

## Armenia Institutes State of Emergency, Restricts Gatherings, Media Coverage

YREEVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenia instituted a state of emergency in response to the rapidly spreading coronavirus outbreak, banning gatherings of more than 20 people and

There will also be sweeping restrictions on what media can report about the novel coronavirus. “Information about people suspected of carrying the virus or informa-

to buy more food and essentials than they need, assuring the public that Armenia has no shortage of supplies.

In a live broadcast on Facebook on the first full day of a 30-day state of emergency declared last night to slow and contain the further spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), Pashinyan ascribed rising food prices to panic buying.

Reports of major instances of panic buying in supermarkets across Armenia first appeared in media on Monday within hours after the Pashinyan government announced a set of limitations, including a ban on public gatherings and the possibility of restricting people’s travel due to epidemiological conditions.

Gegham Gevorgyan, chairman of the State Commission for the Protection of Economic Competition, also confirmed that Armenia is provided with the necessary amount of food. He said that mainly groceries have been in great demand in recent days.

As for the level of prices, the head of the anti-trust body said: “I think that apart from the monitoring of prices it is also important to ensure uninterrupted supply see EMERGENCY, page 2



Medical personnel take the temperature of a resident near Vagharshapat.

restricting media coverage of the disease.

The 28-day state of emergency was issued at a cabinet meeting on the afternoon of March 16. It heavily restricts any public gatherings including protests, religious events, concerts, weddings and funerals. It also forbade the entry of foreigners who had been in countries heavily affected by COVID-19 and gave the authorities broad power to implement other restrictions as needed.

tion about their examinations, the number of cases [of the disease], any content that can raise panic, will be banned,” said Justice Minister Rustam Badasyan. “Only information from official sources can be published, including on the internet, with a link to the source.”

As of March 16, Armenia had recorded 78 cases of coronavirus.

Pashinyan and other senior government officials on March 17 called on citizens not

## Trial of Coronavirus Vaccine Made by Moderna Begins in Seattle

By Denise Grady

SEATTLE (*New York Times*) – The first testing in humans of an experimental vaccine for the new coronavirus began on Monday, March 16, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases announced.

The main goal of this first set of tests is to find out if the vaccine is safe. If it is, later studies will determine how well it works.

The trial was “launched in record speed,” Dr. Anthony Fauci, the institute’s director, said in a statement.

Such rapid development of a potential vaccine is unprecedented, and it was possible because researchers were able to use what they already knew about related coronaviruses that had caused other diseases outbreaks, SARS and MERS.

Despite the rapid progress, even if the vaccine is proved safe and effective against the virus, it will not be available for at least a year.

The tests, which are being conducted at Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute in Seattle, use a vaccine made by Moderna Inc.

Seattle was chosen as a test site before the United States had any known coronavirus cases, not because of the outbreak that erupted there. Washington State has been hard hit by the virus, with more than 670 cases to date.

Moderna (whose chairman is Dr. Noubar Afeyan) uses genetic material – messenger see VACCINE, page 16

## 7 Questions for Moderna Chairman Afeyan

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (CivilNet) – As dozens of research groups around the world race to create the first vaccine for COVID-19, in late February, Moderna, a

Massachusetts-based biotechnology company, announced that it had shipped the first batch of its clinic-bound vaccine, called mRNA-1273, to the US National Institute

of Allergy and Infectious Diseases for use in a planned Phase I study. (See story on this page.)

The vaccine will be tested on 45 healthy patients at the Kaiser Permanente Health Research Institute in Seattle.

Moderna’s researchers were the first to create trial-ready vaccines using mRNA technology. The company uses messenger RNA (mRNA), a form of genetic material, to deliver instructions to a person’s cells. From this information, cells make requisite antibodies to protect against viruses. Alternatively, the instructions can also be utilized to instruct cells to produce proteins that are missing in particular diseases.

To understand the work behind Moderna’s early success, CivilNet spoke with the company’s co-founder and chairman Dr. Noubar Afeyan, a member of the MIT Board of Trustees, and a biotech entrepreneur. Afeyan is a philanthropist, most recently as a co-founder of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity.

**Syuzanna Petrosyan: In the case that testing is successful, what is a realistic timeline for approval and availability of the vaccine? And, in times of crises such as this, are procedures accelerated?**

see AFEYAN, page 16



Dr. Noubar Afeyan

## Editor’s Note: Heading Into Uncertain Times

WATERTOWN – Fellow world citizens and readers of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, we, like you, are trying to cope with the unprecedented state of emergency facing us now.

We don’t know what the coming days will bring. What is clear is that the situation in our state will get more difficult before we break out of the yoke of fear coronavirus has spread around the world.

As you see with this issue, the number of pages has been reduced from 20 to 16. All events in the near future have been cancelled. All are rightly concerned with keeping their families and themselves safe from this modern-day terror. So much is up in the air, including working outside homes.

Going forward, we will probably reduce the number of pages even further, as we will concentrate on getting information out to you either online ([www.mirrorspectator.com](http://www.mirrorspectator.com)) or by print.

We wish you and your loved ones health and patience at this difficult time.

## TCA Coronavirus Announcement

WATERTOWN – The Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada has been closely following the dramatic developments concerning the spread of the coronavirus named COVID-19. It is a serious situation warranting caution without panic.

The Central Board realizes that while many aspects of this new virus are still not fully known, it appears that its spread throughout our communities in North America is unavoidable over the next few months. Conditions vary, however, in different regions. Consequently, we recommend that our chapters follow the directives of their local governments and use common sense in planning activities and programs.

We strongly recommend that all chapters and centers postpone or cancel group activities in order to avoid endangering the health of participants, especially the elderly and vulnerable. In particular, programs that imply traveling must be postponed until further notice. Some chapters have already taken the initiative to do so.

In the meantime, we ask that our Tekeyan centers and buildings be frequently disinfected and meetings and other organizational business be conducted via internet or phone as opposed to in person as much as possible in order to slow down the potential spread of the virus. Any third party renting our premises must show compliance with the local authorities’ directives.

We appreciate your attentiveness to this matter. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to consult with our headquarters in Watertown, MA.

March 12, 2020

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### Vegan Armenian Cookbook

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Opera House to Show Performances on Facebook

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Yerevan Opera House will show its opera and ballet performances and concerts on Facebook starting Tuesday, March 17.

“You can stay home and watch Karen Khachaturian’s brilliant ballet ‘Cipollino’ on March 17, through our official Facebook page,” the Opera House said in a statement, on <https://www.facebook.com/YerevanOpera/photos/a.143559219077775/2356861907747484/?type=3&theater%D6%89>.

“It’s very important for us to keep in touch with you during this time. Enjoy the best opera and ballet performances at home and we look forward to seeing you very soon,” the statement read.

## City Hall to Distribute School Food to Needy Families

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Yerevan City Hall will provide the food stored in the community kindergartens to the socially needy families, the City Hall said on Facebook on March 17.

“Taking into account the current state of emergency in the country Mayor of Yerevan Hayk Marutyan discussed with Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan the issue of providing the food stored in the community kindergartens to the needy families. The food will be provided to the administrations of heads of administrative districts, and their social protection departments will distribute the food to the needy families based on priority”, the statement said.

## Anna Hakobyan Thanks Medical Workers

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The wife of the Armenian prime minister, Anna Hakobyan, sent a letter of gratitude, as well as sweets to the medical staff of Nork Infection Clinic Hospital on March 17, to thank them for the work they do during the current coronavirus crisis, her spokesperson Hasmik Harutyunyan said.

“Mrs. Hakobyan follows the great work done by doctors these days. Sending a letter and sweets is a small step through which she is expressing her gratitude to all medics, including those working in Nork Infection Hospital and other medical centers. These healthcare workers are in the frontline, demonstrate high qualities and fight against the virus day and night,” Harutyunyan said.

## Referendum Delayed Due To State of Emergency

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A constitutional referendum originally scheduled in Armenia for April 5 will be delayed after the country’s authorities declared a 30-day state of emergency over the novel coronavirus outbreak on Monday, March 16.

“Under Armenian legislation, a referendum cannot take place in conditions of a state of emergency. The referendum will take place no sooner than 50 and no later than 65 days after the end of the state of emergency,” Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in parliament.

In the referendum Armenians are to be asked to vote on a constitutional amendment that would lead to the dismissal of seven of the Constitutional Court’s nine members installed before nationwide protests swept Pashinyan to power in 2018.

The seven, including Constitutional Court Chairman Hrayr Tovmasyan, would be replaced by judges to be confirmed by the National Assembly, in which Pashinyan’s My Step alliance holds a majority.

Pashinyan got actively engaged in campaigning earlier this month but interrupted it after the number of coronavirus patients had risen to six.

Parliamentary opposition parties then called for the suspension of the campaign.

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of stocks to exclude shortages. I assure you that at this moment we have no such problem.”

Pashinyan also assured the public about a stable situation in the financial market. “[The financial market is strong] especially after our results last year when our international reserves reached a record level, and the Central Bank purchased and stocked an unprecedentedly large amount of foreign currency. So, we will have no problems,” the head of the Armenian government said.

“I am convinced that we will come out of this situation as winners, that we will become much more proud and stronger, much more viable, competitive and competent,” Pashinyan said.

On March 16 Pashinyan visited several supermarkets and stores in Yerevan to monitor the situation connected with supplies and prices. During a live broadcast on Facebook he registered that shelves at all places were full of the usual assortment and found no change in prices.

Pashinyan also walked into three pharmacies in the city center only to find that none had alcohol-based hand sanitizers in stock. Only one of the three pharmacies had medical masks on sale.

In addition, Armenia has evacuated dozens of its citizens from coronavirus-hit Italy on board a plane operating a charter flight that arrived in Yerevan from Rome early on March 16.

The Armenian government published a video on Monday showing passengers, all of them wearing protective masks, getting off the plain in Yerevan’s Zvartnots Airport.

Medics in protective gear and other emergency services met the 67 passengers, of all whom are said to have been placed under 14-day quarantine.

Another video published by Armenian Health Minister Arsen Torosyan late on Sunday showed that all passengers had been given protective masks before boarding the plane in Rome.

In announcing the arrangement of the charter flight last week, the Armenian government said all of its passengers would be immediately isolated and quarantined to prevent the possible penetration of more of the potentially deadly virus into Armenia from Italy.

### Government Deliberations

In the cabinet meeting on March 17, which was broadcast live, there was some debate over how strictly to restrict entry in and out of the country. Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatskanyan proposed a 30-day ban on international flights, which was deemed too strict.

“There is life after coronavirus,” said Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan. “Don’t be so sure,” replied Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, with a laugh.

Armenia’s neighbors also tightened their borders in response to the growing outbreak. The region first began to institute restrictions on February 24, following a heavy outbreak of COVID-19 in Iran. The closures and restrictions sharply increased over the weekend, as the illness spread dramatically in Europe and the US, even as it seemed to be spreading more gradually in the Caucasus.

Georgia closed all of its land borders to travelers (cargo can still pass), and barred all foreigners from entering the country for a two-week period starting on March 18. The government closed the country’s ski resorts and Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia said the government was considering closing all restaurants, cafes and bars around the country. The government also recommended that Georgians over 70 years old not go out to public places. As of March 16, Georgia had reported 33 cases of coronavirus.

Azerbaijan announced that it was suspending issuance of visas for 45 days, and that foreigners entering Azerbaijan who were either nationals of or who had recently visited some of the most hard-hit countries would be required to produce a certificate showing that they had tested negative for coronavirus to enter the country. Azerbaijanis coming from those countries would be put in quarantine for 14 or 21 days. As of March 16, Azerbaijan had registered 23 cases of the disease.

But Armenia’s response was the most aggressive.

Concern in the country was heightened after several people in Echmiadzin, a small city just outside Yerevan, were infected by a woman who had recently returned from Italy and then attended an engagement party in the city where she infected more than 10 guests. Pashinyan said the woman had returned to Armenia on February 29, before stringent screening measures had been implemented. Ministry of Health doctors had questioned her about her travels but she hid her sickness from them, he said. Eighteen of the country’s confirmed cases of coronavirus were registered in Echmiadzin, and residents of that city will now be able to leave town only after a health check.

One attendee at the party was an air traffic controller at the country’s main international airport in Yerevan, and starting on March 15 the entire air traffic control team was being isolated at the airport but continuing their work.

Pashinyan himself was tested for coronavirus after having met someone at a campaign event who later turned out to have the dis-

ease. His wife also had recently met with Brazil’s first lady, who was feared to have been exposed to the disease. The couple self-quarantined in the resort area of Lake Sevan for several days pending the results of the test, which came back negative.

The prime minister also had earlier suspended the campaign for a referendum on dissolving the constitutional court, which has become Pashinyan’s top political priority. He had initially announced that he would take leave from his job to campaign full-time on the referendum, but on March 12 announced that he would return to work. As a result of the state of emergency the referendum itself, which had been scheduled for April 5, was postponed.

Sunday masses went on around the country virtually unaffected. “The mass is sacred and the mass heals,” one priest, Ter-Ghazar-Qahana Petrosyan, told local news site medialab.am. “The mass has carried us through plagues and scourges for 2,000 years.”

Justice Minister Rustam Badasyan said that Vice-Premier Tigran Avinyan, who has so far led government efforts to contain the spread of the disease, will be placed in charge of coordinating measures connected with the state of emergency.

According to the declared state of emergency, Armenian citizens will be allowed to leave the country only by plane on condition that upon their return they will enter quarantine or self-quarantine. Entry for foreigners is to be restricted upon recommendations of the Health Ministry based on the current epidemiological situations in countries or territories in question. All arrivals in Armenia will be screened for their health condition and placed under quarantine if they exhibit coronavirus-like symptoms.

