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Dan Janjigian Runs in Texas Congressional Primary

By **Aram Arkun**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

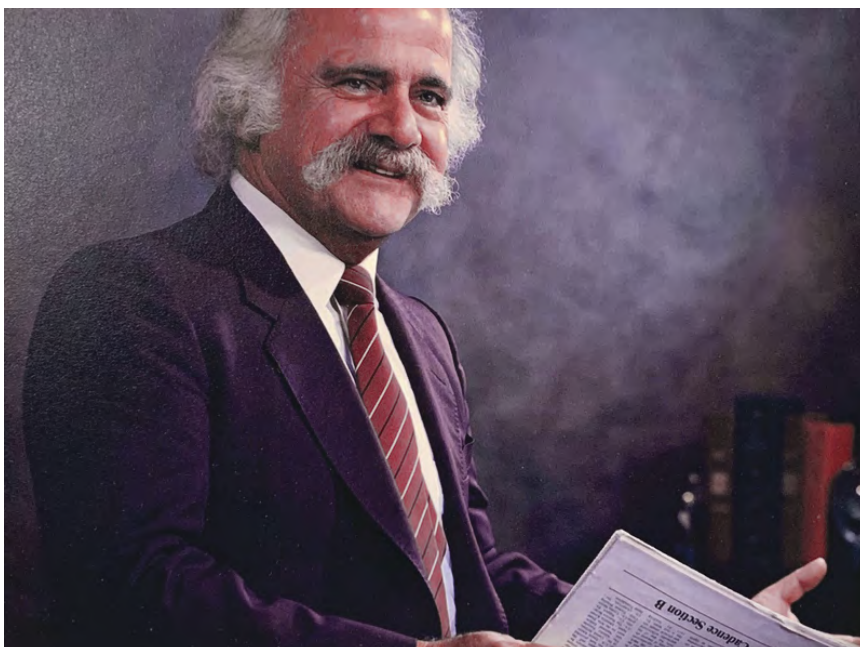
LEANDER, TX – Every so often, a new Armenian name pops up among political candidates on the national scene in the US. Armenians rejoice even when the candidate has tenuous connections to his roots. Today, in the 31st Congressional district, an area north of Austin, Texas, there is a new candidate running in the primary election, Dan (Daniel Armen) Janjigian, who is strongly connected to his Armenian heritage. Some may remember him from 2002 when he was one of two members of the Republic of Armenia’s bobsledding team in the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics. Significantly, if Janjigian wins the primary election, he will be running against a Republican incumbent, Rep. John Carter, who not only refused to cosponsor the successful Armenian Genocide resolution H.R. 296 but did not even show up to vote on it last fall.

Background

Janjigian, 47-years-old, grew up in a very Armenian household. Born in Chicago, he and his family soon moved to the San Francisco Bay area in northern California, where his parents, Aram and Florence, started a popular restaurant called the Armenian Gourmet in 1974 in Sunnyvale. It operated successfully for the next 40 years. As a result, Dan grew up surrounded by Armenian food and frequently was present at various Armenian ceremonies, with his parents doing the cooking. He served in church until the beginning of high school as an acolyte. He was involved in the Armenian Church Youth Organization and would go to Armenian camp in summer, becoming a counsellor. He said, “That was one of the favorite times in my life,” and recalled with a chuckle how he and Matt Vasgersian, today a sportscaster and television host, would get into trouble and have to go shovel manure as punishment.

Later he would go to various Armenian events like ACYO Sports Weekend and the Navasartian Games.

Janjigian’s maternal grandfather came
see JANJIGIAN, page 12



Veteran Journalist Mitchell D. Kehetian Dies

DEARBORN, Mich. – Longtime journalist and regular contributor to the Mirror-Spectator Mitchell “Mitch” Kehetian died on February 22, at the age of 89 at Beaumont Hospital.

Born in Detroit on October 20, 1930, the son of the late Kaspar and Arousiag Alice Kehetian, he was a graduate of Detroit’s Southwestern High School.

A retired editor of the Macomb Daily, he began a 52-year journalism career in 1953 at the Detroit Times. After retiring, he continued to write commentary for local newspapers. He also was a frequent contributor to the Armenian-American press, from his youth until a few months before his passing.

Kehetian served the US military in the Army Active Reserves intelligence division – foreign interrogation unit. A former board trustee at Central Michigan

University, Mitch was recognized by Wayne State University’s Journalism
see KEHETIAN, page 8



ADL Endorses Texas Congressional Candidate Dan Janjigian

BELMONT, Mass. – The Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) Eastern District Committee announced its endorsement of Dan Janjigian for the 31st Congressional district of Texas, which is north of the city of Austin. ADL Eastern District Chairman Kevork Marshlian noted that as Janjigian has been involved in Armenian affairs and has been
see ENDORSEMENT, page 12

American University Students Learn the Best Of Both Worlds at WPI

By **Alin K. Gregorian**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WORCESTER – The American University of Armenia (AUA) prides itself on its curriculum and state-of-the-art facilities. Now, they are able to give an opportunity to several students to study at one of the most renowned institutions of higher learning in the state, the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI).

The students will participate in the Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP), which allows students to work together to solve real-world problems.
see STUDENTS, page 10



Students share a light moment at Prof. Paula Quinn’s class with AUA students and WPI students. (Kenneth Martin photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Armenia to Suspend Air and Land Travel to And from Iran

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – The Armenian Government is suspending travel to and from Iran for two weeks, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in a Facebook post on February 23.

“Based on Article 16 of the Law on State Border of the Republic of Armenia, which deals with the temporary cessation of communication across the state border in the event of the spread of infectious diseases, the government will make an extraordinary decision to suspend communication with the Islamic Republic of Iran for two weeks,” he said.

The Coronavirus Prevention Commission was scheduled to meet on Monday, February 24, to discuss the next steps, possible scenarios and measures to follow.

Iran’s health ministry raised the death toll from the new coronavirus to eight Sunday.

As of February 24, there were 43 confirmed cases of the illness in Iran, health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour told state TV.

Armenia is World’s Third Most Militarized Country, Report Shows

YEREVAN (News.am) – Armenia is the world’s third most militarized country, according to the 2019 edition of the Global Militarization Index (GMI) by the German-based Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC).

Armenia is behind Israel and Singapore only, and tops the list of most heavily militarized countries in Europe.

The ten countries with the highest levels of militarization in 2018 are Israel, Singapore, Armenia, Cyprus, South Korea, Russia, Greece, Jordan, Belarus and Azerbaijan. These countries allocate particularly high levels of resources to the military in comparison to other areas of society, the report shows.

“Both Baku and Yerevan are currently modernizing the old army and air force weapons systems, for which they have awarded various large-scale contracts to Russian weapons manufacturers. The result is rising military spending on both sides,” the authors say.

Azerbaijan’s is tenth in the list, while Armenia’s other neighbors – Georgia and Turkey – are the 49th and 20th respectively.

The Global Militarization Index depicts the relative weight and importance of the military apparatus of one state in relation to its society as a whole. For this, the GMI records a number of indicators, such as comparison of military expenditures with its GDP, the contrast between the total number of military forces and the overall population, the ratio of the number of heavy weapons systems available and the number of the overall population.

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Khachaturian at American Ballet

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

New Canada Ambassador to Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The newly-appointed Ambassador of Canada to Armenia Alison LeClaire (residence in Moscow), presented her credentials to Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia Grigor Hovhannisyian, on February 25.

Hovhannisyian congratulated LeClaire on the occasion of the assumption of the post and hoped that the sides will continue making efforts to enrich the bilateral political agenda.

During the meeting the sides discussed the steps aimed at the activation of bilateral relations in different directions, including activation of inter-parliamentary relations, Canada's assistance to the democratic process in Armenia, as well as issues of fostering bilateral economic relations. The sides also talked about the opportunities to organize high level mutual visits in the near future.

Athlete Gains Armenian Citizenship

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – American-Armenian athlete Allison Halverson has gained Armenian citizenship and will most likely represent Armenia at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

"I am officially an Armenian Citizen! This is one of my proudest accomplishments!" the athlete said on Instagram on February 25, captioning a photo of her with an Armenian passport.

"Just over 100 years ago my ancestors faced some of the hardest times ever seen on this earth... many of them lost their lives in unspeakable ways, but my grandfather was able to narrowly escape the Armenian Genocide by dressing up as a young girl and taking a boat to Ellis Island. Without my ancestors' sacrifices and courage, I wouldn't be here today. I have fallen in love with this amazing, beautiful, welcoming, and strong country and am excited to see what the future holds for myself and Armenia," she wrote.

Wines Win Medals at International Food Expo

MOSCOW (Armenpress) – The Armenia Wine Company was awarded one gold and two silver medals by the contest jury of ProdExpo-2020 international food exhibition.

The 27th edition of ProdExpo-2020 international food exhibition hosted by Moscow, Russia that featured over 2600 producers from 70 countries ended on February 14.

This major international exhibition is one of the best platforms for acquiring new partners, discussing industry issues, winning new markets and showcasing one's products to consumers.

During the international beverage tasting competition organized as part of the exhibition, the representative jury consisting of winemakers, experts, representatives of consumer unions and critics evaluated approximately 800 products in accordance with the accepted international standards.

For the 8th year in a row Armenian wines captured the attention and hearts of the visitors to this annual international wine and spirits exhibition with their excellent taste and flavor, forcing them to constantly choose Armenian wines.

The Armenia Wine Company was again hosted by this year's exhibition.

"Each time presenting our wines at international exhibitions, we also present the best traditions of the millennial history of Armenian winemaking, receiving the highest recognition. This time again our company's representatives returned to Armenia with one gold and two silver awards. We are proud of our achievements, as our company, which has become a symbol of modern winemaking, presented to the visitors not only the excellent tastes and flavors of its wines, but once again held in high regard Armenian wine culture," said Kristine Vardanyan, Commercial Director of the company.

According to the Armenia Wine Company, the gold medal was awarded to the "Armenia" cherry wine and silver medals to "Armenia Muscat" white semi-sweet wine made from Muscat grape variety and to "Armenia" semi-dry sparkling wine made from Areni variety grape.

Serzh Sargsyan's Trial Starts

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Nearly two years after resigning amid mass protests against his continued rule, Armenia's former President Serzh Sargsyan went on trial on Tuesday, February 25, on corruption charges which he rejects as politically motivated.

Sargsyan stands accused of giving privileged treatment in 2013 to his longtime friend and businessman Barsegh Barseghyan which cost the state 489 million drams (just over \$1 million) in losses. According to law-enforcement authorities, he made sure that a government tender for supplies of subsidized diesel fuel to farmers is won by Barseghyan's Flash company, rather than another fuel importer that offered a lower price.

Sargsyan is standing trial together with Barseghyan, former Agriculture Minister Sergo Karapetyan and two other former Agriculture Ministry officials also indicted as part of the criminal case. All five suspects deny any wrongdoing.

Sargsyan's lawyers again dismissed the embezzlement charges leveled against him when they spoke during the first session of the high-profile trial at a district court in Yerevan. One of them insisted that they are based on "contradictory, incredible and illogical" testimony given by a single person.

The trial prosecutor, Arsen Martirosyan, denied that, saying that investigators collected enough evidence to press the charges against the man who ruled Armenia from 2008 to 2018.

The incriminating pre-trial testimony was reportedly given by Karapetyan. The former minister was jeered by the ex-president's supporters when he entered the courtroom moments before the start of the trial. He refused to talk to reporters afterwards.

The defense lawyers also alleged numerous procedural violations committed by investigators. They accused Martirosyan of being biased against their client and demanded his replacement by another prosecutor. The presiding judge, Vahe Misakyan, adjourned the court hearing to consider the demand.

Sargsyan, 65, was greeted by more than 100 supporters rallying outside the district court building when he arrived for the hearing. Addressing the small crowd, he seemed to link the case against him to his position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

"From the highest podiums of the world I have periodically stated and will repeat now that Nagorno-Karabakh will never be part of Azerbaijan. This has been the supreme goal of my life and it will accompany me to the end," the

Karabakh-born ex-president said in a short speech greeted with applause and "President!" chants.

The crowd included senior members of the former ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) still headed by Sargsyan. In a statement issued earlier in the day, the HHK leadership similarly alleged a connection between the trial and the current state of the Karabakh negotiating process.

"With such steps the authorities aim to deflect the Armenian people's attention from numerous internal and external problems that are becoming more acute by the day," said the statement.

HHK representatives claimed earlier that their leader was indicted in early December in retaliation for his public criticism of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Law-enforcement officials and Pashinyan's political allies brushed aside those statements.

Sargsyan accused Pashinyan's government of jeopardizing democracy and stifling dissent in a November 20 speech at a congress of the European People's Party held in Croatia. He had kept a low profile since resigning in April 2018.

Pashinyan repeatedly implicated Sargsyan, his family and political entourage in corruption both before and after coming to power.

Russian, Armenian FMs Discuss Karabakh

GENEVA (RFE/RL) – The foreign ministers of Russia and Armenia discussed international efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict when they met in Geneva on February 25.

According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, Sergey Lavrov and Zohrab Mnatsakanyan touched upon a "broad range of issues" during the talks held on the sidelines of a session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Those included the "Nagorno-Karabakh peace process," the ministry said in a statement.

A separate statement released by the Russian Foreign Ministry said the two men discussed "topical issues on the bilateral and regional agenda" and "exchanged views" on the unresolved conflict.

The official press releases gave no details of the meeting held less than a month after fresh high-level Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations.

Mnatsakanyan and his Azerbaijani counterpart Elmar Mammadyarov held "intensive discussions" in Geneva in January 30, mediated by the U.S., Russian and French co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group. In a joint statement with the mediators, they said they focused on "possible next steps to prepare the populations for peace; principles and elements forming the basis of a future settlement; and timing and agenda for advancing the settlement process."

Two weeks later, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev held a brief meeting before participating in a panel discussion on Karabakh held as part of an annual security conference in Munich. The two leaders publicly traded accusations during the discussion.

Mnatsakanyan accused Baku on February 18 of hampering progress towards a Karabakh settlement with "maximalist" demands. Still, the chief Armenian diplomat said on Monday that the fact that Pashinyan and Aliyev publicly debated the long-running conflict was "very positive" in itself.

Charges Dropped Against Serzh Sargsyan's Ex-Bodyguard

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Law-enforcement authorities have dropped corruption and tax evasion charges against the former chief bodyguard of ex-President Serzh Sargsyan nearly four months after he transferred 2.9 billion drams (\$6 million) to the state.

Vachagan Ghazaryan was arrested in June 2018 on charges of "illegal enrichment" and false asset disclosure shortly after the "Velvet Revolution" that toppled Sarkisian. The charges stemmed from his failure to declare to a state anti-corruption body more than \$2.5 million in cash that was mostly held in his and his wife's bank accounts.

The Special Investigative Service (SIS) said at the time that Ghazaryan was obliged to do that in his capacity as deputy chief of a security agency providing bodyguards to Armenia's leaders. It also accused him of tax evasion.

Ghazaryan, who headed Sarkisian's security detail for over two decades, was released from custody in July 2018 but arrested again in November 2018. A Yerevan court granted him bail one month later after he promised the hefty payout.

The SIS announced in October 2019 that Ghazaryan and his wife Ruzanna Beglaryan have completed the \$6 million payment. A spokeswoman for the law-enforcement agency, Marina Ohanjanyan, said on February 17 that they thus "fully compensated" the state for taxes evaded by them.

The SIS cited a much smaller sum when it accused a night club in Yerevan owned by the couple of tax evasion in 2018.

Ohanjanyan said that because of the payout Ghazaryan and his wife will not stand trial for tax fraud. Investigators have also cleared them of illegal enrichment, she said.

According to Ghazaryan's lawyer,

Armen Harutiunyan, the SIS has acknowledged that an Armenian law on mandatory asset declarations by senior state officials does not apply to the once powerful former security official.

Citing a lack of evidence, the SIS also decided last week not to prosecute Ghazaryan for extortion alleged by the night club's former chief accountant. The latter claims that she was forced to pay Ghazaryan 40 million drams (\$84,000) for financial irregularities blamed on her.



Vachagan Ghazaryan

Officers of Armenia's police and National Security Service (NSS) found \$1.1 million and 230,000 euros in cash when they raided Ghazaryan's Yerevan apartment in June 2018. The NSS said he carried a further \$120,000 and 436 million drams (\$900,000) in a bag when he was caught outside a commercial bank in Yerevan a few days later.

Ghazaryan claimed afterwards that most of the money found in his home and bank accounts belongs to his businessman friend living abroad.

In early 2019, the NSS secured an even heftier payout, worth \$30 million, from Serzh Sarkisian's indicted brother Aleksandr. The money was held in Aleksandr Sarkisian's Armenian bank account frozen by the security service following the 2018 revolution.



ARMENIA



February 25 Marks 155th Birthday of Commander Andranik Ozanian

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – February 25 marks the 155th birthday anniversary of Andranik Ozanian (Zoravar Andranik), a legendary Armenian military commander, statesman and key figure of the Armenian national liberation movement.

Andranik Ozanian was born in 1865 in Shabin-Karahisar, Sivas Vilayet, Ottoman Empire (modern Giresun Province of Turkey) to Mariam and Toros Ozanian. His paternal ancestors came from the nearby Ozan village in the early 18th century and settled in Shabin-Karahisar to avoid persecution from the Turks. His ancestors took the surname Ozanian in honor of their hometown.

Andranik became active in the Armenian armed struggle against the Ottoman government and Kurdish irregulars in the late 1880s. He joined the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun) party and along other fedayis, he sought to defend the Armenian peasantry living in their ancestral homeland; an area known as Turkish (or Western) Armenia – at the time part of the Ottoman Empire. His revolutionary activities ceased in 1904, when he left the Ottoman Empire. In 1907, Andranik left Dashnaktsutyun because he disagreed with its cooperation with the Young Turks, a Turkish party which years later perpetrated the Armenian Genocide.

In 1912-1913, together with Garegin Nzhdeh, Andranik led Armenian volunteers within the Bulgarian army against the Ottomans during the First Balkan War.

Starting in the early stages of World War I, Andranik com-

manded the first Armenian volunteer battalion and led them within the Russian Imperial army against the Ottoman army. After the Revolution of 1917, the Russian army retreated and left the Armenian irregulars outnumbered against the Turks. Andranik led the defense of Erzurum in early 1918, but was forced to retreat eastward.

By May 1918, Turkish forces stood near Yerevan – the future Armenian capital. The Dashnak-dominated Armenian National Council declared the independence of Armenia and signed the Treaty of Batum with the Ottoman Empire, by which Armenia gave up its rights to Western Armenia. Andranik never accepted the existence of the First Republic of Armenia because it included only a small part of the area many Armenians hoped to make independent. Andranik, independently from the Republic of Armenia, fought in Zangezur against the Azerbaijani and Turkish armies and helped to keep it within Armenia.

