrik,” Manoukian went into a bookstore and saw a fancy album which had images of Armenian costumes. However, they were presented as Turkish ones. Upon returning to Yerevan he swore to himself that he would eventually prepare a work presenting information on Armenian traditional costumes, and so he did.

His 183-page, large-size volume presents the various styles of Armenian traditional clothing which survived to the beginning of the 20th century and even to the present. It also includes some improvisations created by the author based on traditional styles. It begins with a brief Armenian and English-language introduction by the author, and contains words of praise by Armenian Academician Ruben Zaryan, well known artist Grigor Khanjyan and writer Tatul Sonentz-Papazian of Boston.

Manoukian said, “I have worked for many years to restore Armenian traditional costumes from ancient times to the present. I have attempted to the best of my abilities to restore and recreate certain lost costumes, which are unknown not only to the world at large but also to many Armenians.”

Manoukian will be presenting his book in the spring in Detroit for the Tekeyan Cultural Association, in Providence, and possibly also in other cities of the US.



“Aram Khachaturian,” oil on canvas, 1982, by Gourgen Manoukian



“Traditional Armenian Women’s Costumes,” oil on canvas, 1980, by Gourgen Manoukian



“Khrimian Hayrik,” oil on canvas, 2008, by Gourgen Manoukian



Arts & Living

Operatic Roadblocks Threaten Tchouhadjian's Legacy

By Gerald Papasian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – Dikran Tchouhadjian's operatic heritage is unquestionably worth adorning the stages of prestigious opera houses. For many reasons, some obvious to all (the Armenian Genocide), many manuscripts have been lost as they were never published. The five works that have survived, now at the Charents Literature and Arts Museum, are his first opera "Arsace Secondo," known as "Arshak the Second" to Armenians (re-named "Olimpia" by the composer), his first, second and third opera-buffas "Arif's Cunning," "Keussé Kehya" [The Beardless Elder], "Leblebiji Hor Hor Agha" (a.k.a. "Gariné") and his last opera, "Zemiré."

Four of these works have been saved from oblivion ... to some extent!

'Arsace Secondo'

Written in 1868, it was first produced in 2001 at the San Francisco Opera house, albeit cut down to two hours instead of its three-hours-plus length, and sung in Armenian instead of its original Italian lyrics. It was based on the urtext [faithful to the manuscript] published by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) of Egypt in 2000 thanks to the efforts of musicologist Haig Avakian and the Dikran Tchouhadjian Institute in Paris. In 2014, American-Armenian composer resident in Canada John Sarkissian contacted us in Paris to review Avakian's publication and turn it into an even more appropriate performance-ready edition. Avakian's faithful restoration is a brilliant critical edition, but lacks some additional tunes Tchouhadjian had intended, which were in sketch form (they are all included in Avakian's publication's appendix section). Sarkissian has reinstated those musical segments in the opera to complete the necessary gaps. Some of the Italian lyrics also had to be corrected grammatically as well as stress-wise according to 19th century Italian language and libretto canons. Two Italian authorities offered their expertise for the task gratuitously for which we are most thankful. Corrections were also made to avoid some plot discrepancies which the composer and librettist would have realized had the work been produced during their lifetime. Today, we have a complete new edition (online for the moment) which is totally ready for all practical performances.

It must be mentioned that during the Soviet years, an attempt was made to produce it at the Yerevan Opera House (1945). This version is still a permanent part of the repertoire till today. However, it would be unjust to consider this production a world premiere since for a multitude of obvious (and sometimes not so obvious) political and cultural reasons the opera has undergone unspeakably tremendous musical changes (i.e. more than 80 percent of the music belongs not to Tchouhadjian but to Levon Khoja-Eynatyan, a Soviet-Armenian composer, and the plot, in Armenian, is completely changed by Armen Gulakian from Tovmas Terzian's original Italian libretto).

We decided to call our institute's final restoration "Olimpia" as intended later by Tchouhadjian himself, in order not to confuse it especially with the distorted Soviet version.

This original complete first opus, still see LEGACY, page 14



The young singers create the group's logo.

Composing after Komitas

BERLIN – Last September the Armenian Little Singers (ALS), popularly known as the cultural ambassadors of Armenia, commemorated the 150th birthday of Komitas by participating in festivals in Germany and Lithuania. (See <https://mirror-spectator.com/2019/10/10/armenias-cultural-ambassadors-celebrate-with-music/>).

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

In the New Year, they are continuing to honor the great musicologist and composer, by organizing a Choral Composition Competition (ALSCCC). This will be the fourth such competition taking place in the framework of international festivals dedicated to Komitas. The aim is to promote the creation of a new choral repertoire for children's choirs.

The idea to launch the international festivals emerged in 2014, on the occasion of the 145th anniversary of Komitas. The ALS held a concert in Harichavank, where he lived and composed, and following the event, discussed preparing a new initiative. It was "new," because no international choral festivals had been held in Armenia since 1993. Due to financial constraints following independence, the Ashtarak 93 International Choral Festival had not been able to continue its activities.

After much hard work, the new Komitas Festival came into being with the help of the ALS in 2017, who intended to make it an annual event. Held under the patronage and with the financial support of Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, the festival has been taking place since then with various events, in several formats, both at home and abroad.

In 2018 two choirs from France travelled to Armenia to take part: Le Choeur Voyageur from Bordeaux, under the direction of Alexi Dufor, and Maîtrise des Hauts-de-Seine Choir from Paris, directed by Gaël Darchen. The latter choir, considered the most prominent in France, performed in Yerevan and Gyumri, in historic

see SINGER, page 17



The Armenian Little Singers in Japan (Photo courtesy of Japan Times)

Author Moughalian to Speak on Legacy of Armenian Ceramics Of Jerusalem

FRESNO – Author Sato Moughalian will speak on "David Ohannessian and the Armenian Ceramics of Jerusalem" on Tuesday, January 28, at 7:30 p.m., in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room 191, on the Fresno State campus.

The talk is the first in the Spring Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program and is supported by the Leon S. Peters Foundation.

Along the cobbled streets and golden walls of Jerusalem, brilliantly glazed tiles catch the light and beckon the eye. These colorful wares – known as Armenian ceramics – are iconic features of the Holy City. Silently, these works of ceramic art – an art that graces homes and museums around the world – also represent a riveting story of resilience and survival.

In 1919, David Ohannessian, Moughalian's grandfather, founded the art of Armenian ceramics in Jerusalem, where his work and that of his followers is now celebrated as a local treasure. Born in an isolated Anatolian mountain village, Ohannessian mastered a centuries-old art form in Kütahya, witnessed the rise of violent nationalism in the waning years of the Ottoman Empire, endured arrest and deportation in the Armenian Genocide, founded a new tradition in Jerusalem under the British Mandate, and spent his final years, uprooted once again, in Cairo and Beirut.

Moughalian will detail the lineage of Ohannessian's ceramic tradition and document the critical roles

his deportation and his own agency played in its transfer – aspects of the story obscured in the art historical narrative. She will speak about the process of coming to terms with her family's past, the ways in which that served as an impetus to excavate and reconstruct her grandfather's history through archival research, and the importance of preserving the stories of peoples displaced through migration.