Under the decision, authorities are also empowered to set up checkpoints around Armenia, restricting travel of citizens based on the results of medical screenings for coronavirus-like symptoms.

Assemblies and strikes are to be prohibited throughout Armenia. “Mass events” involving more than 20 people, including religious ceremonies, concerts, exhibitions, displays, theater performances, sports, cultural, educational and entertainment events, celebrations and memorial services, can also be banned under the provisions of the state of emergency.

The measure also implies the possibility of regulation of attendance at family occasions like weddings, birthday parties and funerals upon decisions by the authorities.

Schools, universities and kindergartens will remain closed, with remote learning options allowed.

Under the terms of the state of emergency, limitations are also introduced for visits and parcels sent to prisons and military units to preclude the spread of the virus inside these closed institutions.

Citing the need to prevent “panic-mongering”, the government has decided that media reports and posts in social media on some specific aspects of the coronavirus-related situation will have to reflect official reports, and that information reported “in violation of the provisions of this clause must be subject to immediate removal by persons who reported it.”

Pashinyan called on citizens to remain calm. He said that the country has a sufficient supply of food to last it for at least a month even in the unlikely event of all supply chains being cut because of the global pandemic. He asked citizens not to resort to “panic buying.”

The prime minister also assured the public that, if necessary, his government has the capacity to provide more means and effort to ensure due quarantines for those suspected of having been affected by the virus.

Armenia’s market sellers have thus far seen a muted effect from the virus.

At the GUM market in southern Yerevan, one of the city’s largest, most stall owners said they had not experienced major disruptions in trade.

“Most of our stuff is Armenian, so we don’t have many problems,” said Eduard, 62, who sells produce. “Some citrus fruits, grapefruit mostly, is [harder to acquire] now, but not much else.”

And Baregam, 36, had no fears about the quality of the various spices he sells that come from coronavirus-besieged Iran. “Everything is checked thoroughly at the [Armenia-Iran] border,” he said.

The full extent of Armenia’s border closure with Iran remains unclear. While Pashinyan’s comments imply that cross-border movement of people is still possible with a visa, other sources say the land border will be fully closed until March 24.

The measure come after the number of cases originally brought to Armenia from Iran, Italy and France reached 30 on March 16, with more than half of them linked to a single community.

Late on Sunday Armenia’s authorities already stepped up control in Vagharshapat (Echmiadzin), a town with a population of some 45,000 situated about 20 kilometers to the west of capital Yerevan.

Exits from Vagharshapat have been limited to only three, with medical screening of commuters conducted at checkpoints to prevent the possible spread of the disease.





## INTERNATIONAL



The ruins of the castle at the bottom of Lake Van

## Ruins of a 3000-Year-Old Armenian Castle Found in Lake Van – Turkey

VAN (*Archeology World*) – The 3,000-year-old remains of an ancient fortification have been discovered at the bottom of Turkey's largest lake. The underwater excavations were led by Van Yüzüncü Yıl University and the governorship of Turkey's eastern Bitlis Province.

The castle is said to belong to the Iron Age Armenian civilization also known as the Kingdom of Van, Urartu, Ararat and Armenia. The lake itself is believed to have been formed by a crater caused by a volcanic eruption of Mount Nemrut near the province of Van. The current water level of the reservoir is about 150 meters higher than it was during the Iron Age.

Divers exploring Lake Van discovered the incredibly well-preserved wall of a castle, thought to have been built by the Urartu civilization. Experts had been studying the body of water for a decade before it revealed the fortress lost deep below its surface.

The discovery was made by a team of researchers, including Tahsin Ceylan, an underwater photographer and videogra-

pher, diver Cumali Birol, and Mustafa Akkus, an academic from Van Yüzüncü Yıl University.

Legends among the area's population spoke of ancient ruins hidden in the water, and the Van team decided to investigate. Over the course of ten years, they captured images of pearl mullets, microbialites, corals and even a sunken Russian ship, but their prize remained elusive.

Their search has now paid off, uncovering castle stonework that has been protected from the ravages of time by the lake's highly alkaline waters. It is thought the stone structure was built by the Urartians, as the rocks used were favoured by civilization.

The castle, as well as a number of villages and settlements in the area, were built at a time when water levels were much lower than they are today.

Speaking to Hurriyet Daily News, Ceylan said: "Many civilizations and people had settled around Lake Van. They named the lake the 'upper sea' and believed it hid many mysterious

things. With this belief in mind, we are working to reveal the lake's secrets. It is a miracle to find this castle underwater."

The Kingdom of Urartu was an ancient country in the mountainous region southeast of the Black Sea and southwest of the Caspian Sea. Today the region is divided among Armenia, eastern Turkey, and northwestern Iran.

Mentioned in Assyrian sources from the early 13th century BC, Urartu enjoyed considerable political power in the Middle East in the 9th and 8th centuries BC.

The Urartians were succeeded in the area in the 6th century BC by the Armenians. Urartu is an Assyrian name and the people called Urartians called their country Biainili. Their capital Tushpa was located at what is now known as Lake Van.

Most remains of Urartian settlements are found between four lakes: Çildir and Van in Turkey, Urmia in Iran, and Sevan in Armenia, with a sparser extension westward to the Euphrates River.

## Gov. Scrambles to Contain Coronavirus as Turkish Cases Triple

By Ayla Jean Yackley

ISTANBUL (Al-Monitor) – The number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Turkey tripled overnight to 18 on Monday, March 16, and the government ushered in a slate of restrictions to curb the spread of the pandemic that has enveloped much of the world.

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca tweeted overnight that Turkey had 12 more cases of the novel coronavirus, including seven people who had traveled from European countries and three from the United States. At least six people have been infected by a man coming from Europe who had the country's first diagnosis less than a week ago.

The indefinite closure of bars and nightclubs began on Monday, and was rapidly followed with another decree shuttering dozens of public spaces, from theaters to tea gardens, pools and baths, in a dramatic bid to prevent large groups from gathering. Schools are shut for two weeks, and dormitories are being emptied.

Courts have postponed trial hearings except for emergencies or to decide on arrest warrants and visits to the nation's prison population of some 282,000 peo-

ple have been halted, the justice minister said. Spectators are banned from football matches and libraries, art galleries and driving schools are all closing.

Turkey has seen no fatalities from the virus so far, and its infection numbers lag behind those of smaller European and Middle Eastern neighbors.

The government's early decision to suspend travel from China, Italy and Iran, may have helped slow the spread of the virus here, analysts have said.

But a leading medical group warned on Monday it was receiving reports the number of Turkish coronavirus patients may be "far higher" than the official count. Sinan Adiyaman, head of the Turkish Medical Association, said the 7,000 tests Turkey has so far conducted are far too low at this stage and the government needs to decentralize testing to catch more cases.

Late last week, the government suspended flights with nine more European countries and set a Wednesday deadline for Turkish citizens to evacuate back home. A pilgrim returning from holy sites in Saudi Arabia was diagnosed with COVID-19 on March 15.

More than 20,000 people who had traveled to Saudi Arabia for the *umrah* have now returned to Turkey. Social

media posts revealed some were not heeding the government's suggestion that all overseas travelers self-quarantine for two weeks.

Authorities then decided on Sunday to quarantine more than 10,000 pilgrims in the capital Ankara and central cities of Konya and Kayseri. The head of the religious affairs directorate said on Monday that prayers at mosques would not be held for large congregations, but the houses of worship would remain open to individuals.

Stock markets around the world tumbled on Monday and fears about the global economic impact of the outbreak spread to Turkish assets, with stocks tumbling 8 percent and the lira skidding to its lowest level since September 2018.

Finance Minister Berat Albayrak promised to ensure liquidity in the market and additional assistance for sectors that are most impacted. Turkey "is more prepared and vigilant than ever for possible global turbulence," he tweeted, adding that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will detail steps to bolster the economy this week.

Erdogan has not been seen in public since last week.

The main opposition Republican People's Party postponed its annual meeting scheduled for later this month.

## International News

### Azerbaijani Economy At Stake As Oil Prices Plummet

BAKU (Eurasianet.org) – Demand for dollars has spiked in Azerbaijan amid fears of another currency devaluation following a plunge in oil prices.

A feud between Saudi Arabia and Russia led to a sharp drop in oil prices on March 9 and they have remained low, finishing the week at under \$34. Azerbaijan's economy is highly dependent on oil and gas revenues, and its current state budget is based on an oil price of \$53.

The government maintains a de facto peg of the currency, the manat, against the US dollar, and can prop up its budget in times of low international oil prices by devaluing the manat. It did so twice in 2015, creating substantial hardship for ordinary Azerbaijanis who held their savings in manats.

Many Azerbaijanis were seeking to trade their manats for more reliable dollars in anticipation of another potential devaluation. Some banks responded by limiting their sales of dollars.

Natig Jafarli, an economist and the co-founder of the political party REAL, reported that on the morning of March 11 he went to four banks in Baku, none of which were selling dollars; he described the situation as "tense."

### Turkey Reiterates Call to End Crimea 'Occupation'

ISTANBUL (Panorama.am) – Turkey on Monday, March 16, the 6th anniversary of Crimea's "illegal annexation", reaffirmed the territorial integrity of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Anadolu Agency reported.

"Turkey and the international community do not recognize the illegal annexation of the Crimean Autonomous Republic of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, which was based on an illegitimate referendum held six years ago," the country's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

It said that the wellbeing and security of Crimean Tatars was a priority for Ankara.

"It continues to be a priority for Turkey that Crimean Tatars, as a constituent people of Crimea, continue to live in wellbeing and security in their historical homeland, protect their cultural identity, and that their suffering resulting from the occupation is brought to an end," it said.

### New Head Coach of Armenia Squad Named

BARCELONA (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The former manager of such Spanish clubs as Sevilla, Deportivo la Coruna and Athletic Bilbao, Joaquín Caparrós as appointed as the head coach of the Armenian national team on March 10.

According to the Football Federation of Armenia, Caparrós's contract will be valid until November 30, 2021.

Caparrós started his coaching career in his mid-20s and has since managed some 20 clubs in Spain, Switzerland, Qatar and elsewhere.

### Armenia Airline Suspends Flights

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenia Airline made a decision to suspend most of its flights until April 16 due to the spread of the novel coronavirus, the company's deputy CEO Gevorg Khachatryan said on Facebook.

"Armenia Airline suspends majority of its flights until April 16 due to the wide spread of the coronavirus which led to the mass return of the tickets. As of now more than 1500 tickets have been returned, all passengers have been refunded or a day change has been made free of charge. The security of the flight crew and passengers is a priority for the Armenia Airline, despite the huge financial losses", he said.

Gevorg Khachatryan informed that all flights between Lyon and Yerevan are cancelled until April 16, and to and from Tel Aviv until April 9.



# Community News

## Diocese Releases Advisory on Church Functions

NEW YORK — Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel has issued an advisory on upcoming liturgical services, and other church functions, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic:

“I send my blessings and comfort to our people in this season of Great Lent.

The daily developments in the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic are troubling to witness, and are affecting everyone in our society. Our church cannot be unmoved by these developments. In issuing the following directive, the Eastern Diocese has been guided by medical and other professionals, our sister churches, and His Holiness the Catholicos of All Armenians.

### 1. Liturgical Services:

This Sunday, March 15, the Holy Badarak will be conducted as usual so that we may offer our prayers as a people before the holy altar of the Lord. At the same time, those faithful who prefer not to attend church — out of concern for their own health and welfare, and that of their families and society at large—are emphatically urged to stay home. A separate directive will give guidance for the weeks following March 15.

### 2. Non-Liturgical Events:

It is our strongest recommendation that, at least until Easter (April 12), all non-liturgical events in the parishes should be cancelled.

### 3. Resources from Medical Authorities:

We recommend that you follow the directions given by your local authorities, as well as the important information linked here:

The Centers for Disease Control  
The World Health Organization  
The Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO)

### 3. Prayer of Healing:

I am asking all of our faithful, particularly those who are unable to attend church, to offer the following prayer:

“Lord our God, enthroned among the angels, as you gaze here below from your holy heights, look down on all of us, your servants, who are suffering through the fear, uncertainty, pain and death surrounding the current pandemic. Take away every sickness and pain, and restore health and hope to all those who are ailing. Glory, lordship and honor to you, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”

\* \* \*

Naturally, the Diocese will issue further directives as the situation develops.

But most of all, in this season of the year, and amid such an unprecedented situation, let us recall the mystery of Jesus Christ's death on the Cross. Imagine the fear and despair of his followers, in whom Christ had instilled such hope. From their limited human perspective, the sight of Jesus hanging on a cross was an unmitigated disaster. And yet, somehow, in a way they could not yet perceive, the Crucifixion became for all humanity the doorway to the Kingdom of Heaven, with all of its glory and eternal joy.

Let us pray that almighty God, in His own time and mysterious manner, will guide us past the pain of the present moment, to bring life and hope to all humanity.

With my prayers,  
Bishop Daniel Findikyan  
Primate  
March 13, 2020



From left: Moderator Alexis Alexanian with panelists Carineh Martin and Mary Ellen Iskenderian

## AGBU Women Shaping the World

### Conference Adds Unique Voice to the Female Empowerment Movement

NEW YORK — In celebration of International Women's Day and the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the women's right to vote in America, over 200 attendees from across the region, as well as from New England and California, spent the day in the company of female leaders who are making transformational change through their careers, philanthropy and volunteer work.