Andranik left Armenia in 1919 and spent his last years in Europe and the United States. He settled in Fresno, California in 1922 and died five years later in 1927.

Andranik was first buried at Ararat Cemetery in Fresno, and his remains were moved to France and buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris on January 29, 1928. In early 2000, the Armenian and French governments arranged the transfer of Andranik's body from Paris to Yerevan. The commander was reinterred at the Yerablur Pantheon in Yerevan on February 20, 2000, next to Vazgen Sargsyan.

Armenian Chief Justice Sues Pashinyan For 'Slander'

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Hrayr Tovmasyan, the chairman of Armenia's Constitutional Court, has filed a defamation lawsuit against Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in response to recent verbal attacks on him.

Pashinyan again lashed out at Tovmasyan late last month in a continuing bitter dispute with the latter and most other members of the court. In particular, he charged that Tovmasyan "offered his services" and cozied up to him following the 2018 "Velvet Revolution." He said he rebuffed those overtures because he did not want to cooperate with "representatives of the corrupt former regime."

Tovmasyan, who has been under strong government pressure to resign in recent months, rejected the claim as untrue while challenging Pashinyan to come up with "credible evidence" of it. He said will take legal action if Pashinyan fails to do that.

The prime minister responded by posting on Facebook a photograph of an expensive pen which he said Tovmasyan gifted him at a 2018 meeting in Yerevan. He portrayed the gift as proof of "the weirdest flattery I've ever seen."

Tovmasyan said through his lawyers afterwards that he will press ahead with the lawsuit.

According to court records publicized on Monday, he wants Pashinyan for retract the "slandorous" statements and apologize for them.

The case has already been assigned to a district court judge in Yerevan, Gayane Khachatryan. She has not yet scheduled the first court hearing.

The legal action followed Pashinyan's controversial decision to hold a referendum on dismissing Tovmasyan and six other judges of the 9-member Constitutional Court who had been installed by Armenia's former governments. Opposition groups have denounced the April 5 referendum as unconstitutional. Pashinyan and his political allies have defended the legality of the vote.

Pashinyan stepped up his verbal attacks on Tovmasyan immediately after the latter pledged to take him to court. He said law-enforcement authorities' allegations that Tovmasyan illegally became the head of the country's highest court shortly before the 2018 revolution are "effectively proven and irrefutable."

The Special Investigative Service (SIS) claimed in October that the former Armenian parliament elected Tovmasyan court chairman as a result of an illegal seizure of the judicial authority by a "group of officials." It said that took the form of forgery committed by former parliament speaker Ara Babloyan and one of his top staffers. Both men strongly deny corresponding accusations leveled against them.

Armenian prosecutors have twice declined to endorse those coup accusations, ordering the SIS to conduct an "additional investigation."

Family and Community Daycare Center Opens in Artik

ARTIK, Armenia – A new daycare center founded by the "Family and Community" NGO was officially inaugurated on February 18 in the town of Artik in Shirak province. The new center, renovated by the Tufenkian Foundation, will provide daycare for the children coming from vulnerable families. Artik's center became the fifth hub in the NGO's map, alongside with the ones in Armavir, Metsamor, Noyemberyan and Ijevan. The center opened its doors for the children due to a generous donation from Mr. and Mrs. Ralph and Arnik Yirikian. The opening ceremony has united the residents of Artik as well as Ralph Yirikian, the foundation's executive director Raffi Doudaklian, Governor Tigran Petrossian, MP Sofya Hovsepian, and other government officials.

The center is first of its kind in Artik and surrounding villages. For the current year, about 100 children will be able to go to the center after school and participate in various extracurricular classes and activities such as singing, pottery, drawing, etc.

"Such centers are significant for our society as they keep children away from the streets and help them become good people and good citizens. We are delighted and proud that children in Artik will have such an opportunity now," said the primary sponsor of the construction, Yirikian. The center will operate in an old Soviet-era building that went through a complete reconstruction and renovation organized by the Tufenkian Foundation earlier in 2019. The municipality of Artik has provided the building for the center.

"We are trying to expand the network of such centers in Armenia, and we are glad that the decision fell on opening the new one in Artik, as Gyumri is the only city in the region that has such centers. Once again, we are thankful to our donors, the team that worked hard to make this center a reality and, of course, we are happy for the children of Artik, who will have the opportunity to receive various social services from a team of expert social workers", stated the executive director of Tufenkian Foundation, Raffi Doudaklian.

The "Family and Community" NGO currently runs four other centers in four towns of Armenia: Metsamor, Armavir, Ijevan and Noyemberyan. The core idea in the philosophy of the NGO is the concept of the family. "The environment that family creates for the child leaves an impact on him/her for the rest of the life, and we strongly believe in the values that come with the idea of family," said Knarik Garanfilyan, the director of the NGO. After the welcoming speeches, the local children cut the red ribbon, officially launching the operations of the center. Soon, the center will operate in its full capacity. "Family and Community" NGO is one of the main beneficiaries of the Tufenkian Foundation. The organization implements programs for social and psychological support, empowerment of families, capacity building for the youth, identification, and development of their resources, development, and empowerment of communities and organizes daycare for schoolaged children. While working together, the lives of many children

have changed for the better. The Foundation currently runs online fundraising for further development of the center.

Founded in 1999 by entrepreneur James Tufenkian, the Tufenkian Foundation has worked in Artsakh for over 15 years.

Armenia Records 7.6 Percent GDP Growth In 2019

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Economic growth in Armenia accelerated to 7.6 percent last year, according to government data released on February 20.

Official figures publicized by the Statistical Committee show that trade and other services were the main drivers of this growth which increased the country's Gross Domestic Product to 6.55 trillion drams (\$13.6 billion).

A 9-percent rise in industrial output reported by the government also contributed to it. By contrast, the Armenian agricultural sector contracted by more than 4 percent in 2019.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan touted the GDP growth rate during a weekly cabinet meeting in Yerevan.

"It means that we have registered the fastest economic growth since 2008 and I want to congratulate all of us in connection with that," he told ministers. "I am confident that as a result of our joint efforts we will register an even higher figure in 2020."

After years of sluggish growth that followed the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, the Armenian economy expanded by 7.5 percent in real terms in 2019.

"For this year we project growth to be at around 6.5-7 percent," the IMF's resident representative in Yerevan, Yulia Ustyugova, said in November.

Ustyugova cautioned that Armenian growth is largely driven by private consumption, rather than rising investments or exports.

According to IMF projections, Armenia's GDP per capita is on course to reach \$4,760 and exceed neighboring Azerbaijan's and Georgia's in 2020.



International News

Armenian Nationals to Be Airlifted out of Iran

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Sixty-five Armenian nationals will be airlifted out of coronavirus-hit Iran on a special flight, foreign ministry official Arsen Avagyan said on February 25.

“The 65 nationals of the Republic of Armenia have applied to the Embassy of Armenia in Iran. A special flight is planned for February 26 to repatriate the Armenian citizens,” he said.

Israel Ambassador Salutes Plans to Open Embassy in Tel Aviv

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Ambassador of Israel to Armenia and Moldova Eli Belozerkowski on February 25 welcomed Armenia preparing to open an embassy in Tel Aviv.

“We welcome the expected arrival of Ambassador Armen Smbatyan in the coming weeks, as well as the preparations for opening a permanent embassy in Israel. It should be noted that last January, Armenian President Armen Sarkissian, who attended the main event for the liberation of the Auschwitz Extermination Camp held at Yad Vashem, visited Israel with President Reuven Rivlin and Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein and lectures in several places in the country, including the Technion and the Technological Institute in Holon,” Belozerkowski said.

Sarkissian signed on February 25 a decree making changes in his March 31, 2018 one according to which Smbatyan was appointed ambassador to Israel, but his residence was in Yerevan. The revisions change the residence of the ambassador to Tel Aviv.

In September 2019, the Armenian government approved the decision to open an embassy in Israel.

Lydian Calls on Armenia To Help End Mine Blockade

YEREVAN (Reuters) – Anglo-American mining firm Lydian International on February 20 called on the Armenian government to help in solving a dispute with environmental protesters and to end their blockade of a gold mine.

The Amulsar gold mine has been in development by Lydian International since 2016, with an investment of nearly \$500 million so far.

The company says the project meets all the legal and environmental requirements, and would generate hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in tax revenues.

But a group of local residents and environmental activists have prevented access to the mine by blocking a road to the site since June 2018.

“We call on the government of Armenia to take immediate action to address the continuing illegality around the Amulsar project,” Edward Sellers, the company’s interim president and CEO.

“The restoration of the rule of law will serve the interests of thousands of Armenian citizens, including community members, employees, contractors and suppliers, as well as thousands of investors who invested in Armenia in good faith and with the hope that their legal rights would be protected.”

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan called on protesters last month to end their 20-month blockade of the gold mine, saying the protest was not in the national interest.

Lydian said last year the blockade had forced it to cut more than 1,000 jobs and caused losses of more than \$60 million.

Toronto Stock Exchange delisted Lydian this month because the company did not meet the necessary requirements.

The protest has divided locals. Some say the mine will provide much-needed employment in Jermuk, a town of about 3,000 people, and to rural communities in the area about 170 km (105 miles) southeast of the capital, Yerevan.



The signing of the TUMO Berlin plans took place jointly in Yerevan and Berlin earlier this year.

Germans Adopt Armenian Digital Education Model

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN – When German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited Armenia in August 2018, she was impressed by the innovative spirit pervading the country. Not long before her arrival, Armenia had gone through a “velvet revolution,” which reminded many Germans of their own peaceful revolution that replaced the East German Communist regime in 1989. It was not only in the political and social realm that fresh winds were blowing; also in technology, Merkel encountered creative new approaches.

The German chancellor was fascinated by the TUMO Center she visited in Gyumri. A physicist by training, Merkel marveled at the effectiveness of the original concept developed there to educate young people in computer sciences. Accompanied by the Minister for Science and Education Arayik Harutyunyan, Merkel said at the time that she “saw teenagers develop innovations while holding fast to the roots of Armenian culture. I just realized what a knowledgeable society exists in Armenia.” Due to her keen interest in the project, she discussed the possibility of opening such a center one day in Germany.

That day is now on the agenda. On February 13, during a joint press conference with Merkel in Berlin, visiting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced the opening of the first TUMO Center in Germany. He and Merkel praised their growing bilateral economic and technological cooperation, of which the TUMO project is the impressive centerpiece. Pashinyan said he was “very happy with the agreement” to set up the facility. “It is a great honor,” he said, “for us to share our advanced experience with a technology-intensive country like Germany.”

The TUMO Center for Creative Technologies, named after poet Hovhannes Tumanyan, is the brainchild of Sam and Silva Simonian, Armenian Americans originally from Beirut. The

first center in Armenia appeared in the capital in 2011 and now there are three more, in Gyumri, Dilijan and Stepanakert, capital of Karabakh (Artsakh). The Simonians’ foundation has generated similar institutions in Paris and Beirut as well.

Berlin will host the first German center, which is slated to open by autumn of 2020. The contract for license and franchise was signed on January 21 between TUMO and the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), a financial institution that sponsors education as well as development projects here and abroad. Dorothee Bär, the State Minister for Digitalisation in the Chancellor’s Office, Armenian Ambassador Ashot Smbatyan,

Young people profit by such an opportunity to acquire skills in the frontier digital technologies, after school and free of charge; this means teenagers from all family and social backgrounds can benefit equally. Such education is a plus not only “for each individual student,” Bär stated, but “also for our society and economy.” These skills are required “to shape the future of our country,” she said, adding, “I am confident that TUMO will become a similar success story as it is in Armenia.”

Dr. Hengster emphasized the significance of the KfW’s supporting a program that was created in a country with whom the credit institute already has experience in development cooperation.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited the TUMO center in Gyumri during her visit to the country in 2018.

KfW Board Member Ingrid Hengster and (connected by videostream) TUMO Chariman Pegor Papazian signed the cooperation agreement in a festive ceremony.

Creative Self-Education

The TUMO Center will provide free education weekly for 1,200 youngsters between the ages of 12 and 18, who will go there after school hours. The concept developed in Armenia allows students to achieve competency in digital technologies in a creative manner. They work together in self-learning sessions and workshops, and learn programming, animation, 3-D modeling, robotics, as well as music, photography and theatre.

“That is especially exciting,” she said. “Because in the digital field the same applies: Only when we learn from one another can we face challenges and truly encounter success.” She said she hoped many more partners would be found in Germany to join the effort.

For his part, Papazian said, “The opening of a TUMO Center in Berlin is a milestone, because Germany is a forerunner in technology and engineering, and we are particularly delighted to be able to contribute to these achievements.” Armenia is well known in this technological sector, which was already very advanced at the time of the Soviet Union, and enjoys a freedom of Internet access on a par with that of France.



INTERNATIONAL

Turkey's Language Activists Keep Armenian Dialect Alive in Music, Literature

By Nimet Kirac

ISTANBUL (Al-Monitor) – His most recent album sung in Homshetsi can be taken as an SOS call, says Hikmet Akcicek. The tongue, a northwestern dialect of Western Armenian, is one of 15 endangered languages spoken in Turkey – and Akcicek's band Vova means to keep it alive.

The cover of the band's July record, "Garmi Doc" ("Red Truck" in Homshetsi), shows a woman in red traditional clothing. For Akcicek, it's a chance to showcase his culture and mother tongue, spoken in the mountainous northeastern Black Sea region of Turkey, and becoming extinct for a combination of reasons.

"Every kid born in Hopa [a town in Artvin province in the northeastern Black Sea region] would first learn Homshetsi, use it in daily life and marry a fellow Homshetsi. Now, kids learn Turkish first thing, and their daily lives are dominated by Turkish," Akcicek told Al-Monitor.

He added that since the 1980s, many of the Homshetsi (or Hemshin) people from the coastline along Rize's İkizdere county up to the Georgian border – have moved to big cities. For various reasons, many of them have migrated from the region to other Turkish provinces such as Sakarya and Erzurum or abroad to Russia, Abkhazia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Akcicek said, "Like many local languages, Homshetsi and its culture are fading."

Akcicek explained, "Vova is a project with a mission to compile, record and carry forward the hymns of a culture and a language to present and future generations rather than [simply] produce albums or play on stage."

The band debuted 14 years ago with its 2005 "Homshetsi Hymns." Its soft sounds are marked by the emotional Homshetsi shepherd's pipe and the blaring Black Sea bagpipe (also an instrument of the Laz), the album evokes nostalgia for the mountains. Unlike the first album, Akcicek said this one includes songs not only from Hopa but also from Rize's Cayeli province and from Abkhazia's Homshetsi.

The language is a dialect of Armenian.

The Homshetsi culture is known for prints of livestock herding and traditions involving dairy production and trade, a high-altitude nomadic lifestyle and an equal distribution of work between the genders, Homshetsi is believed to have survived into modern Turkey thanks to the speakers' relative geographical isolation on the outskirts of the Kackar Mountains and on the plateaus, some at 3,000 kilometers above sea level, songs such as those recorded by Vova have been sung for centuries.

Though the Homshetsi migration trail, Ince Xarxan, is still there, winding narrow through the green uplands of Artvin's Borcka region, hardly anyone migrates on foot anymore, or at all. A traditional song for the seasonal pilgrimage is included in Vova's new album, but the time when the pipe was played along fully loaded horses and donkeys by young and old Homshetsis alike is now past. Yet technology and globalization are not the only reasons, Akcicek said.

"The disappearance of the Homshetsi has gained speed particularly due to government-imposed assimilation policies, and especially since the proliferation of urbanization and mass communication technologies since the 1980s," Akcicek explained. In the days of his youth, his mother tongue was alive in the household, but that's not the case anymore.

"I am educated, I live in Istanbul, my wife is not of Homshetsi origin and my children do not speak Homshetsi," Akcicek said. They all speak Turkish.

Until the 21st century, local tongues such as Homshetsi, Laz, Pontic Greek, Syriac and Kurdish were banned in state schools. According to countless testimonies, children were educated in Turkish and expected to speak only it as the country's official language. Since 2012, some local tongues such as Adyghe, Kurdish and Laz have been offered as elective courses in public schools in various regions. But not Homshetsi.

Today, it's uncertain how many Homshetsi speakers there are in Turkey, but it is widely understood that the tongue may not be around

three decades from now, when the fluent elderly generation is gone.

For those who still read it or wish to learn, the biannual magazine *GOR*, started in 2014, is a pioneering bilingual publication that keeps a record of Homshetsi culture.

On that front, the first children's book to be translated into Homshetsi was published in 2016. Mahir Ozkan, a publisher and a philosophy teacher from Hopa living in Istanbul, worked on the *Little Prince* to help protect his mother tongue. The book remains the world's most translated non-religious text.

Aysenur Kolivar is a niche folk musician who sings in the various tongues of Turkey's northeastern Black Sea region and is an instructor at Sabanci University with expertise in dialectology. She told Al-Monitor that she considers languages universal heritage. Her project "Heyamoli: Children's Songs in Black Sea Languages" aims to introduce Homshetsi and other local tongues to new generations and remove them from UNESCO's World Atlas of Languages in Danger.

"Our primary objective with our children's music album project was to raise awareness among children aged 2-12 that their mother languages are just as valuable as other languages of the world," she said. Recognizing the importance of music to transfer cultural values and information to young people, Kolivar said this project is a reflection of her faith that Homshetsi and other local languages will survive.

The threat Homshetsi faces today is not unique in our new global village. Out of some 6,700 languages spoken around the world today, a third have less than 1,000 speakers, *The Economist* reported. More than 40 percent of those languages are facing the threat of extinction, according to UNESCO, and two languages are lost each month.

"May our hymns be the sun for our days," reads the introductory text for Vova's album. "May they be played and sung wherever there lies a breath."



United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, left, with Foreign Minister of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan

Foreign Minister Discusses Aid to Syrians With UN High Commissioner for Refugees

GENEVA (Armenpress) – Foreign Minister of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan met on February 25 with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, on the sidelines of the 43rd session of the UN Human Rights Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported.

Mnatsakanyan thanked Grandi for his activity and stated that Armenia values the High Commissioner's role in the implementation of programs for ensuring the needs of refugees and internally displaced people.

Mnatsakanyan reaffirmed Armenia's full support and commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees.

Touching upon the ongoing developments in the Middle East and the humanitarian situation in Syria, he added that Armenia is closely following the processes taking place in the region conditioned by its historic presence and involvement in the Middle East. He reaffirmed Armenia's readiness to continue its humanitarian mission in Syria to assist the Syrian people on addressing their challenges and concerns.

The minister introduced the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on Armenia's constant actions on responding to the needs of Syrian-Armenians and improving the living conditions in Armenia.

UN Chief Willing to Push Ahead on Cyprus, Foreign Minister Says

By Evie Andreou

GENEVA (Cyprus Mail) – UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed his readiness to resume efforts on the Cyprus problem right after the elections in the north, Foreign Minister Nikos Christodoulides said on Monday, February 24, after a meeting with the UN chief in Switzerland.