Moughalian is the author of *Feast of Ashes: The Life and Art of David Ohannessian* (Redwood Press/Stanford University Press, 2019). She is also an award-winning flutist in New York City and artistic director of Perspectives Ensemble, founded in 1993 at Columbia University to explore and contextualize works of composers and visual artists. She serves as principal flutist of the American Modern Ensemble and Gotham Chamber Opera, and can be heard on more than thirty chamber music recordings for Sony Classics, BIS, Naxos, as well as YouTube, Spotify, and other major music platforms. Since 2007, Moughalian has traveled to Turkey, England, Israel, Palestine, and France to uncover her grandfather's traces, has published articles, and gives talks on the genesis of Jerusalem's Armenian ceramic art.

The lecture is free and open to the public. Parking is available in Fresno State Lots P6 and P5, near the University Business Center, Fresno State. Free parking permits are available by using a parking code available through the Armenian Studies Program.

Feast of Ashes will be on sale at the lecture.

For more information about the lecture please contact the Armenian Studies Program at 278-2669, visit our website at www.fresnostate.edu/zarmenianstudies or visit our Facebook page at @ArmenianStudiesFresnoState.



Sato Moughalian

Operatic Roadblocks Threaten Tchouhadjian's Legacy

LEGACY, from page 13

awaits its untainted world premiere whether at the Yerevan Opera house or elsewhere.

'Keussé Kehya'

Written in 1875, it was produced in 1968 and 1971 in Beirut, Lebanon, for the first time since its heyday during Tchouhadjian's lifetime. It was a praiseworthy semi-professional community effort made possible by the local AGBU branch. Adapted into Armenian and called "Zvart," it enabled the Lebanese Armenians to discover and enjoy this beautiful opéra comique.

The writer Armen Tarian, who adapted the opera into Armenian, had obviously invented most of the dialogue parts and had to more or less double-guess the plot. The organizers had received the scores, especially the vocal scores, from Istanbul at the time, but it seems that they had an incomplete version of the libretto at hand. There exists an Ottoman-Turkish published libretto at Yerevan's museum, published in 1976, to be cross-checked. Apparently Tarian didn't have that libretto in his possession, the translation of which would have helped him a lot – unless he did have the original Turkish libretto and decided to write a theatrically more interesting storyline and dialogue.

Later, in Los Angeles in 2003, the AGBU and the Lark

Kehya," a relatively limited performance history in the last 90 years. In the late 1960s, Yerevan's radio made an attempt to "improve" it, as they call it in Armenia, and broadcast highlights, once again with countless changes in the music. In 2008 a community semi-professional Armenian language performance was offered to the Los Angeles Armenians by the AGBU/Lark. Again, this work needs full-scale research work to restore it to its original Italian version. A French opéra comique and a Turkish operetta version precede "Zemiré"'s last Italian opus, which should be analyzed and cross checked before a final performance ready version is shaped.

'Arif'

"Arif" is the one opéra comique never performed since 1946 in Turkey (last recorded date of a performance).

A few years ago, I was contacted by the Hagop Baronian operetta theater in Yerevan, asking me if I had the scores. I told them that they were at the museum in Yerevan, a 5-minute walk from their theater. In the meantime, John Sarkissian, unaware and independent of the intentions of the Baronian Theater, had begun working to restore "Arif"'s manuscript score. There is also an incomplete autograph (by Tchouhadjian's hand) vocal score and two other handwritten vocal scores copied in the 1920s.

Hearing recently about the Baronian theater project,

many times that in order to create an Armenian version, one must first translate the Turkish libretto. But we're told that there's no need. "The lyrics of the songs are sufficient to make us guess the storyline," they say. Obviously that's a most erroneous reasoning. Songs never really unfold the story in an operetta. They are usually abstract, all-encompassing themes such as love songs, soldier's choruses, drinking songs etc. It's the dialogues between songs that move forward the plot.

Musically there are many problems that have yet to be resolved; "Arif," like all of Tchouhadjian's works, needs serious editorial work.

Nowadays, there are some musicians who enjoy showing off their superiority by "accusing" Tchouhadjian of not knowing how to orchestrate. This is because they ignore the shorthand techniques of that period which takes a specialist in the field to decipher and digitalize it in a recognizable form for today's musicians.

Tchouhadjian is a professional, a high-quality authority in classical composition and a master of orchestration. It is senseless to haphazardly decide which instrument plays what, simply based on personal taste and call it "improvements." One needs to examine and crosscheck the score, the orchestra materials and the different versions (which are also stored in the museum), and only then, "correct" them to offer a performance ready final version.

It should be noted that in the museum there is another version of a handwritten libretto in Turkish, this time written in Armenian alphabet! Yet it is such a rough handwriting that it's almost unintelligible. Only a cryptographer can decipher and eventually translate it. Nevertheless, Sarkissian, being familiar with both Arabic and Armenian alphabets, says that this libretto must be a different version than the Arabic alphabet Turkish one. It may be the first version of the opera, called "Sherif Agha" in the beginning (1972).

According to the performance history of "Arif," it was first presented at Hagop Vartovian's Gedik Pasha theatre in 1872, revised by Tchouhadjian in 1873 and performed by his own newly-created company in 1874. Both librettos were written by Tchouhadjian's brilliant tenor of the time, Hovhannes Ajemian,

although this second revised version (at least in the modified Arabic alphabet Turkish publication) bears the name of Hovsep Yazejian on the title page as "author." We believe that it may mean "editor" in this case.

The conclusion to all of this is that there is a dire need for further research; to compare different musical and text versions, to try to make the most accurate guesses, to fill in gaps and make professional and refined decisions so as to restore the original piece and turn it into a performance ready opera. Once that is done, and only then, should a decision be made whether to create an Armenian adaptation.

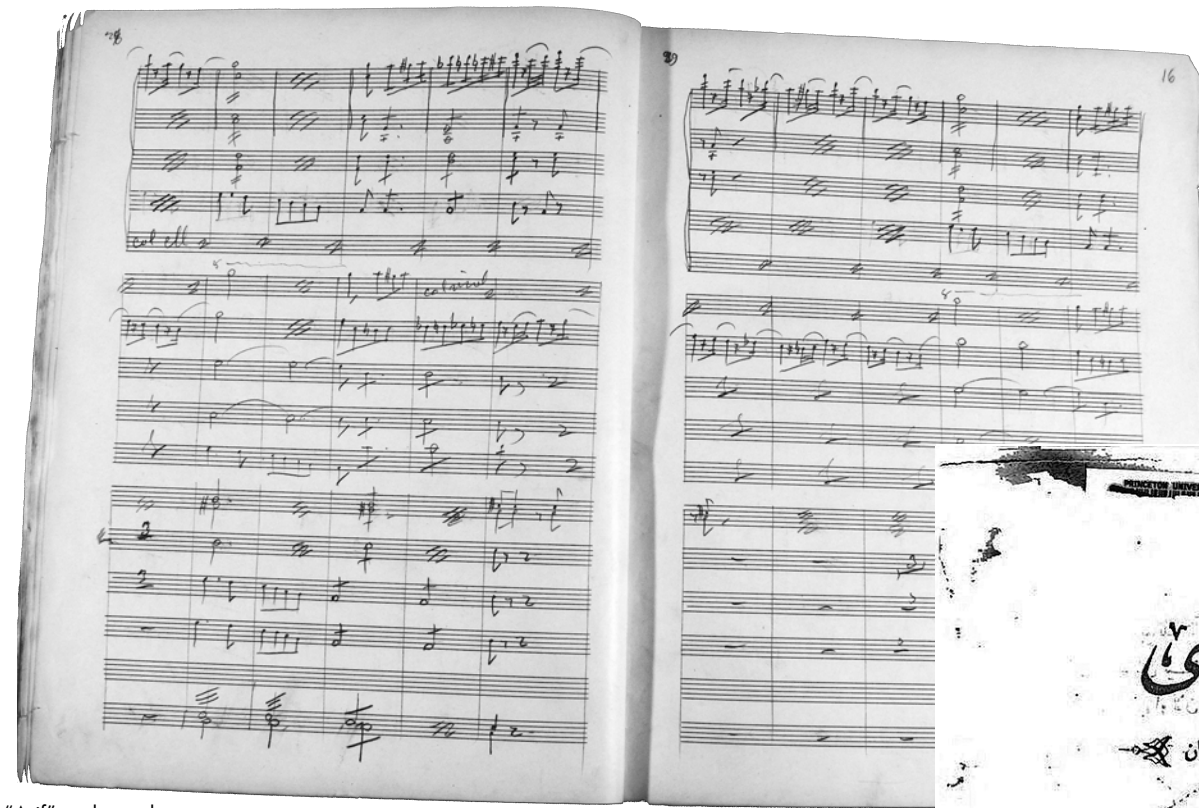
In short, "Arif" is not ready to be put on stage, unless a translator is found.

