

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

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## Greater New York Region Devastated by COVID-19

**By Taleen Babayan**  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK – Life has grinded to a halt in the United States as the coronavirus pandemic spreads through the nation, particularly in the densely populated metropolis of

community, however, has been one of vigilance. From medical professionals to businesses to outreach-minded organizations, each group has mobilized during this unprecedented time to meet the needs of its consumers, give back, and provide hope during this calamitous period.

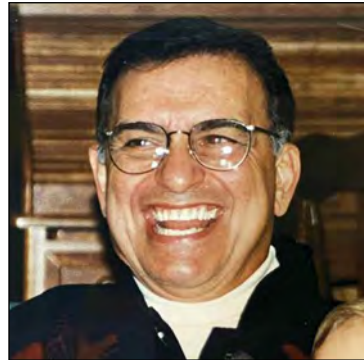
While Toufayan Bakeries is well-known for its pita bread and baked goods, the family-run company also focuses on corporate social responsibility in their daily operations. Headquartered in Ridgefield, NJ, with additional factories in Florida, Toufayan Bakeries is helping out in various ways – from increasing wages of frontline workers to donating to food banks and hospitals across the country.

Toufayan Bakeries has a history of giving back since its founding in 1968, according to Karen Toufayan, vice president of marketing and sales. An integral philanthropic presence not only in the Armenian-American community but nationwide, Karen and her



From left, Kristine Toufayan, Greg Toufayan, Karen Toufayan and Harry Toufayan

New York and New Jersey. The hardest hit region has experienced loss, chaos and disruption at every turn, for every industry. The response from the Armenian-American



### Businessman and Philanthropist, Tekeyan and ADL Leader Armand Norehad Dies

CHICAGO – Businessman and philanthropist Armand Orié Norehad, age 85, passed away on Saturday, April 11, 2020. He was born on June 16, 1934 to Christine (née Kashian) and Onnig Norehad (Norhadian), who fled Turkey during the Armenian Genocide. His parents' immigrant roots and faith in God shaped him into the wonderful man he was.

Armand is survived by his wife of 59 years, Marilyn (née Calderini), and three sons, David, Michael (wife, Michelle), and Steven. He also leaves his grandchildren, Julie, Jennifer, Jessica, John, Peter, and Margot, as well as his sister, Anna Marie, and brother, Ernest.

see NOREHAD, page 7

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Former Ambassador to US Shougarian Dies

BOSTON – Ambassador Rouben Shougarian died on April 21 after a stroke, his family reported. “It is with great sorrow that we announce that our loving father and husband, Ambassador Rouben Shougarian, PhD, passed away peacefully this morning in Boston, Mass. after suffering a stroke last week,” his son, Narek, said in a Facebook post.

Shougarian is survived by his wife Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian and sons Narek, Tigran and Haik.

He served as Armenia’s deputy foreign minister (1999-2005), ambassador to Italy, Spain and Portugal (2005-2008), and was Armenia’s first Ambassador to the United States (1993-1999).

He also served as a senior staffer for the Armenian Parliament’s Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs (1991), and a senior foreign policy aide and spokesperson for President Levon Ter-Petrosyan (1992).

Shougarian most recently was a lecturer at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

A more complete notice will appear in next week’s issue.

### Researcher Says Social Distancing May Be Necessary Until 2022

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (Reuters) – The US may need to endure social distancing measures to fight the coronavirus outbreak until 2022, according to researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health.

The study comes as more than 2,200 people died in the United States from the outbreak on Tuesday, a record, according to a Reuters tally, even as the country debates how to reopen its economy.

The overall death toll in the US from the virus stood at more than 28,300 as of Tuesday, April 21.

“Intermittent distancing may be required into 2022 unless critical care capacity is increased substantially or a treatment or vaccine becomes available,” the Harvard researchers said in findings published Tuesday in the journal Science.

Dr. Rosemary Guerguerian, NBC News’ medical fellow, said that as with most mathematical models, the researchers’ predictions are based on assumptions we don’t yet know about the virus.

The study acknowledged that prolonged distancing would most likely have profoundly negative economic, social and educational consequences.

According to the findings, it is likely that COVID-19 could re-emerge every winter.

The World Health Organization has warned that infections had “certainly” not yet peaked. Nearly 2 million people globally have been infected and more than 124,000 have died in the most serious pandemic in a century.

## INSIDE

### ‘O’ There Is ‘Acoustic’ Music

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## CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

### Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center Reports More COVID-19 Deaths, Seeks Funding to Meet Crisis

**By Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

JAMAICA PLAIN, Mass. – The Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (ANRC) on April 15 provided an update to its situation in the middle of the surge of COVID-19 in the Boston area. This month so far there have been 9 deaths connected to this virus at the center. Nursing homes in general in Massachusetts and elsewhere are experiencing rising numbers of deaths and difficulties in staffing.

Chief Executive Officer Stewart Goff in his informative and often times eloquent weekly report said that there were 11 deaths this month total, which is of course higher than the average of 2-7 monthly deaths prior to the advent of COVID-19.

ANRC stayed one step ahead of evolving guidelines by deciding to test all residents, even those who are asymptomatic, on April 7, see CRISIS, page 8



Ararat Adult Day Health Care Center in Glendale, California

### Adult Day Health Care Centers in Los Angeles Area Adapt to COVID-19

GLENDALE – The situation of the elderly during the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly precarious due to their greater vulnerability to the disease. Those living in assisted living and nursing homes in particular have fallen prey to it in great numbers. There is also an intermediate group of elderly who were living in their homes but going during the day to special centers for assistance. This group, including many

Armenians in Glendale and other areas in Los Angeles County, has also been gravely affected by the coronavirus crisis.

Berdj Karapetian, involved in the ownership and administration of seven adult day health care centers in the Los Angeles basin serving, see ADAPTING, page 8

**By Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff



## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Armenian Archbishop Indicted

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Archbishop Navasard Kchoyan was charged with fraud and money laundering on April 15, amid mounting tensions between Armenia's political leadership and the Armenian Apostolic Church.

In a statement, the National Security Service (NSS) claimed that he had colluded with a businessman to defraud another entrepreneur.

Although the statement named no names, it clearly referred to Ashot Sukiasyan, who was convicted in December 2017 of having misappropriated most of a \$10.7 million loan which his former business partner, Paylak Hayrapetyan, borrowed from an Armenian commercial bank in 2012. Sukiasyan had pledged to invest that money in diamond mining in Sierra Leone. He never did that, according to prosecutors.

A district court in Yerevan sentenced Sukiasyan to 16 years in prison. However, Armenia's Court of Appeals shortened the sentence and released him from prison in January this year.

The NSS statement said that Kchoyan, who heads the Armenian Apostolic Church's largest diocese encompassing Yerevan and the southern Ararat province, owned 33 percent of the offshore company.

## Armenia to Hold Global Forum Against Genocide Later This Year

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia plans to hold the 4th Global Forum Against the Crime of Genocide this year, Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan said on April 21.

"We plan to hold the 4th Global Forum Against the Crime of Genocide this year. This is already a permanent platform for consolidating the expertise potential of the international community and working and developing the tool kits that foster the implementation of preventive measures of genocides at national and international levels," Mnatsakanyan said.

On April 24 the Armenian Genocide Memorial was closed for all visitors aimed at preventing the spread of the novel coronavirus in the country. Other events are planned to take place to pay homage to the memory of the victims of the genocide.

## Pashinyan Vows 'Purge' Of State Officials

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has pledged to purge Armenia's government, judiciary and security apparatus of "remnants" of the country's former leadership, accusing them of trying to discredit him and scuttle his far-reaching initiatives.

In a video message streamed live on Facebook on April 19, Pashinyan charged that many media outlets are keen to undercut him.

"It's probably about time that real purges within the government took place," he declared before hitting out at former President Serzh Sargsyan and his political allies.

"They still have lots of their people in the government and the law-enforcement system," he said. "The state governance system must be cleansed of Serzh's remnants."

The remarks followed a scandal that marred Pashinyan's live address to the nation broadcast on Friday evening by Armenian Public Television.

It emerged afterwards for at least 15 minutes preceding the broadcast, Public Television also filmed Pashinyan's preparation for the address which focused on the government's response to the coronavirus epidemic. The footage was leaked to some of his detractors who circulated it on social media to mock the prime minister.

On Sunday morning, Pashinyan's spokeswoman, Mane Gevorgyan, accused Public Television of negligence and a lack of professionalism, saying that it should have alerted the premier that he is being recorded.

Public Television's executive director, Margarita Grigoryan, resigned on Monday, saying that she takes responsibility for the incident.

# Cases Continue Increasing in Armenia

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — On April 16, a large amount of medical supplies necessary for protecting front-line health care workers fighting the global COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Armenia on a charter flight from China.

Thanks to a \$ 100,000 donation from the Izmirlian Foundation (as well as donations from other charitable organizations) and as facilitated by the United Nations World Food Program in Armenia (UNWFP) with the support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, more than 150,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) items, including medical suits, masks, gowns, safety goggles, gloves etc. were delivered to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia.

In addition, the United States will provide additional \$600,000 to Armenia for fighting the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Armenian deputy foreign minister Avet Adonts said at a press conference this week.

On March 28 the US State Department announced that together with the USAID it would provide \$1.1 million to Armenia aimed at improving the healthcare field, in particular developing the laboratory systems, increasing the capacities for diagnosing coronavirus, assisting the expert circles, etc.

Health Minister Arsen Torosyan called for "additional efforts" to slow the spread of coronavirus in Armenia on Tuesday after authorities reported the highest daily increase in infections in more than two weeks.

The Armenian Ministry of Health said in the morning that the number of coronavirus cases rose by 62, to 1,401, while 29 other persons recovered from COVID-19 in the past day. It also reported two more fatalities which raised the country's death toll from the virus to 24.

Torosyan said that official statistics for the last several days indicate a "steady" rate of new infections standing at 3-4 percent. "We also have approximately the same number of hospitalized people, which varies from 700 to 800," he wrote on Facebook.

But the minister also said: "This means that we all must make additional efforts to lower the peace of the spread [of the disease] and have no right to relax and lose our vigilance."