Both men were in Geneva for the 43rd session of the UN Human Rights Council that started on Monday.

During their meeting they discussed Turkey's activities in Cyprus' exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and Turkey's recent threats to open up the fenced-off area of Varosha.

Christodoulides said that Guterres expressed his willingness and commitment for the procedure to resume right after the elections in the north at the end of April.

He added that Guterres had expressed his satisfaction at the results of his meeting last November with the two leaders in Berlin.

"It is clear that from the discussion (with Guterres), that the procedure must take place in a favourable environment that will enhance the effort so that it can lead to a positive outcome that will be nothing more than a solution to the Cyprus problem on the basis of relevant UN resolutions," Christodoulides said.

The Berlin trilateral meeting ended with a promise by Guterres to continue efforts

towards an agreement on the terms of reference so that proper negotiations can resume. He committed to explore with the two leaders and the guarantor powers the possibility of convening an informal five-plus-UN meeting at an appropriate stage.

Sergei Lavrov on Tuesday as part of the event.

During his stay in Geneva, Christodoulides will also meet with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (left) with Nikos Christodoulides

Christodoulides said they discussed the memorandums of understanding Turkey signed with Libya but also the refugee issue and the serious challenges faced by the Republic of Cyprus.

The minister is expected to address the council's session on Tuesday at 12pm Cyprus time.

He will also meet Russian Foreign Minister

Grandi, director-general of the UN office in Geneva and secretary-general of the Conference on Disarmament Tatiana Valovaya, director-general of the International Organisation for Migration António Vitorino, secretary-general of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation Yousef Al Othaimen, and head of the Red Cross Peter Maurer.

Community News

American University Of Armenia Welcomes Two New Trustees

LOS ANGELES and YEREVAN – The American University of Armenia (AUA) is pleased to announce the appointment of two new trustees of the AUA Corporation (AUAC): Lena Sarkissian and Yervant Demirjian. Both appointees, who are also members of the 100 Pillars of AUA, bring a wealth of experience in the private and non-profit sector and will greatly contribute to advancing AUA's mission.

Lena Sarkissian possesses over 20 years of Board of Director experience in the non-profit sector. A resident of Toronto, Ontario, Sarkissian currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and works in Asset Management for Byron Hill Holdings. She received her graduate degree in speech and language pathology and an undergraduate degree in linguistics and French from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

"AUA has played a pivotal role in the higher education ecosystem of Armenia by introducing a new set of standards and approaches to edu-



Lena Sarkissian

cation. The exponential complexity of the globalized world and pace of change demand that institutions continuously realign to meet the needs of the community they serve. A challenge for AUA is that it now has to prepare students for many of the jobs of the future that have not yet been created. Thus, the continuous reassessment of its pedagogy and infrastructure is necessary – all to further ignite the passion and creativity of its students and staff. Coincidentally also, with its focus on cultivating global networks, AUA will be able to disseminate the creative capacity of its community. It can thus aim to become a generator and a contributor of ideas and products on the global scene."

Yervant Demirjian is a private real estate investor in Los Angeles, a current trustee and vice treasurer for AGBU, and a trustee of the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian High School in Los Angeles.

Demirjian has 25 years of experience in banking. He has also served as a director of the AGBU Manoogian Demirjian School. Demirjian received his MBA and undergraduate degrees from Pepperdine University.

"I always believed that quality education would help us improve the destiny of our little yet noble community. Accepting the invitation to serve on the board of the AUA was part and parcel of my enthusiasm in giving our youth the tools to enhance their prospects in life."



Yervant Demirjian



Dr. Vahan Papoyan is the first Armenian ophthalmologist from AECP's Next Generation Fellowship Program to arrive in the US for his advanced training.

First Ophthalmologist from AECP's Next Generation Fellowship Program Arrives in US for Training

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. – The Armenian EyeCare Project (AECP) has begun 2020 with some great news to mark the extra-special year for the organization and significant number (20/20) in the eye care industry. The first ophthalmologist from the AECP's Next Generation Fellowship Program, Dr. Vahan Papoyan, has arrived in the US from Armenia and is currently completing his medical fellowship at Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia.

Made possible by the Armenian EyeCare Project and donors to the program, Dr. Papoyan's fellowship focuses on his specialized field of glaucoma and allows the Armenian physician to learn nuances and train alongside some of the best eye care specialists in his field. This advanced education and training will allow Dr. Papoyan to then return to Armenia to treat his patients with the highest level of care.

"As a physician, you try to do everything you can to offer the best possible care to your patients," Papoyan said. "So when you have the opportunity to go to the most advanced country and one of the finest medical institutions to learn cutting-edge techniques in glaucoma and eye care, it's an incredible feeling," Dr. Papoyan said. "It has been the best experience of my life."

The Armenian EyeCare Project launched its first Fellowship Program in 1997

continued on next page



AECP Fellow Dr. Anna Hovakimyan trains a group of medical staff in Armenia, including AECP NextGen Fellow Dr. Araks Davtyan (middle), who will be traveling to the US in April for her advanced training in cornea.

Vanessa Bryant Files Wrongful Death Suit Against Helicopter Operator in Kobe Bryant Crash

By Nathan Fenno

LOS ANGELES (*Los Angeles Times*) – As mourners gathered at Staples Center on Monday, February 24, for a memorial service to celebrate the lives of Kobe and Gianna Bryant, attorneys for Vanessa Bryant filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the company that operated the helicopter that crashed last month, killing her husband, daughter and seven others.

The complaint in Los Angeles County Superior Court against Island Express Helicopters and Island Express Holding Corp. alleges that pilot Ara Zobayan, who also died in the crash in Calabasas, failed "to use ordinary care in piloting the subject aircraft" and was negligent.

The lawsuit says the company's "breach of its duty and negligence" caused injuries and damages and that the death of Bryant was "a direct result of the negligent conduct of Zobayan," which the company is "vicariously liable in all respects."

The 27-count complaint, which also names Zobayan's estate as a defendant, seeks unspecified compensatory and punitive damages. An attorney for Vanessa Bryant didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

While flying to a youth basketball game at Kobe Bryant's Mamba Sports Academy in Thousand Oaks on January 26, the 1991 Sikorsky S-76B crashed into a hillside in Calabasas amid dense fog. Zobayan and all eight passengers aboard died. A preliminary report from the National Transportation Safety Board found no engine or mechanical failure.

The lawsuit accuses Zobayan, Bryant's long-



Ara Zobayan

time pilot, of several acts of negligence including failing to abort the flight, failing to monitor and assess the weather, and failure to keep a safe distance between natural obstacles and the helicopter.

"On information and belief, Defendant Island Express Helicopters employed Defendant Zobayan with conscious disregard of the rights or safety of others and authorized or ratified his wrong conduct, and itself engaged in conduct with malice, oppression, or fraud," the complaint states.

The lawsuit notes that the Federal Aviation Administration cited Zobayan in 2015 for violating visual flight rules minimums and that the FAA operating certificate for Island Express limited its pilots to flying under visual flight rules, not conditions that necessitated the use of instruments.

"Defendant Island Express Helicopters authorized, directed and/or permitted with full knowledge that the subject helicopter was flying into unsafe weather conditions," the complaint says.

It adds that the company "promoted and engaged in unnecessary and needlessly risky means of transport under the circumstances."



COMMUNITY NEWS

First Ophthalmologist from AECP's Next Generation Fellowship Program Arrives in US for Training

from previous page

and over the next decade brought eight ophthalmologists to America for specialty training in retina, glaucoma, cornea, low vision, pediatric ophthalmology and neuro ophthalmology. These original Fellows were sponsored with the help of the late Kirk Kerkorian, who felt medical training of local Armenian physicians would contribute greatly to the elimination of preventable blindness in Armenia, the mission of the AECP.

Following their fellowships, these physicians later returned to Armenia to establish and head subspecialty clinics in Yerevan in their fields of expertise, training hundreds of other medical personnel in Armenia on the most advanced techniques in eye care along the way. This includes the AECP's NextGen Fellows, who have all observed and learned under the direction of the organization's past Fellows for several years before their opportunity to continue their training with US fellowships of their own.

Today, the AECP's Next Generation Fellowship Program offers six of Armenia's top-performing ophthalmologists – selected and mentored by the organization's original Fellows – the opportunity to travel to the US for three-to-six-month fellowships. During their fellowships, these ophthalmologists will receive advanced medical education and training at some of the best-known US ophthalmic institutions in their respective specialties.

For Papoyan, this exchange of knowledge and information from a range of physicians – including first-generation AECP Fellow Dr. Lilit Voskanyan in Armenia to now several glaucoma specialists in the US – has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

"Different doctors have different techniques so it's interesting to observe them all and see what works for you and what you can adopt for yourself," Dr. Papoyan said. "Learning these techniques is so important because I can then utilize them when I return to Armenia to treat my own patients and help my country."

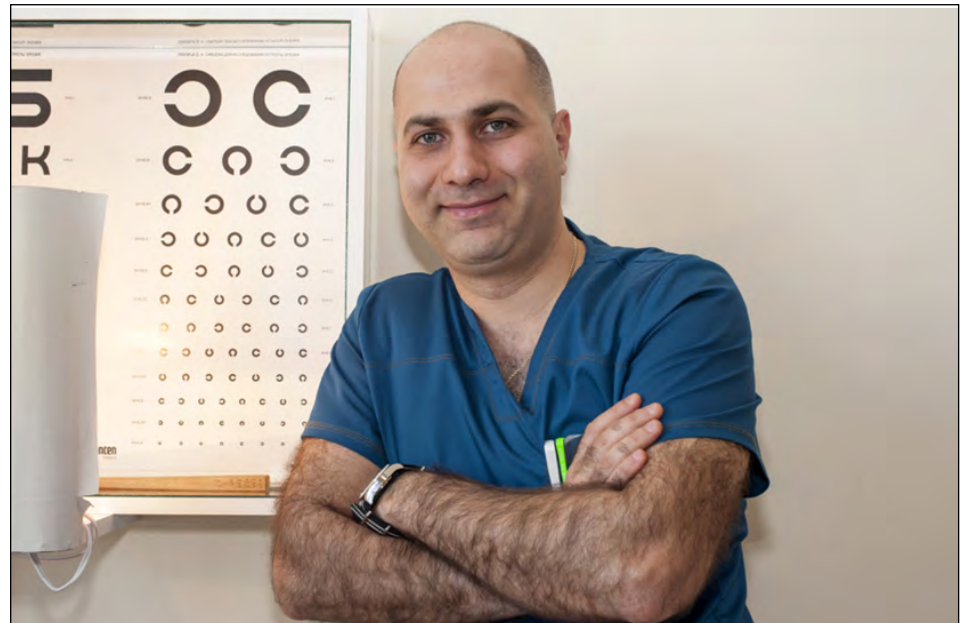
Dr. Papoyan also considers the chance to wit-



AECP NextGen Fellow Dr. Vahan Papoyan trains with original AECP Fellow Dr. Lilit Voskanyan alongside other medical staff in Armenia.

ness these surgeries from some of the most renowned ophthalmologists in the US an unbelievable advantage. "Having the unique access to see these surgeries is exciting because you know how revered these doctors are in their field," he says. "To be able to see their work is incredible."

Through donor fundraising for the program, the EyeCare Project was able to bring Papoyan to the US as the organization's first NextGen



Dr. Vahan Papoyan is the first Armenian ophthalmologist from AECP's Next Generation Fellowship Program to arrive in the US for his advanced training.



AECP NextGen Fellow Dr. Vahan Papoyan with Dr. L. Jay Katz, one of the most renowned glaucoma specialists in the US

Fellow. The nonprofit also plans to bring its remaining five NextGen Fellows to the US for their specialty fellowships throughout 2020.

Dr. Tatevik Adamyan will train in her specialty of retina at Retinal Consultants of Nevada in Las Vegas as well as Haik Humble Eye Center in Louisiana in March; Doctors Zara Dravajyan and Araks Davtyan will train in their specialty of cornea at UCLA's Jules Eye Institute in Los Angeles by April; Dr. Narine Makyane is expected to train in her specialty of pediatric ophthalmology at Children's Hospital Los Angeles by summer and Dr. Artak Kirakosyan is expected to train in his specialty of oculoplastics at Harvard University's Massachusetts Eye and Ear in Boston by fall.

"I am extremely happy for this opportunity, but I also feel a great responsibility to make those who have put so much confidence and investment in me proud," Dr. Papoyan says. "I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in this Next Generation Fellowship Program from AECP Founder Dr. Roger

Ohanesian to Armenia's Chief Ophthalmologist Dr. Alex Malayan to AECP Fellow Dr. Lilit Voskanyan, who has been my mentor in Armenia. And of course, to all the donors of this program who have made my training possible. I would quite literally not be here in the US learning all that I am learning if it were not for you."

While the Armenian EyeCare Project is well underway of bringing its next generation of ophthalmologists over from Armenia for their US fellowships, the organization is still in need of support in order to continue this program and allow the remaining Fellows to complete their training.

To support this medical education and training program by sponsoring a Fellow in full or in part; underwriting a Fellow's expense while they are in the US; or donating to the AECP's Medical Education and Training Fund.

Learn more about the AECP's Next Generation Fellowship Program by visiting www.eyecareproject.com.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

A Service of Prayer and Light at St. Vartan Cathedral

By Steve Nigohosian

NEW YORK – The Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America celebrated a special pre-festal service of prayer and light at New York's St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral on February 13, the evening prior to Dyarnuntarach – the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord to the Temple. Diocesan Vicar the Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian officiated at the event.

The service, a prelude to the Feast Day, is highly symbolic in its use of prayer and flame to represent the bringing of the light of Jesus

lit candles during this evening church service, along with a customary bonfire in church courtyards. There was a strong feeling of faith and participation among the parishioners who attended the service at St. Vartan Cathedral, as they sang along with the hymns with hands folded in prayer and observed the lighting of the bonfire with reverence.

"The tradition of the *nakhadonag*, or pre-festal service, began with celebrations on the evenings before Christmas and Easter," said Odabashian. Although the pre-festal service of the Presentation of the Lord to the Temple was previously observed in some locations around the world, it has recently enjoyed a resurgence at the behest of Bishop Daniel Findikyan.

A Glimpse of Salvation

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord to the Temple is celebrated by the Armenian Church each year on February 14, exactly 40 days after its observance of Armenian Christmas on January 6. The Feast Day is rooted in the gospel story (Luke 2:21-40) in which Joseph and Mary bring the newborn Christ to the Jerusalem Temple for the first time, in accordance with Jewish canons.

By visiting the temple and offering a sacrifice, new mothers would be fulfilled in being purified with "fire and water" and the newborn would become blessed.

In Luke's account, when Simeon, a righteous prophet of advanced age, saw Mary and the infant Christ, he sensed God's presence. He held the child in his arms and thanked God for giving him this glimpse of the world's salvation, declaring: "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

St. Vartan Cathedral's celebration of Dyarnuntarach culminated with a special Divine Liturgy on the morning of February 14, the feast day itself.



The members of the clergy walk out of the cathedral.

Christ to illuminate the void of darkness in the world. It is comprised of prayers, hymns, and Scripture readings in the cathedral sanctuary, after which clergy and parishioners form a procession and move outdoors to the plaza to light a bonfire.

Passersby on Second Avenue stopped to observe the majestic and solemn ceremony, as the flames bathed the plaza in an orange-yellow hue and its embers soared to the heavens.

For centuries, Armenians have traditionally

"Many parishes are beginning to follow this tradition at the local level, as a reminder to all that Jesus Christ is the Light of the world."

Other members of the clergy of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church who served in the pre-festal service included cathedral vicar the Rev. Davit Karamyan; Rev. Diran Bohajian; Rev. Abraham Malkhasyan; Rev. Krikor Sabounjian; and Rev. Tateos Abdalian, as well as several Diocesan deacons and altar servers.



The assembled members of the clergy outside St. Vartan Cathedral

Veteran Journalist Mitchell D. Kehetian Dies

KEHETIAN, from page 1

Department with its Lifetime Achievement Award. He was named General Alexander Macomb Citizen of the Year by the March of Dimes in recognition of his support for that organization. He was also a president of the Detroit Press Club and Society of Professional Journalists.

A proud native Detroit, he was a lifelong fan of his beloved Detroit Tigers, a love that he shared with his daughters and grandchildren.

He was an active member of the Nor Keghi Association, as his ancestral roots originated in the Keghi region in historic Armenia. The association actively fundraises and advocates to sup-

port the children of Nor Keghi, Armenia.

Kehetian was preceded in death by his parents Kaspar and Arousiag Kehetian, brothers Phil, Keith and Nash Kehetian, and his sisters, Grace Kehetian and Isabel Kehetian Mercurio.

He is survived by his wife, Rose Kehetian; children, Grace Kulegian, Janet Haroian and Karen Kehetian; grandchildren Melanie Haroian, Stephen Haroian, Johnny Kulegian and Michael Kulegian and many special nieces, nephews, extended family and friends.

The funeral was held on Thursday, February 27, from St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church, Dearborn, followed by interment in Woodmere Cemetery.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Panel Discussion to Be Held at Hampshire College on Genocide Denial in 21st Century

AMHERST, Mass. – On Friday, March 27, from 12-1:30 pm, Franklin Patterson Hall at Hampshire College will be the site for a Lunch Time Talk titled “From Denial to Repair: Addressing Genocide in the 21st Century.”

The program will feature panelists Dr. Dikran Kaligian and Dr. Henry Theriault and moderator Prof. George Fourlas of Hampshire College.

A brief general history of the Ottoman Genocide of its Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek citizens, including the causes and ideological motivations as well as how it affected the United States at the time. Some aspects of the Turkish government’s denial campaign in recent years will be discussed.

Other aspects of genocide denial will be discussed including its contemporary implications for Armenians in Armenia, Karabakh, and the Diaspora. The issue of reparations and its import for the pursuit of justice will be addressed and related to the Armenian case. Other cases of mass human rights violations and the use of transitional justice will be examined.

Fourlas, the shift assistant professor of applied ethics and the common good, holds a B.A. in philosophy and legal studies from the

University of San Francisco and a PhD in philosophy from the University of Oregon. He has taught a range of courses related to this work; his publications have appeared in peer-reviewed journals such as the *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, *Critical Philosophy of Race*, *Philosophy and Social Criticism* and *Radical Philosophy Review*. He is currently working on a book that addresses issues of race, reconciliation, and solidarity among Middle Eastern Americans.

Theriault is currently associate vice president for academic affairs at Worcester State University, after teaching in its Philosophy Department from 1998 to 2017. From 1999 to 2007, he coordinated the University’s Center for the Study of Human Rights.