What we found out was that the Literature and Art Museum of Armenia where these endangered manuscripts are kept has no Ottoman Turkish language specialist to translate the libretti of "Arif" as well as "Keussé Kehya." Personally, Sarkissian and I tried to solicit the help of some Turkish-speaking people in Yerevan but they obviously asked for money. A lot! As

Sarkissian and I, along with our non-Armenian experts, have been working for so many years at no charge on the Tchouhadjian archives, we feel that this kind of work badly needs endowments.

Dikran Tchouhadjian's works ought to be funded by such institutions as, for example, the AGBU, the Gulbenkian Foundation, Armenia's Ministry of Culture or even by the UNESCO World Heritage in Danger Center. Individuals cannot make such demands. Perhaps it has to come from the government of Armenia itself.

(Gerald Papasian is an award winning actor and stage director. He has translated and published many articles and works from Armenian into English and French. Papasian founded the Dikran Tchouhadjian International Institute, and he continues to work on the restoration of Tchouhadjian's operas by gathering manuscripts long considered lost. Papasian has been awarded the Presidential Medal of Armenia in 2011, in recognition of his propagation of the Armenian heritage internationally for over 30 years.)



"Arif" orchestral score

Musical Society produced "Keussé Kehya" ("Zvart") based on scores obtained from Lebanon, though using a different libretto. Only the producers of the L.A. version would know how close their libretto is to the original. A first look at their Armenian version of that production's lyrics suggests that the L.A. performance follows more closely the original Turkish lyrics. They must have acquired the Turkish publication from the Yerevan museum. The difference between the storylines of the Lebanese production and the L.A. one could be that in L.A., they have also respected the Turkish edition for the dialogues and plot. We won't be certain until someone translates the Ottoman language libretto which uses the Ottoman (modified Arabic) alphabet. Perhaps AGBU/Lark can enlighten us on this point.

As far as the music is concerned, some months ago Sarkissian discovered yet another version of the opera at the Yerevan museum. It is an entirely different and a much more vivid and rousing orchestration than the previous productions of both Lebanon and Los Angeles. It is also obvious that it's Tchouhadjian's last opus of this piece. A few melodies are discarded and new ones inserted instead. Unfortunately, this orchestra score's manuscript excludes the vocal parts. Sarkissian is working on reinserting the vocal lines by comparing the whole thing with yet other orchestral or vocal materials to create a final performance ready version, this time for a full operatic orchestra.

'Leblebiji Hor Hor Agha'

This was written in 1875 and has since enjoyed a rich performance history. The orchestral parts and conductor scores were missing, though, and considered lost. All performances were orchestrated by other composers until our institute was able to find Tchouhadjian's original orchestration in Paris and restore it. The digital form of the complete original opera was edited and compiled, yet again gratuitously, by a French musician. Along with a more updated adaptation of the libretto the final score was then lent to the Yerevan opera that produced it in 2018 for the first time since Tchouhadjian's death in its full original version as intended by the composer.

'Zemiré'

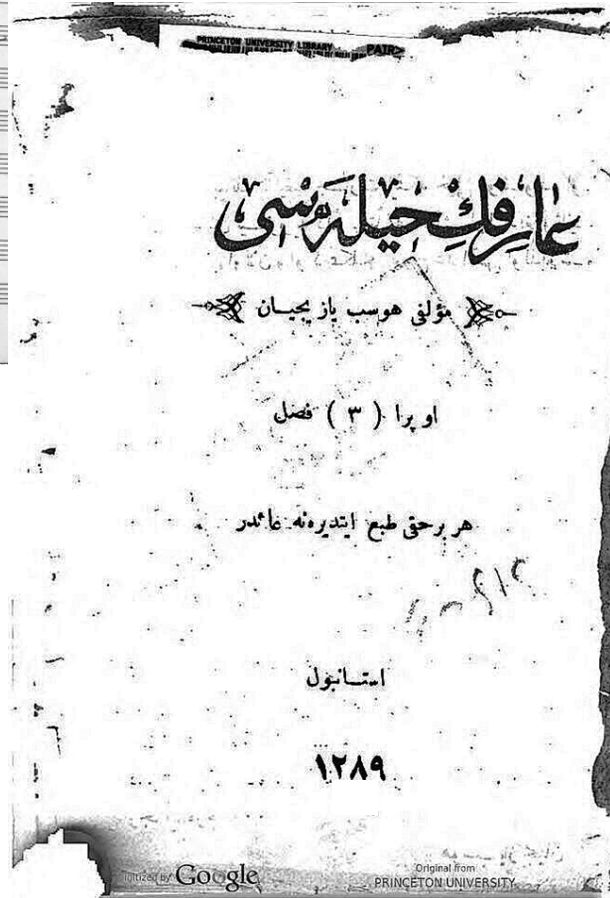
Tchouhadjian's last opera written in 1890 has, like "Keussé

Sarkissian handed over his restoration of the orchestral score to the organizers, noting however that there were no singing parts of soloists and chorus included in the manuscript. That had yet to be reinstated according to the available vocal scores. The big problem is that much of the choral writing in those vocal scores is written in draft form, in treble clef only, making it rather impossible to specify who's singing; sopranos, altos, tenors or basses! The translation of the full libretto could solve this problem at least in part, but the museum doesn't have it.

In short, all they have at the Baronian theater at this point is an Armenian translation of the song's lyrics (rather easy to translate since they are written in Latin alphabet Turkish under the notes) but no dialogues. No one knows who is on the stage or what is happening. A speculative and musically unrelated "libretto" based solely on the abovementioned Armenian translation of the musical numbers was prepared, commissioned to a writer who is not a musician. Alas, it is useless.

Until this issue is resolved, it is not possible to recuperate the score correctly.