"Especially worrying are recent days' cases [of infection] among healthcare workers at medical centers in Yerevan and regions," he added. "The use of personal protective equipment is far more important for healthcare workers than for other citizens."

Hasmik Ghazinyan, a senior doctor at Yerevan's Nork hospital treating only COVID-19 patients, complained that many Armenians are not following social distancing rules or wearing masks or gloves when leaving their homes. She warned of a surge in infections in the days ahead.

"Our doctors, medical personnel are acting heroically on the frontline [of the fight against coronavirus.] ... but the rear (other citizens) does not seem to be safeguarding the achievements of the frontline workers," Ghazinyan told

RFE/RL's Armenian service.

"I think the reason for this is that people are not taking [the epidemic] seriously and believe that it's based on false information," said Giorgi Kantaria, a doctor from the Surp Grigor Lusavorich hospital who is currently treating about 100 infected people quarantined at a Yerevan hotel.

"I want to assure them that it's real and their help is also necessary," said Kantaria. "Doctors' help is not enough."

Such appeals fell on deaf ears in the northern city of Vanadzor where more than 2,000 employees of the local textile factory, Gloria, defied a government to return to their workplaces on Tuesday, April 21, one month after being put on unpaid leave. Police officers fined several of them but had to leave the premises after being confronted by hundreds of mostly female workers.

The angry women said they want the factory to immediately resume its work because they are no longer able to support themselves and their families. They claimed that they have not received financial assistance allocated by the Armenian government to tens of thousands of people hit hard by economic disruptions resulting from the epidemic.

### Maralik Cordoned Off

Authorities sealed off a small town and an adjacent village in Armenia's northwestern Shirak province on Sunday, April 19, after 18 employees of a local hospital tested positive for coronavirus.

Two local residents died from COVID-19, a respiratory disease caused by the virus, after the Armenian police set up roadblocks around the town of Maralik and the village of Dzorakap in the morning.

The head of the provincial administration's healthcare department, Leyli Aslanyan, told RFE/RL's Armenian service on April 20 that one of them, a 90-year-old man, was the father of an infected nurse working at the Maralik hospital.

Aslanyan said that the old man was diagnosed with coronavirus just hours before his death. His family declined offers to hospitalize him even though he had a fever for almost a week, she said.

The Maralik hospital was temporarily shut down on Saturday after the 18 coronavirus cases were confirmed among its 61-member staff. Shirak's governor, Tigran Petrosyan, said the infected medical personnel were taken to a hospital in the provincial capital Gyumri while their colleagues were placed under quarantine. The authorities also ordered more than 40 relatives and friends of the infected medics to self-isolate, he said.

Local officials did not disclose the suspected source of the infections. Another Maralik resident died from coronavirus early this month. The 68-year-old man was reportedly taken to the local medical center before being hospitalized in Gyumri.

The latest fatalities brought Armenia's death toll from COVID-19 to 22. The Armenian Ministry of Health reported on Monday morning that the total number of coronavirus cases in the country rose by 48 to 1,339 in the past day.

### President Sarkissian Concerned

President Armen Sarkissian meets with children from socially vulnerable President Armen Sarkissian has said that he feels the pain of scores of poor Armenians who have lost their jobs and other sources of income due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In a weekend interview, Sarkissian stressed the need to find the right "balance" between easing their hardship

through renewed business activity and tackling the deadly virus.

"My thoughts are constantly with such families because they lack reserves, so to speak, to get by for one, two or three months [without work,]" he said. "They obviously need assistance and that assistance must come not only from the state.

"Of course, the state and business need to cooperate very closely, and I can see that the government is taking some steps in the financial, social and business sectors. To the best of my ability, I certainly give my advice when necessary, but it's a quite difficult problem."

"It's not an Armenian problem, it's a global problem, and it's hard to find the right balance between public health and public well-being," added Sarkissian.

The Armenian government ordered a nationwide lockdown last month in an effort to contain the spread of coronavirus. Since then it has also approved a series of measures designed to cushion the severe economic impact of the lockdown.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan listed those measures in a televised address to the nation aired on Friday. In particular, he touted some 7 billion drams (\$14.4 million) in one-off cash handouts planned or already paid by the government to about 100,000 socially vulnerable citizens. They include employees of private firms forced to suspend their operations, microbusiness owners, self-employed and unregistered workers as well as some pregnant women.

"The most endangered stratum in our country is those people who had no permanent jobs and were dependent on day labor; those families that have always had very modest incomes," said Sarkissian. "Just imagine what a difficult time those families ... are having now."

(Reports from Mediamax, RFE/RL and Armenpress were used to compile this story.)

## Artsakh Central Electoral Commission Declares Arayik Harutyunyan President

STEPANAKERT (News.am) — The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh Republic) on April 21 held a regular session that was exclusively devoted to the nationwide elections held in March-April 2020.

Governed by the Constitution and the Electoral Code, the Central Electoral Commission declared Arayik Harutyunyan as the elected president of the Republic of Artsakh based on the results of the second stage of the presidential elections held on April 14, 2020.

The Central Electoral Commission also accepted as a basis one of the requirements in the Electoral Code and summed up the results of the presidential elections held in the second stage and decided that there haven't been violations of the Electoral Code ahead of the elections and during the vote that could have had an impact on the results of the elections.

## Correction

The April 11 issue of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* incorrectly included a recipe for brine with the recipe for the zucchini caviar. Readers should go to the online version for the correct recipe:

<https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/04/09/recipe-corner-zucchini-caviar/>





## INTERNATIONAL

## Foreign Minister Lavrov Supports Return of Lands to Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Mediamax, Armenpress) – Foreign Minister of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan stated on Tuesday, April 21, that the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can be achieved through compromise.

He made that statement while commenting on the remarks earlier in the day of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov that a stage-by-stage option of the settlement is being actively discussed.

The above option refers to Armenia evacuating and returning territories around Karabakh that were taken as an insurance policy against an Azeri invasion.

“There have been and will be no concessions. The Armenian sides will never exercise that approach,” said Mnatsakanyan.

According to Mnatsakanyan, the Armenian government and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan have been

as transparent as possible regarding this matter in the last two years.

“We expressed our stance and our approaches very clearly. Foreign Minister Lavrov’s statement referred to many documents, including the documents which were discussed in the last two years. These approaches appeared in 2014 and 2016 and they are unacceptable for the Armenian side.

“Since 2018, the talks on the Karabakh conflict have been limited to the discussion and assessment of the approaches which the sides exercised in particular periods of time. The option of settlement, suggested in 2014, is not on the negotiation table now. We have expressed our stance clearly, stating that security is the priority for the Armenian sides,” said Zohrab Mnatsakanyan.

According to him, the principle of self-determination is also a key element in the negotiations for the Armenian sides.

“Those who think that it is possible to negotiate one thing and present another to the public are wrong. No decision can be made without the people of Artsakh,” added Mnatsakanyan.

Lavrov also addressed the issue of Russia not reducing the price of gas for Armenia despite the global decrease.

“I think that of course allies should be provided with economic advantages, but when the price has reached where it is now, it is necessary to take into account that there are concrete commitments by contracts,” Lavrov said.

Lavrov said earlier Moscow has received proposals on reducing the gas price.

“I am confident that while observing the applications, and recently applications were received from our Belarussian and Armenian partners, our allied relations, of course, are under consideration,” Lavrov said.

## Armenian Artists in Times of Corona Pandemic: Berlin

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN – The coronavirus pandemic shutdown has affected every aspect of life here in Germany, from schools to shops, from factories to farms. Social encounters that have always been part of our daily life, in restaurants, bars and cafes, fitness studios, public parks and playgrounds, have undergone a drastic redefinition, distancing has replaced engagement, friendly personal exchange stifles under the protective cloth of the face mask.

And we all agree: it is the right thing to do. So far, the measures taken by the German government have contributed to reducing the spread of the virus and it is deliberating how slowly, step by step, the shutdown can be eased.

Cultural life is suffering the impact. Here in Germany, as elsewhere, theatres are closed, the opera houses are silent, the music festivals, like the annual series of concerts in the Rhine valley, will not take place. Museums are shut; only those with the adequate technical and financial resources have organized virtual tours through the internet. Homes for the elderly which usually enjoy visits by poetry circles and small music ensembles have to endure a ban on visits.

Archi Galentz is an Armenian artist whose atelier and gallery occupy an important place in the cultural life of the capital. On April 12, his new gallery should have celebrated its first anniversary with the vernissage of a new exhibition, but – alas – that was not possible. In a letter addressed to friends of the gallery, Galentz reported on how he and his colleagues – despite everything – are dealing with the current challenge. With his kind permission, we share some of his thoughts with our readers.

“Dear Friends,

Allow me to address you with a personal message. These days many of us are celebrating the holy Easter. Since my childhood, it has been my favorite holiday. And not only because I was named

Harutyun, “Resurrection” in Armenian. The older I get, the more I understand the significance of this credo as victory over despair.

This year, the power of hope for rebirth is especially important. My family and relatives are scattered in different countries and it is not clear when we will meet again at the same table. But this is really not a big problem, since I am

the creative journey lasting 60 years of a Berlin woman artist, whose legacy is our care. Information about all our exhibitions, photographs of expositions and lists of participants are displayed for you on our website. Our latest exhibition about the medium of woodcut was particularly successful. We await this week a 160-page catalog to be delivered from the printer.

Of course, for this anniversary we



One of the exhibits which took place at Galentz’ gallery

today with my heart and thoughts with all my friends and relatives who are struggling with uncertainty in the near future or with the disease itself, who are feeling hostage to today’s situation.

I spent Sunday evening in my newly found Berlin home, the Wolf & Galentz gallery garden, in the close circle of our team, that has become a family. We just had to get together on the first anniversary of the opening of our gallery, to look back at the year that passed, to discuss future projects, both emotionally and cordially, though of course, we sat at a correct ‘social distance’ from each other.

The year that began for us on April 12, was both intense and challenging. We organized 7 exhibition projects, each of which was unique in its own way. We presented group exhibitions of classics from our collection and works by contemporary Berlin artists from our circle. We hosted guest artists from Los Angeles and Serbia. And the curator of the Armenian National Pavilion in Venice conducted a multimedia research project on the theme of the dialogue with authority.