Theriault’s research focuses on genocide denial, genocide prevention, post-genocide victim-perpetrator relations, reparations, and mass violence against women and girls. He has lectured and given panel papers around the world. Since 2007, he has chaired the Armenian Genocide Reparations Study Group and is lead author of its March 2015 final report, *Resolution with Justice*. He has published numerous journal articles and chapters. With

Samuel Totten, he co-authored *The United Nations Genocide Convention: An Introduction* (University of Toronto Press, 2019).

In 2017, Theriault was elected president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) and was re-elected in 2019. He is founding co-editor of the peer-reviewed *Genocide Studies International*. From 2007 to 2012 he served as co-editor of the International Association of Genocide Scholars’ peer-reviewed *Genocide Studies and Prevention* and has guest-edited for the *International Criminal Law Review* and the *Armenian Review*.

Kaligian is the managing editor of the *Armenian Review* and teaches at Worcester State University. He received his PhD in Middle Eastern and German history from Boston College. His book, *Armenian Organization and Ideology under Ottoman Rule, 1908-1914*, was published by Transaction Publishing and was just published in Turkish by Aras Publishing.

His articles have appeared in the *Journal of Genocide Research*, *Genocide Studies International*, the *Armenian Review*, and in the books *Through a Lens Darkly: Films of Genocide and in Genocide in the Ottoman Empire: Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks*.

Koutoujian Heads Major County Sheriffs Of America Group

WASHINGTON – Members of the Major County Sheriffs of America new Executive Board were formally sworn-in during the opening ceremonies of the organization’s 2020 Winter Conference in Washington, DC on Tuesday, February 11.

Middlesex County Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian of Massachusetts and Pima County (Ariz.) Sheriff Mark D. Napier were installed as the new president and vice president. They were administered the oath of office by Immediate Past President Grady Judd of Polk County, Fla.

MCSA is a professional law enforcement association comprised of sheriffs’ offices representing counties or parishes with populations of half a million people, or more. Its 100+ members represent over 120 million Americans.

Joining Koutoujian and Napier on the Executive Board are: Vice President of Government Affairs Michael J. Bouchard (Oakland County, Mich.), Vice President of Homeland Security Mike Chapman (Loudoun County, Va.), Secretary David J. Mahoney (Dane County, Wis.) and Treasurer Bob Gualtieri (Pinellas County, Fla.), as well as Immediate Past President Judd.

“I am truly humbled and honored to have been selected by my peers to lead this incredible organization,” said Koutoujian, who previously served as vice president. “Over the next two years, I look forward to working with Vice President Napier, the members of the board and our entire mem-



Sheriff Peter Koutoujian is sworn in.

bership to ensure our collective voice is heard by policymakers on issues of critical importance to our communities. Whether it is dealing with effects of the opioid crisis or implementing officer wellness programs, our members have a vast wealth of knowledge and experience that can and must be shared across the country.”

In addition to leading MCSA, Koutoujian is currently President of the Massachusetts Sheriffs’ Association. He is also a founding member of Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime and Incarceration and serves on the advisory board for The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center.

“As elected officials, Sheriffs hold dear the confidence expressed by our citizens when they award us the honor of their vote. It is indeed a high honor to earn the vote of one’s peers to represent them. I look forward to working alongside President Koutoujian serving as the Vice President of Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA),” said Sheriff Napier. “MCSA is comprised of the most amazing law enforcement leaders in the nation. Our country faces many public safety challenges. Meeting these challenges will require tenacity, innovation and engaging in effective partnerships with all segments of our community. Sheriffs, as the elected law enforcement leaders in their respective communities, are uniquely positioned to meet these challenges, engage the community and move us forward. MCSA members are truly on the frontline of making our nation safer and I am honored to be a part of it.”

Napier is also currently vice president of the Arizona Sheriffs’ Association and serves as a member of the executive committees of the Arizona Joint Terrorism Task Force and Arizona High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA).



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COMMUNITY NEWS

American University Students Learn the Best of Both Worlds at WPI

STUDENTS, from page 1

The AUA students have been here since January and are due to leave at the end of February. In addition to the IQP project, they will take two other courses at WPI. Studying in English should not pose a problem for them since at AUA, many of the courses are in English and students are required to know the language well.

The students are Aneta Baloyan (BS CS '21), Nina Kirakosyan (BS CS '21), Lilit Ghandilyan (BS CS '21), Anna Tatinyan (BS CS '21), Knarik Manukyan (BS CS '21), Levon Amiryan (BAB '20), and Ani Ghazaryan (BA EC '21).

Sharistan Melkonian, dean of General Education and director of Assessment and Accreditation at AUA, and a Worcester native herself, was instrumental in the project.

In a recent interview, she wrote that "students were selected on a competitive basis. In order to be eligible to apply students must have completed at least 60 credit hours and have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above. Interested students submitted an application including a personal statement describing their interest and identifying how the experience would comple-

ment their education. A committee of faculty reviewed the applications and invited students to an interview. There was a great deal of interest from students."

She added, "I hope students will gain a greater understanding of the challenges that communities face around the globe, and the tremendous impact that can occur when we work together to understand and face those challenges."

The interaction with WPI has gone both ways, Melkonian said.

"In 2019, AUA invited WPI's Center for Project-based Learning to Yerevan as part of the AUA's ongoing faculty professional development. Twenty five faculty members from across disciplines participated in workshops aimed at enhancing teaching and improving student learning by focusing teaching on engaging students in projects that challenge them to use their skills to address real-world problems. Also in 2019, AUA provided classroom space for the 24 students and 2 faculty members participating in WPI's Armenia Project Center."

She added, "The AUA-WPI partnership was born out of these previous experiences and the leadership of Mike Aghajanian. And, the partnership has fostered tremendous potential. AUA and WPI students are engaged in a unique opportunity to learn and work together complementing each other's experiences, and ultimately engaging in projects here in Armenia. Faculty from AUA and WPI are working together and learning together. And, of course, we are hopeful that the projects that the students will engage in here in Armenia will lead to greater awareness, commitment and resolve toward solving our societal challenges in Armenia and beyond."

Michael Aghajanian, a lecturer at WPI and the institute's director of the Armenia Project Center, said the origins of the program dates back several years.

"In 2016, Diran Apelian [founding director of WPI's Metal Processing Institute and a profes-

sor there] and I decided to convince WPI to open a project center in Armenia. At the time, WPI was sending students to 45 project centers around the world. We felt that Armenian society would benefit from the talents and efforts of WPI students working on meaningful high-impact projects in Armenia. We also felt that exposing these young people to Armenia would have a potentially very significant long term impact on Armenia. These young people will be leaders in industry in the next 20 years or so. In their role as industry leaders they will be making decisions on where to put design centers, which suppliers to partner with, where to place manufacturing or customer support operations, etc. If only one student took one of these actions, the way that Yervant Zorian did with Synopsis, it would be a game changer for the Armenian economy," Aghajanian said.

"In 2017 we received permission to launch a pilot program in Armenia. We had 8 students on 2 projects – one project was with the Armenia Eye Care Project and the other with Smithsonian/Mt Armenia," he added.

In 2018, he assumed the role of center director for the Armenia Project Center and com-

(KENNETH MARTIN PHOTO)



Anna Tatinyan, second from right

pleted all of the work to set up a permanent project center.

"In 2019 we had our first full class of 24 students go to Yerevan to conduct 6 projects. I served as faculty advisor with another WPI professor, Holly Ault," he added.

AUA fit the bill on several fronts, he explained, as the students already had fluency in English.

Everyone benefits from this collaboration, Aghajanian said.

"The WPI-AUA Strategic Alliance is a mutually beneficial relationship. The AUA students get to come to the US to study and they get to work on projects with WPI students in a project-based learning program that has been celebrated by the National Academy of Sciences as a best-in-class program. The WPI students get a much richer immersion into all things Armenian and get to work on more complex and meaningful projects that they were not able to do with teams of American only students."

Laura Bilazarian Purutyan, director of youth careers with MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board, a supporter of STEM education and the parent of a student at WPI, has been helping the visiting students.

"The seven AUA students are full of enthusiasm and adapting well to apartment life on the WPI campus, where they're quickly acclimating to the 7 week term, very different than the AUA semester," she said.

She has been working with Lusine Baghsarian, the marketing manager at WPI, as well as the WPI Armenian Students Association and other community volunteers "to coordinate an enriching calendar between January and March. They are vibrant engaging individuals ready to experience as much of the culture and history of Worcester, Boston and New England as possible, without sacrificing their important project work," Purutyan said.

She added, "They are gathering in the homes of Armenian-American families and connecting with many Armenian students from Worcester and Boston, as well as the 15 Tavitian Scholars who arrived in January for the semester at the Tufts Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy."

The visiting students also took part at a Boston AGBU Center event for hi-tech professionals.

"Ken Martin of Suffolk University and also their AUA photography professor, showed them around Worcester, through the lens of the first Armenian immigrants in the early 20th century," Purutyan added. (Photos by Martin accompany this story.)

The students have ridden on the "T" and toured the city, including the Armenian Heritage Park. They have visited historic sites in the state as well as visited other college campuses. They are working with non-Armenian students on projects to expand their horizons.

And what do the organizers hope these AUA students will take back?

"[The memories of a] warm welcome and new friendships from the Massachusetts community and a valuable project-based learning experience and new skills they can take back to Armenia. We hope and expect this produces strong bridges that will continue," Purutyan and Baghsarian said.

The Students in Their Own Words

Four of the students took part in an interview about their stay in Massachusetts as well as what they hope to take back.

Lilit Ghandilyan is a junior majoring in computer science. This is not her first time in the US as she said she has studied at a US high school with the FLEX (Future Leaders Exchange) program.

Asked what she wants to take back to Armenia, she replied, "Good memories and a *continued on next page*

(KENNETH MARTIN PHOTO)



From left, Nina Kirakosyan, and Aneta Baloyan, third from left, with classmates at Prof. Paula Quinn's class with AUA students and WPI students



COMMUNITY NEWS

'Yerevan Biennial 2020' Announced at Consulate General's L.A. Event

GLENDALÉ — Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles held a reception at which the newly established Yerevan Biennial Art Foundation announced the upcoming, first-ever biennial of contemporary Armenian art. The biennial will take place in Yerevan from September 24 to December 31.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Armen Baibourtian, Armenia's consul, welcomed the idea of the Yerevan Biennial, noting that the project is unique in that it combines art, culture, and education.



Ambassador Armen Baibourtian and guests at the reception

According to the Consul General, the biennial will be another marvelous opportunity to present Armenia and Armenian culture to the broader international community.

Co-founder of Yerevan Biennial Art Foundation Fabio Lenzi said that more than 30 works of contemporary art representing special value, authored by artists from Armenia and the Diaspora, will be displayed at the biennial. The foundation aims at making the Yerevan Biennial a spectacular, regional event that will ultimately put Armenia on the map as a hub for art and culture in the region.

During the biennial, dozens of events will be organized depicting various fields of art, including opera performances, music concerts, art exhibitions, and theater performances, presenting a broad spectrum of the Armenian art and culture. Caroline Tufenkian, board member of the foundation and director of the Tufenkian Art Gallery in Los Angeles noted that the Yerevan Biennial will attract a number of



Dancers at the gathering

tourists to Armenia.

The event was attended by numerous representatives of the Armenian communi-

ty and American art lovers. The evening featured Armenian dance and musical performances.

from previous page

motivated team ready to work on our projects. (Anything else can be ordered and shipped to Armenia!)"

"I see this program as an immense growth opportunity for me both personally and professionally and a challenge which has taken me out of my comfort zone. Me and my team are motivated to work on our IQP projects and do our contribution in Armenia's progress," she noted.

Another interesting fact about this group is that the majority of the participants is female. According to Ghandilyan, around 40 percent of the AUA computer science students are female.

She added that AUA and WPI are "just different," with advantages to both. "In WPI courses are faster paced which make you more focused on them. I enjoy that most of our classes are around 30 people in AUA while in WPI there are around 100 people in each of my major courses."

She is taking an applied statistics course as well as one titled "Foundations of Computer Science."

Ghandilyan added that she is excited about the project she wants to implement in Armenia. "My team and I are using the Poverty Stoplight tool to measure poverty in Armenia. It is a survey developed to measure poverty in its multidimensionality. According to the data we will identify a high priority need and implement a solution in collaboration with our sponsor World Vision Armenia."

Levon Amiryanyan is a senior majoring in business and marketing. This visit has been his first outside of Armenia. "Exiting the airport was one of the most exciting experiences of my life. The instant contrast that I felt was incredible," he said.

"I have loved engineering since early childhood and when I saw the opportunity to study in the US polytechnic institute I immediately applied. Also it was a dream for me to experience what it is like to be a US student having watched so many movies during childhood. Last, but not least, my most favorite professor, who taught me how to shoot gorgeous photos during the AUA summer semester, Kenneth Martin, is originally from Worcester," Amiryanyan said.

Amiryanyan noted that he is participating in My Step foundation's "Promoting a healthy lifestyle project," "which aims at problems in Armenian schools, more specifically hygiene and physical education." He added that apart from the IQP course he is taking a psychology and law course as well as an introduction to

materials science.

He noted his delight in meeting with the locals. "The Armenian community of Massachusetts is incredible. The way they greeted us, helped us with every little aspect and made our lives substantially easier and enjoyable, simply cannot be described with words," he said. Asked what he wants to take back with him: "I wish to take a jar of peanut butter and a bottle of maple syrup as icons of American culture."

Nina Kirakosyan is a junior computer science major. Before coming to WPI, she had spent one academic year in Texas several years ago as part of the FLEX high school student exchange program sponsored by the US State Department.

"This collaboration between AUA and WPI is an excellent opportunity for me to experience a

friendships that we are building during these seven weeks."

"The challenges that come with adapting to a new environment, and getting oneself outside of the comfort zone as during this program are opportunities for growth. WPI has a very strong engineering department, which I am passionate about, so I was happy to have the opportunity to take advantage of the courses and resources that aren't available in Armenia," Kirakosyan said. The motivator for her was that what she learned here could be applied toward the betterment of her country, one that she hoped would be even more open to females in tech.

"The female majority [of the visiting student group] came as a surprise to a lot of people. I believe that the selection process was very competitive, and I am thrilled to be studying at an

(KENNETH MARTIN PHOTO)



Knarik Manukyan and a classmate

new educational approach and appreciate the benefits of project-based learning. I wish to take the teamwork, leadership, networking skills, and academic knowledge acquired through this experience to Armenia," she said. "This program is also an excellent opportunity to meet professionals from my field, as well as the amazing Massachusetts Armenian community members, so I am happy to use this chance to widen my network and build lasting relationships on this side of the ocean. Also, I am here with a great group, so I am excited about all the memories, the fun we are having and the great

institution that has many motivated and intelligent female students, breaks gender stereotypes and promotes women's role in STEM. Like in the rest of the world, in Armenia as well, the tech industry is male-dominated. However, the ratio of women indeed is higher than in the US and many other countries," she noted. She stressed that Armenia's tech industry is thriving.

Kirakosyan explained that her IQP project is about designing a centralized platform "for matching Armenian diaspora resources to Armenia's needs. We are working with the

Armenian General Benevolent Union to support its mission of increasing diaspora engagement and supporting Armenia's development."

In addition to her project she is taking artificial intelligence and operating systems courses at WPI. "I am very passionate about computer science, and exploring AI and OS here at WPI is a unique and fruitful experience for me. These are quite intensive courses, especially with all the extracurricular activities that come with this exchange program and the cultural experience of MA that we are here to enjoy, but we are always up for the challenge."

She also stressed her delight with the warm welcome. "We have been blessed with the support and warm welcome of the Armenian community, which we are very thankful for. I am especially happy to be working on an IQP project that aims to strengthen the Armenia-Diaspora connections for the benefit of our country."

Aneta Baloyan, a junior majoring in computer science, said this was the first overseas visit for her. Studying at WPI has given her practical experience. "One of the aspects that is well developed in Armenia is the theory and the explicit professional knowledge. From this experience I look forward to taking back also the practice and the soft skills, as working in a team, communication, working on a real-life project from scratch and many other factors that might come up working in a multicultural environment," she explained.

"We are proud of the gender distribution not only in our university but also in Armenia. We believe that talent must be harvested no matter where it is settled," she noted.

Her IQP project is also "Matching Diaspora Resources to Armenia's Needs" sponsored by AGBU. "During our stay, our team will be working on the project by researching and developing the required methodology to realize the project later in Yerevan. The projects require a well-rounded problem-solving and a great amount of teamwork and communication."

"I am looking for ways to give back to the community that has contributed to my education and development. I guess my guts say that this program is a step forward. Until now, I am getting more and more confident about the decision I made to participate in this program," she noted.

Besides the IQP, she is taking courses on artificial intelligence and operating systems in WPI.

The group was scheduled to take part in a program on February 28 at WPI on the Armenian Project Center to meet with all the WPI community and share their stories.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Dan Janjigian Runs in Texas Congressional Primary

JANJIGIAN, from page 1

from Samsun and his maternal grandmother from Trebizond. It was this grandmother, Nevart Karagozian, who had the most profound impact on him. In awe, he said, "The woman saw the bulk of her family murdered and still found a way to keep going, found a way to go through orphanages and then come to the US with just her and her brother, to move here and then live in Watertown for a little while, and then get moved out to Fresno and build a life there." She lived to be nearly 101 and had an infectious laugh.

Janjigian contributed to a book with Jack Canfield as part of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series (*The Soul of Success Volume Two*, https://www.amazon.com/Soul-Success-2-Jack-Canfield/dp/0996197842/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8) and based his chapter on his grandmother's story. He wrote the chapter in the first person and tied it to the principles of success he said he learned from her.

Janjigian was so intrigued with his family history that he took a trip to Trebizond (today in Turkey) with his sister via Armenia while his grandmother was in her late 90s. He said that before going, his grandmother told him about all the areas she was in as a girl, and the two grandchildren went to great lengths to find those areas, which have of course changed greatly in appearance. On a local tour, they were told that khachkars with Armenian lettering were supposedly Byzantine. Janjigian brought his grandmother back some mementos and she was delighted, he said.

Janjigian used to visit his maternal grandparents when they had a ranch in Fresno in the summers, but after his grandfather Jivan died his grandmother came to live with his parents for many years. Janjigian would speak Armenian with his grandmother all the time and can still understand Western Armenian fairly well though he does not have much occasion to use it in Texas. He said, "We were very fortunate because we had a lot of discussions about the Genocide and her escape and what that looked like. She was just an amazing woman. She was really petite. She was very short, but she had a ton of energy."

Janjigian went to college at California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, at the central coast of California. He started as a materials engineer but switched to business administration and marketing, graduating in 1996. He said, "I knew that whatever I did in life I would always be doing something on the business or marketing side and that is what turned out to be true."

While in college he worked selling educational books door to door over the summers for a company called Southwestern. Janjigian said, "So when I got out of school I had a really good basis for understanding how the sales cycle worked, and I parlayed that to get a job with a company called WebTV. That was a job that was just an amazing opportunity. That was a startup that while I was there got purchased by Microsoft."