Fortunately, I had obtained an original libretto from the Princeton University Library, published in 1874 in Constantinople in Ottoman Turkish (written in the modified Arabic alphabet). I recently gave it to the Museum of Literature and Art in Yerevan. But no one has tried to translate it and see what the plot is. We at the Tchouhadjian Institute have stated



"Arif" title page



ARTS & LIVING

Novelist Elif Shafak Recommends Yessayan Book Published by AIWA

NEW YORK — A book published by the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) was highly recommended by Turkish novelist Elif Shafak in an interview appearing in the December 26, 2019, issue of the *New York Times Book Review*.

Asked to name her “favorite book no one else has heard of,” Shafak cited *In the Ruins* by Zabel Yessayan, an account of the 1909 massacres of Armenians in Adana.

“The Armenian feminist, novelist and intellectual Zabel Yessayan was a writer with a brilliant mind and a woman far ahead of her time,” Shafak said in the interview.

“*In the Ruins* is a heart-rending cry, an important chronicle,” she added. “A very important read.”



Elif Shafak

An award-winning British-Turkish author, Shafak writes in both Turkish and English. Her most recent novel, *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*, was a finalist for the 2019 Booker Prize. Her earlier works include the best-selling novels *The*

Bastard of Istanbul, *The Forty Rules of Love* and *Three Daughters of Eve*.

“Read women writers, women journalists, women poets, women academics,” Shafak advised in the *New York Times* interview. “And when I say women, I mean women of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds.”

Yessayan was a prominent Armenian writer, intellectual, and social activist. Born in Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1878, she received her early education at the Holy Cross Armenian School and became one of the first Ottoman women to study abroad when she enrolled at the Sorbonne in Paris. She began publishing articles and books and became prominent in French and Armenian intellectual circles.

In 1909, the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul appointed her to head a delegation to the Adana province of Turkey to survey the damage caused by the 1909 massacres of the Armenians there and to arrange relief efforts. Upon her return to Istanbul, Yessayan published a series of articles about her experiences, and these were later collected into the book titled *In the Ruins*.

In 1915 Yessayan became the only woman on the list of Armenian intellectuals to be arrested on April 24, but she managed to elude her captors and escape to Bulgaria. During and after World War I she travelled widely in Europe, the Caucasus, and Middle East, using her contacts in the Armenian and foreign press to publish information, including eyewitness accounts, about the Armenian Genocide.

Yessayan moved in 1929 to Soviet Armenia, where she taught literature at Yerevan State University and continued writing and publishing. In the 1930s she became a victim of Josef Stalin's repression of intellectuals; she was arrested and died in an unknown prison, probably in 1943.

AIWA has had three of Yessayan's books translated into English and published as part of its Treasury of Armenian Women's Literature series. In addition to *In the Ruins*, these are *The Gardens of Silihdar* (a novel/memoir of Yessayan's early life) and *My Soul in Exile* (a novella about the role of the artist in society). Soon to be released by AIWA Press is the latest book in the series, the groundbreaking Armenian feminist novel *Mayda*, by Srpuhi Dussap, originally published in 1883.

All of AIWA books are available for purchase through the organization's website: www.aiwainternational.org, through Amazon books, and retailers specializing in Armenia-related material.

House of Hope-Mer Hooys Benefit Concert at Fresno State

FRESNO — A Benefit Concert for the Yerevan-based “House of Hope-Mer Hooys” will take place on Saturday, February, 22, at 7 p.m., at Fresno State. The concert will feature music by pianist Michael Krikorian, violinist Armen Derkevorkian, and cellist Garik Terzian. Lauren Movsesian, Colette Compton, and Clarise Compton will perform vocal selections, accompanied by Derrick Lowe.

Dr. Michael Krikorian is a Los Angeles-based pianist, composer and music teacher. He recently completed his studies at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music as a student of Antoinette Perry with a DMA in piano performance.

Since graduation from the USC Thornton School of Music, Derkevorkian has been enjoying an international career both as an orchestral and a chamber musician. He is a winner of the New World Symphony National auditions, a principal violinist with the Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra, concertmaster of Lark Orchestra and regularly plays with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra.

Terzian has performed extensively throughout the former Soviet Union, United States, Mexico, Spain, Ireland, and Czech Republic. He has worked at the Armenian State Chamber Orchestra, the Beverly Hills Chamber Orchestra and the South Bay Chamber Orchestra.

Colette Compton graduated from college in 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in performing arts with a major in music and a minor in communications. She was one of only a few around the country to attend the Mike Curb



Garik Terzian

Record Music Festival, where she participated in educational sessions with top musicians in Nashville, Tenn.

Clarise Compton graduated in 2017 from the University of California at Berkeley, with a Bachelor of Arts in media studies. She lives in the Bay Area and works in the media industry. She enjoys participating in all things musical, including bands, musicals and singing with friends.

Lauren Movsesian, Esq. (née Hazarian) received

her Bachelor of Music in vocal performance at the University of California, Irvine, Claire Trevor School of the Arts in 2007 (student of Elisabeth Pehlivanian and Robin Buck) and is an alumna of Boston University's Tanglewood Institute Young Artists Vocal Program.

“House of Hope-Mer Hooys” is a program dedicated to reaching out to girls from severely disadvantaged lifestyles. Their residential program teaches them the skills needed to lead productive adult lives, and to make positive decisions for themselves and their futures.

“House of Hope-Mer Hooys” was incorporated in December 2008 as a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and opened the Nakashian Children's Support Center in October 2012 with their first “class” of 15 girls, ages 13-15 years old.

The program is designed to help girls recognize and develop their talents and skills, and to utilize those assets as they mature into self-sufficiency. The girls come from either an orphanage or a seriously socially disadvantaged family currently receiving substantial government or private NGO support, and all are at risk; most have a parent or parents who are financially unable to properly support their families.

Tickets for the Concert are available at for general admission at \$25 per person and for students at \$10 per person. Ticket reservations for the Concert may be made by calling the Armenian Studies Program.

For more information visit fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies or the Mer Hooys website <https://www.mer-hooys.org/>.

Recipe Corner

Guest Recipe

by Christine Vartanian Datian



Bulgur Pilaf with Chickpeas (Garbanzo Beans) and Dried Apricots

For many people, sharing a cherished family recipe is a special way of showing respect to those relatives who are no longer with us. This recipe is courtesy of Robyn Kalajian at thearmeniankitchen.com. “I came across this delicious recipe for Bulgur Pilaf with Chickpeas (Garbanzo Beans) and Dried Apricots, given to me by my wonderful late aunt, Arpie Vartanesian, in her distinctive handwriting.”

INGREDIENTS:

1/4 cup dried apricots, chopped
2 cups chicken broth, vegetable broth, or water
1 cup bulgur, size #2 or #3
2 tablespoons olive oil or butter, divided
1 small onion, finely chopped
Salt and ground black pepper, to taste
1 teaspoon curry powder or cumin, optional
1 clove garlic, minced
1 - 15 oz. can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
Garnish with 1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped, optional

PREPARATION

Place chopped apricots in a small bowl. Cover with warm tap water for about 5 minutes to soften them. Drain liquid and set aside. In a 2-quart saucepan, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil or butter. Stir in bulgur to coat; heat until lightly toasted. Add the broth or water. (Note: at this point, 2 teaspoons of Better Than Bouillon chicken flavoring can be added, if desired.) Bring to a boil; stir, reduce heat, and cover. Simmer for 12 to 15 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Uncover and fluff the bulgur with a fork.