The sold-out Inaugural AGBU “Women Shaping the World” (WSTW) conference, held in Manhattan on March 7, was organized by a committee of women with three goals in mind: to provide a forum for sharing insights and ideas on challenges and opportunities facing women socially and professionally; create a space to work in solidarity towards gender equality and women's rights at home and abroad; and give women a platform for networking and exploring career development strategies, with guidance from industry specialists.

The diversity and scope of the conference attracted a mix of co-sponsors.

In her welcoming remarks, advisory committee co-chair Claudia Nazarian set the tone for the three-part agenda, promising a day in which “women of all ages and a few brave men will come together to share their stories and leave feeling enlightened, inspired and challenged to do more.” She assured guests that the conference was the first of many more to come.

AGBU Central Board member and Co-Chair of the AGBU Global Women's Empowerment Initiative Ani Manoukian presented a brief overview of AGBU's century-old commitment to the elevation of Armenian women in society. She highlighted how, as early as 1917, AGBU women mobilized a multi-national clothing drive in behalf of child survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. AGBU also opened women's shelters, orphanages and trade schools as well as took up the daunting task of rescuing abducted Armenian women from Turkish homes. By the 1940s, women were serving on the organization's Central Board of Directors. The early 1990s saw Louise Manoogian Simone as AGBU's fifth president, during the critical years of Armenia's independence. Manoukian further noted that today 40 percent of AGBU chairs worldwide are women and, when looking solely at its Young Professionals leadership, the rate increases to 55 percent. She made a compelling case that Armenian women's voices do matter.

The guest speaker segment opened with keynote remarks by Suni Harford, the president of UBS Asset Management. Long known for her advocacy in support of women leaders in finance and business, Harford described her own career path as mostly unplanned, and more a succession of opportunities that opened doors to others. She emphasized the importance of women as consumers and drivers of change, underlining that female empowerment is connected to the bottom line and there must always be an economic component to the movement.

She also shared her “four pearls of wisdom” beginning with visibility within the company's power structure by taking positions or getting involved in special projects that allow access to key decisionmakers in the organization. Next, was don't opt out early when considering leaving the work world to start a family. “You don't know what lies ahead, and you don't know what your companies are going to look like,” she noted. Third on her list was to take risks, saying, “I do believe women have as many opportunities as men, but too many women wait for these opportunities and don't raise their hands to take that risk.” Her final token of advice was to speak up; recounting the time she applied for a leadership position in Tokyo to the surprise of her colleagues. “Everyone assumed I would never take that role, but I had never let anyone know that I wanted it.” Though Hartford's big move never happened, she recalled that advocating for herself started an important dialogue in her workplace and opened other unanticipated doors in her career.

see WOMEN, page 5

## NAASR and Knights of Vartan Issue Most Ever Scholarship Grants

BELMONT, Mass. — During the second half of 2019, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies received the largest ever number of requests and issued the most grants to scholars around the world since the beginning of their partnership in 2007. The following recipients received grants during this period (July-December 2019).

•Nora Bairamian, graduate student, Columbia University, Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies, Columbia University, travel grant to conduct research for MA thesis, “Reassessing the Legacy of Mkrtich Khrimian.” Grant issued by NAASR.

•Sargis Baldaryan, PhD student, Armenian History Chair, Yerevan State University, travel grant to access manuscripts for preparation of critical text of 17th-century trade manuals of Constant of Julfa. Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

•Emre Can Daglioglu, PhD student, History Department, Stanford University, travel grant to conduct archival research for doctoral thesis “Unintended Fatalities: Armenian Victims of the Pontian Genocide.” Grant issued by NAASR.

•Prof. Salah Mahgoub Edris, Faculty of Arts, Dept. of Oriental Languages, Cairo University, travel grant to conduct research for research/translation project on the Armenian-language version of the Story of the Seven Sages and Sinbad, known in Armenian as Patmutiwn kaysern Pontsianosi ew knojn ew ordwoy norin Diokghetianosi ew eotn imas-tasirats. Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

•Dr. Danny Fittante, visiting scholar, Center for Advanced Studies in Sofia (CAS), grant to support fieldwork for research project “Armenian Mobilization/ Intermediation in Contemporary Romania.” Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

•Stas Gorelik, PhD student, Department of Political Science, George Washington University, travel grant to conduct focus groups in Armenia for dissertation covering comparative analysis of Armenia's Velvet Revolution, Moldova's anti-corruption protests in 2015-16, and Ukraine's Euromaidan. Grant issued by NAASR.

•Khachik Grigoryan, managing director, Ankyunacar Publishing (Yerevan), grant to support compilation, translation, and publication of the Armenian full text of “Commentary on the Epistle to Hebrews” by Cyril of Alexandria. Grant issued by NAASR.

•Onnik Kiremitlian, PhD student, Oriental Institute of the Catholic University of Louvain, travel grant to participate in the 18th International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, August 19-23, 2019, presenting paper relating to Armenian-Syriac cultural relations, “Newly-discovered gems from Syriac literature: Armenian translations of Syriac works by Marutha of Tagrit.” Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

•Dr. Sergio LaPorta, Haig and Isabel Berberian Chair of Armenian Studies, CSU Fresno, and Dr. Allison Vacca, Associate Professor of History, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, grant to support inclusion of maps in forthcoming new English translation and edition with an introduction and commentary of the Historical Discourse (Patmabanut'iwn) of Ghewond, to be published by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Grant issued by NAASR and Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

•Dr. Khatchig Mouradian, lecturer, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies Department (MESAAS), Columbia University, travel grant to participate in the 2019 Special Session of “Lessons and Legacies” conference see SCHOLARSHIPS, page 6





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Genocide Research Network Launched at Oxford University

OXFORD, UK – A new initiative to study the Armenian Genocide and its connections to the world today was launched at Pembroke College with a string quartet concert in the Pichette Auditorium on March 9.

The Oxford Network of Armenian Genocide Research (ONAGR), the brainchild of Dr. Meryem Suzan Rosita Kalayci, hopes to foster new research directions in the study of the Armenian genocide, while making it part of global conversations about human rights, witness and genocide prevention.

Co-founder of the network Prof. Theo Maarten van Lint, Calouste Gulbenkian Professor of Armenian Studies, in his introduc-



Prof. Theo Maarten van Lint

tory remarks explained the purpose of the new project: “Combining the wealth of Armenia’s multi-millennia cultural legacy, cutting-edge research in genocide and post-genocide reality represents a significant development in Armenian Studies not only in the University of Oxford but for academia in the country and beyond, as well as in wider society.”

The renowned Chilingirian String Quartet presented a unique program to the diverse audience made of students, faculty members, college representatives and members of communities in Oxford and London. A selection of

Armenian compositions by Komitas, Aslamazian and Mansourian were presented for the first time in Oxford.

In her remarks, Kalayci appealed to the minds and hearts of the audience. “The history of the Armenian Genocide is the history of a war that never ended. The history of a region that never saw peace,” she said, adding that not much has changed in the last one hundred years. “Even the images [of suffering] we see remain the same: the only difference is that now we see them in color and on our social media feeds.”

Conflicts in the Middle East – from the Armenian Genocide during World War I to what is happening in Syria today – have resulted in millions of victims and displaced communities. Surviving victims “have witnessed a world that most of us have not begun to face and never wish to,” Kalayci underlined. “We should remind ourselves that they have paid for our freedom. We owe to them to never look away.” She then called upon everyone “to open the borders of our hearts, minds, houses, colleges, universities



Dr. Meryem Suzan Rosita Kalayci

and countries to prevent history from repeating itself. There is no other way.”

While a brand new research network, ONAGR has already established partnerships with a number of international institutions in locations such as Berlin, Istanbul, Yerevan, Paris and Los Angeles. In June 2019, ONAGR was chosen as one of three networks to be supported by the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH) and has received further funding from the Humanities Cultural Project Fund to create a pop-up Syrian library in the middle of Oxford during Trinity Term 2020. In addition, through extra funding from the John Fell Fund and the British Academy, ONAGR is working with the Oral History Archives at Columbia University (OHAC) to facilitate the digitization and transcription of the latter’s Armenian Oral History Project collection, which is expected to be completed by June 2020.

When asked why should ONAGR study the Armenian Genocide and its relevance to contemporary times, “It is not for the sake of history,” said Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian, a scholar of Armenian Studies in Oxford, “but more crucially to save the future.”

## Middlesex County Sheriff Koutoujian to Co-Chair National Re-Entry Programs and Initiatives Working Group

MEDFORD, Mass. – Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian has been tapped to co-chair a corrections and re-entry-focused working group for the Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice.

The commission was authorized by executive order last October, with the 18 members having been formally appointed in January by Attorney General Bill Barr. The Commission – chaired by Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office Director Phil Keith – is tasked with exploring modern issues affecting law enforcement that most impact the ability of American policing to reduce crime.

As co-chair of the Re-entry Programs and Initiatives Working Group, Sheriff Koutoujian and other members of the panel will advise the Commission on “how prison-

er programming and post-custodial rehabilitation initiatives can reduce recidivism and improve the quality of life for criminal offenders and their communities.”

“Ensuring those placed in the custody of our nation’s jails and prisons have access to targeted programming, continuity of care and appropriate levels of post-release supervision are key to improving outcomes for individuals, families and our communities,” said Sheriff Koutoujian. “I believe that by tailoring and targeting our efforts to the specific underlying needs of individuals – as we have in Middlesex County with our medication-assisted treatment, incarcerated veterans and emerging adults programs – we will better enhance public safety. I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure we provide Commission members with the best and most well-informed advice and support

as we carry out our work in the months ahead.”

Fifteen working groups in total will assist the Commission, with panels looking at issues including: victim services; officer safety, health and wellness; data and reporting; grant programs; juvenile justice and youth crime; and technology.

“The Working Groups are a critical component of the Attorney General’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, as they cover wide ranging issues and themes impacting law enforcement, criminal justice components and our communities – everything from entire community groups to individuals in law enforcement,” said Keith. “Each working group member’s diverse perspectives and experiences will provide tremendous value to the Commission’s overall mission.”

## Conference Adds Unique Voice to the Female Empowerment Movement

WOMEN, from page 4

Picking up the threads of Harford’s speech, panel moderator Alexis Alexanian, an independent producer and former president of the New York Women in Film & Television, opened the discussion with two high-powered Armenian-American women who exemplified the “shaping the world” concept: Mary Ellen Iskenderian, president and CEO of Women’s World Banking, the world’s largest network of microfinance institutions and banks; and Carineh Martin, a leading luxury brands executive who co-founded RAD, which partners with celebrity talent and brands to use the Red Carpet for advocacy and social good.

The conversation continued over lunch, where attendees could talk shop with peers and make new social and professional connections. An hour later, they were back in their seats for the unveiling of AGBU EmpowerHer, presented by AGBU Central Board Member and Co-Chair of the AGBU Global Women’s Empowerment Initiative Arda Haratunian.

EmpowerHer is a multi-dimensional initiative designed to promote gender equality in the Republic of Armenia, a country in which women (who represent over half the country’s population) are still struggling for a seat at the table in business, economy and politics. They are also still grappling with outworn cultural norms that undervalue females in society and subject them to intergenerational household pressures that impede their personal growth.

Thanks to the early support of donors across the diaspora, the AGBU EmpowerHer model has the capacity to combine education, train-



Members of WSTW Conference Organizing Committee

ing, institutional support, mentorship, and expertise from program partners and collaborators worldwide, including AGBU Hye Geen Centers for pregnant women and the Women’s Support Center in Armenia for victims of domestic violence and abuse.

Haratunian highlighted multiple ways that

EmpowerHer can help Armenia’s women gain social and economic independence, including learning workplace fundamentals and enrolling for trainings from Coding and IT to entrepreneurship and community leadership, along with a cycle of support through alumni services.

She also invited the attendees to get involved

in the EmpowerHer initiative through volunteering, connecting, mentoring, fundraising, donating, and other ways to help enhance the role of Armenia’s women in business and society.

The remainder of the day was dedicated to networking and advice-gathering through small roundtables grouped by industries.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# NAASR and Knights of Vartan Issue Most Ever Scholarship Grants

SCHOLARSHIPS, from page 4

in Munich, Nov. 4-7, 2019, to present paper "Unarmed and Dangerous: Resistance in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship." Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

• Sona Nersisyan and Lusine Tanajyan, researchers and PhD students, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of The National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia (NAS RA), travel grant to present joint paper "Diasporic Identity and Cross Cultural Issues" at 17th International Polish Sociological Congress, 11-14 September in Wroclaw, Poland. Grant issued by NAASR.

• Dr. Milena Oganessian, research associate, Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., travel grant to conduct research in Los Angeles for publication project on American theater and film director Rouben Mamoulian's Armenian heritage as it relates to his art. Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

• Dr. Janice Okoomian, assistant professor of Gender and Women's Studies, Rhode Island College, grant to support translation and transliteration of interviews with staff and clients of women's resource centers in Yerevan

and other areas for planned academic publication. Grant issued by NAASR.

• Dr. Hayk Paronyan, associate professor, Regional Autonomous University of the Andes (UNIANDES), Ecuador, travel grant to participate in Central Eurasian Studies Society 20th Annual Conference, George Washington University, Washington, D.C., Oct. 2019, to present paper "Political crisis in Armenia in 2018: Reasons and Consequences." Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

• James Robins, author and journalist, grant request to support travel and source material acquisition for forthcoming book project "When We Dead Awaken: Australia, New Zealand, and the Armenian Genocide." Grant issued by NAASR.