He stayed with Microsoft for a few years in the tech industry and then worked for a few other companies, but primarily began to run his own businesses for approximately the next ten years. He had a website development company and also developed SpeedMenu, an application allowing people to order food and drinks from their cell phones while in a restaurant.

Finally, he switched to the health care insurance industry, and has been selling insurance in the Austin, Texas area, to which he moved in 2005.

While working in these jobs and running several restaurants, he also pursued many other interests at a fairly high level of success. He was convinced by a friend of his cousin on the Greek bobsledding team to try the sport, and went to Calgary in 1998 right after the Nagano Olympics. By chance, the world-class coaches had been underscheduled and Janjigian was able to have intensive training in this field. He said, "I just fell in love with it. I did it for almost ten years. When I started off, I was racing for both the US and the Armenian teams, but unfortunately there was just a lot of politics in the US team."

The Armenian Federation was willing to accredit Janjigian and his Greek-American partner, and the plus was that Janjigian's grand-

mother loved that he was putting Armenia's flag on the map in this sport. Janjigian went to Armenia both before and after the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics. He also did win a silver medal in the 2005 America's Cup.

A second important interest for him is acting, which he did primarily when he moved to Los Angeles after the 2002 Olympics for about three years. He also did some shows in Austin, Texas later. Janjigian said, "I have a passion for it...It was never a fulltime career but I had a lot of success in it." He was in several reality shows and did some commercial work. He performed as an extra in some fairly well-known movies, such as "Sea Biscuit" and "The Longest Yard" with Adam Sandler. The best known one, "The Room," was independently shot in 2002 and came out in 2003. It developed a cult following, which led to a book about its production. James Franco and Seth Rogan then made a film based on the book in 2017 called "The Disaster Artist," which was a 2018 Golden Globe nominee for the category of Best Motion Picture. In it, Janjigian is portrayed by Zac Efron.

Political Passions and Policies

Politics has now become his main passion, with his three main areas of focus being health care, the environment and immigration. He directly connects his position on immigration, maintaining secure borders but welcoming immigrants and refugees through "proper legal channels" with his Armenian background on his cam-



Dan Janjigian, his wife and children

paign website: "My grandparents escaped genocide and tyranny in Armenia, and America has given us nothing but opportunity, prosperity, and a chance at an incredible life. This distinctly American value of welcoming immigrants is a huge part of why I love my country so much."

His 15-year experience in health care, he explained, motivated him to enter politics and try to make changes. He said, "It just got to a point that you realize that people are not addressing the big problems. People right now are still focused on premium prices and how much they are paying and how much their deductibles are. They don't realize that even when they do all those things right, even when they can afford to do all those things, they are still left in financially grave danger. If you can't work for six months or two years, how can you make your mortgage payment? How are you covering those things?" The problem, he continued, is not just coverage, but what happens after a catastrophe strikes.

He proposes giving a public and private option for American health care, similar to how the US educational system at present gives guaranteed access to public education but also allows paying for private schools. He said, "Everybody should have access to a certain level of health care. It should be a right and not a privilege. No American citizen should have to worry about losing their homes, losing their families, because of a medical condition." Private insurance coverage is fine, he said, as long as every single person can have free access to health care, as in many other countries.

A second motivating factor has been a bill passed last year in Texas that basically allowed an employer to fire an employee just for recognizing that they are a member of the LGBTQIA com-

munity. Janjigian said, "That is ridiculous. We have other states that are trying to get rid of archaic laws like this yet this a new law that just got on the books last year. It got me so angry. I have friends who could be affected by this.... All citizens have to be treated with a very high level of respect and not discriminated against."

Janjigian is concerned about climate change and will work to combat its deleterious effects. He also is upset that the US only recycles about ten percent of its recyclables. He said, "That is a horrible, horrible number. In India, 60 percent of all recyclable material is recycled." There are a lot of alternative methods that the US can choose to improve this situation.

Finally, there is the question of the animosity and gridlock reigning in Washington nowadays, and how to change the way that government operates. Janjigian points to Simon Sinek's book, *Leaders Eat Last* (<https://simonsinek.com/product/leaders-eat-last/>) for a solution. Thirty years ago, members of Congress would live together in Washington and travel back to their districts on breaks, which allowed them to become friends in their personal lives despite their political differences. Today they do the opposite and the mutual respect of the past has disappeared. Consequently, an astounding low percentage of bills pass both houses of Congress to become law.

Janjigian said that of the five Democratic primary candidates, "What I think I bring that is unique is that I am running as a Democrat but I

best candidate in front of you for the general election, you have to wait two more years to go start the process again. That is key...and I obviously believe I am the right candidate."

Another Armenian in Congress?

If he makes it into Congress, Janjigian said he would love to be a part of decisions concerning Armenia, Artsakh and Azerbaijan. With changing US-Turkish relations, and the new regime in Armenia, perhaps there would be more opportunities for Armenia to benefit from its relationship to the US.

He stressed, "Suffice it to say that Armenian issues are incredibly important for me. We have such a rich culture and at one time had such a large country. We are, I think, the only country whose national symbol [Mt. Ararat] is not within its borders."

As far as Armenian Genocide recognition is concerned, after the two Congressional resolutions last year, he said that the Genocide should be included in public school curricula just like the Holocaust.

The primary election is on March 3 and early voting already began on February 18. Janjigian and his campaign staff are working to contact voters and do fundraising (see www.danjanforcongress.com). So far, his campaign has raised just shy of \$70,000 and needs to reach around \$100,000. Much of this is from individual donors, and Janjigian himself is financially contributing to his campaign. Some other candidates have raised more because they have been running longer, but Janjigian said his campaign would try to spend its money in a more efficient manner.

He said that so far, "the Armenian community has been amazing" in its support. Janjigian has been endorsed by the Eastern District Committee of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party and also by the Armenian National Committee Western Region.

Perhaps the most important Armenian component in Janjigian's campaign and in his life as well again comes from his grandmother. He said, "I spent I don't know how many nights sitting at the kitchen table, eating madzoon and dolma, and talking with my grandma. I would sit on the couch with her and hold her hands, and I remember the wrinkles in her hands, where she had been and what she had done. She was in her mid-to-late nineties. ...She said, I feel I am a young girl trapped in this old body. I asked her, what would you do if you had the body? All I want to do is run and jump and play in a park. I feel like I am trapped in this body and can't do anything. That just spoke so, it just resonated with me... Why do you wait? The timing has to be right?"

Janjigian drew the following conclusion: "There are things you just can't do at a certain point in life no matter how hard you try, so you have to do those things now. That is what I got from my grandmother. That is why we are going to fight. We are going to fight until we win, lose, or draw. And hopefully it is the former."

ADL Endorses Texas Congressional Candidate Dan Janjigian

ENDORSEMENT, from page 1

a proud advocate of Armenian culture for all his life, there is no doubt that he will be a spokesman for Armenian-Americans in the House of Representatives concerning Armenia, Artsakh, the Armenian Genocide and various diasporan issues. Marshlian urged Armenians to back Janjigian in his race.

The Democratic primary in the 31st district takes place on March 3. If Janjigian wins, he will be facing Republican incumbent Rep. John Carter, one of the few Congressmen not to vote for the recent Armenian Genocide resolution, in the general election on November 3 of this year.

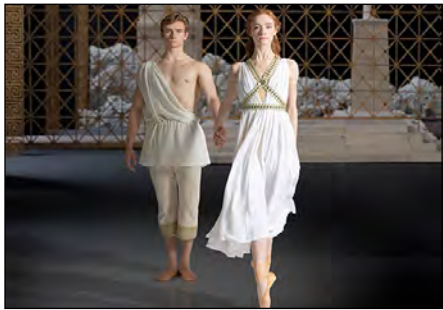
For more information on Janjigian, see an interview of him in the current issue of the *Mirror-Spectator*. To support him, go to his campaign website <https://www.danjanforcongress.com/> or Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/danjanforcongress/>.

Arts & Living

Aram Khachaturian Music to be Performed by American Ballet in World Premiere

NEW YORK – The American Ballet Theatre, the country's national ballet company, will be celebrating its 80th anniversary in the new year. This milestone will be marked by several special programs including the world premiere of "Of Love and Rage," a full-length ballet by Alexei Ratmansky, American Ballet Theatre's artist-in-residence and MacArthur "Genius Grant" Award Winner.

Alexei Ratmansky chose the music for "Of Love and Rage" from sweeping works by the famed Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian. One of the most prominent composers of the Soviet era (along with Dmitri Shostakovich and Sergei Prokofiev), Khachaturian is widely recognized for his work on the Sabre Dance from the ballet "Gayaneh" and is also known for creating the



A still from "Of Love and Rage"

score for Spartacus, one of the great classics of the Bolshoi Ballet that is beloved for its pounding score and soaring harmonies. Alexei has huge respect and love for Khachaturian and he shared recently that he always wanted to make a ballet set to his music. Khachaturian's vibrant and energetic music, which propels the choreography, has been arranged for this production by renowned British composer and pianist Philip Feeney.

Based on the first century historical romance novel Callirhoe by Chariton, "Of Love and Rage" tells the epic story of star-crossed lovers Callirhoe and Chaereas in ancient Greece. The set and costumes are designed by distinguished French artist Jean-Marc Puissant.

"Of Love and Rage," Ratmansky's 17th work for American Ballet Theatre, will have its World Premiere on March 5, at Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa, Calif.

The ballet will have its New York Premiere on June 2, at the Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center, an excerpt will be featured at ABT's 80th Anniversary Spring Gala on May 18, 2020.

Tickets may be purchased by going to <https://www.scfta.org/events/2020/american-ballet-theatre>



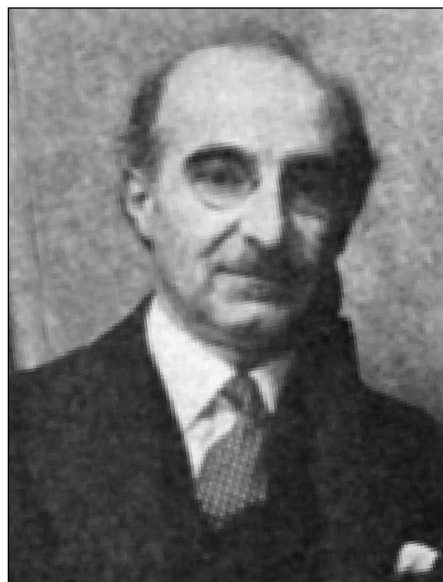
Alexei Ratmansky



"L'Esperance" by Hovsep Pushman

Woodrow Wilson House And the Art of Hovsep Pushman

WASHINGTON – Recently, the staff of the Woodrow Wilson House in Washington wrote a blog entry about a painting titled "L'Esperance" by Hovsep Pushman at the museum. The painting hangs above the fireplace in the drawing room at the Woodrow Wilson House and is a beautiful portrait of a young girl holding a small flower. However, the meaning behind the portrait is much deeper than just a painting that is pleasing to the eye.



Hovsep Pushman

Pushman, the artist, was born in Armenia in 1877. He studied art in Istanbul, Paris, and Chicago, and was later naturalized as a U.S. citizen. Gaining much of his influence from oriental art, he stressed the importance of three main components in his artwork: color, modeling, and imagination. However, in all of Pushman's paintings, color seems to be the most important out of all the components.

The Near East was in a state of turmoil at the same time as World War I, during Woodrow Wilson's presidency. Armenian families and

their children were devastated by conflict between Turks and Armenians. The United States was very active in relief efforts.

On November 27, 1917, Hovsep Pushman's wife led a delegation of Armenians to the White House to meet Wilson. The youngest member of the group, Miss Alidz Kurkjian, presented the painting to Wilson. She gave a short speech expressing the Armenian people's appreciation for the United States' efforts to help them in their time of need.

The painting depicts Pushman's niece, Dora, at the age of 14 dressed in traditional Armenian costume. The look of sadness on her face represents the suffering of the Armenian people. It also represents the thousands of little children who perished as a result of the genocide, as well as those who were completely dependent on charity for survival. The flower Dora holds is a Mountain Snowdrop. Some cultures in the Near East see the flowers as good luck and protection from evil. Its appearance in Armenia is a sign that winter is ending and that spring is on its way

see PUSHMAN, page 14

Dadoyan to Discuss Islam In Armenian Literary Culture at Columbia

NEW YORK – Dr. Seta B. Dadoyan will present a lecture titled "Islam in Armenian Literary Culture, 7th to 21st Centuries: Texts, Contexts, and Dynamics," on Wednesday, March 11, at 7 p.m., at Columbia University, Knox Hall, Conference Room 208, 606 West 122nd St. The program is co-sponsored by the Columbia Armenian Center, Columbia University Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS), and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

Unique patterns of interaction and development distinguished the Armenian experience in the world of Islam from the beginning, yet a large body of the record in the entire Armenian literature remains not only barely studied but also unavailable to scholars in Near/Middle Eastern and interfaith studies. Based on the primary and secondary material from the 660s to the present she has gathered and made available (in her translations), Dadoyan traces novel paradigms of mutual perceptions and interactions in dynamic historical development in the Near/Middle East. The objective is to bring forth in a coherent whole and for the first time, a critical and comprehensive panorama. The discussions, analyses and arguments focus on three themes: the perceptions of the Prophet and Islam, or the "Medieval Armenian Mahmet and his Laws" – Seventh to fourteenth centuries; Pax Islamica the literary record seventh to the twentieth centuries; The Holy Qur' n in the literature or the "Armenian Ghurans," and their side-scripts and appendices 1680-2014.

Dadoyan is Doctor of Sciences in Philosophy. She taught cultural studies, philosophy, art and technology histories, professional ethics, and Armenian studies. She has authored, edited and co-authored a dozen books, including *The Fatimid Armenians: Cultural and Political Interaction in the Near East* (1997), *The Armenian Catholicosate from Cilicia to Antelias: An Introduction to the Political History* (2003), and *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World: Paradigms of Interaction, Seventh to Fourteenth Centuries* (2011-2013). Her forthcoming book is titled, *Islam in Armenian Literary Culture. Texts, Contexts, Dynamics*.

For more information contact Prof. Khatchig Mouradian at km3253@columbia.edu.

Erevan Chorale Society to Perform Spring Concert

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – A Boston tradition for over 50 years, the Erevan Chorale Society will perform a spring concert on Sunday, April 19, in the sanctuary of Holy Trinity Armenian Church located at 145 Brattle St. The concert will begin at 2 p.m. and is free and open to the public.

The chorus was founded by Father Oshagan Minassian and performed its first concert on June 4, 1967. Since 2009, composer Konstantin Petrossian has served as music director and conductor of the Erevan Choral Society. Every year, the chorus has offered engaging and delightful musical repertoires that deeply connect audience and performers. The chorus has performed throughout New England, New York, New Jersey, and California to capacity crowds.

The ensemble is the only one of its kind outside of Armenia and has made a great name for itself throughout the world. The Erevan Chorale and Orchestra was recently awarded the Gold Medal from Yerevan City Hall by the order of Yerevan Mayor Hayk Marutyan in recognition of outstanding work.

For further information, contact the Church office at office@htaac.org, or log onto www.htaac.org/calendar



ARTS & LIVING

Zaven Paré

From Robotic Puppets to Bowie to Obsidian

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

RIO DE JANEIRO/YEREVAN — French-Brazilian painter and new media artist Zaven Paré, born in 1961 in France, has a rich biography, filled with a myriad forms of art and technology.

He started his career as the painter for the Beauvais Manufactory, a historic tapestry factory in Beauvais, France in 1987 and was the painter for the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres porcelain in 1991. In 1988, he created his first inflatable structure for the set design of choreographer Marie Chouinard, for the Olympics Arts Festival of Calgary, and started working for well-known Canadian experimental choreographer Edouard Lock.

He designed the circular video projection screens for the 1990 David Bowie tour and also designed the sound installation for composer Mauricio Kagel in 1992 at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Montreal.

Since 1993 Zaven Paré has lived in Brazil. He has worked internationally in the theater: for the Théâtre Ubu he created the decor and the costumes for “Woyzzek” and “Les trois derniers jours de Fernando Pessoa”; he also created the decor for a production of “Don Giovanni” at the Opéra de la Bastille in Paris. He also cooperated with the Lalala Human Steps dance company and the Amsterdam National Ballet.

In 1996, he designed his first Electronic Marionette in Canada through video retro-projection, followed in 1999 by the digital version (digital puppetry with electronic guidance), controlled by keyboard, for the show which he directed at the Cotsen Center for Puppetry of the California Institute of the Arts.

In 2002, he projected the analogic version of his electronic marionette, controlled by voice, for Valère Novarina at the Festival d'Avignon. Those two marionettes are in the collection of the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry and the Gadagne Museum, respectively.

Paré is one of the researchers of the Robot Actors Project of Prof. Hiroshi Ishiguro. Currently he is a professor at the Federal

University of Juiz de Fora (Brazil).

Dear Zaven, the first time I read about your work was in *Les nouvelles d'Arménie* magazine in 1994 or 1995, and since then I have followed your activities, always amazed by the broad sphere of your interests. What are the sources for such continuous creativity?

I always try to keep the same curiosity for everything and the same spontaneity for everything I do, from art to technology. The other source is maybe a certain sense of freedom, as much as the circumstances have always been propitious to the stimulation of my imagination.

I always wondered if for a new media artist it is necessary to have a technical background or he or she can just remain a generator of creative ideas cooperating with technicians.

More and more, it is becoming necessary to consider working collaboratively, not only for questions regarding skills or because of the very quick evolution of engineering skills, and devices in particular, but also because working alone in a studio or a laboratory will be less and less viable. Interlocution is also essential in artistic practice. After having developed most of my projects alone for a long time, I understand how sharing this experience and competences gives meaning to this activity.

You have worked in Brazil for many years. Is it a good place for new media art?

Any place is a good one, in the sense that sometimes, if you do not meet the necessary technological resources, you have to invent them from scratch and become creative, or find other ways to achieve the expected results. This was particularly the case when I invented my first robotic puppets in Brazil in the 1990s.

Can anyone predict what kind of surprises new media art will come up with?

While I was at a Social Robotics Congress in Chengdu in 2012, my neighbor at the table, who was the roboticist Cynthia Breazeal, asked me the same question. In artistic terms, I replied that it was a matter of enchantment by introducing new forms of narrative. And in terms of technology, I think that her conversational robot JIBO, launched in 2014, fits perfectly with this proposal to try to develop other forms of narratives, through new forms of relationships with objects, whether they are smart or not.

You are the creator of the first robotic puppet. Do you think that the future of the puppet theater belongs to robots?

It was one of the questions of the Moscow International Puppet Festival last autumn. And yes, it can maybe become a genre for a moment, but it is already a complete repertory at the Robot Actors Project of the laboratory of the Professor Hiroshi Ishiguro, in Japan and since 2009.