Meanwhile, in a non-stick skillet, heat the remaining olive oil or butter on medium heat for 1 minute. Add onion and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in minced garlic and seasonings; cook for an additional minute, making sure not to burn the garlic. Add chickpeas, apricots, and cooked onion mixture into bulgur. Cook, covered, another 2 to 3 minutes. Remove pot from heat. Allow bulgur to rest about 10 minutes. Remove cover and fluff bulgur with a fork.

Before serving, garnish with chopped parsley, if desired.
Serves 4 to 6.

For this recipe and other Armenian recipes and how-to-make videos, go to: <https://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/>. Also see: <https://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/2019/11/bulgur-pilaf-with-chickpeas-and-dried.html>





ARTS & LIVING



Joëlle with her young dancers

Joëlle Delights Young Fans

MILFORD, N.J. – On January 11, a delighted audience was treated to the anticipated performance starring children's singer Joëlle from Montreal, Canada.

Organized by the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York, the children enjoyed a fun afternoon with Joëlle for her debut performance in New Jersey.

The performer started her journey into the children's



Joëlle on stage



From left, Nanor Kradjian, Anita Atamian, Joëlle, Salpie Megerian, Talia Bouldoukian and Hilda Hartounian

music three years ago. She has a background in early childhood education and dedicated her time to being an educator for the past 10 years. She has a YouTube Channel, "Sorvink Hayeren," which serves as an educational program for children that teaches the Armenian language.

Along with her 6 dancers – Jemma, Noushig, Tais, Reya, Mila and Milvanna – Joëlle entertained the children with songs whose music and lyrics she composed. The Hovnanian School auditorium was full of joy, laughter, singing and dancing. The children also thoroughly enjoyed the tricky tray which had gifts suitable for their ages. The party concluded with goody bags and snacks for each guest.

This was the first event that the TCA Greater New York committee organized for young children, paving the way for similar events in the future.

Next on the cultural calendar, TCA Greater New York Chapter is co-hosting a Valentine's Dinner Dance with Hovnanian School PTO on February 8th at Hovnanian School in New Milford, NJ. Tickets are \$60 for adults (\$75 at the door) and \$30 for kids 13 and under. Entertainment by VOMAS and DJ Harry. For reservations, RSVP Nanor at mrsnanor@gmail.com.

For more information about the Chapter, please like us on Facebook @tekeyangreaternewyork and Instagram @tekeyangreaterny.



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

JANUARY 18 — (Birds)squared Enamel Birds/Origami Birds. Mary Aroian enamel birds/ origami bird demonstration (plus make your own!) 12 pm – 2 pm, Gallery of Enamel Art, 340 Main Street, Suite 505, Worcester, www.enamelgallery.org Free entry, coffee, hot cocoa, and cookies

FEBRUARY 9 — A cappella concert by Boston Jazz Voices to Benefit the Armenia Tree Project. 5 pm at the Jenks Center, 109 Skillings Road, Winchester, MA. The venue has plenty of free parking. Event will feature an a cappella performance, refreshments, raffle, and silent auction. Tickets are \$30 each and a family four-pack of tickets is available for \$100. Tickets available via Eventbrite at www.armeniatree.org/acappella

FEBRUARY 13 — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on

Contemporary Armenian Issues presents a public forum on “The Armenian-American Press in Perspective: Its Purposes, Challenges, and Future Prospects.” Lively discussion on issues of immigration, history, and the 125-year-old history of the Armenian-American press. Panel featuring Leeza Arakelian, assistant editor of the *Armenian Weekly*, Alin K. Gregorian, editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* and Stephen Kurkjian, Pulitzer Prize winner reporter retired from the *Boston Globe*, and NAASR Board Member. Moderated by NAASR Board Member and Armenian Weekly columnist Stepan Piligian. Thursday, 7.30 to 9.30 p.m. Batmasian Hall, NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont. A reception will follow in the Shahinian Solarium. Contact NAASR at 617-489-1610 or hq@naasr.org.

FEBRUARY 22 – Poon Paregentan Dinner Dance - Family Kef Night, Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford, MA. Featuring the Fabulous Ani Ensemble: Art Chingris - Dumbeg, Ara Jeknavorian – Clarinet, Dave Anisbigian – Vocals/Guitar, and Brian Anisbigian – Oud. Surprise DJ for modern Armenian and non-Armenian music. Complimentary Armenian Dance Class - 5:00 pm. Dinner and Dancing at 6:00 pm. Paid in advance tickets must be received by February 15: Adults \$25, Students \$10, and 5 & under Free. At the door: Adults \$35 and Students \$15. For reservations, please contact Maria Kazanjian (617) 240-3686 or Ria.tk@verizon.net. Tables of 8 can be reserved in advance with full payment Checks made payable to: Sts Vartanantz Armenian Church.

NEW JERSEY

FEBRUARY 8 — Valentine’s Dinner Dance. Sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association – Greater New York Chapter and the Hovnanian School PTO. 7 pm. Magic show for children to begin at 7.30 pm. Mezze and dinner included. Cash bar. \$60 adults, \$30 kids under 13. RSVP to Nanor at mrsnanor@gmail.com. Payment required upon reservation. \$75 at the door. Hovnanian School, 817 River Road, New Milford.

RHODE ISLAND

JANUARY 26 — The Armenian Historical Association of Rhode Island presents “Not in Our Backyard,” The amazing clean-up and restoration project at Oakland Cemetery, a roundtable discussion by the Sts. Vartanantz Men’s Club, Sunday, 1 p.m. Learn why the Men’s Club took on the task of cleaning up an abandoned cemetery. 245 Waterman St., fifth floor conference room, Providence. Refreshments at 12.30 p.m.

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.

Composing After Komitas

SINGERS, from page 13

sites such as the Garni temple, and the Harichavank and Geghard monasteries. In the capital they joined the ALS in a gala concert in the Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall. In the autumn, the Galan trio from Greece appeared in Vanadzor and Yerevan, presenting pieces by Komitas as well as new compositions.

The visiting musicians expressed their delight with Armenia, impressed by its ancient culture, its hospitable people, and – quite by chance – the Velvet Revolution which unfolded throughout the country that year.

In 2019, as mentioned, Germany and Lithuania hosted activities of the festival and the ALS. The events feature not only musicians – choirs, ensembles and orchestra – but also members of the performing arts and painters. There are plans to organize master classes, open workshops and seminars conducted by visiting artists. As Tigran Hekekyan, founder and director of the ALS explained, “The aim of the festival is to spread Komitas’s music, poetry and cultural heritage throughout the world, and to encourage cultural life in various regions of Armenia.”

Call for Composers

To foster the development of children’s choirs throughout the world, it is vital to generate new repertoires, and thus the significance of the 4th competition. The winning compositions will be performed by the ALS and will be included in the choir’s repertoire. Composers, conductors and choral organizations are invited to consider taking part. The detailed conditions for participation are list-



The singers in Japan during an earlier tour.

ed on the website www.alsccc.am. Co-sponsors of the initiative are the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia and HaarAtes Foundation.