• Dr. Lusine Sargsyan, Junior Researcher, Matenadaran (Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts), and visiting lecturer at Chair of Armenian Art History and Theory, Yerevan State University, travel grant to participate in 12th International Congress of South-East European Studies, September 2019, in Bucharest, Romania, presenting paper on the codicological, paleographic, iconographic and stylistic analysis of the Armenian Gospel, copied in 1354 in Surkhat' (Crimea), in the session

entitled "From Ani to Romania: History, Tradition and Iconography." Grant issued by NAASR.

• Dr. Alvard Semirjyan, Associate Professor, Faculty of Armenian Philology-Chair of Theory of Literature and Literary Criticism, Yerevan State University, travel grant to participate in Surrealisms 2019 (2nd Conference of the International Society for the Study of Surrealism [ISSS]), University of Exeter, August 2019, to present paper "Surrealism in Contemporary Armenian Art and Literature." Grant issued by NAASR.

• Dr. Ani Shahnazaryan, Senior Researcher, Matenadaran (Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts), travel grant to participate in Digital Armenian Conference at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris, October 2019, to present paper on "A digital critical edition of Aghvesagirk." Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

Dr. Khachatur Stepanyan, Chair of History of Armenia, Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan, travel grant to conduct research in the ARF archives in Watertown, MA, fall 2019, for project "The Activity of the ARF in Soviet Armenia, 1921-

1933." Grant issued by NAASR.

Sipana Tchakerian, PhD candidate in archaeology, University of Paris 1-Panthéon Sorbonne, Labex RESMED, and University Aix-Marseille, travel grant to carry out field research in Armenia and Georgia for thesis "Les monuments crucifères à stèle quadrilatère d'Arménie et d'Ibérie orientale de l'Antiquité tardive au haut Moyen-Age." Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

## Grant Deadlines and Academic Committee

All relevant grant proposals are reviewed four times per year (March 15, June 15, September 15, and December 15) by NAASR's Director of Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian and the NAASR Academic Advisory Committee, currently consisting of Prof. Kevork Bardakjian, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Prof. Valentina Calzolari, University of Geneva; Prof. Michael J. Connolly, Boston College; Prof. Bedross Der Matossian, University of Nebraska; and Prof. Christina Maranci, Tufts University.

Guidelines for potential applicants are available online at <https://naasr.org/pages/grants-academic-outreach>. Questions and inquiries can be directed to Marc Mamigonian at [marc@naasr.org](mailto:marc@naasr.org).

## OBITUARY

### Leon Nigohosian, Sr. (1938-2020)

#### Man of Family and Faith

EASTON, Penn. — Leon Nigohosian, Sr., of Easton, and formerly of Haworth, NJ, who tirelessly dedicated his time and professional service for decades to the Armenian Church and countless Armenian causes, passed away on March 9. He was 81.

Born on November 28, 1938, in Troy, NY, Nigohosian was the son of the late Siragon and Lucine (Bedian) Nigohosian.

He graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in 1961 with a bachelor's degree in metallurgical engineering, and later received his doctorate of law from Albany Law School.

Early in his career, he was employed at North American Philips Corporation and then worked for Radio Corporation of America (RCA) as a patent attorney. He later opened his own private law practice in New Jersey.

He was dedicated to the Armenian Church for much of his life, serving on the Parish Council of St. Thomas Armenian Church (Tenafly, NJ) and as a Sbarabed of the

Knights of Vartan (Bakradouny Lodge #38). He leaped into action when the City of New York was going to permanently cancel the permit allowing the Knights of Vartan to hold their annual commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in Times Square. He not only got the permit restored for future years, he also planned and coordinated the entire event and stepped up as the commemoration's master of ceremonies that year. He did not want any glory or recognition for his efforts; he did it for the church and to honor the martyrs of the Armenian Genocide.

He was, most importantly, a man devoted to his family. He demonstrated his love for them through his devotion to his wife, Elsie, whom he cherished throughout their 57 years of marriage; his love for his two sons, Leon Jr. and Steve; his love for his daughter-in-law Tina and his three grandchildren, Michael, John and Stephan; and to his son Steve's partner, Tanya. He always put his family before himself. He also helped his friends and strangers who were in need,

because he cared for peoples' happiness and well-being, too.

Leon loved spending time with his three grandchildren, and truly enjoyed spending the winters on Marco Island, FL., where he was very involved in the Armenian Church of Southwest Florida (Naples, FL), including serving as "godfather" of the Blessing of Water service. Leon was also known for his trademark unlit cigar, his wonderful sense of humor, and his firm handshake, which left an indelible mark on all who met him.

He is survived by his wife, Elsie Tatoian Nigohosian; his sons, Leon Nigohosian, Jr. and his wife Tina of Nazareth, Pa., and Stephan S. Nigohosian and his partner, Tanya Vartivarian of Oradell, NJ. He is also survived by his grandchildren, Stephan, Michael and John.



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### Dr. Hagop Sarkis Pambookian Psychologist, Academic

ROYAL OAK, Mich. — Dr. Hagop Sarkis Pambookian died on March 13. He was 87.

A first-generation immigrant from Lebanon and son of Armenian Genocide survivors, Dr. Pambookian earned his undergraduate degree from the American University of Beirut and chose to come to the United States from Lebanon in August 1961 to earn his advanced psychology degrees. He received his master's degree from Columbia University Teachers College (New York City) and his doctorate degree from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

His career spanned decades, working as an instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, research assistant, and lecturer, including work as a Senior Fulbright lecturer at Yerevan State University in Armenia. Pambookian was an emeritus professor of psychology at Shawnee State University in Ohio. Dr.

Pambookian helped establish and shape the psychology program following his association with the university in 1987, including designing new courses, leading to the creation of SSU's psychology degree.

He was a longtime member of St. Sarkis Church.

He was the brother of Josephine (the late Norayr) Karakouzian of Massachusetts, Aram (Rose) Pambookian of Michigan, the late Ovsanna (the late Emmanuel) Karageuzian and the late Apraham (the late Hripsime) Pambookian. He also will be missed by his nieces, nephews, friends, fellow educators and former students.

The funeral was at St. John Armenian Church on Thursday, March 19, with a burial service in Oakland Hills Memorial Gardens in Novi, Mich.

### Giragosian

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COMMUNITY NEWS



# SPONSOR A TEACHER IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Social and Environmental Factors in Starting New Forests: Lessons from ATP's 25 Years of Experience

By Jason Sohigian

WOBURN, Mass. — Armenia's goal to double its forest cover by 2050 as part of its commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change has captured the attention of the public and of professionals in the field. It was discussed at "Forest Summit: Global Action and Armenia," organized by Armenia Tree Project (ATP) and American University of Armenia's Acopian Center for the Environment in October 2019.

The reforestation goal presents many challenges and opportunities for Armenia, including creation of new nurseries, expansion of habitat for plants and animals, and joining the fight against global climate change because trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. One concern expressed by experts at the Forest Summit is the availability of land. At least 250,000 hectares of new forest is needed to achieve Armenia's long-term goal.

Given Armenia's diversity of microclimates and potential limitations on available land, creative approaches to reforestation and afforestation must be implemented. ATP has 25 years of experience successfully planting in all regions of Armenia and will continue to provide leadership in Armenia's sustainable development. Experts from Lebanon, Kenya, and Israel who participated in the Summit offered interesting examples of creative solutions employed in their countries.

The terms reforestation and afforestation are sometimes used interchangeably, and it's worth pausing for a moment to define them. Reforestation refers to planting trees on land that was previously forest, whereas afforestation refers to planting trees on patches of land which were not previously covered in forest.

Forester Omri Bonnehi shared several insights during the Summit from the experiences of KKL-Jewish National Fund. For example, from 1920 to 1970 afforestation in Israel was characterized by dense coniferous plantations. A massive dieback of the planted pine trees during the 1970's and 1990's caused by an invasive pest triggered a change in forestry policy. "We realized 'putting all our eggs in one basket' by planting monocultures of this one tree was not a sensible approach to develop a sustainable forest," explained Dr. Bonnehi. "We changed our forestry policy in 1990. The new policy had the goal to create mixed, multilayer forests that more closely resemble natural forests."

This is instructive for Armenia, which has many Soviet-era monoculture plantations. He urged Armenia to avoid Israel's past mistakes with monoculture plantings, and find the right

way to create mixed forests that are healthier than monoculture plantations. The concern about monoculture plantings was repeated throughout the Summit by international and local experts.

Bonnehi also shared examples from the deserts of southern Israel, where there is a low rainfall similar to Yerevan. JNF has restored landscapes in these areas that were destroyed by overgrazing and soil erosion. Planting trees in dry riverbeds and training farmers to harvest water have been successful.

Keynote speaker Dr. Anthony Davis reminded summit attendees that now is the time to define what the future



The Sose and Allen Memorial Forest in Stepanavan was planted with a mix of tree species including ash (pictured here), oak, maple, pine, and wild apple.

forests will look like. With thoughtful planning about which trees to plant and where to plant them, Armenia's reforestation efforts will renew, regenerate, and sustain rural economies and natural ecosystems.

ATP has more than 1,000 hectares of new forests planted at over 30 sites. One example is the Sose and Allen Memorial Forest established in 2014 in Stepanavan. "The ATP team is always scouting for locations in northern Armenia to plant new forests," explained Forestry Manager Navasard Dadyan. "When we got to Stepanavan and applied to the municipality about land, they offered

this 17-hectare location for a new forest."

The reason ATP's forests are planted in northern Armenia is because the Mirak Family Reforestation Nursery is located in the Lori region, and seedlings do best if planted in a similar environment to where they originated.

The Sose and Allen Forest was planted as a living memorial for the young couple, Sose Thomassian and Allen Yekikian, who died in an auto accident in 2013. Their friends and family crowdfunded to support this project with ATP, and many of their friends were present at the first plantings in 2014.

The site is a prominent hillside in Stepanavan where there is an ancient cross-stone that is often visited by local people. The local community only has one public park and this area will allow people to enjoy the shade of these new trees. The location is grassland so it has been used for livestock grazing.

"The Sose and Allen Memorial Forest improves the ecology of the area overall," noted Dadyan. "Eventually, the public will be able to collect mushrooms that grow in the forest, and spend hot summer days there in the shade. It's also worth noting that the local community is aware of the effects of climate change, and recognized the importance of forests as a solution to the problem."

In order to identify and establish new forest areas, ATP's experts meet with the local community and leadership to get their agreement on the use of a site. Consensus and cooperation is essential in order to ensure the sustainability of the planting over time. In the case of Stepanavan, ATP met with the community to communicate their plans, and the feedback was positive. This is also important because many sites require protection and long-term monitoring and maintenance. In order to protect the Sose and Allen Forest from damage and livestock grazing, the area was fenced off before any plantings began. ATP's experts examined the soil to determine which species of trees would survive and thrive in the new forest.

Dadyan recalled the first year of establishing the site: "Two bus-loads of volunteers from Lori joined the planting. Another big bus came from Yerevan, including friends and family of Sose and Allen. We also created temporary jobs by hiring 50-60 people to help plant the trees."

From 2014 to 2019, 73,589 trees were planted at the site including the following species: oak, ash, maple, pine, and wild apple. The survival rate is 60 percent, which is higher than international average for a forestry planting.

As Armenia plans to double its forest cover by 2050, a site selection process such as that used in the example of ATP's Sose and Allen Forest will be applied all over the country by every organization involved in the reforestation effort.

## Guleserian Becomes First Woman to Lead Congenital Heart Surgery Program US

By Will Maddox

DALLAS (*D Magazine*) — Congenital heart surgeon Dr. Kristine J. Guleserian was appointed medical director of the Medical City Children's Hospital Heart Center on March 9. The facility treats congenital heart defects and cardiovascular disease in children.

Guleserian (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2017/04/06/tiniest-patients-with-biggest-problems-saved-by-dr-kris-guleserian/>) is a board-certified thoracic and congenital heart surgeon, who was featured in this *D Magazine* story, gained fame for performing a heart transplant on the world's smallest patient at the time, a 5-pound newborn. She chairs the Workforce on Congenital Heart Surgery for the Society of Thoracic Surgeons and is the only woman to lead a congenital heart surgery program in the United States.

The heart center also added Dr. Javier E. Brenes, a congenital heart surgeon, has also joined Medical City Children's Congenital Heart Surgery. He formerly directed the congenital heart surgery program in San Jose, Costa Rica.

"Our goal is to ensure the very best outcomes for our tiniest and most fragile patients by using the most innovative and least invasive techniques," said Guleserian via release.



Dr. Kristine Guleserian (Courtesy: Medical City Children's Hospital)

"The expansion of the Congenital Heart Surgery Program at Medical City Children's Hospital brings unsurpassed pediatric cardiovascular care to the families in North Texas and beyond," said Jessica O'Neal, CEO of Medical City Children's Hospital via release. "The addition of world-renowned Dr. Guleserian and Dr. Brenes will allow us to further advance our exceptional congenital heart program and continue providing the exceptional outcomes and highly individualized, patient-centered care that are synonymous with our children's hospital."

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# Arts & Living

## Tjeknavorian Film Wins in New York

NEW YORK – The American University of Armenia (AUA) lecturer Zareh Tjeknavorian's film "Crowned & Conquering" won the "In the Spirit of Analysis & Understanding Award" and a cash prize at the Magikal Charm Experimental Video and Film Festival (MCEVFF). The event took place at the Dolby 88 Screening Room in Manhattan on February 20. Tjeknavorian teaches Filmmaking and Cinema Studies in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS).