At the California Institute of the Arts you founded the “Theater of the Ears.” What does that mean?

The Theatre of the Ears was adapted from texts by the French playwright Valère Novarina.



These ears undoubtedly refer to the ears of listeners, the spectators, but also to those of the author of the play. Because this artistic proposal stages the dilemma that exists in the theater between the author and the director since the invention of electricity. In this specific case, my work was to reproduce the author in the form of a robotic puppet, and to place it on stage, almost motionless, condemned to watch as the text was recited by remotely controlled speakers, which circulated on stage at his feet.

Having a particular interest in choreography I would like to ask you what is the most remarkable facet of your work in field.

I think mainly three experiences were remarkable. The first was when I painted the costumes for the Het National Ballet of Amsterdam in 1988. The second was during a collaboration for a performance by David Bowie who had organized an event for the 40th anniversary of the Institute of Contemporary Art in London the same year; and finally the third was for the costumes and the prosthetic accessories for Stravinsky’s “Rite of Spring,” choreographed by Marie Chouinard, an artistically striking show which has toured the world for 25 years.

I know you have also written literary works and scripts. What subjects are you interested in?

Having been an actor and witness to a crucial moment in the recent history of robotics and having met most of its main protagonists, especially in Japan, today I try to share my questions in this area, from an anthropological point of view, or in relation with performing arts. My last book is *L'âge d'or de la robotique japonaise* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016).

What was your cooperation with Gulbenkian Institution of Lisbon?

The Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon never directly invited me; I'll go to Portugal for the first time this year. But my work was presented there through artistic collaborations with theater and dance for Canadian companies: With director Denis Marleau, for whom I done costumes, sets and technological devices for the play “The Last Three Days of Fernando Pessoa” by the Italian author Tabucchi in 1997; and maybe the other presentation was the “Rite of Spring,” cited before.

Please tell us about your Armenian side.

Having a common Armenian first name

marks effectively the sign of the manifestation of a form of belonging. In fact, my maternal grandparents immigrated to France at a time when the diaspora was scattered in countries where a certain cosmopolitanism still existed. At that moment, the idea of not having a country could be seen as a reason for the possibility of opening up to other cultures, and then living where we wanted. My grandparents were Hayk and Guedjan Zadikian, both born Madjarian and originally from Boghazlian.

When I became an adult, I overturned the precept that we should find our roots. The idea of no longer having a connection was ultimately an asset that allowed me to live between France, Canada, Brazil and Japan. Moreover, if I can still identify with the idea of what it means to belong in part to a diaspora, my dearest wish is to hope to have transmitted this taste of cosmopolitanism to my children in a world where communities withdraw into themselves.

Therefore, I assume, you are not in touch with the Brazilian-Armenian community.

I have never really been in touch with the Armenian community in the different countries where I have lived. I have Armenian friends, and sometimes I consider them as members of an Armenian family that I would have invented. I am mainly especially feeling concerned when a cause affects the community. Since Armenia's earthquake of 1988, I feel concerned by the adversities which repeatedly touch this country and its inhabitants.

In November of last year you were in Russia as the official consultant of the 3rd Gefest Moscow International Puppet Festival. And when you will visit Armenia?

I was extremely impressed with this invitation and this recognition of the profession, which paid homage to my career and contribution by making me the guest of honor of this festival. Moscow fascinated me, being there as an Armenian also seems a reality a lot more present than anywhere else since Armenia was a former Soviet Republic. Also, for the first time I had the feeling of crossing the door towards an East, finally closer than I thought it was. I also currently designed obsidian objects made with obsidian from Armenia for the editor Michel Der Agobian, so maybe my curiosity will bring me even closer to the prospect of such a visit to Armenia.

Woodrow Wilson House And the Art of Hovsep Pushman

PUSHMAN, from page 13

— a sign of hope for better times. Dora and the flower symbolize the hope for the future of Armenia, helped by Americans. The inscription on the frame reads:

“L'Esperance.” (Hope)

Presented to Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, November 27, 1917, by Mrs. Hovsep Pushman, as an expression of thanks for the hope and gratitude his efforts to help suffering Armenia have inspired in the hearts of all Armenian women.

Alidz Kurkjian later said that she saw President Wilson wipe tears from his eyes during her presentation of the painting because he was so touched by it. It hung in the White House through the remainder of Wilson's final term in office. When the Wilsons moved to S Street, the President hung it over the fireplace in the drawing room where it remains today.

The President Woodrow Wilson House, a National Historic Landmark and model presidential site, offers an intimate look at one of America's most consequential presidents. View authentic objects from the White House and elaborate gifts of state. This Embassy Row house is a living textbook of “modern” American life in the 1920s and serves as a space to explore issues of international relations, race, and women's rights — issues that still resonate today.

For more information about the museum, visit <https://www.woodrowwilsonhouse.org/>



johnavakian.com

Homage To Poet Diana Der Hovanesian
Monprint: Image size 16" h x 32" w

781-784-2059



ARTS & LIVING

Power of Love Fundraiser and Art Show Features Photographer Zaven Khachikyan at Armenian Museum of America April 4

WATERTOWN — The Power of Love Fundraiser and Art Show, dedicated to the mothers of war, the unsung heroes of the April 2016 War in Artsakh, will take place Saturday, April 4, at the Armenian Museum of America from 7 to 10 p.m.

The evening will include an art exhibition by renowned photographer Zaven Khachikyan, with some of his most iconic photographs, and performances by distinguished artists Victoria Avetisyan, mezzo-soprano, and Anna Avetisyan, piano. All proceeds will go to children who lost their fathers during the April War of 2016 as part of an ongoing effort to support these families since 2016. The event was conceptualized

by Nerses Zurabyan and Yelena Bisharyan and is hosted by Diaspora for Frontline Family Fund (DFFF) and the Knights and Daughters of Vartan (Ararat Lodge and Arpi Otyag).

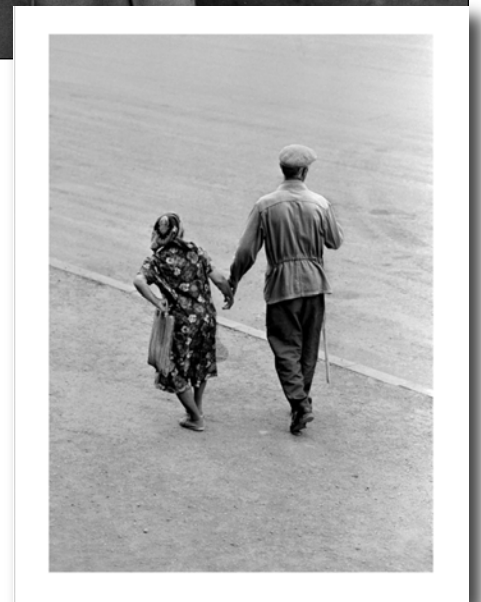
Khachikyan is highly regarded as Armenia's top documentary and artistic photographer. Considered one of the most influential photographers of his generation in Armenia, he has produced a prolific collection of photographs that document both the strife and victories of the Armenian people, between 1980s and the present, including the collapse of Soviet Union and the Nagorno Karabakh war in the 1990s. In addition to collaborating with many of Armenia's most respected newspapers and magazines, Khachikyan has worked as a freelancer with AP, TASS, Time, Paris Match, and other international media organizations. Khachikyan's photography has appeared in nearly a dozen books, with publishers ranging from the British Library and Paris-Musées to Somogy and Indiana University Press.

DFFF was founded by Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge members after the April 2016 War in Artsakh. The April War resulted in around 100 Armenian casualties. Many of these heroes were fathers and often the only breadwinners of their



Zaven Khachikyan

families. The Knights who founded DFFF sought to offset the financial burden that was suddenly thrust upon these families. Their mission is to provide an ongoing, transparent, and overhead free mechanism for raising and distributing donated funds to the children of our fallen heroes. DFFF's first order of business was to compile a full and accurate list of those impacted. The next priority was to identify a reliable and trusted resource for delivering donated funds directly to the families. Once these mechanisms were in place, DFFF turned



its attention to fundraising and has raised nearly \$100,000 to date.

DFFF partnered with Children of Armenia Sponsorship Program (CASP) of the Eastern Armenian Diocese's Fund for Armenian Relief. CASP distributes funds raised in the

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian

Roasted Eggplant with Raisins and Pine Nuts

INGREDIENTS:

1 lb. eggplant (you can fit up to 2 lbs. eggplant per baking sheet if you want to double the recipe), peeled or unpeeled, cut into 1-inch cubes
 2 medium zucchini, peeled, cut into 1/4-inch-thick rounds
 1 each medium green and red pepper bell pepper, cored, cut into chunks or strips
 1 large red onion, cut into 1/4-inch-thick half-moons
 1 large sweet potato, peeled, cut into 1-inch cubes
 2-3 tablespoons olive oil
 Juice of 1 lemon
 1/2 cup golden raisins
 2-3 tablespoons toasted pine nuts
 Salt and black pepper, to taste
 1/2 teaspoon each paprika and cumin
 Lemon or orange zest and chopped flat-leaf parsley, as garnish



PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 425°. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper sprayed lightly with cooking spray. Set aside. Salt the eggplant. Place the eggplant in a colander or salad spinner and sprinkle with salt. Toss to combine, then let the eggplant sit for 30 minutes. If you're using a colander, you'll want to place it in a sink or bowl, as the eggplant will let off a bit of water. Rinse the eggplant under cool water and then dry thoroughly. In a large bowl, toss the eggplant and vegetables with olive oil, salt, pepper, paprika, and cumin. Spread mixture in a single layer on prepared baking sheet. Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, or until vegetables are tender, tossing occasionally with a metal spatula. Remove from the oven and toss with lemon juice, raisins and pine nuts. Garnish with lemon or orange zest and parsley. (Vegetables will shrink while baking, so do not cut them too small.) Serves 4.

*Christine's recipes have been published in the *Fresno Bee* newspaper, *Sunset Magazine*, *Cooking Light Magazine*, the *New York Times*, and at <https://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/>.



United States by DFFF directly to the families. The Knights of Vartan provides tax-deductible receipts for donors. 62 children lost their father during the April War and all have received annual financial aid. DFFF is proud to report that donated funds are delivered to the families without overhead expense. DFFF intends to provide annual assistance to each child until they are 18 years old. 59 children remain in the program ranging in age from 4 - 17.

For more information, see the following "Talking Vartan" podcast interview of DFFF founder, Nerses Zurabyan, hosted by David Medzorian: <https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/talking-vartan/talking-vartan-a-knights-and-i8r56gBxacv/>.

The event will take place at the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries, at the third floor of the Armenian Museum of America, located at 65 Main Street in Watertown. For more information, email info@kovcas.org.



ARTS & LIVING

Dancing Moon Press Releases *Adieu Bellapais*

BEND, Ore. — Dancing Moon Press released this past fall the book *Adieu Bellapais and Collected Short Stories*, by Jirair (Jerry) Shekerdeman.

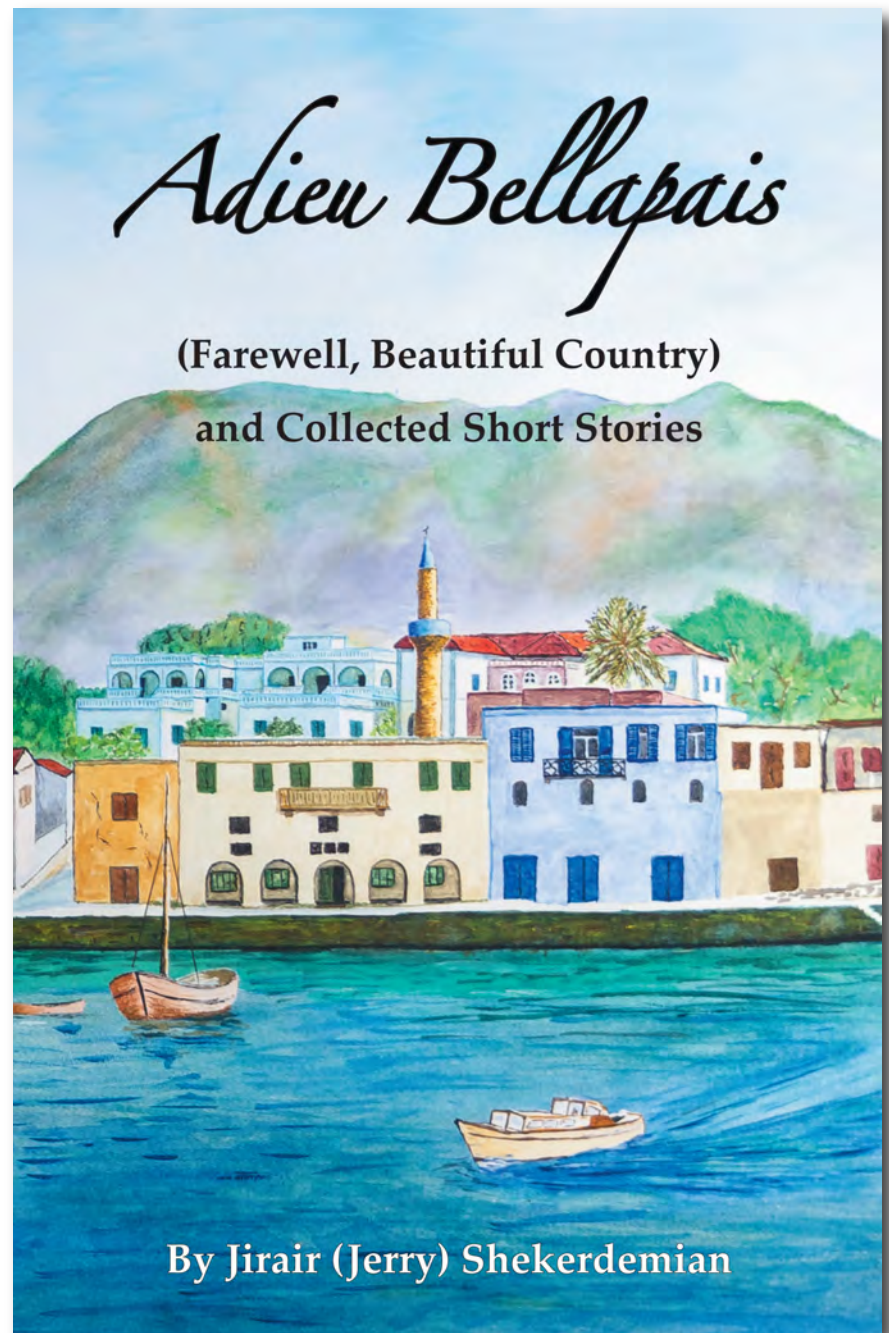
Born the youngest son of survivors of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, Shekerdeman was raised on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus before immigrating to Beirut, Lebanon, and then to London, England and finally to Vancouver, Canada.

Throughout decades raising a family and working as a hydraulics engineer, Jerry dreamt of becoming a writer. Whenever he could, he would write, returning to the same subjects again and again—the life of the immigrant, the Armenian culture, and his beloved family. This compilation of many autobiographical and fictional stories is his first book, published on his 90th birthday.

“*Adieu Bellapais* is a beautiful collection of stories that looks back on the life of a man of words,” said Kim Cooper Findling, Dancing Moon Press publisher. “Jerry’s stories bring to life episodes from his early life in the Mediterranean, illuminate the journeys he and his family took to ultimately arrive in Canada, and interpret the challenges and rewards of starting over in a new country. Throughout, Jerry’s astute observations and entertaining narratives paint a picture of a resilient lover of culture, art, literature, and of course, his family.”

Shekerdeman is also a painter in oil, acrylic and watercolor. He was an active member of the Armenian community of Vancouver, B.C. where he often gave speeches, in English and Armenian, on important cultural holidays and served as host of the Armenian Cultural Association’s radio program on Vancouver’s community radio station. His family likes to call him a “True Renaissance Man.” His 10-year-old grandson, Eli, credits his grandfather for his love of painting, drawing and writing.

Adieu Bellapais is available on Amazon.com and directly from the author. The author is available for readings and signings. See dancingmoonpress.com or contact Linda Shekerdeman, lmsinbend@gmail.com or (541) 815-9675 for more information.



Saving Radio City Music Hall

By Ruth Bedevian

FAIR LAWN, N.J. — “Come listen and watch history unfold. We enthusiastically invite the community to learn, reminisce and enjoy this special afternoon,” states Donna Hortian, St. Leon Women’s Guild chair.

The guild is hosting Rosemary Novellino-Mearns to speak about her inspiring story and introduce her book, *Saving Radio City Music Hall. A Dancer’s True Story*, which chronicles the 40-year-old events in the life of one determined woman.

She and husband Bill will engage their audience in Abajian Hall of the St. Leon Community Center in Fair Lawn, NJ on Sunday, March 22, at 1:30 p.m. with a presentation of exciting story-telling and a power point slideshow of clips from old newsreels.

Radio City Music Hall, an Art Deco masterpiece and one of New York City’s iconic tourist attractions and cultural landmarks, was doomed for destruction in 1978. A modest, yet determined young dancer from Glen Rock, NJ, Rosemary Novellino, joined the Radio City Music Hall Ballet Company, the classical dance counterpart to the world-famous Rockettes, in 1966. She rose to the rank of Dance Captain of the legendary Ballet Company during the 1970s. She was to rise to even greater heights when she led the campaign to save the iconic landmark for generations to come.

Rosemary keeps her audience engaged with personal accounts of how she motivated a small group of dedicated colleagues, friends, politicians and the media to join together and challenge the Rockefeller establishment.

Rosemary’s husband, Bill Mearns, a former soloist and captain of the Singing Ensemble of the Music Hall, likes to say he met Rosemary on “The Great Stage.” They fell in love while working together. In January 1978, when the head

of Rockefeller Center made the public announcement that the Music Hall, the 6,200 seat theater — the largest indoor theater in the country — would be closed and torn down after the Easter Show, Bill stood right by Rosemary’s side to defy the destruction of America’s “Showplace of the Nation.”

The couple’s multimedia presentation has been seen nationwide from the Art Deco Society of Los Angeles, to the Brand Library in Glendale, to Cape Cod. Engagements in New York City have included world famous theatrical clubs. Libraries, club organizations and dance schools in Rosemary’s native state of New Jersey, as well as New York and Massachusetts have hosted her popular presentation.

Light refreshment will be served following the talk and there will be opportunity for book signing by the author. Admission is free and there is ample parking at the St. Leon Armenian Church site at 12-61 Saddle River Road, Fair Lawn, NJ. For information or questions, contact RBedevian@hotmail.com.