Participation is open to composers from any country, over the age of 20.

Languages accepted are Latin, Armenian, English, German, Italian and French.

Lyrics on the score should be in the original language, and an English translation is required.

The pieces submitted should be composed for the “Little Singers of Armenia” children’s choir for 3 (S, S, A) or 4 voices (S, S, A, A) with or without piano accompaniment. The duration of the composition should not exceed 5 minutes.

Utilizing Komitas melodies is encouraged, but, if not possible, the piece should be dedicated to Komitas Vardapet. Composers may

submit one piece only, and declare that it has been neither published nor performed, and is written especially for the ALSCC. For further details on mode of submission, price, deadline, prizes and dates of rounds of selection, one should see the website or write to alsccc@hotmail.com.

(Material for this article has been taken from “The Komitas Festival: An Event Dedicated to a Great Armenian Composer,” by Tigran Hekekyan,



Conductor Tigran Hekekyan

Bulletin, Volume XXXVIII Number 3, 3rd Quarter, 2019, pp. 29-32 and www.alscc.am.)



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Centennial of Wilsonian Armenia Can Serve As Platform for Demands

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Perseverance and vigilance pay off. Armenians around the world have struggled for a full century to get 30 countries to recognize the Armenian Genocide. And even more importantly, the centennial commemoration in 2015 achieved global resonance with Pope Francis I, who called the event by its true name, and four heads of state arrived in Yerevan to participate in the commemoration at Tsitsernakaberd. And last, but not least, last October, when a historic opportunity arose, both chambers of the legislative branch of the US government passed resolutions recognizing the Armenian Genocide, which had remained elusive in the US.

International relations are structured in such unexpected ways. Therefore, the name of the game is to keep the forces at the ready and informed, so that when those opportunities come, they don't bypass us unnoticed and unused.

This year presents another historic watershed anniversary to remind the global political community of the injustices committed by replacing the Treaty of Sevres of 1920 with the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923. The specter of the Treaty of Sevres has haunted the leaders of the Republic of Turkey for a full century.

Let's present some background. In the immediate aftermath of the Armenian Genocide, the Treaty of Sevres came to bring justice to victims and survivors of that genocide within the historic boundaries of Armenia.

US President Woodrow Wilson issued his Fourteen Points to create a new world order based on peace and respect for human rights. The 12th point referred to Armenia in the following context: "The Turkish portion of the Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development."

President Wilson assigned the King-Crane Commission under Gen. James Hardbody to study the case, to determine the borders and make recommendations.

The commission came up with a conclusion to allocate a territory of 150,000 square kilometers to Armenia (versus the 30,000 square kilometers of current Armenia) to include the provinces of Van, Bitlis, Erzurum and Trabzon, with the latter to serve as Armenia's outlet to the Black Sea.

These recommendations were incorporated in the documents of the Treaty of Sevres (Articles 88 through 93).

As a side show to the negotiations in Sevres, Armenians were struggling to achieve another national dream by creating a home rule in Cilicia, which was not included in Wilson's recommendations.

The head of the Armenian National Delegation, Boghos Nubar Pasha, had negotiated with the World War I Allies and contributed to their efforts by recruiting a 5,000-strong corps of Armenian volunteers, in return for a guarantee of home rule in Cilicia.

The representative of the Armenian National Delegation in Cilicia, Mihran Damadian, tried to pre-empt the signing of the Sevres Treaty on August 10, 1920, by declaring independence for Cilicia on August 6, 1920. Unfortunately, that act of defiance was not backed by armed forces, because the French authorities had disarmed Armenian volunteers right after their victory in Arara, Palestine, on September 19, 1918, against the combined Ottoman-German forces. Therefore, it was no problem for the French army to dismiss the cabinet members of the government to be led by Damadian.

This historic event reminds us that any time in the future Treaty of Sevres is discussed, the Cilician claim must remain part and parcel of the negotiations.

Although Turkey had signed the treaty, whose Article 88 stated that "Turkey recognized Armenia as a free and independent government," soon events took a negative turn.

The Allies had assigned Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to go and disband the defeated Ottoman army. Instead, he used that force to begin his "National Liberation Campaign" to rid Anatolia of its remaining indigenous populations. By that time the Alliance had fallen apart with each nation trying to have its separate deal with

the resurgent *Milli* movement. Particularly damaging was the Kemal-Lenin cooperation, which brought ammunition, supplies and gold from Russia to enable Kemal to expel 150,000 Armenians who had returned to their homes in Cilicia. In September 1922, he literally dumped the Greek-majority population of Smyrna into the sea after burning the city and signed the Treaty of Lausanne which gave legitimacy and sovereignty to the current Republic of Turkey. Thus, the Treaty of Sevres was supplanted by the Treaty of Lausanne, in which Armenia's name is not even mentioned.

The Treaty of Sevres was meant to partition Turkey and return parts of its confiscated territories to their rightful owners. Until World War II, Turkey felt safe from the danger of partition. At the end of that war, however, some provinces were demanded to be returned to Armenia and Georgia. Soviet leader Josef Stalin was even ready to invade Turkey, but when Winston Churchill dangled the threat of the atomic bomb, Stalin halted his efforts.

The Treaty of Sevres can be resurrected anytime that international relations warrant as its reverberations still echo. For example, today there are calls in the Russian parliament to abrogate the Treaty of Kars of 1921, which had finalized the border between Turkey and the Soviet Union. Since the collapse of the Soviet Empire, Russia does not have a common border with Turkey. By virtue of Armenia's membership in the Soviet Union, Kars remains in force in determining its border with Turkey. By asking Armenia to sign the Zurich Protocols to reestablish relations between the two countries in 2009, Ankara intended to trap Armenia to reconfirm its adherence to that treaty. (Armenia did not sign them.)

Thus far, Armenia has refused to commit itself, allowing Ankara to try to guess Armenia's intentions. The reconfirmation of the Kars Treaty will revive the conditions which were forced upon Armenia by the Turks in 1920 by the Treaty of Alexandropol.

Thus far, Turkey has enjoyed the fruits of its membership in NATO. But it seems that Ankara has overplayed its hand through its solo adventures in Iraq and Syria while under the banner of NATO. One sign that Ankara has been wearing out its welcome within NATO was the recent votes by the US Congress.

Before even raising the possibility of revising or reversing the Sevres Treaty, the question is how can

Armenians receive restitution or compensation?

Turkey has murdered two-thirds of the Armenian nation and confiscated its historic homeland and today enjoys immunity against any legitimate claims, under the protection of NATO. Some legal scholars cannot find a venue to take on the restitution issue.

Others, like Prof. Alfred de Zayas, former Secretary of United Nations Human Rights Commission, have a more optimistic view by stating: "Because of the continuing character of the crime of genocide in factual and legal terms, the remedy of restitution has not been foreclosed by the passage of time. Thus, the survivors of the Genocide against Armenians, both individually and collectively, have standing to advance a claim for restitution. This has been the case with the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, who have successfully claimed restitution against many states where their property had been confiscated."

Time is running out for Armenian interests and Turkey is counting on that factor – oblivion. Plus, many Armenians scattered around the world and with blurred national identities, do not see any practical advantage to their lives by appealing for compensation or even laying territorial claims.