Now in its eighth year, the MCEVFF has established itself as one of the most distinctive festivals of underground cinema in New York. The program showcased a selection of 30 idiosyncratic films in what Tjeknavorian calls "a one-of-a-kind exhibition of visionary cinema; of films that are not merely esoteric in content but in form. Films that, in the words of the festival, express 'a unique personal language.'" According to the MCEVFF: "our intention is to provide a medium for the imaginative, strangely beautiful expression of personal experience(s), truth(s) and transformation. Themes will emphasize the mystical, mysterious, 'magikally alchemical' nature of performance, music, poetry, and visual composition."

Festival co-founder Paul Ricciardelli described Tjeknavorian's film as a "piece of visual poetry ... Beautifully wrought ... The work is powerful, 'Angeresque', thought-provoking." Addressing the director, he added: "It is profoundly personal work, such as



Zareh Tjeknavorian

yours, which creates the 'Heart & Spirit' of the festival."

"Crowned & Conquering," shot on 16mm and 8mm film, was recently awarded the Grand Prix at the Kinoskop 1st International Festival of Analog Experimental Cinema and Audio Visual Performance in Belgrade, Serbia. "Zareh Tjeknavorian lulls us into the state of a weightless mystical dream," the jury wrote in conferring the award. "His allegorical visions appear to open time-space wormholes through which we are transposed into the mythical dimension."

Earlier in 2019 "Crowned & Conquering" won the Theremin Award for Best Sound Design at the First Hermetic International Film Festival (FHIFF) in Venice, Italy, where it was also nominated for Best Experimental Film.



From left, Teacher Madeline Kachadoorian, Jill Eskender, and Event Chair Mary Ekmalian.

## ACC of Fresno Showcases Culinary Art Of Kharpert Kufta

FRESNO – The Armenian Cultural Conservancy (ACC) of Fresno hosted their third annual Armenian Heritage Culinary Art Class on January 25, 2020 in the Armenian-American Citizens' League Hall and kitchen at the California Armenian Home (CAH). The recipe selected to showcase was the Kharperts-style kofta – so well-known and loved yet made less often in today's homes. With expertise, the CAH Home Guild co-hosted this session as they prepare and sell this specialty dish bi-annually.

Guild member Elsie Bedrosian demonstrated mixing the triple-ground lean meat with water-soaked fine cracked wheat in a Hobart mixer and how to assess its "doneness." Delicately forming the outer shell is part of this multi-step process that requires much skill. To allow more time for practicing this particular technique, ACC and Guild member Mary Ekmalian prepared, formed, and refrigerated the por stuffing into walnut-size pieces the day before.

Approximately 40 participants including teachers, students, and guests were in attendance. To enable personalized lessons, each teacher instructed a small group of students. The community kofta experts who accepted the invitation to teach were: Angel Bardezbanian, Anna Garabedian, Madeline Kachadoorian, Patty Kalajia, and Arda Toktas. After each group of students completed a couple of trays of kofta, ACC and Guild member Linda Kaloustian demonstrated how to prepare the broth. Students and community guests enjoyed a kofta lunch which included salad, cheese boerag, bourma and persimmon cookies. Everyone received a printed recipe and additional kofta to-go.

The CAH Home Guild's purpose is to promote and serve the general welfare of the California Armenian Home. Throughout the year, they host bake sales and frozen kofta sales to benefit the California Armenian Home.



KUFTA event chair Mary Ekmalian speaking to the participants.

## Diran & Garo Tavitjan:

'We Represent Macedonia But Respect Our Armenian Roots'

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/SKOPJE – The Tavitjan brothers from Skopje, Macedonia, Diran (born in 1977) and Garo (born in 1982) work in the fields of jazz, contemporary, ethno, experimental and instrumental music and they are known as high-quality composers, performers and music producers who have collaborated and shared the stage with many jazz giants. After long years in the fusion band Paramecium, they founded the Tavitjan Brothers music brand, which has given more than 500 international concerts across Europe and the US. Their jazz



Diran and Garo Tavitjan

album won the national award in 2006 for the first time in Macedonia's history; they also received awards for the best concert, best albums, best producers, music ambassador's award, etc. They have produced more than 300 compositions, musical theatre works and short movie soundtracks.

In 2009 Diran and Garo received awards for their project Macedonian Heart beats in 7/8 as the best producers and arrangers, the music video of the year and the best project of the year. In their rich music career they have released original compositions as well as projects with jazz standards, traditional music, projects with compositions of classical composers in new jazz arrangements for symphonic orchestra and trio. Their numerous worldwide performances also include the legendary Blue Note jazz club as well as Carnegie Hall in New York City, being the first Macedonian musicians who have performed sold out shows at both of these legendary venues. There had also concerts at Nublu, Mc Gallery, Drummers Collective and several others in the US. Their best-selling CD sold more than 100,000 copies.

Their father Garabet Tavitjan – a rock legend himself – is a drummer, composer and founding member of the Yugoslavian band Leb i Sol (they have sold more than 600,000 LPs and CDs in the last 30 years), and leader of his jazz rock band Paramecium. He is the founder of the Balkan and Macedonian modern rhythm

see TAVITJAN, page 13





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook Presentation Organized by New Paths at Baikar

WATERTOWN – The authors of *The Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook: Recipes and Stories from Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora*, presented their book on March 10 at an event organized by New Paths-Bridging Armenian Women hosted at the Tekeyan Cultural Association's Baikar Building.

Kristin Asadourian of New Paths introduced the authors, thanked Tekeyan and Baikar for allowing use of their hall, and said that the event was consonant with the goal of New Paths; namely, to connect Armenian women, to

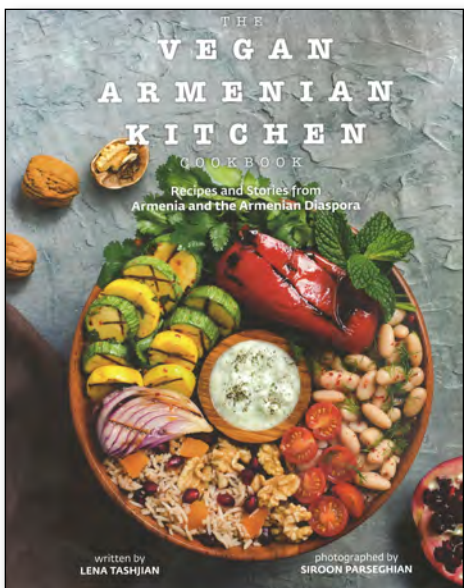


Kristin Asadourian (photo Aram Arkun)

support each other and to lift each other up. Author Lena Tashjian and photographer for the book Siroom Parseghian used slide illustrations to accompany their talk.

The 265-page book contains 119 recipes from both the Republic of Armenia and the diaspora. It covers a wide range of items, including herbs, pastes, syrups, drinks, breakfast, salads, soups and stews, bread, main dishes like various types of *dolma* (tolma) and bean dishes, accompaniments (especially various rice, bulghur and potato dishes) and desserts. Information is provided on folk practices like reading coffee grounds or offering toasts at gatherings. The photographs make the various food items seem tantalizingly close and appealing.

The pages are sprinkled with Armenian sayings printed both in the Armenian alphabet and translated into English (e.g. “To know a person, you must eat a handful of salt with them”). The



index at the end can help readers quickly navigate through the book.

Tashjian lives in Toronto, Canada, while Parseghian lives in Los Angeles. Tashjian said that she went vegan while studying at college, while Parseghian became convinced in 2011 after watching the documentary film “Forks over Knives” (<https://www.forksoverknives.com/the-film/#gs.00wudo>). Tashjian went to Armenia through Birthright Armenia in 2011. She ended up spending six years there, volunteering first for Green Lane (<https://www.facebook.com/greenlane/>), an agricultural assistance nongovernmental organization (NGO) through Birthright and then working for the same NGO and learning about farms and foods through them. She said her



From left, Lena Tashjian, Siroom Parseghian, and two guests with the cookbooks at the event.

writing afterwards was independently done for various local and international publications on food, nutrition, travel and culture.

Siroom went to Armenia through Birthright Armenia in 2012 and met Tashjian there. Afterwards, in the US, she started a production company called Rhinofly Productions (<https://www.rhinoflyproductions.com/>) with her husband for product photography. She soon tried food photography for a client and fell in love with styling and photographing food. After Tashjian returned to Canada, she started a blog and YouTube channel on vegan Armenian recipes and food. Parseghian contacted Tashjian to ask for some recipes. Then the latter came to Los Angeles and the two reunited after six years. Tashjian proposed creating a cookbook, which was officially released in January 2020. It took them one year of working long distance to complete it, as well as one further visit in March of last year.

Tashjian said that she had several goals for the project. First, she wished to diversify veganism, which she thought was being portrayed as inaccessible and expensive, with lots of spe-

ciality ingredients. Secondly, she said she wished to introduce Armenian cuisine to a completely new audience. Thirdly, she wanted to inspire Armenians, who seem to think that cutting down on animal products would essentially mean giving up Armenian foods.

In the book, Tashjian added the following: “As both my maternal and paternal grandparents were survivors of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, I understood early on that food has meaning, and it is political. My grandparents used their memories of food and cooking as a way to tell stories of the lands they were forcibly removed from and to preserve this unrecognized history, passing it down from generation to generation.” She noted its positive significance: “Armenian cuisine in both the Armenian diaspora and Armenia, is associated with a never-ending sense of abundance, generosity, and oftentimes a grandmother who takes it upon herself to lovingly (or forcefully) make sure that everyone is well-fed.”

At the presentation, Tashjian said she was happy to realize that Armenian food could stand on its own feet separate from general

Middle Eastern recipes. She tested and developed recipes. She found it sometimes necessary to cook classics of Armenian cuisine in different ways, with some modern options. Choosing was difficult, and some recipes that were too similar to others had to be eliminated. In general the recipes were not difficult and do not take too long to make. Some that are not in the book will eventually be placed on the website.

Tashjian wrote their history and stories. Parseghian worked on the illustrations. She explained that she first created mood boards to get inspiration for what colors she needed to use and bought props from US and Armenian stores. She even borrowed items from people's houses and created backgrounds. Parseghian then had to cook the food and make it look beautiful. She said that meant cooking it more than once to get it right, and often photographing certain items multiple times.

The duo explained that as a self-published work, it is only sold online on its website and at a few physical stores like Abril Bookstore in Glendale and Hamazkayin Bookstore in Toronto. The duo launched a online crowdfunding Indiegogo campaign (<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/vegan-armenian-kitchen-cookbook#/>) as way to market the idea and offset some expenses. Tashjian said that though not all expenses were covered (\$6,440 was raised), it was still helpful. There were also a number of helpful sponsors, including Tazah, VanArdi, Cleo Digital, Meline's Garden, Hermine Travel, Yamchops, and Nane.

For more information on the cookbook, see <https://veganarmeniankitchen.com/>. There is also a YouTube page with some of the recipes in action (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzbWH4ztuCP4JMI0UdIAtw/>). The sale of each cookbook also leads to a donation to the Centaur Animal-Assisted Therapy and Rescue Center, established in 2008 in Ushi, Armenia.

See the accompanying sample recipe from the cookbook for *tertanoush* (also known as *sari burma*) below as well as the recipe for olive and walnut salad (shepherd's dinner) in Christine Vartanian Datian's column this week from the same cookbook. Our website will present a video pertaining to *tertanoush*, also courtesy of Tashjian and Parseghian.

## Rolled Tertanoush

(Makes 4 rolls)

*Tertanoush*, more commonly known as *baklava*, is a layered sweet pastry using phyllo, walnuts, and simple syrup. The rolled option is one of the easiest ones to prepare, and although *tertanoush* traditionally contains both butter and honey, it can be made without animal by-products, making it a great dessert for Lent. I've even heard that the word *baklava* originates from “bahk” (Lent) and “lavash,” which means a butter- and honey-free version may just be the norm!

Simple Syrup (recipe below)

4 sheets of phyllo dough  
2 cups walnuts  
1 tsp cinnamon  
1 tsp sugar  
1 cup coconut oil, unrefined or refined, depending on preference  
Handful of blanched almonds or pistachios, ground, for garnish (optional)  
Pinch of salt

If phyllo is in freezer, remove the four sheets and cover them, allowing them to get to room temperature. If making the syrup, do it now, so it cools in time for when you need it.

In a food processor, process the walnuts. Mix processed walnuts with sugar and cinnamon.



Preheat oven to 300oF (150oC). In a pot on the stove, double boil or melt the coconut oil so it is easily spreadable. Brush coconut oil all across the phyllo sheets generously, making sure to keep the sheets you are not using covered with a damp towel. Pour approximately 1/3 cup of the ground walnuts onto the lower half of the phyllo sheet, spreading it out as best as you can. Place a thin wooden pole on the side with the ground walnuts and begin tightly rolling up the pastry, starting with the side with the ground walnuts.

Once you reach the halfway point, brush on more coconut oil on the rolled half. At three-quarters of the way, brush more coconut oil (the more generous with the oil now, the better the end result will be). Finish rolling, and brush coconut oil all over the phyllo, making sure to get the side where the opening is. With your hands, push the phyllo inwards, towards the center, so that it's wrinkled and tight. Slide it off the stick onto a baking tray.

Cook for about 30 minutes, until the *tertanoush* is golden brown. Flip midway through. Immediately pour the cooled syrup over the rolled phyllo dough. When done correctly, you should hear a prominent sizzling sound, which means the pastries will absorb the syrup. Top them with ground blanched almond or pistachio, and a sprinkle of salt if desired.