We highlighted one important aspect in

planned a special exhibition, bright and inspiring. Unfortunately, we can’t invite guests during the city quarantine and the opening is postponed indefinitely. But of course, I will inform you of the dates of new events and the schedule of the gallery. We are sure that life will return to normal and we will again be able to host you in our gallery spaces to present you with exhibition projects that we prepare with creativity of designers and curiosity of practicing artists.

During these days of the pandemic and general insecurity, one can especially understand the limits of human capabilities and the relativity of daily fussing. We are happy to inform you of substantial support of our gallery by two philanthropists from Germany and Armenia.

And very special thanks to each of you! For attention, for advice, for active participation and especially for trust in us as partners helping you in collecting or introducing you to visual art. Please continue to contact us with any matter in which our gallery can be of assistance.

Respectfully yours,

Archi Galentz

## International News

### Azeri Drone ‘Shot Down In Karabakh’

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) – Nagorno-Karabakh’s army claimed to have shot down an Azerbaijani military drone on Tuesday, April 21.

In a statement, the Defense Army said the Israeli-made drone was hit by one of its air-defense units early in the afternoon immediately after entering its airspace over a southern section of the Armenian-Azerbaijani “line of contact” around Karabakh. It promised to release photographs of the wreckage the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) later.

The statement also said that Azerbaijani warplanes, combat helicopters and UAVs have carried out more frequent flights near the heavily fortified frontline of late. It claimed that Azerbaijani drones have also repeatedly attempted to cross into Armenian-controlled territory “for intelligence-gathering purposes” and urged Baku to avoid such “provocative steps.”

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry did not immediately react to the claim.

An Israeli company, Aeronautics Defense Systems, manufactures several types of Orbiter UAVs, including light-weight systems designed for reconnaissance missions and heavier attack drones.

The Karabakh army did not specify which one of them it shot down. It had claimed to have destroyed an Orbiter 2 reconnaissance drone in September 2019.

### India Sends Aid to Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Foreign Minister of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan had a telephone conversation with his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. Jaishankar tweeted about his conversation with the Armenian FM, noting that the medical aid sent by India to Armenia is expected to arrive soon.

“I had a warm conversation with the Foreign Minister of brotherly Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan. We discussed the strengthening of our friendship even at the time when we are fighting against coronavirus. We appreciate Armenia’s careful attitude towards the Indian students studying in Armenia. We expect our medical aid to arrive soon,” Jaishankar wrote.

### Armenia Recalls Ambassador to Italy

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Armenia recalled its ambassador to Italy. The relevant decree was signed by President Armen Sarkissian on April 13 upon the suggestion of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, the president’s press office reported.

Ambassador Vitoria Baghdasaryan has served as Ambassador of Armenia to Italy since 2016. In November of the same year, Baghdasaryan was appointed Ambassador of Armenia to Republic of Malta, in combination

### Holy Fire Ceremony in Jerusalem Takes Place Without Pilgrims

JERUSALEM (Panorama.am) – The Holy Fire ceremony symbolizing Jesus’ resurrection took place in a deserted Jerusalem on Saturday, without the joyful throng of Orthodox Christian pilgrims who would normally attend one of the most colorful spectacles of the Easter season, Reuters reported.

Outside in the medieval courtyard of the Holy Sepulchre, by tradition the site of Jesus’ crucifixion, burial and resurrection, the plaza was empty of all but a few Israeli police and clerics maintaining social distancing.

It is noted that the Holy Fire ceremony typically draws tens of thousands of worshippers to an imposing grey edifice in the Holy Sepulchre that is believed to contain the tomb where Jesus lay two thousand years ago.

Sunbeams that pierce through a skylight in the church’s dome are believed by worshippers to ignite a flame deep inside the crypt, a mysterious act considered a Holy Saturday miracle each year before Orthodox Easter Sunday.



# Community News

## ANI Exhibit on US Military Intervention In First Republic Featured in Magazine

WASHINGTON – The Armenian version of the 27-panel ANI exhibit "The United States Military in the Republic of Armenia 1919-1920," which is based on documentary and photographic records created by the American Military Mission sent to Armenia by President Woodrow Wilson, is presently being serialized in the publication *Hay Zinvor*, Armenian Soldier. *Hay Zinvor* is a publication at the Defense Ministry of the Republic of Armenia, where the exhibit was recently displayed.

Four installments of the exhibit have appeared to date, and will continue to be serialized. The exhibit may be viewed in the 2020 issues 11 (pages 20-21), 12 (pages 12-13), 14 (pages 26-27), 15 (pages 26-27) of *Hay Zinvor*.

"It was a very special privilege to see the ANI exhibit go on display at the Armenian defense ministry and to have Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan, US Ambassador Lynn Tracy, and Major General Lee Tafanelli of the Kansas National Guard do the opening," stated ANI Chairman Van Z. Krikorian. "It is an equally great privilege to see this very special ANI exhibit become accessible in the Armenian language and to the Armenian-speaking public as one more example of the long and deep connections between Armenia and America," added Krikorian.

The exhibit profiles several important American military figures, who rose to prominence as members of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) that were sent overseas to France to join the fight against Germany during World War I. Many of these officers later joined the American Relief Administration (ARA), created to respond to the postwar situation in Europe where food shortages threatened famine. The ARA was also tasked with relieving the plight of vulnerable people in Armenia. Herbert Hoover, who at the time headed the ARA, tapped former US Ambassador to the Ottoman Turkey Henry Morgenthau and General John J. Pershing, the commanding general of the AEF, for recommendations on the personnel to be assigned to Armenia. Many of the US officers sent to Armenia were close associates of General Pershing and some were highly decorated veterans of battles in France where they turned the tide of the war in favor of the Allies.

President Wilson dispatched two missions to Armenia, a military mission headed by General James G. Harbord, which investigated the political situation in the region, and a humanitarian mission headed by Colonel William N. Haskell, which was also tasked with overseeing the undertakings of the Near East Relief organization that the United States Congress formally incorporated as part of the humanitarian relief effort in response to the dire situation in Armenia.

"I want to thank the editors of *Hay Zinvor* who proposed publishing the Armenian version of the ANI exhibit and who are overseeing its serialization," stated ANI Director Dr. Adalian. "We also appreciate their close coordination with the Armenian Assembly's Yerevan office staff, who have been supporting this undertaking with the translation effort. It is no small undertaking to explain this significant and complicated chapter in American history to an Armenian audience and they have done a superb job. Considering the challenges of continuing to forge ahead under conditions created by the dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic, I want to extend special appreciation to the *Hay Zinvor* and Assembly Yerevan staffs for dedicating their energies to properly commemorate the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide."

Those who want to read future issues of *Hay Zinvor* can subscribe online. The publication is available for free to the public and contains past and current information about the Armenian military.

The United States Military in the First Republic see EXHIBIT, page ?



The Peace of Art billboard

## We Will Overcome This Together

BOSTON – "We survived the 1915, the Armenian Genocide. Together we will defeat COVID 19."

This is the message carried by "Peace of Art" [www.Peaceofart.org](http://www.Peaceofart.org) since April 1, which has been posted on digital displays in various cities of Massachusetts, on the occasion of the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Daniel Varoujan Hejinian, founding president of Peace of Art, Inc., stated that "if the Armenian nation was able to survive the genocide and reborn from ashes, together we can also fight and overcome COVID 19, the epidemic that is currently facing mankind, against which all nations and religions are equal. We must unite to defeat major epidemics, disasters, and prevent genocides, because a crime against one nation is a crime against all humanity."

In 2003, Peace of Art, Inc., a non-profit educational humanitarian organization, was founded in Boston. This organization uses the universal language of art to raise awareness of the human condition, and to promote peaceful solution to conflicts, and promotes the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

The billboards are located on Route 1 in Walpole, and Route 106 Junction in Plainville, Mass.

## Wakefield Station Rewards Healthcare Workers

WAKEFIELD, Mass. – Elite Gas and Service, a station in Wakefield, Mass., offered free gas on April 10 and the morning of April 11 to any doctor, nurse, dentist or EMT with identification.

**By Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

Owner Ervant ("Ed") Kibarian declared on his Facebook page: "Just listened to a WBZ broadcast which made me want to pay it forward in gratitude and thanks to our doctors and nurses in this time of uncertainty." These health workers are risking their lives to help

others, particularly now with the dangers of COVID-19.

Elite's post on Facebook reached over 10,000 people. Quite a few came on Saturday morning, in particular, when people were off their shifts, Kibarian reported afterwards.

Kibarian started Elite Gas and Service in 2015.



The Elite Gas and Service station

## Los Angeles Genocide Coalition Raises Funds for Feeding America

LOS ANGELES – The coalition of Armenian community organizations in charge of organizing the Southern California area Armenian Genocide commemorations, the United Armenian Council of Los Angeles (UACLA), the Unified Young Armenians (UYA) and the Armenian Genocide Committee (AGC) announce have announced their plans for alternative commemorative events given state and local orders prohibiting mass gatherings due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

In lieu of the traditional requiem service at the Armenian Genocide Martyrs Monument in Montebello, the March in Little Armenia, Hollywood and the Protest demonstration in front of the Los Angeles Turkish Consulate, the committees have been working together to create an all day commemoration which will be aired on local Armenian television channels as well as several hours of live streaming on social media all to take place on April 24 beginning at 10 a.m.

The all-day commemoration will feature addresses by several prominent government officials, community leaders and the clergy, as well as by federal officials instrumental in having both Houses of Congress adopt the historic resolutions acknowledging the Armenian Genocide by the United States of America, informative panel discussions concerning Genocide recognition, reparations and restitution for the crime of Genocide. In addition, viewers will have the opportunity to see documentaries regarding the Genocide and hear from community leaders, well-known personalities and cultural presentations to honor the victims of the first genocide of the 20th century.

The Armenian Genocide brought unspeakable horrors upon the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire, including mass starvation. At the time, Americans organized the largest relief effort in United States history, through the Committee for Near East Relief to come to the aid of the Armenians devastated by the impact of the Genocide. Armenians have never forgotten the benevolence and great generosity of the American people. Americans are now facing a food insecurity crisis due to unprecedented levels of unemployment brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. To address this need, the UACLA/UYA/AGC coalition have partnered with Feeding America, America's largest food bank, to raise funds to provide 1,500,000 meals to America, in honor of our fallen Martyrs and this Great Nation that came to our aid. Through this epic campaign, the entire Armenian community will be able to give thanks to America for its philanthropy at our greatest hour of need, and now, as Armenian-Americans we will do our part to help our communities and fellow American neighbors of all backgrounds and affiliations who face food shortages at this extraordinary time.