Bill Mearns and Rosemary Novellino-Mearns

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by Taleen Babikian

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ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

CALIFORNIA

MARCH 27 — Dr. Mehmet Polatel will give a talk titled "Confiscation and Destruction: The Yopung Turk Seizure of Armenian Properties," at USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research, Friday, 8 p.m. Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, 3325 N. Glenoaks Blvd, Burbank. Polatel, a Postdoctoral Fellow in Armenian Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, has been awarded the 2019-2020 Center Junior Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research. The program, initiated by the Tekeyan Cultural Association, is supported by AGBU Western District Committee, Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian Council of America, Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, Armenian Rights Council of America, Armenian Society of Los Angeles, Nor Serount Armenian Cultural Association and the Organization of Istanbul Armenians, under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate, Western Diocese of the Armenian Church.

APRIL 4 — Boston Court Pasadena presents a concert reading of Joyce Van Dyke's play Daybreak, inspired by the true stories of her Armenian ancestors, and featuring the original Off-Broadway cast. Saturday, April 4, at 4:00 p.m. Tickets \$10 (free to subscribers), with Armenian refreshments included in the price of the ticket. Boston Court Pasadena, 70 N. Mentor Ave., Pasadena. For tickets, visit <https://bostoncourtpasadena.org/events/daybreak/>, or call the box office at 626-683-6801, 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Tues. - Fri.

MASSACHUSETTS

FEBRUARY 29 – 30th Commemoration of the Baku Pogrom. Dinner and Program featuring a biographical Presentation on Zabel Yesayan, Armenian novelist, translator, and professor of literature by Judith Saryan. St. Gregory Armenian Church, 158 Main St., No. Andover. 6 p.m. Adults - \$20. Students - \$10. For reservations, please contact Armen at 978-256-2538, armenjeknavorian@gmail.com; or Ara, 978-251-4845, ara.a.jeknavorian@gmail.com. Merrimack Valley Armenian National Committee of the Merrimack Valley.

MARCH 2 — St. James Men's Club Dinner Meeting - social hour and mezza at 6:15 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m., St. James Armenian Church Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center - Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown. Guest speaker will be Stewart R. Goff, RN, MS, the new C.E.O of the Armenian Women's Welfare Association and the Armenian Nursing & Rehabilitation Center (ANRC) in Jamaica Plain. The presentation is titled "The ANRC, Is it Armenian Enough?" Mezza and a Losh Kebab & Kheyra Dinner \$17/person. Ladies invited. For additional information call the St. James Church office at 617-923-8860 or call Hapet Berberian at 781-367-6598.

MARCH 28 — Sayat Nova Dance Company invites you to an evening of fun and laughter. Back by popular demand, world-renowned comedian and pianist Kev Orkian returns to Boston during his 2020 World Tour! Get ready for a fun-filled night of laughs as KEV entertains the audience with his brand new show "SUPARMENIAN"! To be held at Newton North High School Auditorium, 457 Walnut Street, Newton, at 7:30 pm. Reserve your tickets today! Tickets: \$60 (\$60 tickets include a pre-show meet & greet reception with KEV from 6-7pm). \$45 (General Admission). Tickets may be reserved: Online at itsmyseat.com/KevInBoston (online fees apply) Or by calling: Alina (617) 852-1816 or Shant (781) 879-8102. Flyer and seating chart available at <http://www.sayatnova.com/kevorkian.htm> All tickets are final sale.

MARCH 28 — Songs of the Other with Daniela Tusic, voice; Sylvie Zakarian, marimba; Nikola Radan, flute. Works by Komitas, A. Hovhannes, N. Grover, N. Radan, V. Srvandzians. Armenian Cultural Foundation, Arlington. Saturday, 7 p.m. Open to the public. Admission Free.

MARCH 29 — Sunday, Music of Violinist Levon Chilingirian and Pianist Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian. 2 p.m. The Sanctuary at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston. 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Everyone is welcome to attend; this concert is a gift to the community. The duo will offer a rich and colorful program of works. Levon Chilingirian is Professor of Violin and Chamber Music Artist in Residence at the Royal Academy of Music (London) as well as Professor of Violin and Chamber Music at the Guildhall School of Music and



On April 4, photographer Zaven Khachikyan, mezzo-soprano Victoria Avetisyan and pianist Anna Avetisyan will participated in The Power of Love Fundraiser and Art Show at the Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main St., Watertown, 7-10 p.m. Hosted by the Diaspora for Frontline Family Fund and the Knights and Daughters of Vartan (Ararat Lodge and Arpi Otyag). All Proceeds go to children who lost fathers during the April 2016 war.

Drama (London). Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian has performed extensively in her native Armenia and the former Soviet Union, as well as internationally. Her solo appearances and collaborations with various ensembles have won acclaim from renowned authorities in the musical world. Contact Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632 or office@htaac.org for more information.

APRIL 19 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston and the Erevan Chorale Society, founded by the Very Rev. Fr. Oshagan Minassian (1930-2008) and now under the direction of Composer Konstantin Petrossian, Music Director and Conductor, will present a Spring Concert on Sunday. 2 p.m. The public is warmly invited to attend this complimentary concert which is a gift to the community. Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. For further information, contact the Holy Trinity Church office at 617.354.0632 or e-mail office@htaac.org.

APRIL 19 — Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture at the Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Sunday beginning at 7:00 am. Coffee, hosted by Starbucks & Conversation from 8:30am -9:30am. The annual reconfiguration is supported by the Park's Charles and Doreen Bilezikian Endowed Fund. A crane lifts and pulls apart the two halves of the split rhomboid dodecahedron, made of stainless steel and aluminum, to create a new sculptural shape. The annual reconfiguration is under the direction of A&A Industries, Inc., Peabody, who fabricated the Abstract Sculpture, the generous gift-in-kind of owners Aurelian and Anahid Mardiros and their family. Rain date: April 26 RSVP appreciated at hello@armenianheritagepark.org

MAY 2 — Celebrate Public Art two-part program during ARTWEEK BOSTON. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Saturday at 1:00pm. WORLD LABYRINTH DAY: WALK AS ONE, join people in cities and towns in 35 countries world-wide walking in peace and harmony including Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay and USA followed by RECEPTION TO VIEW THE 2020 RECONFIGURATION OF THE ABSTRACT SCULPTURE, hosted by Eastern Lamejun Bakers and MEM Tea Imports. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

May 9 – Spring Dinner/Dance featuring Barteve Garyan of Istanbul, Saturday 7:30 p.m., St. James Armenian Church, Watertown. Sponsored by the Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston, Inc. to aid all Armenian schools in Istanbul. For info or donations, call Krikor Shaboian at 617 489-0346 or email prsoiab@gmail.com

MAY 28 — Friends of Armenian Culture Society (FACS) presents the 69th annual Armenian Night at the Pops, featuring the young and talented violinist Diana Adamyan as soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra.

Symphony Hall, Boston. 8 p.m. For tickets and information, please visit FACSBoston.org

JUNE 17 — Tea & Tranquility. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Wednesday from 4:30 pm - 6 p.m. Late afternoon to meet and greet, walk the labyrinth, enjoy refreshing ice teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports ,and desserts. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

JUNE 25 — Under A Strawberry Moon. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Thursday at 8:30pm. Evening to meet & greet, tie a ribbon on the Wishing Tree. Enjoy a moonlit labyrinth walk, luscious chocolate dipped strawberries, hosted by vicki lee's and refreshing ice teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

NEW JERSEY

SEPTEMBER 17-19, 2021 — Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) 75th Alumni Anniversary Weekend in Northern NJ. More details to follow. Questions? Email: ACYOA75@gmail.com

NEW YORK

MARCH 1 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York presents "Charles," a bio-musical on the life and art of the legendary Charles Aznavour, by playwright Taleen Babayan. Featuring Maurice Soudjian, Bernard C. Bayer and Mariette Soudjian. Music: Harout Soghomonian. Sunday, 5.30 p.m. at 2537 Broadway, New York, NY. Tickets \$45. www.symphonyspace.org/events. Text or call Sheela at 201-218-6726. Program in English.

MARCH 27 — Atom Egoyan, films and direction Mary Kouyoumdjian, composition Laurie Olinder, projection artist JACK Quartet Silvana Quartet Unreleased scenes and highly personal short films by Oscar-nominated filmmaker Atom Egoyan ("The Sweet Hereafter") are given original new scores by Armenian American composer Mary Kouyoumdjian in this MetLiveArts commission. Egoyan's highly personal films and excerpts on the life of abstract painter Arshile Gorky are infused with themes of family and immigration. Kouyoumdjian's string quartets Bombs of Beirut and Silent Cranes explore her family's history with the Lebanese Civil War and Armenian Genocide through survivor testimonies and documentary. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 5th Avenue, New York. 7 p.m.

APRIL 23 — Thursday 7 p.m. Armenian Genocide Commemoration featuring the acclaimed documentary "The Stateless Diplomat: Diana Aparcar's Heroic Life." Presented by producer Mimi Malayan. Sponsored by CHHANGE at Brookdale Community College, Student Life Center, Navesink Rooms (Parking Lot 7), 765 Newman Springs Road, Lincroft, NJ. Free Admission. 732-224-1889 or contact@chchange.org

PENNSYLVANIA

MARCH 25 — The Armenian Student Organization of Villanova University Hosts Book Presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian of her father's memoir Forced into Genocide, Wednesday, 7-9 p.m., Villanova University, 800 E Lancaster Ave Villanova, Falvey Library - Building # 18 - Room 205 (parking on West Campus in the S4 / S5 lots) . Contact information: Kallie Stahl (610) 519-4458 / kallie.stahl@villanova.edu. Book sale/signing during reception (cash only). All proceeds donated to the Armenian Student Organization

RHODE ISLAND

MARCH 14 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church Presents Its "Music Appreciation Series" Featuring Talented Performers Knarik Nerkararian, Soprano, Dalita Getzoyan, Flute, Nune Hakobyan, Piano, Gregory Ayriyan, Violin. Andrei Sobchenko, Saxophone. Book Presentation "Haykakan taraz - Armenian Costumes" By Artist Gourgen Manoukian. Saturday, at 7 p.m. Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence. Donation \$15 Refreshments.

MARCH 22 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church Presents "Meet The Doctors 2020 — Questions & Answers." We invite everyone to avail themselves of this opportunity and "Meet with our Armenian Doctors" Dr. Beverly Serabian, PhD, clinical psychologist Topic: Healthy Lifestyle Practices and Psychological Well Being Sunday, at 12:30 p.m. Hanoian Hall, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence.



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Challenges Facing Forthcoming Elections in Karabakh

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Karabakh, or the Republic of Artsakh, its more recent official title, has developed into a self-contained, independent political entity, with all the attributes of a full-fledged state. It has held orderly and frequent transparent elections to maintain its governance. In addition, although global political structures have not endowed the republic with official recognition yet and continue to issue statements about their refusal to acknowledge the election results, they understand deep down that Karabakh is not a break-away rebel territory under the rule of warlords.

And thus, the people and the state of Karabakh take themselves seriously and continue to rule the republic under a constitution based on democratic principles.

The Armenian people in Armenia and Karabakh organize local and national elections meticulously, inviting international observers to monitor the election processes and issue their opinions.

On March 31, 2020, legislative and executive branch elections are set to be held in Karabakh. At this time, 27 political parties have put forth their candidates for 33 seats in the parliament. There are 14 presidential candidates in the running. The campaign was officially launched on February 26.

Karabakh maintains the presidential system, unlike Armenia which switched to a parliamentary one.

Karabakh is a contested territory between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group has been holding negotiations since the May 14, 1994 cease-fire took hold to try to settle the conflict.

For the government in Yerevan, Karabakh is Armenia, period. For Azerbaijan, it is an integral part of its national territory, where Armenians can live under "the highest level of autonomy," if they lay down their arms. Unfortunately, Azerbaijan cannot offer, let alone deliver, that "highest level of autonomy," because 49 percent of its population comprises a diverse and restive minority body vying for independence.

Therefore, elections in Karabakh will have regional ramifications, but above all, they will have an intra-Armenian impact.

The Velvet Revolution in Armenia in 2018 developed a new political paradigm for dealing with Karabakh. Many political parties in Armenia lamented that the revolution did not reach Stepanakert. Therefore, not only heated rhetoric but also political actions were needed, according to those forces, for similar change in Karabakh. The radical political party Sasna Tsrer even threatened to organize armed raids to bring about that change. They were deterred by Karabakh war hero Vitali Balasanyan's warning.

But indeed, the forces defeated in Armenia have found a refuge in Karabakh. Serzh Sargsyan's and Robert Kocharyan's cronies made highly-visible appearances in Karabakh. Even the ARF, after its election debacle in Armenia, regrouped in Karabakh.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's job is cut out for him. He came to power through a revolutionary fervor and today he cannot control nor contain that feeling among his followers. The revolutionary logic among the latter is that when the young administration has achieved full control in the country, it should wipe out the remaining vestiges of the old regime completely, with no exceptions.

The prime minister, after attaining power, has realized that he cannot proceed while ignoring international legal norms. Pashinyan himself was very careful to be elected by the old parliament. A case in point is also the current crisis with the Constitutional Court. His angry partisans do not understand why the leader of the revolution does not simply sack seven members of the court and thumb his nose at the warning from the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe. Instead, Pashinyan is trying to skirt the crisis created by the forced housecleaning by organizing a referendum on April 5.

For a long time, the old regime in Armenia was tolerated

because people understood that there was a war on the border. And the leaders of the regime became untouchable, until the people reached the breaking point. As long as their rule lasted, the old regime looted the country.

The same situation was replicated in Karabakh, where war heroes exploited their favored statuses to rob the country. And the people's cautious approach has outlasted the revolution in Armenia. The Karabakh situation was – and still is – more fragile.

There are signs that the new elections will rectify that in Karabakh.

Officially Armenia has taken a hands-off policy to allow fair and transparent elections there. It has promised to invite international monitors to observe the election process. As well, Yerevan has ostensibly no favorites among the 14 candidates for president (including two women). However, last August 5 Pashinyan was in Karabakh where he set the parameters for the new president, namely no candidates who trained with the old regime in Armenia. Last week, when the security councils of the two republics held a joint meeting, the prime minister spoke of the unity of the two republics. Following that session, the Karabakh Minister of Defense Lt. Gen. Karen Abrahamyan was sacked and was replaced by Gen. Jalal Harutyunyan.

No one doubted that Pashinyan's signature was on that order.

Despite all these actions, Armenia has taken a neutral stance

on the elections, although the latter has reasons to watch carefully the elections and political developments. Although all the candidates vow to work in synch with the Yerevan administration, there is talk that the proponents of the old regime may somehow band together in Stepanakert and create a revanchist force. Even more dangerous is the talk of placing Karabakh under Moscow's tutelage. The proponent of that plan is Samuel Babayan, an adventurous war hero and political activist who was pushed out of the election process through legal actions. Nonetheless, he has formed a new political party, the Revolutionary Party of Artsakh, to remain in the game.

Although all the candidates in Stepanakert claim to be on good terms with Pashinyan, a gradation of those relations is apparent. Even candidate

Vitali Balasanyan, who has engaged in public altercations with Pashinyan, believes that he maintains friendly relations with him.

Vahan Bandasyan, the head of the United Armenia Party, is the most vociferous and radical opposition leader, and seems to be trailing in the polls.

The front runners at this time are Arayik Harutyunyan, the former prime minister, Masis Mayilyan, the current foreign minister, and Ashod Ghoullyan, the speaker of the parliament.

Harutyunyan had formed his Free Motherland Party in June 2006 and won 10 seats that year. He is considered to be one of the oligarchs who has contributed tremendously toward the economic development of the republic. He may win the election on bread-and-butter issues.

Mayilyan, who serves as foreign minister in the current cabinet, is running as an opposition candidate. He is backed by the Nor Artsakh Alliance.

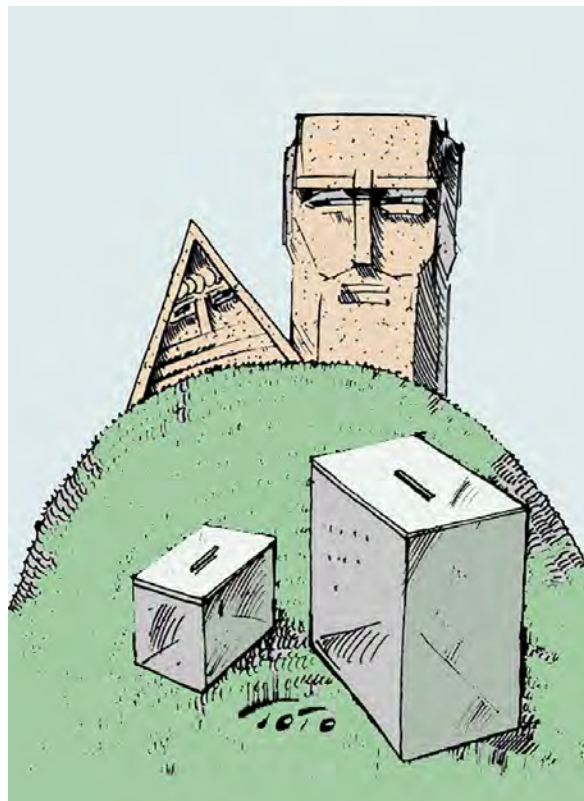
Ghoullyan, the most articulate among the candidates, is heading the Popular Party of Artsakh.

Haik Khanumyan is the head of the National Renaissance Party.

Out of 27 parties participating in the elections, 20 have been formed recently. Two alliances have grouped the newly-formed parties. They have no history nor a track record of any political activity and they will fade away as soon as the elections are over.

There are true political forces in Karabakh and they have been recruiting younger elements to complement their ranks with experienced elements.

Transparent and orderly elections will further enhance Karabakh's political profile in the region, particularly in the aftermath of Azerbaijan's recent elections, which were fraught with bribes, corruption and violence.



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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Turks Attack Each Other: Cypriot Turkish Leader Criticizes Turkey

Turkish columnist Orhan Kemal Cengiz wrote an article in the website “al-Monitor” on February 18, 2020, titled: “Why is Turkish Cypriot leader declared ‘enemy’ in Turkey?” The article provided the details of the antagonism between the government of Turkey and the leader of Turkish Cyprus.

Ever since the Turkish occupation of Northern Cyprus in 1974, the Republic of Turkey has spent billions of dollars and stationed thousands of Turkish troops to preserve its foothold on the island.

In recent months, the Turkish media has publicized the hostility between the government of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leader. “Turkish officials and politicians visiting the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is recognized as a state only by Ankara, have refused to meet with its president, Mustafa Akinci, since October,” wrote Cengiz.

The conflict started with the Turkish invasion of Northern Syria last October, when Akinci dared to criticize the “Sultan” of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan: “Now, even if we call it [the Turkish invasion of Syria] Operation Peace Spring, what is being spilled is not water but blood. For this reason, it is my greatest wish that dialogue and diplomacy come into play as soon as possible.” Hundreds of Turks in Turkey have been imprisoned for criticizing the Turkish military campaign in Syria. Going beyond Syria, Akinci expressed his disagreement with Turkey regarding its invasion of Northern Cyprus: “Even

though we called it Operation Peace, it was a war and blood was spilled in 1974.” According to Cengiz, “by drawing a comparison between the two interventions, Akinci was obviously trying to say that military operations in foreign lands create lasting problems and, therefore, he was inviting Turkey to consider other options in Syria.”