Let the *tertanoush* cool completely, then cut diagonally. Keep the pastries in a container in the fridge or freeze them—they will taste even better after they sit in the fridge for a few hours or overnight.

**Simple Syrup**

2 cups sugar  
1 cup water  
1 tbsp lemon juice  
1/2 tbsp rose water (optional)

Combine sugar and water in a saucepan and bring to a boil. No need to stir. Once the mixture is boiling, reduce heat to low-medium, and cook for 10 minutes. Stir in the lemon juice and cook for another 3 to 4 minutes before removing from heat and adding in the rose water (if using). Allow to cool completely, pour into an airtight container, and store in the fridge.





ARTS & LIVING

# Replica of Tatev Monastery Complex Exhibited For the First Time in Washington

WASHINGTON – The miniature of the Tatev Monastery Complex and the replica of a 15-16th century cross-stone kept in the museum area of the monastery complex were exhibited for the first time at the Museum of the Bible in Washington D.C. on March 7.

The exhibits were donated to the museum by Initiatives for Development of Armenia (IDeA) Foundation and the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative ahead of the 10th anniversary of construction of Wings of Tatev aerial tramway and launch of Tatev Revival Project.

Within the Tatev Revival Project, the Tatev Monastery Complex, one of the religious, cultural and enlightenment centers of Armenia in the 9th century, is being renovated.

IDeA Foundation is sponsoring 150 projects aimed at preservation and restoration of cultural heritage in Armenia and the Armenian World.

The donated works will become part of the permanent exhibition representing the Tatev Monastery Complex at the Museum of the Bible. They will also be showcased at a major exhibition “Breath of God: Armenia and the

Bible,” which will be held from September 2021 through March 2022. The exhibition will be dedicated to Armenia as the first country to have adopted Christianity as an official religion.

“Tatev Monastery will have a central role in the ‘Breath of God’ exhibition. We hope that guests are inspired to visit the historic and beautiful site of Tatev and the surrounding area. This exhibition will be the first fully Bible-focused major exhibition on Armenia, which will have a special emphasis on Armenian-Americans and the American Diaspora in relation to the Bible. It will also be the most technologically advanced major exhibition on Armenia to date, and it will include many artifacts never before shown outside of their country of holding”, said Dr. Jeffrey Kloha, Chief Curatorial Officer at Museum of the Bible.

The visitors will learn about the Armenian Bible, history of the Armenian Church, rituals and liturgy, Armenian language and alphabet, Armenian church art and cultural heritage, the Armenian Genocide, history of revival of Armenian national identity intertwined with the Bible.



The replica of the Tatev Monastery Complex



Representatives from the Armenian government, including Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesyan, second from right, and the Armenian Church in the US, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, and from the Museum of the Bible in Washington D.C. with the replica of the Tatev Monastery Complex

The exhibition will also focus on one of the biblical topics - “Following the Flood: The Second Chance of the Humanity” and the story of Noah’s Arch on the biblical Mount Ararat. The latter is also the key idea underlying #AraratChallenge? global movement of Aurora Humanitarian Initiative as a global symbol of salvation and revival. Like Armenian orphan

children who survived the Armenian Genocide got the chance to start a new life, #AraratChallenge initiative calls on joining efforts to give a second chance to those who most need it now. The exhibition to be held in Washington will present to Armenians, the world and whole humanity the symbol of the second chance.

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# English Translation of Keljik’s *Armenian-American Sketches* Published by Cal State University Press, Fresno

FRESNO – Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Berberian Coordinator of the Armenian Studies Program, announced that the English translation of Bedros Keljik’s *Armenian-American Sketches* has been published by the Armenian Series of The Press, at California State University, Fresno.

“Keljik’s stories offer us a glimpse into the soul of the Armenian people, whether in their historic homeland or finding their way in America.” Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern).

Co-editor Lou Ann Matossian familiarizes the reader to Keljik in her introduction. She discusses how author, activist, and entrepreneur Bedros Arakel Keljik (1874–1959) belongs to the founding generation of Armenian-American authors, yet his “sketches” of early immigrant life are only now emerging. Keljik was a maternal uncle of Vahan Totovents (author of *Life on the Old Roman Road* and other works) and an elder brother of novelist and poet Krikor Keljik (“K. Devrish”).

A foreword by co-editor Christopher Atamian discusses the genesis of the book, and the sig-

*Armenian-American Sketches* by Bedros Keljik; edited by Christopher Atamian, Lou Ann Matossian, and Barlow Der Mugrdechian (9 x 6, 195 pp. \$20.00 paper, ISBN 13: 978-0-912201-61-0) has been published as Volume 8 in the Armenian Series, of The Press at California State University, Fresno. In English.

nificance of its publication. He places Keljik’s works in the early history of Armenian-American literature. Atamian also notes the role of translator Aris Sevag, whose meticulous work has brought Keljik’s work to life.

*Armenian-American Sketches* includes 29 short stories written originally in Armenian by Bedros Keljik. Twenty of the short stories were translated by noted Aris Sevag, one by Lou Ann Matossian, and eight of the stories originally published in *Hairenik*, were translated by Vartan Matiossian.

The volume also includes an enlightening biography of Keljik, “An Armenian Odyssey: From the Euphrates to the Mississippi,” written by his grandchildren, Mark and Thomas Keljik. Roupen Zartarian’s “How Death Came to the Earth,” translated by Bedros Keljik, is also part of the volume.

Edited by Christopher Atamian, Lou Ann Matossian and Barlow Der Mugrdechian, *Armenian-American Sketches* provides a wealth of interesting stories about the early Armenian community in America.

Armenians began arriving to America in large numbers at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. They established themselves in communities throughout the United States, maintaining their Armenian culture, while also becoming acclimated to life in America. In *Armenian-American Sketches*, author Bedros Keljik brings to life this period in Armenian-American history. With keen observation Keljik provides the reader with an often-humorous insight into that life, with all of its sadness and joy, with the sense of community, and with the hard work and challenges faced by the immigrants. This is a book which will appeal to any reader who seeks to understand the immigrant experience in the United States.

*Armenian-American Sketches* (English Translation) is available through Amazon.

# Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian



## The New Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook

*The Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook* (released in January 2020) is a joint project between the creator of YouTube’s Vegan Armenian Kitchen, Lena Tashjian, a writer and vegan recipe developer based in Toronto, and Siroon Parseghian, a photographer and creative director based in Los Angeles. They met in Armenia in 2012, and reunited in Los Angeles six years later to set the wheels in motion for this endeavor. After living in Armenia for six years, Lena is on a mission to not only veganize the Armenian dishes she grew up with, but also highlight the plant-based staples present in both Armenia and the diaspora. Siroon, with her unique vision and style, is passionately bringing the recipes, stories, and the cookbook itself to life. Lena adds, “Integral components of Armenian dining and cuisine include abundance, generosity, and a love of good food. Our cookbook showcases that it is possible to cut down or eliminate animal product consumption while still being able to enjoy many classic Armenian dishes.”



Siroon Parseghian, a photographer and creative director based in Los Angeles. “We are proud of our commitment to bringing awareness to the variety of Armenian foods available that are naturally free of animal products, as well as the history, stories, and folklore behind them. With a general shift towards plant-based eating on the rise, we are excited to bring some much-needed diversity to the vegan food scene,” says Lena. While the recipes are the main component, *The Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook* is an all-in-one resource for Armenian cooking which is intertwined with its rich culture and heritage. From food idioms and detailed explanations on dishes, names and customs, to pantry staples, menu pairing and holiday planning, this cookbook will be an invaluable tool that will serve not only to educate and fascinate readers on Armenian cuisine and history, but also to inspire them to create more plant-based and veganized dishes in their own kitchen.



## Olive and Walnut Salad (Shepherd’s Dinner)

Olive and Walnut Salad or Shepherd’s Dinner is a delicious dish that hails from Musa Ler. It is said to have been created out of utility, as it was a quick and accessible meal for those working the land. On top of it being flavorful and unique, this festive color combination of green olives and ruby red pomegranate arils makes it a perfect addition to any holiday or special occasion menu.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/2 cups green olives, pitted, either whole or sliced
- 1/2 small onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup roughly crushed walnuts
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley, optional
- 1 tablespoon pomegranate molasses or syrup
- 1-2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, to taste
- 1/4 cup fresh pomegranate arils, optional

### PREPARATION:

Mix the olives, onion, walnuts, parsley, and pomegranate molasses or syrup together in a bowl. Add the tomato paste and olive oil, and mix well. Set aside for 15 to 20 minutes to allow the flavors to combine. Top salad with fresh pomegranate arils, if using, and enjoy. Watch this recipe here: [https://youtu.be/ZMeQ\\_G4F\\_A8](https://youtu.be/ZMeQ_G4F_A8).

As Lena and Siroon are self-publishing, the best way to support their work is by preordering their cookbook for your family and friends, and spreading the word. This outstanding selection of traditional, authentic, and modern plant-based and veganized Armenian recipes will be a welcomed addition to any cookbook collection.

To order: *The Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook* is \$35.00 each. For more recipes or to order, visit [www.veganarmeniankitchen.com](http://www.veganarmeniankitchen.com). See related article on Page 10.



PsychoSymmetry (Detail)

Website: [johnavakian.com](http://johnavakian.com)

781-784-2059



## Diran & Garo Tavitjan: 'We represent Macedonia But Respect Our Armenian Roots'

TAVITJAN, from page 9

and the modern rock and jazz fusion music in the region. In his 53-year-long career, he has performed more than 2,000 major concerts, with the greatest rock and pop legends of the Balkan region and abroad (Goran Bregovic, Bijelo Dugme, Time, Smak, Oliver Mandic). On September 8, 2012, the Tavitian Brothers and their father, Garabet, presented the largest concert for the first time in Macedonian history at the city stadium with more than 70.000 people in the audience uniting the greatest vocal legends of Balkan in honor of Macedonia. In 2018, Tavitian Brothers received the prestigious award - the European jazz ambassadors.

In 2019, Garo Tavitjan became the resident artist of Vic Firth, the world's greatest drumstick manufacturer company based in the US. Vic Firth/Zildjian made drumsticks with Garo Tavitjan's signature on them.

Dear Diran and Garo, while studying the history of Armenians in Macedonia, the name of Tavitjan family comes up often. I know the history of your family comes from Stepan Tavitjan (1830-1890), physician and linguist, one of most interesting Armenians of his time. Is his memory alive among his heirs?

Unfortunately no. We have very little information on the life and work of our ancestor Stepan Tavitian. We would really like and hope to find more info on him in future. Our grandfather and grandmother unfortunately have not left us info about Mr. Stepan.

Well, Stepan Tavitian, originally from Caesaria, introduced his idea of a universal language to the lecturers of the Imperial Medical School in Constantinople before Esperanto was created by Polish scientist Zamenhof. In 1887 he published a study in French on this subject and presented it to the Paris Academy. Tavitian's concept of universal language was based on the language of Grabar (classical Armenian) as a perfect language. Your grandfather, Garabet Tavitian, was also a physician, a specialist of internal and childhood diseases, and also a writer. Have you read his writings?

Dr. Garabet Tavitjan was the first from our family to come in Macedonia. He was sent from Constantinople to Macedonia for medical purposes. A highly respected medical doctor at his time, he was the founder of the medical chamber in Macedonia, who was active in healing and helping those in need at that time. His contributions are significant. He was a humanitarian character, family man, an intellectual and man of good will and his word as many family descents of his patients and friends testify even today. He spoke several languages and raised three kids with his Armenian wife Victoria: two sons, Diran and Stepan and daughter Hermine. He loved art, he was also a painter; he loved realism and left several oil paintings in his family. He was also a writer, who wrote poetry in Armenian and French. Unfortunately, my father was born after his death and he have not had a chance to meet him or see any of his personal books. He left a great amount of AGBU literature also.

**The next Tavitjan is your grandfather Diran – what was his profession?**

Our grandfather Diran was a pharmacist. He was born in Skopje and studied in the Armenian college in Venice; after graduating he continued his studies in Paris where lived for a while. Then he came back to Macedonia and married our grandmother, Araksi (nee Mardikian), who lived in Serbia and then moved to Skopje. They had two children - our father Garabet and his sister Lusia. Grandpa Diran

loved music, especially classical and opera. He was also a philatelist and a collector. His brother Stepan was a violinist and his sister Hermine was a classical pianist who lived in Paris (her husband, writer and journalist Hagop Djirdjirian was among the founders of the Macedonian Philharmonic). Like his father, Diran spoke seven languages.

**Your father, Garabet Tavitjan, who was considered the most acclaimed Balkan drummer, was a founding member of the greatest Macedonian rock band Leb i Sol and founder of the legendary Garo & the Paramesium band. So it is no wonder his sons Diran and**

concerts and hundreds of collaborations with the greatest bands and vocal artist from the Balkan and abroad. He is the first conceptual drummer with solo projects in Balkan region. Garabet is also the first drummer who developed irregular Macedonian rhythms and made them popular in the whole Balkan region, being considered as the founder of the modern rhythm and jazz rock legend of the Balkans.

As we can see, even being fourth generation Armenians in Macedonia, you keep your Armenian names. Wasn't it difficult for your father and you to make a career with non-Macedonian name?

ing held at the church as an opportunity to meet other Armenians.