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Greater New York Region Devastated by COVID-19

COVID, from page 1

siblings follow in the footsteps of their parents, Harry and Suzanne, who always donated to communities they lived or worked in as well as places in need across the country.

Prior to the pandemic, Toufayan Bakeries (<https://toufayan.com/>) consistently donated to a number of organizations, including Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida, Eva's Shelter, St. Paul Episcopal Church Men's Shelter, nourish.NJ, Oasis, and Interfaith Social Services, in addition to the plethora of initiatives and support the family has contributed to the Armenian community in the Diaspora and the homeland.

"My father is grateful to be living in the United States and when he sees places that experience devastation like how Tennessee was affected by the tornadoes, his first instinct is to figure out a way to get bread to the folks there in the community," said Toufayan. "The same goes for what is happening in our communities now with the coronavirus pandemic."

When the pandemic surfaced in the US and was particularly menacing in the New York metropolis area, Karen and her siblings took the lead in managing their New Jersey headquarters and reassured their parents to remain in Florida.

"My siblings and I have been coming to work every day and we are doing our best to stay open so we can continue to employ our workers and feed families," said Toufayan, noting that the company increased employee wages with a bonus throughout the pandemic and will match that amount with a donation to local charities. "Our family also decided to donate \$100,000 each to two food banks, including nourish.NJ and Second Harvest Food Bank in Florida."

In addition to the monetary donations, Toufayan Bakeries has shipped hundreds of cases of bread and cookies to three shelters in Paterson, NJ, and to the first responders in the hospitals in New York City, "who are helping all of us keep healthy and safe."

After a phone call from a customer who expressed need for food banks in the Boston area, the Toufayan family sprung into action and filled a truck with baked goods and shipped it to the food pantries in New England that were beginning to run low.

"When we give back to the communities where we live, work and sell our products, it is just returning the favor for all those who have helped us become successful over the years," said Toufayan.

"Our faith in God and our strong connection to the Armenian Church is what is helping us get through the stresses," said Toufayan. "I'm grateful to the St. Leon Armenian Church in Fair Lawn, NJ, for streaming their services every Sunday because it gives me a chance to forget about everything that is going on and pray that we all stay healthy and safe."

## 'War Zone'

On the healthcare front, entire hospitals have become Intensive Care Unit wards in the New York and New Jersey area as doctors and healthcare officials face an unprecedented number of sick patients. As of Friday, April 17, more than 200,000 residents had confirmed positive cases in New York State with over 17,000 hospitalized and close to 13,000 deaths. To meet the demands on the healthcare system, hospitals sought out retired physicians, universities coordinated to graduate medical students early, and also re-tasked doctors to the ER and ICU to help with the growing number of patients. Each day over 30,000 new infections are cropping up nationwide.

In New York City, Dr. John Arek Kileci, a community member through the Knights of Vartan, has been on the frontlines helping battle the coronavirus at the New York University (NYU) Langone Health in midtown Manhattan. He is assigned to patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 and likens the pandemic to a "war zone."

"Many people are dying including young ones," said pulmonologist Dr. Kileci, noting that the Intensive Care Units are full. "As an ICU doctor, I wish all the strength and luck to all my healthcare colleagues and workers."

Showing support for essential members of

the community, Hiran Gulian, Chairman Emeritus of the Knights of Vartan, expressed gratitude to all of the frontline workers, including Dr. Kileci.

"Our entire Brotherhood, from coast to coast, is very grateful to all the doctors and nurses during these challenging times," he said. "We thank Dr. Kileci for his dedication and devotion to mankind."

## COVID-19 Task Force

After recognizing the severity of the pandemic in early March, a task force was set up in collaboration with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Armenian Youth Federation, Armenian Relief Society, Hamazkayin and local New York and New Jersey churches to respond to community needs and bring aid in a variety of platforms, from making get-well baskets to community members stricken by COVID-19, to securing housing and basic needs for the vulnerable, to delivering groceries for the elderly. These organizations are ready, willing and able to assist members in any capacity throughout the New York tri-state area.

"This is a humanitarian need and we are both the community leaders and the servants at the same time," said Mher Janian. "In the last one hundred years we never left anyone homeless or hungry and we always make sure to serve our people."

The youth are also playing an essential role, raising funds for local hospitals, shopping and delivering food, while also preparing hot homemade meals and setting up a food bank and shelter at St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Douglaston, NY. The AYF members also filmed and circulated videos informing the public to stay at home and to reach out to them if they needed any items. Other public service announcement videos informed the community about small business loans and grants that may be relevant for Armenian-owned companies and operations. Janian acknowledged that Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian's support and leadership has been instrumental in helping mobilize the organizations and provide relief for the community.

"We've been affected the most in New York City where we have elderly Armenians who live in these areas that have the highest rates of infection, from Queens, Brooklyn, all the way out to Long Island," said Janian, who urged anyone in need to contact him ([mher.janian@gmail.com](mailto:mher.janian@gmail.com)). "A generation ago, these elderly that we are serving now were the ones who served our community, and now it's our time to give back to them."

## Times Square Demo Cancelled

Just a month ago the city streets were filled to the brim with tourists lined up for Broadway shows and snapped photos of famous sites while locals hustled to their offices. In its place now are barren sidewalks and emptiness, especially in symbolic Times Square, where the annual Armenian Genocide Times Square Commemoration, sponsored by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, has taken place every year since 1985. Due to the pandemic, the significant event has been postponed to April 25, 2021. Instead, the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide will be held virtually around the US on both coasts. In the New York tri-state area, the ANCA Eastern Region will host a three-day commemoration honoring the victims of the Armenian Genocide, thanking members of the US Congress for their recognition of the Armenian Genocide and demanding justice from its perpetrators. The virtual event will take place from Friday, April 24 until Sunday April 26 on Facebook ([facebook.com/ancaeasternregion](https://facebook.com/ancaeasternregion)).

## Going Online

In Paterson, NJ, an industrial city that was once the hub of textile factories and an Armenian population at the turn of the 20th century, the longstanding Nouri Brother's Middle Eastern Shopping Center has transitioned its business model to cater to its consumers in new ways during the pandemic. George and Christine Noury, whose father and uncle opened up the business in 1978, are helping lead the center's operations that includes a grocery, cafe, electronics and jewelry department and switching from customer-facing inter-

actions to online shopping and phone orders.

"We are minimizing contact and making sure we are taking the proper precautions," said George Noury, who along with his sister is helping box, ship and deliver goods while offering curbside pick-up for the shopping center as well as Nouri Cafe. "We are rolling with the punches and helping out our workers, customers and community however we can."

Although they were tuned into the news and prepared for the increase in customer traffic before the lockdowns went into effect, George and Christine were still surprised at the empty shelves and flood of customers on Friday, March 13.

"Once we saw how packed the store was, we started figuring out what our new normal would be," said Christine. "We had to adjust according to our means and abide by all of the new rules."

Cleanliness and sanitation remain a priority to the family-owned business and in order to avoid any possible health risks, George and Christine decided early on to close the store during the stay-at-home orders and only focus on pickup, delivery and the shipment of goods. Their user-friendly website (<https://nouribrothers.com/>) lists all of their items and they also added a delivery option within a 15 mile radius. After a month-long voluntary closure of the store to help keep the pandemic at bay, the essential business will reopen on Monday, April 20 for in-store shopping with a limited number of customers permitted inside Nouri's at one time.

"It has been difficult for our customers because they liked to come into our store, browse and hand-pick their items," said George. "This has been a big change for everyone."

Half-Armenian and half-Syrian whose parents hail from Aleppo, Syria, both George and Christine are involved in the community and have been helping hospitals by contributing meals, in addition to donating family dinners, all while keeping operations running as smoothly as possible.

"At first we did have issues with distribution, but everything is on track now and we have fresh bread made onsite everyday which is a customer favorite," said Christine.

Looking towards the future, George and Christine want to continue the current services they're offering to customers well after the pandemic is over.

"As the second generation, this is a good opportunity for us to prove ourselves that we can manage this long-established business and that we are up to the task," said George. "We are taking it as a challenge to transition forward and implement our vision."

## Schools Shuttered

The largest education system in the United States also shuttered in the face of the pandemic. All New York City public schools were shut down on Monday, March 16 and will remain closed through the end of the school year, affecting the day-to-day lives of the 1.1 million students, teachers and parents alike in over 1,800 schools throughout the five boroughs.

In a short period of time teachers had to train themselves with remote learning programs such as Google Classroom and adjust to explaining lesson units virtually. To meet the needs of an estimated 300,000 students who did not have wifi or laptops at home, the New York City Department of Education purchased devices with assistance from Apple, T-Mobile and Google to provide the proper technology for all students.

The closing of the schools caused other concerns, such as how essential workers, including healthcare professionals, first responders and transit workers, would care for their children during school hours. In response, the city provided physical locations where students could be dropped off. Many students also relied on the schools for meals and the city administration organized "grab-and-go meals" for families to pick up breakfast and lunches during normal school hours.

Karine Abalyan, who teaches social studies at a public school in Queens, said that despite these setbacks, her school has seen success with remote learning. "I am very proud of my students," she said. "They have been complet-

ing the work, attending virtual office hours, and e-mailing to ask for feedback on essays. They even took the time to share touching words of encouragement with me and their classmates to keep our spirits up during this uncertain time."

## Mental Health Care

As millions stay quarantined at home and battle the tangible and intangible consequences of the pandemic, such as unemployment and isolation, it has led to an increase in mental health and anxiety issues as people's routines and daily lives have dramatically altered. Thanks to the advent of teletherapy, medical professionals like Lenna Salbashian, a licensed psychotherapist and art therapist, can remain connected to their clients and help them conquer any adverse mental effects.