Western Armenians were the victims of Genocide and they don't have a sovereign state to advance their cause. Only a sovereign state has the legal power to go after restitution. That should be a job for the Republic of Armenia, but that country is looking to improve its diplomatic relations with Turkey without preconditions. They have laid the groundwork for potential rapprochement. Therefore, it is incumbent on the Diasporan Armenians to continue the struggle to keep Armenians alert and aware of their rights and to keep world public opinion informed. Otherwise, historic opportunities may pass us by.

The centennial of the Treaty of Sevres is an opportunity to mobilize forces for the long haul; seminars, lectures, public demonstrations, political actions, news campaigns have to come to commemorate the principles of that treaty and to celebrate their anticipated future success and victory.



Mirror Spectator

Established 1932

An ADL Publication

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

Baikar Association, Inc.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Turkey Eliminated its Minorities From the Economy with Exorbitant Taxes

After the near total physical elimination of the minorities from the Ottoman Empire 1915-23, the Turkish government embarked in 1941 on the financial ruin of the remaining Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and a small number of Turkish Muslims.

Turkish journalist and political analyst Uzey Bulut, formerly based in Ankara, wrote an in-depth article posted on the greekcitytimes.com website, titled: “Wealth Tax Law: How Turkey’s Non-Muslims Were Eliminated from the Economy.”

The chauvinistic government of then Prime Minister Shukru Saracoglu enacted the Wealth Tax Law on November 11, 1942. While the Genocide of the minorities in Turkey has attracted much international attention in recent decades, the seizure of their wealth through taxes has not been as well publicized. The minorities residing in Istanbul were not subjected to mass deportations by the Ottoman authorities due to the presence of foreign embassies in that city which was then the Ottoman Empire’s capital.

Turkish scholar Bashak Ince wrote that the stated aim “was to tax previously untaxed commercial wealth and to rein in the inflationary spiral of World War II. However, the underlying reason was the elimination of minorities from the economy and the replacement of the non-Muslim bourgeoisie by

its Turkish counterpart.”

The Turkish researcher Ridvan Akar, who wrote a book about the exorbitant Wealth Tax Law, described it as “economic genocide against minorities.”

Here are the four groups and the percentage of taxes imposed on them according to the 1941 tax law: Armenians (232 percent), Jews (179 percent), Greeks (156 percent) and Muslims (4.94 percent).

“The way in which the law was applied was scandalous,” wrote Ince, an assistant professor of political science. “Converts paid about twice as much as Muslims, while non-Muslims ended up paying up to ten times as much. In addition, non-Muslims were required to pay their taxes in cash within 15 days; as a result, they had to sell their businesses or property to Muslim businessmen at low prices to cover the bill. The law was also applied to the many poor non-Muslims (numbering 26,000), such as drivers, workers, and even beggars, whereas their Muslim counterparts were not obliged to pay any tax.”

Those who could not pay the taxes were sent to labor camps at Askale, near Erzurum, deported or their properties seized by the government, wrote Bulut.

Author Sidney Nowill described the labor camp as “an area cooler than Moscow in the winter.” The tax debtors were put to work breaking stones, but the tragedy did not end there!

“Out of 40,000 tax debtors,” Ince wrote, “about 5,000 were sent to these camps, and all of these were members of non-Muslim communities. Unfortunately, 21 people died in these camps and the government usurped their wealth and sold it to Turkish Muslims at low prices.”

Furthermore, “The government also confiscated the property of the tax debtors’ close relatives, even if they had been sent into labor service.”

Bulut also quoted historian Corry Guttstadt who wrote in her book, “Turkey, the Jews, and the Holocaust,” about the financial and psychological ruin the Wealth Tax inflicted on the minority non-Muslim citizens of Turkey: “People who were unable to pay were granted a two-week extension on request, but interest was charged for this period. Many fami-

lies were forced to sell their shops and businesses, their houses, even their carpets, furniture, and other household articles to raise the tax money.... Some people committed suicide in despair. The extraordinary tax was also levied on foreign Jews, and if they were in no position to pay, their property was confiscated down to the beds and cupboards. Although the law stipulated that people over 55 years old were exempt from labor service, 75 and 80-year-old men and even sick people were dragged to the train station and deported.”

Turkish Prime Minister Saracoglu stated at the time: “This way, we’ll break the foreigners’ tight grip over our market and put Turkish money into the hands of Turks.”

Turkish Researcher Sait Chetinoglu has investigated and written extensively on the Turkish government’s Wealth Tax policy, based on historical documents and testimonies of the victims. A Greek-Turkish woman, Marika Shishmanoglu, was quoted as saying that the unreasonably large tax of 30,000 Turkish liras was charged on her father who was forced to sell both of his houses and his shop and was still unable to pay the full amount of the taxes levied on him. So he was deported to the Askale labor camp. Her uncle was also charged an extraordinarily large amount of tax and was financially ruined. He was deported to Askale too. Her father died at the labor camp of Sivrihisar of a heart attack at the age of 57.

“The Wealth Tax was repealed in March 1944, under the pressure of criticism from Britain and the United States,” Bulut wrote. “It was the so-called ‘secular’ Republican People’s Party (CHP), for example, that imposed this ‘jizya – kafir [infidel] tax’ on Turkey’s non-Muslim citizens.”

Turkish journalist Bulut concluded: “The founders and ideologues of Turkey – since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 – propagated a discriminatory and Turkish supremacist mindset that revealed itself under the slogan ‘Turkey for the Turks.’ All succeeding governments have consciously attempted to make this slogan a reality, turning the lives of religious minorities into hell on earth. The current aggressive policies of the ruling AKP government against non-Muslims are just a continuation of this mentality.”

How Can Other Schools Exist and Not This One?

The year 2019 ended unfortunately with some sad news for the Armenian community in Los Angeles and it reverberated all around the global Armenian community, from Australia to Canada, from Europe to the Middle East, as well as Armenia.

It is the decision by the largest and richest Armenian organization in the world, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), to close the Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Armenian High School in Pasadena, Calif., by

By Prof. Osheen Keshishian

the end of this academic year. The school has received full accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

The announcement came as a shock to everyone. Immediately, and for days afterwards, demonstrations took place in Pasadena and Los Angeles against the unfortunate decision.

The announcement by the AGBU is very clear about the closure, however, the announcement is not very clear about the reasons for the closure and the explanations do not seem to be convincing. The official statement says that the “AGBU will combine” the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian High School in Pasadena and the AGBU Manougian-Demirdjian School in Canoga Park, which does not make sense. Pasadena is about 30 miles (48 kilometers) to Canoga Park and probably no student will travel that long to go to school. Students will have to leave Pasadena by 7 a.m. to be able to reach Canoga Park to attend school and it will take that much time to go back home. It just does not make sense.

Why do that?

The school was founded in 2006 as a high school and has existed for 13 years (four grades, 9-12). All the graduates have attended colleges and universities, are working and are involved in Armenian community organizations. Some are still in universities.

Armenian day schools in California, especially in the Los Angeles area, have existed and continue to educate students, for the past 50 years. Actually, some schools opened in 1965, 1965, 1969, 1976, including the AGBU Manougian-Demirdjian School (1976); each has more than 600 students (Pilibos 800, Manougian-Demirdjian 700 and Ferrahian more than 650), and so on.