Even though Akinci’s criticisms of the Turkish military invasions were well-meaning, Erdogan, who does not tolerate dissent, was furious, stating that Akinci had “exceeded his limits” and adding that the electorate will soon teach him a “lesson.” Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay also condemned the Turkish Cypriot leader. Cengiz reported that “in Northern Cyprus, meanwhile, Akinci received death threats, for which he requested a judicial investigation.”

Columnist Cengiz further reported that “Akinci’s remarks made him a scapegoat in Turkey and fueled an unprecedented wave of reactions, the harshest that any Northern Cyprus representative has ever seen. [Turkish] MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli called on Akinci to immediately resign. ‘Akinci and his supporters should not forget that Cyprus is Turkish and will remain Turkish,’ Bahçeli said. He also suggested that Akinci move to the Greek Cypriot south. AKP spokesman Omer Celik urged Akinci to apologize, while Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said the Northern Cyprus leader was being ‘hostile to Turkey’ and that he had never seen ‘such a dishonest politician’ in his life. With the tone set like that by top politicians, pro-government newspapers were even harsher. ‘The Crusaders’ Akinci should resign immediately,’ one paper said, while another declared that Akinci was ‘like an enemy.’”

Cengiz explained in his article that “it is Turkey that pays the bills in Northern Cyprus through direct and indirect financial aid. Therefore, Cypriot Turks should always be grateful to Ankara. Turkey is ‘the mother’ and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is her ‘baby.’ Anything that goes beyond this notion of subordination would threaten the status quo.”

In an interview with the Guardian on February 6, 2020,

Akinci warned the “permanent partition of its [Cyprus’s] Greek and Turkish communities unless an agreement is swiftly reached involving an ‘equitable’ federal solution.” Akinci said he disagreed with Erdogan’s vision of the relationship between Ankara and Nicosia as one of “mother and baby.... I want independent, brotherly relations,” he explained. He acknowledged the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus had to do more to make its economy less reliant on Turkey, which pays the government’s bills. To do this he needed support from the [Greek] south, Akinci told the Guardian.

“Akinci – who on Wednesday evening [Feb. 5, 2020] launched his re-election campaign – said the only viable solution to Cyprus’s nearly half century of division was reunification under a federal ‘roof’.... ‘If this failed to happen,’ Akinci told The Guardian, ‘the north would grow increasingly dependent on Ankara and could end up being swallowed up, as a de facto Turkish province.’”

“Akinci’s vision, which is shared by many Turkish Cypriots, calls for a bi-communal, bi-zonal Cyprus with political equality and a single ‘personality,’ he told the Guardian. It is based on a shared identity of being islanders of Cyprus, rather than being Turkish or Greek,” Cengiz wrote.

“Akinci’s likely election run-off rival is Ersin Tatar, an outspoken pro-Ankara populist who opposes reconciliation with the south. Tatar, the current prime minister, favors a two-state solution. He enjoys strong support from Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and from settlers who have arrived in unquantified numbers from the mainland, changing the island’s religious and cultural makeup,” The Guardian wrote.

“I’m not going to be a second Tayfur Sökmen,” Akinci told the Guardian, referring to the president of Hatay, who in the 1930s merged his republic – formerly part of French-mandated Syria – with Turkey after a referendum.

The dispute between Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leader is deviating the Turkish government’s attention away from a slew of other serious conflicts Turkey has with Armenia, Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Greece and Cyprus.

Can Planting 10 Million Trees Save Its Environment?

By Ariel Sophia Bardi

IN SOUTHERN ARMENIA, not far from the Turkish and Iranian borders, the village of Paruyr Sevak straddles a strip of arid, treeless no man’s land between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The border village was settled in 1978 as just a smattering of Soviet-built houses named after Armenia’s esteemed 20th-century poet, killed in a car crash farther up the road. Before the village was founded, Azeri shepherds had wandered there freely with their flocks, but the outpost helped define and delimit the land.

In 1988, a six-year war with Azerbaijan flared over nearby Nagorno-Karabakh, the self-declared autonomous region that is historically Armenian but under Azerbaijani control. The same period saw the fall of the Soviet Union and the redrawing of regional maps. Protracted territorial disputes eventually slowed into a daily drum of Azeri sniper fire, and the village needed more than aging buildings to signal its status as Armenian.

“For the land to be yours, it’s not enough just to have a signpost. You have to cultivate the land. You have to plant trees,” EdikStepanyan told me on a dry, sunny afternoon this past October. He’s the village mayor and moved there 40 years ago from the city of Ararat, named for the white-capped mountain considered sacred to Armenians, which now sits on Turkish soil.

Planting trees is just what the area is doing. Running through the desert plains, on one side of a dusty two-lane thoroughfare, a towering dirt bulwark protects villagers from Azeri gunfire. (“If we didn’t hear the shootings, then we’d be worried, because we’re so used to it,” joked the 60-year-old resident Mesrop Karamyan.) On the other side, poking through the red, parched soil, still five or six years away from providing any shade, sit close to 5,000 green saplings—the makings of a community forest.

A white sedan sputters by with a treelingstrapped to its roof. Nearby Khosrov Forest, a protected nature reserve, is home to bears, wolves, ibex, and a handful of endangered Caucasian snow leopards, but sunbakedParuyr Sevak, lacking any rivers or streams, has virtually no tree cover. The mayor hopes the new park will soften the harsh climate, with the bonus of dou-

bling down on the village’s claim on the vulnerable stretch of borderland.

“We always have to be alert. That’s the only choice we have,” Stepanyan said. “We either keep these borders or we lose everything.” Besides, he added brightly, “it will be a heavenly place.”

Stepanyan is one of many Armenians looking to transform the landscape. Riding high on the heels of a peaceful revolution that swept out years of corrupt oligarchy, Armenia’s new reformist government, led by the former journalist Nikol Pashinyan, has pledged to double the country’s tree cover by 2050 as part of Armenia’s commitment to the Paris climate agreement goals.

There is a lot to unpack in the plan to “Make Armenia Green Again,” as tongue-in-cheek comedy duo Narek Margaryan and Sergey Sargsyan have coined it. More than an environmental strategy against climate change, illegal logging, biodiversity loss, and desertification, in Armenia tree planting is suffused with cultural survival.

Since 1994, the Armenia Tree Project (ATP), a Massachusetts-headquartered non-profit staffed by Armenians and Armenian Americans, has led the country’s reforestation efforts. ATP nurseries, greenhouses, community forests, and planting sites dot virtually every corner of Armenia, from the lush, leafy Georgian border down to Nagorno-Karabakh. Their forests often memorialize; they’re named for genocide survivors or are dedicated to patriotic themes. In 2001, ATP planted the poplar and fruit trees skirting the roads around the 13th-century Noravank monastery to honor Armenia’s 1,700-year anniversary as the world’s first Christian nation.

Scaling up that model, in October at the country’s inaugural forest summit – Forest Summit: Global Action and Armenia, convened by ATP and the American University of Armenia – Pashinyan announced that doubling the tree cover would begin with 10 million trees planted by October 10, 2020 – representing the global population of Armenians. To put that number into perspective, after 25 years on the ground, ATP celebrated its 6 millionth tree planting only late last year.

Reforestation, a popular talking point in climate change adaptation efforts, is tricky that way. It does have the potential to reduce air pollution, increase rainfall, and absorb harmful carbon emissions. It is equally valuable in terms of symbolism (even the reelection campaign of U.S. President Donald Trump has spoken of planting a trillion trees, whether it is for shoring up borders, committing to cleaner air, or self-aggrandizement. But the danger in symbolism is that it can favor tidy, fast solutions in place of messy complexities, much like the identical rows of trees often planted to replace eroded forest cover.

These eerie, ersatz forests are about as natural-seeming as a strip of McMansions, and they are less adept at carbon absorption and more vulnerable to wildfires. “How can you compare these plantations to real forests, which we have and which we are losing now?” Karen Manvelyan, the director of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Armenia, told me this fall in Yerevan. “It’s PR.”

During Soviet rule, forests, streams, and natural sites were considered state property, and in those days, timber was trucked in from Russia. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991

led to a devastating energy crisis, with Armenians ransacking forests for fast firewood. ATP founder Carolyn Mugar, living in Yerevan, watched branches stripped and trees felled—the degradation of those years became crucial to the nonprofit’s origin story. “We would cut, in secret, from places we weren’t supposed to, even national parks,” said 53-year-old Angela Minasyan, who now works as a laborer at an ATP nursery. “We always felt sorry for cutting anything,” she added. “That’s why we’re planting trees now.”

Armenia’s current tree cover hovers at around 11 percent – almost half what it was during the 17th and 18th centuries. Along with Armenia’s wood fuel crisis after the fall of the Soviet Union, industrial logging and open mining pits have also contributed to heavy tree losses—a trend that is reflected in waning forestland throughout much of the world. Indeed, global deforestation rates continue at a frightening clip. The world has lost 129 million hectares of forest since 1990—roughly the size of South Africa.

But the yield on new trees is not easy to calculate. Near the village of Margahovit in northern Armenia, not far from the sprawling, thickly forested Dilijan National Park, Marik Nursery sits tucked into the low, mist-threaded hills. Equipped with germination tables, its greenhouses can grow up to a million seedlings, including ash, pine, and wild apple – ATP makes a point of only planting native tree species – which are placed outside to adapt to frigid winters. Still, almost half of the seedlings will die once planted.

“If we have 60 percent, it’s good,” ATP forestry manager Navasard Dadyan told me this fall. “To plant [a] tree is the easier thing. You can plant and go. The harder thing is to take care of them. I won’t say anything about 10 million trees,” he added, chuckling.

Early this January, ATP issued a press release with cautious praise of Pashinyan’s bold announcement – and much concern. It cautioned against planting nonnative or invasive species, which might add further strain to local ecology, and recommended mixed-species forests in place of the monoculture pines usually favored.

But the Pashinyan administration’s muscular, large-scale tree-planting plan not only raises concern about quantity over quality; it also overlooks one of the main drivers of deforestation in Armenia, a cause far more controversial than its history of individual, poverty-driven logging: mineral mining, which involves clearing swaths of forests in preparation for mining areas as well as new roads and related infrastructure. Its reputation as a deforestation driver is well founded: Mining activity has caused almost 10 percent of the total tree loss in the Brazilian Amazon.

Many environmentalists complain that the new government has not done enough to denounce the lucrative, corruption-dogged industry, even greenlighting construction for a \$300-million gold mine in the spa town of Jermuk, located on the edge of landlocked Armenia’s largest freshwater source, Lake Sevan. Known for its rich biodiversity, Armenia is home to more than 300 Red Book-listed endangered animal species and

see TREES, page 20



Can Planting 10 Million Trees Save Its Environment?

TREES, from page 19

over 450 endangered plants. But mines have been traced to habitat loss and toxic residue, known as tailings, and the lake is a protected area.

“On the one hand, you say that we take a green direction,” said Manvelyan, the WWF Armenia director. “On the other hand, you are giving license to new mines.”

The new government took power promising to fight corruption, chase out oligarchs, and dismantle the old regime. It adheres to a kind of social media-savvy transparency. Pashinyan

delivers speeches on Facebook Live. Armenians breezily call the prime minister by his first name. One night, I spot “Nikol” out at a jazz club in Yerevan, gamely posing for selfies.

That openness pervades the ranks of the administration. Before I sat down with Vardan Melikyan, the deputy minister of environment, in between panels at the Forest Summit in Yerevan, a man in a dark suit rushed over, interrupting with an urgent-sounding murmur. I instinctively stepped aside, giving them privacy. “Don’t leave.” Melikyan waved me back. “There

is no secret.” But the mood noticeably soured when I brought up the mines, prompting a crisp “no comment.” “Maybe people need to wait a bit,” Melikyan finally offered, alluding to legal complications.

“Actually, it’s not complicated,” countered Artur Grigoryan, an environmental lawyer tapped by the Pashinyan administration to inspect mine sites and who was subsequently fired. After a monthlong investigation, in the summer of 2019, Grigoryan had reported evidence of a Red Book-listed butterfly to the Environment Ministry, which would make mining in Jermuk a criminal offense. He made similar findings in Kajaran, a privatized, Soviet-era open-pit copper mine in southern Armenia traced to rampant heavy metal pollution.

“I spoke to the prime minister,” Grigoryan said. “I presented the situation.” Then Pashinyan jetted to Switzerland to talk up Armenia’s economic development at the 2019 World Economic Forum. “From Davos, he signed the decision to fire me,” Grigoryan said.

Mines in Armenia are operated by offshore companies like Lydian International, which act as smokescreens for their owners. This opaque financial structure makes it difficult to know what benefit is being reaped by whom. “Nobody knows what kind of influence they have on the current government,” Grigoryan explained—if any at all.

Manvelyan believes that the massive reforestation plan was announced to deflect from a furor over unchecked mining policies. It is “a kind of compensation” for the public, he said. “But you can’t compensate. It’s two different

stories.”

Along with doubling the country’s tree cover, the Pashinyan administration simultaneously announced at October’s Forest Summit that it would aim to increase the country’s population from 3 million to 5 million people, opening up new channels of immigration and recruiting Armenians from the diaspora. In multiplying its forests and — very nearly, at least — also doubling its population, the Pashinyan government has promised hyperbolically bold economic and ecological investment. Each looks to the past while striving to put Armenia back on the map.

Back in the southern village of Paruyr Sevak, the mayor looked out approvingly on the makings of the community park, with the clear line its trees had drawn in the sand. He recalled many encroachments of Armenian territory by neighbors on all sides, most notoriously Turkey. Mount Ararat — symbol of the Armenian people and faith — appears mostly as a haze-dulled backdrop from Armenian soil. “We have no more space to move back. If you go and compare Armenia’s maps from before and now, what’s left of it is so little,” Stepanyan complained. “Our borders kept getting smaller and smaller.”

Beyond the craggy, rust-hued mountain range, dogs trawl the rings of landlocked desert, which sit baking under the sun. The thin, sparsely foliated treelings—wedged between Turkish, Iranian, and Azerbaijani borders — barely rise a foot off the ground. But it won’t be long before they cast long shadows.

(This analysis originally appeared in *Foreign Policy* on February 18.)

Freed Turkey activist rearrested on charges he collaborated with his own tormentors

By Borzou Daraghahi

ISTANBUL (*The Independent*) — Hours after he was acquitted by a court and freed after more than two years in jail, a high-profile Turkish philanthropist was rearrested on separate charges in a case that has raised questions about the rule of law in Turkey.

A surprise court decision on Tuesday, February 18, to drop charges against Osman Kavala, 63, and eight other defendants, of undermining Turkey’s national security by taking part in the 2013 Gezi park anti-government protests prompted applause in the courtroom.

Even pro-government circles and supporters of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan voiced quiet relief that a court case based on little evidence — and one which had drawn scrutiny from diplomats and international advocacy groups — was finally concluding.

But Kavala’s rearrest later the same day, on fresh accusations that he participated in a dead-end 2016 coup attempt, allegedly perpetrated by the spiritual movement of exiled religious scholar Fethullah Gulen, dashed those hopes.

“It was Erdogan who ordered the arrest of Kavala, and it was he who ordered his release today,” pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) lawmaker Garo Paylan was quoted as saying by local media.

Paylan, a politician of ethnic Armenian descent, added: “Nobody is safe against this judicial cruelty in Turkey. I am seriously worried about arbitrary judicial decisions and trumped-up charges.”

The prosecution of Kavala, who has used his inherited wealth to finance numerous political and cultural projects, has underscored the country’s political and cultural divides, pitting Turkey’s older secular elites against the newly dominant power of Erdogan and his allies.

Erdogan has in the past called Kavala the “local collaborator” of the “Hungarian Jew” George Soros, in reference to the Hungarian-

born financier and philanthropist.

“The Gezi incidents directly cost Turkey \$1.4bn while its indirect cost was hundreds of billions of dollars,” Erdogan said in a speech on Wednesday, February 19. “Whoever defines Gezi incidents as an innocent environmental movement is either ignorant or an enemy of this country and nation.”

The prosecutor has vowed to challenge the judiciary decision to acquit Kavala and the oth-



Osman Kavala (Bianet photo)

ers on the 2013 protest charges.

Allegations that Kavala had a role in the 2016 coup attempt are odd in light of the fact that it was Erdogan and the Justice and Development Party that originally allowed Gulen’s cult-like spiritual movement into government and security institutions, as an ally against Turkey’s military-dominated old order.

Secular liberals like Kavala were hostile to the Gulenists and were targeted by the movement’s supporters in the interior ministry and judiciary. Ironically, Kavala, the scion of a wealthy Turkish family, was considered a supporter of Erdogan when the Islamist-rooted leader and his allies took on the power and privileges of the military.

Amnesty International called the continued detention of Kavala “cynical and outrageous.”

“It is time for Turkey to end the relentless crackdown on dissenting voices,” said Milena Buyum, the group’s Turkey campaigner, in a statement.

New Karabakh Army Commander Named

STEPANAKERT (Armenpress) — The commander of Nagorno-Karabakh’s Armenian-backed army, Lieutenant-General Karen Abrahamyan, was dismissed and replaced by his first deputy on Monday, February 24.

Bako Sahakyan, the outgoing Karabakh president, signed the relevant decrees five days after the sacking of two senior military officials in Armenia.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan fired the heads of the Armenian military police and an army department in charge of military moral following a spate of non-combat deaths of soldiers who served in Armenia and Karabakh.

Five of those soldiers are believed to have committed suicide in separate incidents investigated by law-enforcement authorities. The shootings caused public outrage and cast a renewed spotlight on the chronic problem of hazing and other abuses in the army ranks. Armenia’s political and military leadership pledged to improve military discipline in response to the outcry.

Pashinyan and Sahakyan chaired a meeting

of top military officials in Stepanakert on Saturday. The participants included Abrahamyan, Armenian Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan and army chief of staff Lieutenant-General Artak Davtyan. Few details of the meeting were made public.

The new commander of the Karabakh Defense Army, Major-General Jalal Harutyunyan, served as Abrahamyan’s first deputy and chief of the army’s General Staff until now.

Like his predecessors, Harutyunyan, 45, is a decorated veteran of the 1991-1994 war with Azerbaijan. He joined the formed Karabakh forces in 1992 at the age of 17 and mostly served in artillery units during and after the war. (See related editorial on page 18.)

Harutyunyan rose through army ranks after graduating from a Russian military academy in the early 2000s. In 2016, then Karabakh army chief Movses Hakobyan described him as one of the army’s best officers.

Harutyunyan was promoted to the rank of major-general in July last year.



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**CONFISCATION AND DESTRUCTION
THE YOUNG TURK SEIZURE OF
ARMENIAN PROPERTY**

Keynote speaker

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