**The Macedonian Armenian community is very small - could you please provide some information?**

Macedonian-Armenian community has over 100 members. Very well, respectful community but not so much active and there are not so many relations between the members in everyday life. A number of Macedonians are also our community member - very respectful friends. Armenian genocide memorial day is probably the main event uniting the Armenians annually. There are doctors, surgeons, tourist agency



Diran and Garo Tavitjan

**Garo followed in his footsteps.**

Garabet was born in Skopje. From his earliest years he was interested in music; as a small child he took piano lessons from his aunt Hermine, and shortly after started playing guitar. A little bit later, his primary instrument became the drums. He played with every significant musician at that time in Macedonia. His talent and ability were above usual and he was considered a prodigy on drums that led him to more serious engagements in music. After playing in the earliest rock and jazz bands in Macedonia, he recorded the very first LPs in history with Skopje's festival orchestra. Later he became the founding member of Leb i Sol as composer and performer. His drumming arrangement contributed mostly to the traditional song *Aber dojde donke* to get them their first significant award. Afterwards, many awards, concerts and festivals started to come, and they became the greatest rock band in Yugoslavia's history with more than half a million sold records, more than 13 albums and hundreds of concerts. Our father was received awards as the greatest drummer of the Balkans multiple times, and received the St. Kliment Ohridski national award as an artist of national significance. His discography includes more than 100 albums, more than 3,000 large stage

It was not easy. We love Macedonia. It is a beautiful country with amazing people, rich history and modern society, having great acceptance and tolerance. It is similar to Armenia in many points. We are the fourth generation born and raised here and we have learned everything here. Our family took part in making this country a better society and proved itself on the field. We invested our life, resources and heritage in this country. It is natural for any nation to love and favor their artists with the same nationality and surname primarily, and we understand that. It is a unique situation and experience which occurs only to those affected by those circumstances and makes them think about it. That's why it was a challenge for our father and for us to work twice as hard as many others to receive recognition. Everything we did, we did it by ourselves with the support of close friends. We personally believe that in any country the quality and the right people in right places are more important factors in achieving success than the national background itself. People who love and work for the interest of one country are more valuable than those doing nothing productive for the society but just natives of that given country. We are thankful to Macedonia for being our home and to those who loves us and our music which means a lot in supporting us through the years. We represent Macedonia sincerely, while maintaining the highest quality and loyalty we know in doing that, meanwhile respecting our Armenian roots and never forgetting them. We have not known family ties in Armenia after the genocide unfortunately.

**What other Armenian traditions do you have?**

We often celebrate and respect Armenian holidays as Christmas, we celebrate Garabet the Forerunner's day as a name day of our father, Armenian dishes are frequent in our family's and friends' menu, we enjoy the music of great Komitas, Khachaturian, Orbelyan, Charles Aznavour, Levon Malkhasyan, Tigran Hamasyan, Arto Tunçboyacıyan and many others. The genocide memorial is an annual meet-

owners, museum curators, intellectuals, economy and law workers and more who are Armenians or half Armenians living in Macedonia.

**Armenia is considered a jazz country. Have you ever been in your ancestor's country?**

Yes, several times, at the invitation of Mezzo production and their management who are top professionals and friends - Kamo Movsesyan, Ani Saghoyan and Gaya Poghosyan. We played several concerts at the Aram Khachaturian philharmonic hall, the Mezzo club, Cascades etc. We had the opportunity to meet so many great musicians such as the Armenian state jazz big band which is amazing; especially the horn section is unbelievable! The piano legend Levon Malkhasyan, another legendary pianist Vahagn Hayrapetyan, the saxophone virtuoso Armen Hyusunnts, Armen Manukyan – a great man and top music journalist, members of Armenian Navy Band, Gor Sujyan from the Dorians, Karen Mamikonyan, etc, great and friendly reporters at the Armenian First TV Channel, Shant TV, Pan Armenian, etc. They are all amazing professionals and people. It was an amazing experience to see the beauties of our roots, the Ararat Mountain, one of the oldest Christian churches – Holy Echmiadzin, Tsisernakaberd, the Genocide museum memorial, the Matenadaran museum of ancient manuscripts, the beautiful center of Yerevan, Cascade and more. Armenia has a remarkable music and cultural tradition, even the taxi cabs had classical and jazz music on the radio. We cannot wait to go there again!

**How was 2019 in your life and what are your plans for 2020?**

The year 2019 was a year of great happenings and moments in personal and professional life for us. We are looking forward to new music adventures and goals in 2020. We have planned lots of travels, projects and hope on good health and wish better understanding and positive energy among the people around us and in the world.

# CALENDAR

As all events in the upcoming months have been cancelled, we will delete the section until further notice.





COMMENTARY

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COMMENTARY

Humanity United in Fear

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The coronavirus epidemic is certainly the curse of globaliza-  
tion. The proximity of individuals, through travel, has its bless-  
ings and its dangers.

In historic times, many pandemics had devastating impacts on  
certain remote societies but they were contained because of a  
lack of movement of people. Thus, past pandemics were con-  
tained and people living in other parts of the world were not  
affected nor even informed of the misery that had befallen mem-  
bers of humanity in another region.

Coronavirus (Covid-19) has followed closely the patterns of  
the Black Death or the Pestilence, which broke out in the 14th  
century in Central Asia and spread to Europe, peaking from  
1347 to 1351. The Black Death killed 30 percent to 60 percent  
of Europe's population, reducing it from 475 million to 350 mil-  
lion. It is believed that the virus was carried by rats travelling on  
Genovese merchant ships.

Coronavirus has emerged from China, believed to be carried  
by bats. And since modern transportation moves faster than  
Genovese ships, the spread of the virus has been nearly instan-  
taneous globally.

The world, which until so very recently had been divided into  
many enemy camps, is united by the necessity to combat this  
global threat. Italy, a NATO member country, received medica-  
tion and medical teams from China to com-  
bat the outbreak. The humanity of  
mankind is forced upon the population of  
the globe by overwhelming natural disas-  
ters.

Today no country is immune from the  
virus, which has spread to 138 countries  
around the world.

Many major nations which had devel-  
oped mutually-assured destructive weapon-  
ry have been rendered helpless in front of  
this calamity and they need each other by  
default.

The Black Death created many religious  
social and political upheavals in Europe  
and affected the course of European histo-  
ry. The shock and fallout of the current out-  
break will affect the course of current  
human civilization, hopefully without a sim-  
ilar number of victims.

Today, the pandemic is on everyone's  
mind and it has isolated and frozen soci-  
eties.

Every group and every individual is  
stunned and pondering ways of survival.

Diasporan Armenians, concerned as they  
are for their safety, naturally also think  
about Armenia, which is in the neighbor-  
hood of one of the epicenters of the pan-  
demic, Iran.

As the outbreak was spreading at alarm-  
ing rate in Iran and China, life was unusu-  
ally calm and under control in Armenia,  
until a foolhardy action was taken by one  
irresponsible woman in Vagharshapat,  
where the seat of the Armenian Church,  
Holy Echmiadzin, is located.

A resident of that city of 45,000 avoided  
the medical authorities and even lied that  
she was healthy when she returned from an  
Italian vacation, infected with the virus.  
She organized an engagement party, which  
resulted in 18 people infected out of the 28  
nationwide, at that time.

At this time, the entire city of  
Vagharshapat is in quarantine. At this writ-  
ing, the total number of infected people  
stands at 72 and unfortunately, the number  
is rising. Surprisingly, no infections have  
been reported yet in Karabakh (Artsakh),  
where presidential and parliamentary elec-  
tion campaigns are under way, scheduled to  
take place on March 31.

The Armenian parliament adopted a bill declaring a 30-day  
state of emergency, running from March 16 through April 14,  
which has been postponed to a period between 50 and 65 days  
after the end of the state of emergency. The purpose of that refer-  
endum is to change a single clause (168 a) of the constitution  
in order to do away with seven judges on the Constitutional  
Court who had been left over from the old regime.

Incidentally, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has also pro-  
posed a bill passing judgement on the performance of the pre-  
vious administrations over the last 30 years.

Armenia has been handling the current crisis in an orderly  
and reasonable fashion. Preventative measures are being taken  
throughout the country. The public health system seems to be  
under control, medications are available and testing is already in  
progress. Many news outlets have been interviewing ordinary  
citizens, who all seem to be unalarmed. They are stocked with  
food and provisions and no price-gouging has been reported.

At this time, there are 300 citizens in quarantine at the  
Golden Palace Hotel in the resort town of Tsakhgadzor. The first  
patient infected has recovered and been discharged from the  
hospital.

Armenia has been relatively spared from the worst, but yet,  
there is no guarantee about the future, as the country is locat-  
ed in a high-risk region.

Armenia was looking forward to a very brisk tourist season  
and a robust rate of economic development. These hopes will  
certainly be dashed. Trade with Iran stands at \$400 million  
annually, which will no doubt also suffer.

Prime Minister Pashinyan seems to be on top of the situation.  
He is broadcasting regularly on his Facebook page new devel-  
opments. Both he and his wife, Anna Hakobyan, have tested  
negative for the virus. Hakobyan had been part of the entourage  
of the Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro. An individual in that  
entourage has tested positive. In addition, Pashinyan himself  
had been in the proximity of an infected citizen returning from  
Italy to the southern city of Meghri.

Dr. Arsen Torosyan, Armenia's health minister, is on the TV



screens reporting on the development and advising people to  
take preventative measures.

As fear rages on the horizon, humanity is caught in a crisis.  
Armenia will share whatever challenges the rest of the globe faces.  
Coronavirus has the scope and devastating effect of the Black  
Death. Let us hope that at least the victims contracting the  
virus will not suffer the same grim fate, as medical science has  
made tremendous strides since then.

The fear induced by this virus may silence the threat of a  
nuclear Armageddon.





## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Erdogan Should be Tried by International Criminal Court for Supporting Terrorism

Last week, I reported that Pres. Erdogan's office sent a letter to the heads of religious minorities in Turkey demanding that they sign it and send it back to the President. In that letter, Erdogan falsely claimed that Turkey was alone on the forefront of the fight against international terrorism.

Contrary to Erdogan's claims, there have been dozens of reports in the international media proving that Turkey was in fact on the forefront of those assisting ISIS terrorists in Syria and Iraq.

Ahmet S. Yayla is someone who has first-hand knowledge of the Turkish government's support for ISIS as he was the chief of counterterrorism and operations in Turkey from 2010 to 2013, and chief of public order and criminal investigations in Sanliurfa, Turkey, from 2013 to 2014. Sanliurfa was the endpoint of the ISIS "jihadi highway." Yayla wrote an in-depth article on March 6, 2020, in The Investigative Journal, exposing Erdogan's complicity in terrorism. The article was titled, "Try Erdogan at the International Criminal Court for Enabling ISIS."

Yayla wrote that he had to leave his job in 2014 and retire "in order not to be involved with Erdogan's atrocities, which rise to the level of crimes against humanity."

According to Yayla, "ISIS would not have swelled to power or killed so many if the Erdogan regime had not decided to support it directly or indirectly from its emergence in 2014. The fact is, when ISIS set up shop in Raqqa [Syria] in 2014, the Turkish Intelligence Agency (MIT) was guarding its front door and putting out an elaborate welcome mat for jihadist

volunteers on their way to martyrdom. Turkey was a central hub for the travel of over 50,000 ISIS foreign fighters, and the main source of ISIS logistical materials, including the majority of ISIS IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices], making Turkey and ISIS practically allies."

Yayla also quoted an October 2019 U.S. Department of State publication which reported that "Turkey remains a transit point for foreign fighters looking to join the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, which could help the terrorist group to reorganize and regain influence." The U.S. Government further warned that "foreign fighters transiting through Turkey could help Islamic State to regenerate." ISIS was able to relocate many of its high-profile and senior members to Turkey, where they ran the terrorist organization's day-to-day operations.

Yayla reported that "on December 3, 2019, terrorist kingpin Hamid Shakir Saba' al-Badri – cousin of deceased Abu Bakir al-Baghdadi – was captured south of Kirkuk, Iraq, having returned from his safe haven in Turkey. A Turkish ISIS prisoner in Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) custody told journalist Lindsey Snell about a giant safe house ISIS maintained in Gaziantep, Turkey. The prisoner said, 'there were so many foreigners there; so many different languages. They (Turkey) knew what we were there for.'"

Since Turkish leaders assisted ISIS, there was widespread support for ISIS among the Turkish public. Reuters reported that according to "Turkey's Social Trends Survey," conducted by an Ankara think tank, 9.3 percent of the respondents stated that ISIS was not a terrorist organization, with 5.4 percent supporting its actions.

According to PEW research, 8 percent of the Turkish population had a favorable view of ISIS. As a result, according to a recent Combating Terrorism Center report, Turks contributed the highest number of fighters to ISIS. There were up to 9,476 Turkish ISIS terrorists, whereas there were more than 900 Azerbaijanis in the ranks of ISIS.

Turkey was also the source of continued supply of various materials for ISIS, including boots, uniforms, vests, food and most importantly explosives. Quoting from Conflict Armament Research (CAR), Yayla reported that ISIS had "first, a major acquisition network operating in Turkey and, second, a clear supply route from Turkey, through Syria, to Iraq." CAR also revealed that "Turkey is the most important chokepoint for components used in the manufacture of IEDs" by the Islamic

State. In fact, CAR documented that ISIS fighters "source most of the products used in the manufacture of weapons and ammunition from the Turkish domestic market."

A Turkish journalist, Tolga Tanis, was fired and slapped with a libel investigation filed by Pres. Erdogan, when Tanis revealed how Turkish companies were exporting explosive materials to ISIS.