"I'm extremely grateful that teletherapy exists because it is providing some means for me to continue to be supportive and to help people during this crisis," said Salbashian, who is licensed in New York and Massachusetts as a registered Art Therapist, Licensed Mental Health Counselor and Yoga Teacher. According to Salbashian, staying mentally and emotionally healthy is critical for coping, building resiliency, and maintaining overall wellness through this crisis.

She credits virtual platforms such as Zoom for providing a "healing space" and connection with her clients, who are responding positively to the online sessions.

"Teletherapy allows us to communicate with people during this time of change when they are inundated with more anxiety, depression, isolation and fear than ever before," said Salbashian, who runs her own private practice and is part of the group private practice Whole Living Center. "In that way it's been a saving grace."

She acknowledges the importance of maintaining mental health and staying both mentally and physically fit to help combat the stresses that have been brought on by the change in everyone's day-to-day routines. According to Salbashian, staying mentally and emotionally healthy contributes to one's emotional and physical health.

"Even before this crisis we knew feelings of isolation can have serious detrimental effects on mental and physical health and that loneliness is a huge risk factor for diseases like diabetes, heart disease and arthritis," said Salbashian. "At the root, isolation can compromise the immune system and increases production of stress hormones that put us at a greater risk for developing and being prone to illnesses."

Salbashian gives options and alternatives for people who are isolated and experiencing loss, loneliness and grief. She suggests taking up a routine to create some sort of structure and maintain groundedness. By implementing daily practices, like meditation, people can "go inwards and heal from the inside." She cites a number of free resources available on Instagram, YouTube, Zoom and online meditation groups that allow people to connect with one another over technology and pursue a creative practice, such as cooking, painting or clay-working.

"I've been offering clients ways to get creative using art materials so people can establish a sense of control, groundedness and acceptance for what is going on within oneself and around the world," said Salbashian, who offers a list of therapy services at <http://www.whole-living-center.com/> and her instagram [@artandyogatherapy](https://www.instagram.com/artandyogatherapy). "Creative practices activate your mental and emotional health while physical practices like yoga, help you ground and connect through breathing and movement."

Salbashian also encourages reaching out to friends and contacting people with whom communication has been lost over the years. She recommends connecting with a therapist and notes that some insurance companies are currently waiving copays for telehealth. Above all, she states that offering support can alleviate fear.

"People say the opposite of fear isn't courage, it's compassion," said Salbashian. "If we can show up for other people in our greatest time of fear and loss, then that's the most beautiful thing we can offer."





## OBITUARIES

## Sarkis Tatigian

### Longest-Serving Defense Department Civil Servant

WASHINGTON – Sarkis Tatigian, who began his Navy career at the age of 19 during the Second World War, passed away earlier this week, leaving behind a nearly 78-year legacy of service to the Department of Defense, reported the Naval Sea Systems Command Office of Corporate Communications on Tuesday, April 7.

At the time of his death, Tatigian, the longest serving civil servant in the history of the DoD, was serving as Naval Sea Systems Command's (NAVSEA) Small Business Advocate.

"Mr. Tatigian truly lived a life dedicated to advocacy and the service of others," said NAVSEA Executive Director James Smerchansky. "His decades of work oversaw the expansion of the small business industrial base and more than \$100 billion in contracts awarded to diverse, small businesses. As we bid fair winds and following seas to Mr. Tatigian, NAVSEA will greatly miss his presence but we will never forget the positive impact he made

on this command and the entire U.S. Navy."

Tatigian's civilian career with the Navy began in July 1942 as a junior radio inspector at the naval aircraft factory in the Philadelphia Navy Yard and the Navy Office of Inspector of Naval Aircraft in Linden, New Jersey. He left his position as an inspector in March 1943 and entered the uniformed Navy as an active-duty Sailor. In June 1944, he started working as an aviation electronics technician's mate in the development of the Navy's first guided anti-ship munition, the ASM-N-2 "BAT" glide bomb, which later became an operational weapon used by the fleet at the end of World War II.

In 1946, he left active duty and returned to the Navy department and civil service with the Bureau of Ordnance in Washington, working on the Navy's first generation of guided-missile systems. From there, he moved on to his life's passion, helping small businesses, as a small business analyst for the bureau. While in the



Portrait of Sarkis Tatigian in Bldg. 197 at the Washington Navy Yard. (U.S. Navy photo by Juan Liriano)

position, Tatigian developed a small business mobile exhibit that traveled coast-to-coast, visiting all state capitals and cities with populations exceeding 400,000. For his organizational efforts on the exhibit, Tatigian received Congressional recognition.

In June 1979, Tatigian was appointed NAVSEA's associate director of the Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Office. The office was eventually renamed the Small Business Program Office, where he continued to serve as an advocate for small business.

In 2012, it was announced during a ceremony honoring Tatigian's 70 years of service that the Navy's Office of Business Opportunities

Director's Award would be renamed the Sarkis Tatigian Small Business Award. The award recognizes outstanding performance by a field activity in creating an organizational climate resulting in the advancement of small business opportunity through exceptionally-managed small business programs and challenging initiatives and who has made significant contributions to the command and the DON small business program. Because of his contributions, Tatigian even won the

award that bears his name.

In 2017, NAVSEA celebrated Tatigian's 75th anniversary of civil service. A unique service pin was specially made to mark the occasion as one celebrating that many years of service had never been given before to an employee.

Tatigian, explained upon his 75th anniversary, why he was driven to continue to come to work each day at NAVSEA.

"I was retirement eligible in October 1973," said Tatigian. "But when you don't have something to wake up for, that's when you start to decline. And, if you love what you do and derive a sense of personal worthiness, it's not really work."

## Florence (Almasian) Markarian

### Dedicated to Family, Church

WATERTOWN – Florence (Almasian) Markarian died in April from COVID-19. She was 95.

She was born on July 4, 1924 and lived in Whitinsville with her family until her marriage in December 1946 to Joseph Markarian of Watertown. After the birth of daughter Ardis

and son Joseph, Jr., the family moved to South Portland, Maine and in 1955 to Ashland, Mass. when Joe accepted the position as Music Director in the Town of Hopkinton Public School system.

For more than 30 years Florence ran the household, managed the family budget and chased her children around. In later years, she worked as a cafeteria cashier in an Ashland elementary school. In 1986, Florence and Joe moved to Watertown where they reconnected with friends and dedicated countless hours to the St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church.

Florence cherished her family: husband, son, daughter and grandsons Jesse and Travis. She will be remembered most for her spirited personality, pride in her Armenian heritage and deep devotion to family and friends.

A private Funeral Service was held for the immediate family at the Bedrosian Funeral Home followed by Burial at Ridgelawn Cemetery, both in Watertown. Condolences can be sent to Joe Markarian, c/o 22 Nason Rd., Swampscott, MA 01907.



## George Sayegh

### Jeweler

BRIGHTON, Mass. – George Sayegh, 77, of Brighton, passed away on April 16, 2020 after a period of failing health and a courageous battle with the coronavirus.

He was born in Lebanon, son of the late Alexander and Loulou (Tufankji) Sayegh.

A longtime resident of Brighton, he worked for many years in the Jewelry business.

He loved walking and sharing fun stories with friends and family.

He is survived by his beloved sister Annette, Jacques and his wife Reine, Margo and her late husband George Chryssis, John, and Emile and his wife Josephine.

Due to the current COVID - 19 restrictions, funeral and cemetery arrangements are private. Arrangements were made by the Bedrosian Funeral Home.



## Zabel (Arslanoglu) Purut

### Born in Turkey

BOSTON – Zabel (Arslanoglu) Purut passed away on April 16, 2020 at the Armenian Nursing Home in Jamaica Plain. She was 93 years old.

Zabel was born on January 1, 1927 in Everek, Turkey to the late Garabed and Marta (Panosian) Arslanoglu.

She was the beloved wife of the late Kalost Purut who passed away in 2016. She is survived by her children; Harutyun Purut and his wife Taline of New Jersey, Herman Purutyan and his wife Laura of Concord and the late Sarkis and Zarman Purut. She was the grandmother of Tamar and Nina Purut and Lorig and Jivan Purutyan. She was the sister to Panos Arslanoglu, Takuhi Uckardes, Vartuhi Koroglu and the late Kaghetsig Angac.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic and current public safety measures, private graveside services were held at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord. Memorial contributions may be made in her memory to St. James Armenian Church.



## Donation

Sandra Shahinian Leitner donated \$200 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

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## ANI Exhibit on US Military Intervention In First Republic Featured in Magazine

EXHIBIT, from page 4

Republic of Armenia digital exhibit is the sixth exhibit developed by ANI. It follows upon other educational material developed for the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, including five large exhibits displaying hundreds of historic photographs. These exhibits include:

\* American Relief in the First Republic of Armenia 1918-1920 (about the role of the YMCA)

\* Iconic Images of the Armenian Genocide (also available as a slideshow)

\* The First Deportation: The German Railroad, The American Hospital, and the Armenian Genocide

\* The First Refuge and the Last Defense: The Armenian Church, Echmiadzin, and the Armenian Genocide

\* Witness to the Armenian Genocide: Photographs by the Perpetrators' German and Austro-Hungarian Allies

\* Survivors of the Armenian Genocide

All exhibits can be freely downloaded.

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## OBITUARIES

## Businessman and Philanthropist, Tekeyan and ADL Leader Armand Norehad Dies

NOREHAD, from page 1

Armand, a lifelong Chicagoan, attended Kilmer Grammar School, Sullivan High School, Purdue University, and graduated from Northwestern University Business School with a master's degree in Business Administration.

Following graduate school, he worked for Union Cord Products, an industrial gasket manufacturer founded by his parents during WWII. Armand worked closely with his father for years until he felt the pull of Wall Street. In 1969, he left the family business and moved to New York to pursue a career with Paine, Webber, Jackson & Curtis.

Armand returned to Chicago in 1973 to pursue a position as an institutional salesman with Bear Stearns & Co. He quickly rose in the ranks due to his competitive nature, persistent drive, and thoughtful manner, leading Armand to become a partner at the firm. Over the next twelve years, he successfully managed and built the Chicago office into the highest grossing location outside of the New York Headquarters.

After retiring from Bear Stearns, he and Marilyn traveled the world and retreated to the Boulders in Scottsdale, Ariz.

in the winters. This peaceful desert oasis was the gathering place for his entire family, for whom he had unconditional love. Armand was a gifted artist and developed a passion for sculpting after his retirement. He continued to sculpt at the North Shore Senior Center almost to the end of his life.