The decision cannot be because of high expenses since all the Armenian day schools around the world have expenses. In California, it is true that the tuition covers only part of the expenses and many schools cover 50 percent or even 60 percent of the budget and the rest is collected by fundraising banquets and donations. Why not keep the school open and if the budget is the issue, why not have fundraising banquets or collect donations?

If 13 day schools are still operating in Los Angeles turning out graduates and preparing the next generation, then how come the Board of Trustees and the AGBU do not check to see how those other schools still operate? Instead, they decided to close the school in an area where there is still the dire need for an Armenian day school.

It is very sad and extremely heartbreaking for the students and the community as a whole.

(This column appeared in the January 1 edition of the *Armenian Observer*. Prof. Osheen Keshishian is the editor of the *Observer*.)

Turkey Must Stop Meddling in Armenian Church Affairs

By Aykan Erdemir and John A. Lechner

On December 12, 2019, the U.S. Senate approved for the first time a resolution to recognize the Armenian Genocide and commemorate “the killing of an estimated 1,500,000 Armenians by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923.” The previous day, Turkey’s embattled Armenian community of 70,000 elected Sahak Masalyan as the 85th patriarch of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The patriarchal elections came 11 years too late and featured heavy-handed meddling from a Turkish government increasingly irritated by the growing list of countries that recognize the Armenian genocide.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, established in 1461, enjoyed relative autonomy under the Ottoman millet system, as the church provided spiritual and civic leadership to its members. An Ottoman code in 1863 introduced lay participation in church affairs, and the Turkish government’s 1951 decree governing patriarchal elections provided a vaguely worded guideline as to how delegates chosen by lay members and the Spiritual Council would then elect the patriarch.

Mesrob Mutafyan, Turkey’s previous Armenian patriarch, died in March 2019, but he actually had been unable to fulfill leadership duties since 2008, due to early onset dementia. Given the circumstances, in January 2010, a divided Armenian community petitioned Turkey’s Interior Ministry, as lay members wished to elect a new patriarch and the clerics a co-patriarch.

The Turkish government responded six months later that there was no legal basis for elections, as the current patriarch was still alive and instead called for the creation of a “deputy-general patriarch” position, taking advantage of the divisions within the Armenian community to insert itself firmly into church affairs. Archbishop Aram Atesyan, whom the Turkish government considered to be more in line with its sensibilities, assumed the role of deputy-general patriarch.

In March 2017, the Spiritual Council elected Archbishop Karekin Bekdjian, from the German Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, as locum tenens—a temporary adminis-

trator responsible for carrying out the election of a new patriarch. Within minutes of losing the vote, Atesyan conveniently produced a note from the governor of Istanbul, voiding the elections as they may “cause disturbance and divisions in the society.” Later, the Turkish government notified the patriarchate that the Turkish authorities did not recognize Bekdjian and still regarded Atesyan as the deputy-general.

The Apostolic Church’s uncertain legal standing exacerbates the Armenian community’s problems and facilitates the Turkish government’s ability to meddle in its affairs and exploit divisions.

The Apostolic Church’s uncertain legal standing exacerbates the Armenian community’s problems and facilitates the Turkish government’s ability to meddle in its affairs and exploit divisions.

The Treaty of Lausanne, signed shortly before the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, guaranteed equal rights to the country’s Armenians and other non-Muslim minorities but no legal status. Successive Turkish governments have not only failed to treat the country’s religious minorities as equal citizens but also prevented their religious bodies from obtaining legal status, a criticism that the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has consistently raised in its annual reports.

To make matters worse, since 2013, the Turkish government has blocked minority foundations from electing new board members, weakening the very institutions vital for running day-to-day affairs in the absence of legal status for the religious communities themselves. This policy has not only incapacitated religious minorities by restricting their legal and economic room for maneuver but also left them indebted to the mercy of the Turkish government. Over the years, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has perfected the art of swinging between scapegoating and benevolent treatment of minorities as part of his strategy of instrumentalizing minorities to advance his policies at home and abroad.

(This commentary originally appeared in the January 14 online issue of *Foreign Policy*.)



Health Minister Defends Hospital Closures

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Health Minister Arsen Torosyan on Tuesday, January 14, defended his decision to shut down small maternity hospitals across Armenia, while agreeing to make concessions to some of them following protests staged by medics and other local residents.

A directive signed by Torosyan in July 2018 mandates the closure of state-funded mater-



Health Minister Arsen Torosyan speaks at a news conference in Yerevan, January 14, 2020.

nity hospitals handling fewer than 150 child-births annually. It argues that these medical institutions located in small towns and vil-lages are understaffed, poorly equipped and not cost-effective, increasing the risk of new-born deaths.

“Imagine that in a maternity hospital lack-ing an operating room there is an urgent need for caesarian section during a child delivery,” Torosyan told reporters. “What should that hospital do? Can you tell me?”

He said that pregnant women will instead be able to give birth at larger and better-equipped hospitals located not far from their communities.

The Armenian Ministry of Health stopped financing such hospitals this month, spark-ing angry protests in several communities affected by the controversial decision.

In the northwestern town of Maralik, sev-eral dozen people blocked a major highway

in protest last week. They unblocked it only after provincial authorities pledged to orga-nize public discussions on the matter.

Protests continued in another town, Yeghvard, on Tuesday. Ruzanna Mkrtchyan, an obstetrician working at the local materni-ty hospital, complained that she and her col-leagues are not in a position to ensure the threshold for child births set by the ministry.

“That depends on people’s living stan-dards, people’s free choice, emigration rates,” said Mkrtchyan. “Nothing depends on us.”

“I had 16 grandchil-dren and 16 great-grandchildren here,” said an elderly Yeghvard resident tak-ing part in the protest.

The protesters dis-persed only after Romanos Petrosyan, the governor of the surrounding Kotayk province, talked to them and claimed to have received assur-ances from Torosyan that the hospital will not be closed for now.

“There are nuances, regional issues which the health minister is not obliged to know as profoundly as the governor may know,” said Petrosyan.

Torosyan clarified afterwards that the hos-pitals in Maralik, Yeghvard and elsewhere may be allowed to continue to operate if they address their staff shortages and improve their facilities.

“If there is no operating room, if there is no intensive care, if there is not even an anes-thesiologist at a maternity hospital, then this will be out of the question no matter how many roads they block,” he said.

The minister also stressed: “We will defi-nitely not be negotiating with those hospitals that handle 10 child deliveries [annually] but we may negotiate with those that handle around 100 or just over 100 births.

Ukraine Deports Azerbaijani Opposition Blogger to Baku

KYIV, Ukraine (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 on December 14.

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

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Elvin Isayev

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

The Azerbaijani government statement doesn’t say on what grounds he was arrest-ed 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 was 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 citi-zenship 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 mea-sure 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.

With reporting by Zmina, Ukrayinska Pravda, and DW

Greek Foreign Minister Issues Turkey Warning

ATHENS (Euobserver.com) – Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias on Monday, January 13, criticized Turkey’s activities in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean, claiming they were leading to Ankara’s international isola-tion, the Greek daily Ekathimerini reported.

“Turkey must understand that this behaviour is counterproductive and drives it into isolation,” said Dendias, who believes the understanding on maritime borders signed between Turkey and Libya is null and will destabilize Libya and the region.

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