Yayla also reported that "on November 18, 2019, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated two Turkish brothers, Ahmet and Ismail Bayaltun, as Turkey-based 'ISIS procurement agents' in addition to four ISIS-linked companies operating in Syria and Turkey. Bayaltun brothers were known for their role in supplying ISIS, specifically shipping 48 tons of aluminum paste to be used in ISIS IEDs. More importantly, the Bayaltun brothers had a close relationship with AKP chairman Mustafa Bayaltun in Sanliurfa, where their office is located."

The role of the Turkish National Intelligence (MIT) in supporting terrorism was revealed when the Turkish police stopped three trucks operated by MIT on January 19, 2014, and found military-grade weapons hidden underneath medicine boxes being transported to Syria.

Beyond supporting terrorism, Pres. Erdogan also purchased ISIS oil through a Turkish front company named Powertrans controlled by his son-in-law Berat Albayrak, according to Yayla. "Albayrak paid up to \$3 million a day at the height of ISIS oil production. In fact, Erdogan passed a bill to grant the rights to transfer oil by tanker and contracted Powertrans without a public bid as the sole authorized company. In addition to purchasing the ISIS oil, Erdogan tasked his son, Bilal Erdogan, through his Maltese shipping company, the BMZ Group, to sell ISIS oil on the world market." In addition, Turkish money transfer centers passed hundreds of thousands of dollars a day to ISIS.

Yayla concluded: "In the end, ISIS would not have killed, wounded, enslaved, and raped thousands of innocent people without the vast support it enjoyed through Turkey. Erdogan and his co-conspirators must be tried at the International Criminal Court in The Hague for their crimes against humanity.... Turkish President Erdogan and his co-conspirators have blood on their hands. Based on the well-documented, incontestable, and undeniable evidence [that] exists, it is clear that Erdogan has been directly and indirectly supporting ISIS."

# AN APPEAL FROM CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS KAREKIN II

Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, issued the following urgent appeal on the Coronavirus pandemic, on March 16.

In addition, he declared a national day of prayer on March 18.

Dear Faithful:

We are following with concern and prayer the developments around the globe regarding the Coronavirus. These are difficult times, when the world—including Armenia—is troubled by a pandemic, with disturbance to our lives and livelihoods.

With fatherly love, we urge our clergy and faithful people to exercise extreme caution, and to avoid public contact and large crowds.

We urge everyone to act with high personal and public consciousness and responsibility—not only for ourselves, but also with care for one another. We must deeply understand that the security of everyone's life at this moment is our own personal responsibility. With trust in God, we pray for healing and spiritual strength for the infected and isolated. We extend our highest appreciation and blessings to the doctors who ceaselessly serve with the utmost effort, while operating under a state of emergency.

After consultation with the leaders of the Hierarchical Sees of the Armenian Church, and having discussed the situation with the bishops of Armenia today, we have hereby decided:

1. To schedule regular open church hours, so believers can make individual visits, offer private prayers, and receive Holy Communion and other urgent spiritual needs. In Armenia, churches will be open every day from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.; these hours will be in effect for the period up to Holy Thursday, April 9, 2020. (Other diocesan jurisdictions are asked to make provisions suitable to their own circumstances.)
2. To conduct all celebrations of the



"LIFE IS THE MOST PRECIOUS OF DIVINE GIFTS. WE NEED TO CARE FOR LIFE BY CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER, WITH LOVE. NOW IS THE TIME TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE LOVE THAT UNITES US."



Divine Liturgy behind closed doors, without the participation of faithful people; and if possible to broadcast the celebrations online;

3. To cancel the service of "Blessing the Children" on Palm Sunday (April 5), and to perform the Antasdan ceremony (the Blessing of the Four Corners of the World) and other ceremonies without the presence of the faithful;

4. To cancel the service of "Blessing of Expectant Mothers" on the Feast of the Annunciation of Blessed Virgin Mary (April 7);

5. To suspend ceremonies of Holy Matrimony;

6. To perform the Sacrament of Baptism only in case of urgency (e.g., in case the person to be baptized is ill);

7. In the case of funerals, only to perform the graveyard ceremony, urging mourners to refrain from organizing crowded funerals and memorial meal gatherings.

Beloved people, in this difficult time, it is necessary to unite and show support to the government of the Republic of Armenia and all relevant governmental bodies. We should strictly follow the instructions and requirements set by the authorities.

Together, by the grace and mercy of our Lord, we will overcome this challenge with public solidarity, civic responsibility, and spiritual consciousness. Life is the most precious of divine gifts. We need to care for life by caring for one another, with love. Now is the time to bear witness to the love that unites us.

May the Lord's blessing, grace, and mercy be with us and with all. Amen.

The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin,  
March 16, 2020





# Trial of Coronavirus Vaccine Made by Moderna Begins in Seattle

VACCINE, from page 1

RNA – to make vaccines, and the company has nine others in various stages of development, including several for viruses that cause respiratory illnesses. But no vaccine made with this technology has yet reached the market.

The infectious disease institute has been working with Moderna because the RNA approach can produce vaccine very quickly, said Dr. Barney Graham, the deputy director of the institute's Vaccine Research Center.

He said the researchers at the vaccine center were focused on pandemic preparedness.

"The goal here is to be ready for all the virus families that can infect humans," he said.

As bad as this epidemic is, Dr. Graham said, in one way it is lucky that a coronavirus caused it, because the researchers were at least partly ready for it. If another type of virus had caused the outbreak, it could have taken months longer to create a potential vaccine.

Other companies, using different approaches, are also trying to manufacture coronavirus vaccines. Moderna is the first to reach a clinical trial.

The trial will enroll 45 healthy adults ages 18 to 55. Each will receive two shots, 28 days apart. Moderna calls the vaccine mRNA-1273.

Three different doses will be tested – each in 15 people – and the participants will be studied to determine whether the vaccine is safe and whether it stimulates the immune system to make antibodies that can stop the virus from replicating and prevent the illness it causes.

Four participants were vaccinated on Monday, and four more are to get shots on Tuesday. Then there will be a pause to monitor them, before more participants receive injections, Dr. Graham said.

The participants will be followed for a year, but Stéphane Bancel, the chief executive of Moderna, said in an interview that safety data would be available a few weeks after the injections were given. If the vaccine then appears safe, he said, Moderna will ask the Food and Drug Administration for permission to move ahead to the next phase of testing even before the first stage is finished.

The second round of testing, to measure efficacy as well as to verify safety, will include many more participants.

Moderna, with headquarters in Cambridge, Mass., and a manufacturing plant in nearby Norwood, is already buying new equipment so that it will be able to produce millions of doses. Bancel acknowledged that the company was taking a risk, because neither safety nor efficacy has been proved yet.

"Humans are suffering and time is of the essence," he said. "Every day matters. We have taken these decisions to take the risk, because we believe it is the right thing to do."

The company's stock price jumped in February in response to news reports about the vaccine. And on Monday, Moderna's stock rose more than 24 percent, rising \$5.19 to close at \$26.49.

Work on the vaccine started in January, as soon as Chinese scientists posted the genetic sequence of the new coronavirus on the internet. Researchers at Moderna and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases identified part of the sequence that codes for a spike-like protein on the surface of the virus that attaches to human cells, helping the virus to invade them.

A nonprofit group, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, helped pay to manu-



Scientists at the Moderna labs

facture the vaccine for the trial.

That spike sequence is the basis for the vaccine. Moderna does not need the virus itself to produce its vaccine: The company synthesizes the stretch of RNA required for the vaccine and embeds it in a lipid nanoparticle.

By February 24, Moderna had a batch of vaccine ready to ship to the infectious diseases institute, for use in the trial. On March 4, the Food and Drug Administration gave permission for the trial to begin.



## 7 Questions for Moderna Chairman Nubar Afeyan

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Noubar Afeyan: It's true that the speed of entry to the clinic has been without precedent. There is a lot of uncertainty around what happens after this. We are within days of testing the samples on healthy volunteers. This first phase is purely looking at whether it is safe on healthy people, then it will be tested on a larger group, which will be the phase 2 trial. This will take a few months. There you try different variables, particularly to see what's the most effective dose that creates a strong immune response. It's only in a phase 3 trial that you test on many thousands of people. And there are two main reasons to test on thousands of people. One is to make sure it's safe very broadly and not just for 10, 20 people. The second reason is because you need a certain amount of people in an effected zone to ensure that at least some of them could come into contact with the virus so that you are able to see the treatment effect. In other words, if 10% of the population had been exposed, then you would do a smaller trial. But because the numbers are still pretty small as a percentage of population, you have to test on a large number of people.

Timing is hard to say. The national authorities in the US that we are collaborating with, like Dr. Anthony Fauci, who is head of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, say that they take 12-18 months. In emergency situations you have to think about what can be done particularly for vulnerable populations, such as health-care workers or certain populations that have other health complications that make them susceptible to getting a bad version of the virus. In times like these, people want to try everything and anything, but there is a real danger that not only could there be unknown safety effects but also it really does jeopardize the underlying therapeutic methodology which nobody wants to fail by rushing.

**SP: Moderna created the vaccine 42 days after receiving the genetic sequence of the COVID-19 virus. What were those 42 days like behind the scenes?**

NA: The team at Moderna, which has large scientific and manufacturing departments, worked incredible hours and showed a lot of devotion to move very quickly. The good news for us was that our team had been collaborating with the National Institute of Health team on other coronavirus vaccines. For example, we had been working with them on the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) vaccine using the same mRNA technology. So we didn't start from scratch, we had the relationships, and this is the reason we were able to move very quickly.

The other interesting thing is that Moderna is a company that's working on many different drugs and vaccines. And as

such, one of the things we have been developing for many years is what's called a cancer vaccine. It involves taking a sample from a tumor and identifying things in the tumor that might be immunogenic, which means that the immune system of the patient, if they saw enough of it, could mount an immune response and go kill the cancer. We are not the only ones working on this, this is a whole field called therapeutic vaccines. The reason I bring it up is because we've been working on this personalized cancer vaccine (PCV) program at Moderna. PCV requires a very rapid methodology that goes from a patient tumor sequence, to identifying antigens, making them very quickly, and putting them in a vial and shipping them to try it on that same patient. That workflow is identical to the workflow we have to use for COVID-19.

**SP: Did any of the drug development take place in countries other than the US? Other companies seem to be collaborating with the Chinese on this.**

NA: Moderna's work is done locally in Cambridge and Boston. Of course, we collaborate with people around the world but actual work is done here.

**SP: Considering that many of Moderna's current vaccine candidates are still in Phase 1 and Phase 2 testing, have there been discussions regarding scaling up production to meet demand in the event a COVID-19 vaccine is approved?**

NA: Yes. The part and parcel of advancing this vaccine will be to add manufacturing capacity. We already have a dedicated manufacturing facility in Norwood, MA. It's an automated manufacturing facility for this kind of product, but as you said that facility was dedicated to many other mRNA-based products. So, as part of scaling up the capacity, we will have to add new manufacturing capability in the coming weeks and months.

**SP: Despite its early success, the company, Moderna hasn't been without criticism. These include secretive data, roadblocks due to the loss of good talent. How do you respond to critics and, as chairman, how do you balance the company's day-to-day management issues with its overarching goal to provide treatments to historically overlooked diseases?**

NA: In the first three years of the company's nine-year history we were quite secretive and not because we wanted to be but because we didn't know what we were going to end up with. We didn't know what was going to work and what wasn't. There is an interesting misconception among the media that covers the frontiers of science, which is that they think somehow it's predictable and validatable, and that you have to be transparent. The reality is that if you are on an exploration, it's difficult to be able to predict what you are

going to find. The underlying issue is always that in the beginning you are constantly trying, failing, until you identify what works. And when it works, you have something to talk about. In the pharmaceutical discovery space, which is where we are, there are many definitions of what works. It can mean, it "works" in the laboratory, or it "works" in animal trials, or it "works" in early clinical trials. And if it fails to fail long enough, that's ultimately considered a success. Unless and until you go through the journey, it's a little bit like asking somebody in a marathon for the first time, after the first mile, what makes them think they'll get to the finish line, what makes them think they'll be the first. The answer is nothing makes you think that actually. So I would say "guilty as charged" as it relates to our explorations and excavations, and trying new things.

**SP: Aside from the COVID-19 vaccine, is there another potential vaccine in Moderna's pipeline that excites you?**

NA: The most advanced program is the cytomegalovirus (CMV), which infects some 60% to 70% of the population. In women who are pregnant, it has a very severe birth defect likelihood. We just finished recruiting our phase 2 trial patients, and assuming that goes well, we'll start phase 3 shortly. That should be a large broadly applicable vaccine. We have also done two trials on pandemic influenza strains.

**SP: When you were working with Dr. Fauci, who heads the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, how was the neutralizing antibody for the vaccine selected? It seems there were likely multiple targets you could have gone after. How did you select that one?**

NA: That was done by their expertise and years of work with other coronaviruses. They are the ones who had the know-how to do that and that's why our partnership has been extraordinarily helpful. It really is a partnership. It's not like they had the problem and we had the solution. The world has the problem and we both had parts of the solution, and now we'll see if a vaccine works.

If nothing else, the COVID-19 episode is going to dramatically change society's relationship with the flu. People think that this is getting us ready for some future threat, but we have been living with the threat. The very same behaviors of going into crowded places, having people sneeze and cough on you, that's how the flu is transmitted, exactly the same way as COVID-19 is being transmitted. And yet, we view the flu as part of living and we view the COVID-19 like some major terrorist activity. Either we are going to have to start working from home because we are afraid of the flu, or we'll have to come up with other ways to mitigate it.

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