Following in his father's footsteps, Armand continued a tradition of benevolence. He spent much of his life contributing to a variety of charitable organizations throughout the world. As a devoted Armenian and Christian, he served as treasurer of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA) and was a member of the Armenian Assembly. He supported the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), the central board of which he was a member, and turned the AGBU Norehad Center into an important gathering place for Chicago Armenians.

Armand's father Onnig and uncle Bedros were active leaders in TCA and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, and this family tradition now stretches to almost a century with the third generation of Norehads.

In the wake of the 1988 Armenian earthquake, Armand

and Marilyn led a team from the Chicago Armenian community to raise funds in order to send much-needed supplies to his ravaged homeland. Throughout Armand's life, even during the busiest of times, he acted as a mentor to his family and friends, guiding them in key life decisions and struggles. For this he will be remembered by many.

Armand was a devoted and loving husband to his wife, Marilyn, and was an active and supportive father throughout his children's lives, including: coaching soccer, attending soccer and hockey games, and gymnastics meets. This presence and support continued into the lives of his grandchildren.

Armand's legacy is his commitment to faith, family, and love. He could light up a room with his charismatic smile, which left an impact on those who were lucky enough to know him.

A celebration of Armand's life will take place in the summer or fall at the Church of the Holy Comforter in Kenilworth, Illinois, with a reception to follow at Skokie Country Club.

Contributions in memory of Armand may be made to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America ([www.alzfdn.org](http://www.alzfdn.org)).

## Olvi Leon Mangasarian

### Groundbreaking Computer and Math Professor

MADISON, Wis. — Olvi Leon Mangasarian, 86, died at University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison on March 15, 2020.

The son of Leon Mangasarian and Josephine Amassian Mangasarian, Armenian refugees, who fled during the 1915 Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire, he was born in 1934 in Baghdad, Iraq.

He studied at the Jesuit Baghdad College and American University of Beirut before completing his final two years of undergraduate work on full scholarship at Princeton University where he majored in Civil Engineering and was a member of the Colonial Club. He graduated from Princeton Phi Beta Kappa with a B.S.E. in 1954 and an M.S.E. in 1955. He went on to study applied mathematics at Harvard University where he experienced the potential and frustrations of the emerging computer age, working on the Univac, a room-sized computer, powered by vacuum tubes that continually needed to be replaced and using punch cards that at times cascaded helter-skelter across floor. Olvi received his PhD at Harvard University in 1959.

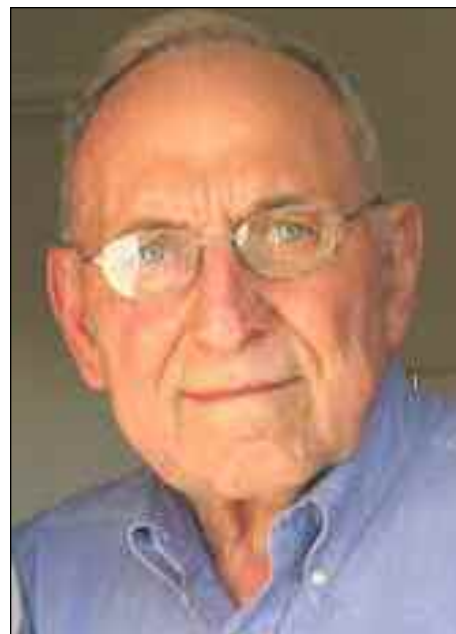
In 1959, Olvi married Claire Garabedian, ini-

tiating a solid alliance for the next 60+ years. They lived in Berkeley, Calif., where he worked at Shell Development Co.

In 1967, they moved to Madison when Olvi joined the faculty of the Computer Sciences Department at the University of Wisconsin. An avid researcher, with over 200 peer reviewed publications, and a dedicated teacher, having mentored 28 PhD students at UW, Olvi was chairman of the Computer Sciences Department for three years in the 1970s.

In 1996, he was the recipient of the Hilldale Award in the Physical Sciences division for distinguished professional accomplishment. As a member of the editorial board of SIAM (Society of Industrial and Applied Mathematics) from 1969-84 and a corresponding editor from 1985-93, he received the designation of SIAM Fellow for advancing the application of mathematics to science and industry. Among other honors, he received the 2000 INFORMS Lanchester Prize for machine learning and data mining.

Professor Mangasarian, the John von Neumann Professor Emeritus of Mathematics and Computer Sciences at the UW, was a pioneer and leader in the field of mathematical



programming where his fundamental contributions range from abstract theory to practical applications. His results have been characterized as very elegant, having great impact and providing the basis for many subsequent extensions. His 1969 monograph, *Nonlinear Programming*, which has remained to date an invaluable textbook for students and reference for researchers, was reproduced in 1994 as the

10th SIAM Classics in Applied Mathematics.

Winters in Madison are long. Ice and snow are part of the package. While invigorating when young, at an older age the Wisconsin winter loses its appeal. After Olvi's retirement from the UW, he and Claire began spending the winter months in San Diego. During these months Olvi worked as a research scientist in the Mathematics Department at the University of California, San Diego, where he enjoyed interaction with colleagues.

Olvi's love of classical music began in his college years and continued throughout his life. Like many mathematicians, he was partial to the Baroque period. Johann Sebastian Bach topped his play list and concerts at the Wisconsin Union Theater were his delight.

Olvi is survived by his wife, Claire; his son, Leon of Potsdam, Germany; his son, Jeffrey of Lake Forest, IL; his son, Aram of Paris, France; and 6 grandchildren: Tarrant, Kyra, Carl-Leon, Alma, Samuel and Elise.

Due to restriction on travel and gathering at this time, a memorial and celebration of Olvi's life will be postponed, probably until summer. Colleagues and friends will be informed when a date is decided.

Olvi's family request that any gifts in his memory be directed through the UW Foundation and designated to the Dept. of Computer Sciences Annual Fund or the Wisconsin Union Theater Director's Discretionary Fund.



### Donations

The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada gratefully acknowledges the following donations to the Krikor and Makrouhi Kuredjian Educational Fund.

Edmond Y. Azadian \$100  
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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Adult Day Health Care Centers in Los Angeles Area Adapt to COVID-19

ADAPTING, from page 1

he said, somewhere between 900 and 1,000 people daily, said that they were like daytime nursing homes. “Our function is to help people who have been identified to be frail adults, who have one or more chronic medical conditions that could lead to their activities of daily living deteriorating and diminishing so that it reaches a dangerous point and they are institutionalized into a nursing home or hospital.” More than half of the participants in his centers’ programs have cognitive impairment conditions which complicate dealing with medical issues like diabetes and hypertension, and care plans prepared with the participation of their physicians and caretakers or family members had to be tailored to their specific needs.

In other words, these health care centers allow such individuals to stay as long as possible in their communities, either living in their own home alone or with family members, by slowing down the decline in their health or maintaining it at a steady level. Oftentimes, even if there is a family member or caregiver to help them, constant care proves too difficult a burden and these centers provide a respite to the former. There are 260 such centers in California ([https://www.aging.ca.gov/Providers\\_and\\_Partners/Community-Based\\_Adult\\_Services/CBAS\\_Providers/](https://www.aging.ca.gov/Providers_and_Partners/Community-Based_Adult_Services/CBAS_Providers/)), including 152 in Los Angeles County.

These centers are different from adult daycare centers, which are basically free centers for socializing and were deemed nonessential by the government. They were shut down during the pandemic.

Karapetian said that on March 16, when the California governor announced that the senior population was at the greatest risk, his adult day health care centers voluntarily decided to temporarily suspend operations until it could be clear what was going on and start providing services remotely.

By the end of that week, most of the employees were laid off, with the exception of some who had to continue to provide critical services to participants in the centers’ programs. However, Karapetian said, the centers began retraining and adjustments so that by the mid-

dle of the following week they began rehiring staff to expand services remotely. He said, “It is like a doctor – you cannot abandon your patients.” Services like delivery of meals and medication, including injections (e.g. insulin), could not be totally suspended.

Nurses of these centers initially went with protective equipment and administered shots and other medication management at the homes of participants, but Karapetian said that by the end of March arrangements were made with family members and caregivers so that with training the latter could administer them and physical contact between individuals was minimized.

Some services were provided by telephone, one person at a time. During the first two weeks, the staff went over COVID-19 symptoms and did educational work in languages like Armenian for those who did not understand English well.

Meal delivery was arranged for those living alone at home and coordination of daily activities that now had to take place at their homes instead of the center.

By the end of the second week, Karapetian said, there were more issues of anxiety, loneliness and isolation that had to be dealt with. By April they started taking more creative measures to connect people, such as starting a YouTube channel (for example, see that of Karapetian’s Ararat Adult Day Health Care Center: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCU76zP9gsY8jdIbGjI6nlLA>). The center’s activity person would tape a short one- or two-minute exercise, activity or song and links were sent to those who could receive it on phones. Otherwise family members were asked to help them watch on smart televisions or tablets.

Karapetian reported at least one positive note: only one person out of all the participants in the seven centers’ programs reported infection with COVID-19, and this happened only a week ago, well after the centers all physically closed. The others are all still safe at their homes and not institutionalized or hospitalized, which could lead to greater risks of infection.

Unfortunately, some employees became infected after physical closure, often due to con-

tact with their own family members at their homes or in second jobs, but they have all recovered, Karapetian said. Other staff have declined to work due to health conditions or other personal circumstances, but meanwhile demands for work are increasing as the centers provide more services. Last week, Karapetian said, they began delivering nonmedical necessities such as toilet paper or hygienic items to people without means of shopping.

New staff are being hired to fill the demand and by the end of the week of April 20 Karapetian said he hoped they would have 80-90 percent of their former numbers employed, even if not fulltime as before, Karapetian said that this is possible because the government and health plans have indicated that they will pay for such services at the same rate as they used to get. Center like his have to submit temporary alternate plans of services to these authorities for approval.

The vast majority, 98 percent according to Karapetian, of the individuals enrolled in his centers were paying through either Medi-Cal (the California equivalent of Medicaid) or a health maintenance organization, usually through Medicare.

During the process of adaptation to the new circumstances created by COVID-19, Karapetian said that the California Association for Adult Day Services ([www.caads.org/](http://www.caads.org/)) provided webinars and other assistance which was incredibly helpful for the centers he worked in. While each of the seven centers operated as independent businesses, his involvement in each helped also in some mutual sharing of information.

## Armenians in the Centers

The majority of Karapetian’s centers are in Glendale, but he also has centers in Van Nuys and Lake View Terrace. Though the majority of the people they serve are Armenians, some 35-40 percent are not, he said, and each center has a different mixture of people. Consequently, each has its own way of addressing the cultural needs of the population it serves along with various health issues.

Some have mixtures of Armenian, Filipino and Hispanic populations and attempt to celebrate elements of each culture along with educating the people of other backgrounds to have

greater acceptance of each other. Karapetian said that though the groups may mingle, most of the time people congregate with people from their own cultures. As most individuals are in their 70s or older, they are fairly set in their ways, so the staff must adapt to this, he explained.

Even the centers primarily serving Armenians are different from one another. For example, he said, one has more Armenians from Iran than Armenia, and even in the two centers which both have large numbers of Iranian Armenians, there is a difference in the way they approach things. Karapetian said, “All of a sudden, they have also developed a certain identity with the locality where they are living and they see themselves as people from that locality and they have their own way of doing things. Whether it is North Hollywood or Van Nuys, they look at themselves differently than those from Glendale.”

Those in Glendale, which has a denser and larger Armenian population, were accustomed to receiving services from the government and major utilities in the Armenian language, unlike those in places like Van Nuys with fewer Armenians. Therefore, Karapetian said, Glendale Armenians feel like they are not being respected if they don’t see a lot done in Armenian (or Farsi). They feel like they have an ownership stake in the town. He said, “They have a stake in caring for things and that manifests itself in how they act – they are a lot more demanding.”

He pointed out that this was not unique to Armenians. Even the Latino population is not all from the same country or region of origin. There are people from El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico along with Hispanics who have grown up in the United States, and the centers have to adapt to their cultural differences.

Karapetian concluded that at present, “The important part is that services have continued to this frail elderly population in an alternative way. We have adapted through telephone contact and the delivery of meals and medications to try and help them cope with the conditions and minimize their risks. We feel that we are continuing to help these individuals stay well by staying at home and being safe.”

## Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center Reports More COVID-19 Deaths, Seeks Funding to Meet Crisis

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while the Massachusetts Department of Public Health recommended this approach on April 13. Of the 73 resident samples, 25 had symptoms but 50 residents tested positive.

Goff wrote, “We are bewildered by this result. We have been so vigilant around any clinical changes in condition. Any identified clinical changes resulted in a transfer to the isolation suite, whether day or night.”

He added that all employees were checked for symptoms and temperature when entering the facility on all three shifts, but this has limited benefit because people could be asymptomatic while infected (as confirmed by the test results from the residents).

Fifteen employees were out with COVID-19, and almost all had positive test results, but two employees completed the quarantine period recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and have returned to work fully recovered, Goff stated.

While infection with the coronavirus is not a death sentence, Goff told family members of residents that “should the worst-case scenario unfold for your family member, please know the nurses are using whatever means they have at their disposal to comfort and reassure each resident nearing end of life. We are talking softly to them, supplementing oxygen, using medication to manage comfort and anxiety and working in full partnership with our physicians through this process. We treat your loved one as our own.”

FaceTime and Skype are being used to allow families to speak with and see their loved ones.

### Difficulties to Be Met

The prior week, 8 employees quit work, largely from the laundry and housekeeping departments. Job duties were adjusted in response but if needed, Goff wrote, ANRC is ready to contract an outside company to fulfill these needs. The nursing staff, on the other hand, remains strong and dedicated, so he said there should be no worry about staffing levels.

Personal protective equipment is being conserved according to CDC guidelines and a group purchasing arrangement was reached this week through the Massachusetts Senior Care Association to secure the needed items for the next two months at the cost of \$15,000.

According to Carolyn Goff, Stewart Goff’s wife who is volunteering to help at the ANRC, the center has a staff of 65.

This is a large expense, and ANRC would greatly appreciate donations to help with this situation. There already have been some donations of protective equipment or aid for purchase of equipment from the community, for which ANRC is thankful, as well as for meals for the workforce.

In his report, Goff concludes: “We are in a desperate situation. But we are invigorated by each other in this situation. We are invigorated by watching the way each member of

the team rises to meet each new challenge. We are invigorated by the Armenian community support which seems to arrive just when we need it. We are committed and doing the very best we can for your loved one.”

### Fundraising by Volunteers, AWWA

Nancy Barsamian is a volunteer advisor to the Armenian Women’s Welfare Association (AWWA), which is the body tasked with raising funds to maintain the ANRC.

Barsamian, who has advised the group with their efforts at the Hanganank Clinic in Artsakh for seniors, formerly worked for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services throughout New England, is helping them raise awareness about help for their staff.

She and her fellow volunteer advisor, Laura Purutyan, want to raise \$15,000, the amount that the ANRC had to spend on protective gear for the staff. They want the money to help feed the staff.

“We want to figure out how to help the staff. If people could donate to the website and earmark it to buy the staff boxed lunches and gift cards for grocery stores,” Barsamian said, that would be a great help.

Barsamian explained that it costs about \$700 to feed the staff boxed lunches daily so that they don’t go out for their meals. Getting them separate food from the rest of the residents will also help the kitchen staff who has to do all the cooking.

“It gives the kitchen a break and gives the staff a nice meal,” Barsamian said.

“It’s really true that the nursing home industry was not prepared in any way,” Barsamian said. “It’s because they were not being tested. COVID is throughout the community and it is one of the things that is very difficult about this pandemic,” she noted.

Carolyn Goff said both Bertucci’s and Stoked Pizza have helped the center.

“It’s just amazing. People call to help,” she said, even when they don’t have a loved one at the center.

In addition, Barsamian said that she would love to see a member of the clergy take responsibility for the spiritual needs of the nursing home. Many different pastors from local churches visit the ANRC but especially now in the time of the pandemic, “We really need a clergy assigned to this facility,” someone who can coordinate the spiritual messages from local members of the clergy.

Barsamian will address the next telehealth program by the Armenian American Medical Association, scheduled for April 25 on elder care.

For up-to-date reports, see the center’s Facebook page. Those who would like to help the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in this crisis period may send their checks to it at 431 Pond Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. <https://www.awwa.us/donate>, Add memo: support staff box meals.

(Alin K. Gregorian contributed to this report.)



# Arts & Living

## Two New Albums In Modern Armenian Folk Music: 'O' and 'Acoustic Armenia'

By Harry Kezelian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

DETROIT – The last few years have seen a very interesting phenomenon in the Armenian music world – the growth of what might be called “modern Armenian folk music.” These new interpretations of Armenian traditional folk songs as well as new songs inspired by the folk tradition seem to have started with Arto Tunçboyacıyan’s Armenian Navy Band, but the real movement today seems to be growing in the Diaspora, with such groups as France’s Collectif Medz Bazar, Los Angeles’ Element Band and Armenian Public Radio, and Lebanon’s Garabala. In this piece, I am reviewing two albums that have been released in the past year which are significant for the progress of Armenian folk music in the world and in the United States in particular.

Medz Bazar, which has been on the scene for a while now, has released their third album, “O,” this past year. Meanwhile the US East Coast, headquarters of the beloved yet controversial genre of “kef time music,” has finally brought forth two entries in the field, Raffi Wartanian’s second album, “Critical Distance” (reviewed on February 6 by *Mirror-Spectator* contributor Taleen Babayan), and Karinné Andonian’s “Acoustic Armenia.” (Though this is Karinné’s first album, she is no stranger to many in the tight-knit East Coast Armenian community.)

Collectif Medz Bazar is composed of ethnic Armenian, Turkish and French residents of Paris. Their inimitable combination of Armenian, Turkish, and other regional folk music, along with influences from American jazz and many other genres, while obviously brand new, is strangely familiar to many Armenians in the US, especially in the East Coast. The reason is obvious – though the members hail from France, much of the same influences have gone into the traditional Armenian dance repertoire of the United States, and so to the ears of this writer at least, Collectif Medz Bazar’s work is something like postmodern kef music.

The members of the band are: Sevana Tchakerian (vocals, accordion, keyboard instruments, *shvi*, etc.), Ezgi Sevgi Can (vocals, clarinet and saxophone), Ela Nuroglu (vocals), Marius Pibarot (vocals, violin, cello, etc.), Vahan Kerovpyan (vocals, percussion), and Shushan Kerovpyan (vocals, double bass). The artists work in a collaborative way, alternating instruments and vocals, and they have written many of the songs themselves.

Sevana Tchakerian tells us that “O” is composed of songs about love, as this happened to be what was inspiring the members of the band at the time. The album opens with *Cambaz*, a Turkish word which although it has several meanings, this author took, based on the music, to be a reference to a tightrope walker, and perhaps to the difficulty of retaining one’s culture in the Diaspora. The album gets off to an amazing start with *Inch G’ella*, a fast, playful 6/8 tune by Tchakerian that can only be called a “kef song,” but for once told from a woman’s perspective, about a boy that doesn’t love the narrator back. Tchakerian’s wonderful interpretation of this song makes it so much fun that one could imagine it becoming a staple of Armenian-American kef bands – if they had any female vocalists!

*Pari Dgha* is an intense song by Vahan Kerovpyan, describing a boy torn between society’s expectations and his own youthful

see MUSIC, page 12



Andrew Janjigian

## No Yeast?

Here’s the easy way to start a sourdough starter from a baking expert

MINNEAPOLIS (*Star Tribune*) – Would-be bread bakers, you’re not mistaken. The spike in demand for flour and yeast that you’re witnessing in supermarkets is real.

“At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, people worried about staying at home, and so they stocked up, a lot,” said Mike Oase, chief operating officer of Kowalski’s Markets, which has 11 Twin Cities locations. “People bought everything in sight. It was bigger than a Christmas week.”

By Rick Nelson

Oase said that flour supply lines are returning to normal. “And yeast will be back in stock in the next few weeks,” he said.

The phenomenon of empty baking-aisle shelves did not go unnoticed at America’s Test Kitchen, the Boston-based publisher of *Cook’s Illustrated* and *Cook’s Country* magazines.

The difficulty of finding yeast at the supermarket came up during an online staff meeting. That’s when senior editor Andrew Janjigian – known to his fellow staffers as “the Bread Guy” and/or “the Bread Whisperer” – offered a solution.

“It’s the perfect opportunity to start a sourdough starter,” he said.

He’d tackled the subject in *Cook’s Illustrated* about four years ago, but that formula called for two pounds of flour.

“Given how little flour there is out there right now, I decided to try it on a much smaller scale, and see how it works,” it said.

Turns out, it works just fine. Janjigian began to document the process on his Instagram account (@wordloaf), and the experiment – which he dubbed #quarantinstarter – went viral. “Or, as I like to say, ‘fungal,’” he said with a laugh, mentioning that yeast is a fungus.

To date, he’s playing a kind of sourdough Pied Piper to about 600 fellow bakers, following along from as far away as Australia and Malaysia. “The list of names that people are calling their starters is really good,” he said with a laugh. They include Clint Yeastwood, Courtney Loave, Carrie Breadshaw, Bread Astaire, Holly Doughlightly and Quentin Quarantino, and no, Janjigian hasn’t christened his.

Because Janjigian has so many bakers following along in real time, he has fielded a lot of questions. Here he is on ...

**Flour:** “Ideally, you want to start with a mix of white with whole wheat or rye, because that extra nutrition will make things happen faster,” he said. “But I’ve done it using only all-purpose. It has to be wheat flour and unbleached. The organisms that you get in sourdough don’t come from the air or from your hands. It’s from the flour itself. Ideally, it would be organic flour so that there are no fungicides, and you’d be using filtered or bottled water for that same reason. But this experiment is showing that it can work without ideal conditions.” Note: Once you’ve hit the twice-a-day refreshing period, switch to using white flour only. The starter no longer requires the nutrients in whole grain flours.

**Temperature:** “The ideal temperature for sourdough is 78 degrees; that’s when both bacteria and yeast are happiest,” he said. “Too much higher, and it will kill all that, and too much lower and it slows everything down.” If it’s too cool, he suggests placing the container in an insulated cooler or freezer bag, or an unheated

see SOURDOUGH, page 11

## Armenia Nercessian De Oliveira:

‘To Love People, the Beauty  
Of Diversity and Feeling at  
Home Anywhere’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/RIO DE JANEIRO – Armenia Nercessian de Oliveira was born in Brazil, to an Armenian father and a Brazilian mother. She is married to film director Xavier de Oliveira and employed as assistant professor of sociology in Brazil. She worked for the United Nations for 16 years with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and in Missions in El Salvador and Bosnia-Herzegovina. She is currently a social entrepreneur, co-founder and president of Novica company.

**Dear Armenia, during past 20 years you have traveled widely as the president of the Novica Company. What is your company’s mission and how successful you are?**

Novica was founded in 1999 to be an Internet platform to give access to the international market to artists and artisans around the world, providing opportunities to grow, to receive more for their work. Products are featured with bios and photo of the artisans, shipped gift wrapped with a handwritten and signed postcard. The goals are to connect people and create an appreciation for other cultures.

Novica started in Los Angeles at the basement of my daughter and son-in-law, Roberto Milk, who is our chief executive officer. It is a



Armenia Nercessian de Oliveira

project created with family and friends. Within five months we had offices in four countries. Within two years, we raised \$20 million, made a partnership with National Geographic, received a World Bank investment and expanded the company to 11 countries. Last year, we celebrated having sent \$95 million to the artisans.

**When first we met in 2000 in Yerevan, you were scouting opportunities to set up a Novica branch also in Armenia. Why it did not take place?**

I am of Armenian descent and have a great interest in having Armenia represented in the Novica system. The country has nice paintings, amazing handcrafts, and I have friends, I had also met the Minister of Culture. But what prevented us from going ahead with our purpose was logistical issues. Novica ships the items straight from the country where we operate to the final customer and the shipping rates were extremely high in 2000.

**What about now?**

Presently, the situation has changed and we are again considering opening an office in

see deOLIVEIRA, page 10





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Armenia Nercessian De Oliveira: 'To Love People, the Beauty of Diversity and Feeling at Home Anywhere'

de OLIVEIRA, from page 9

Armenia. Last September, I attended My Armenia Crafts Festival in Yerevan and visited other regions to meet some artisans. Novica has started a partnership with the Smithsonian Folklife Festival to feature Armenian artists and artisans. The country has changed – and for better.

**Nercessian is a quite familiar name in Brazil due to your brother, popular film and TV actor Stepan Nercessian...**

Yes, each time I give my last name in any place I hear the phrase, “are you a relative of Stepan?” and after saying that I am the sister, the next phrase is “I love him” and of course it opens doors and venues to all sorts of kindness. Not only because he is famous; he is loved due to his personality. Stepan is the one who goes to the supermarket, sit in the coffee on the corner, talks to a homeless the same way he does to the highest authorities. Stepan never acted like a celebrity. He was twice elected as city Councilman and to the Chamber of Deputies of the National Congress of Brazil, our parliament, and he was President for eight years of the Actors Guild of Rio de Janeiro.

I have also another actor in our family. Pedro Nercessian, the son of my sister Celina.

Stepan started his career in 1970, in the leading role of the feature film “Marcelo Zona Sul,” directed by my husband Xavier de Oliveira. In the next five years he had acted in leading roles of 10 feature films. Now, at age of 66, his filmography includes 58 feature films, 5 plays and roles in dozens of TV soap operas and TV series.

During his long career, Stepan won many important awards. The most recent, was the award for Best Actor in the film “Chacrinha, O Velho Guerreiro” by the Brazilian Movie Academy. It is our “Brazilian Oscar.” Stepan was for eight years the President of the Artists Union. Since 1999, he has been the President of Retiro dos Artistas, an institution that welcomes elderly artists with no financial resources. I apologize being so enthusiastic about my brother, but he is really a very interesting and captivating person.

**Yes, we welcomed him in 2006 in Armenia: how did that trip influence him?**

Stepan is very proud of his Armenian heritage, mentioning it in all his interviews. But to come to Armenia had a deep impact on him. He could not stop crying when visited the Genocide Memorial. Each place he visited was full of emotion, especially his visit to Echmiadzin, meeting there the Catholicos. In the streets he saw familiar faces, people that reminded him the Armenian friends of our father.

As a councilman of the city of Rio de Janeiro, Stepan submitted a bill creating the 24th of April the Tribute Day for the Armenian people.

Every Armenian in Diaspora has a unique family story. Please tell us yours.

My father, Karabet and his brother Paulo, are survivors of the Armenian Genocide. My grandfather was taken by the military before the soldiers came to the village to evacuate the children, women and elders. He doesn't know what really happened to his father. He was a child. Later, the mother and brother as all the women, children and elders of Haini, his village, were evacuated by the soldiers for a death march through the desert, like thousands of other Armenians. Before departing, my grandmother managed to hide her two sons ages 5 and 7, a situation that could have happened to other children. After the soldiers left the village, the two young kids roamed the streets, and later ended up in an orphanage from where my father was adopted by a Turkish officer who died and was returned to the orphanage two years later. By then, he had lost contact with his brother. He lived in Greece and then France. In Paris he met an Armenian lady that was trying to reunite Armenians from different countries with their relatives. Thus he knew there was a Nercessian from Haini in Brazil and confirmed to be his brother. In 1930, he came to Brazil to

join his brother Paulo, an exciting family reunion after 10 years without anyone knowing the whereabouts of each other.

**You have been in Armenia three times. How would you describe those visits?**

Coming to Armenia is very special for me. My visits were in three different contexts. The first one was in 1965, when Armenia was a Soviet Republic. The second visit was in 2000 and the third one last year.

The country has changed a lot in all these years. In my last visit I found the people were more optimistic, expecting changes and hoping for a better future. Yerevan is a modern city, but the ancient places, buildings, churches, are what attract me more. In all my visits I was so warmly welcomed. In 2000, I took a taxi, started a conversation and told the driver that I was a Brazilian Armenian. When he knew that my first name was Armenia, he refused to charge for the ride and invited me to have a dinner with his family. Last year, I had another nice surprise, having booked a room in a hotel in Jermuk, I was given an upgrade to their best

room, for free, because of my name. So many stories to remember.

**In 2004 in Los Angeles I met your charming daughter Milena, a film actress. How is her career going?**

At that time, Milena was beginning her career. Since then, she has starred in three short films, five feature films, and a TV series. In 2009 she wrote and starred in a one-woman show, “LOL Latina on the Loose,” acclaimed by audiences and critics. She won many awards for that play. Presently, she is writing and acting. Milena started her carrier as Mina Oliveira, suggested by her agent, but lately changed her artistic name to Mina Nercessian. On March, her last movie, “Single Almost Crazy,” co-produced by MGM is going to be released in Brazil. She wrote the screenplay and is in the leading role. Presently, she is writing a TV Series. All that with four children!

**What about her brothers?**

When I founded Novica my two sons were deeply involved. Fabio started Novica Brazil and was the first director. Raphael is the first

web designer of our site. Milena in the merchandising and our top model. A few years later, the three left Novica to follow their artistic careers. Milena in acting, Fabio in composing soundtracks, for one feature film, “Adagio ao Sol,” and for three short films. Raphael had a music band, composing songs and playing guitar. At one point, he started painting and has sold through Novica more than 50 works. Of course, to make a living with music is not always easy and he also works as a computer programmer. Right now, he lives in Portugal with his wife and 8-year-old daughter. Recently he joined the party of Lisbon Armenians and highly enjoyed it.

**You had – and still have – an interesting life, being so open to the whole world, traveling constantly, speaking almost a dozen languages, meeting always inspiring people. I am always delighted of such people, so it will be interesting to know what is your motto for life?**

To love people, the beauty of diversity and feel at home anywhere in this small world.

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

## Mshosh, a Lentil and Dried Fruit Dish

**Photo and recipe from the Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook courtesy of Robyn Kalajian, a retired culinary teacher and food blogger at thearmeniankitchen.com, the essential Armenian recipe and cooking blog that has become an Armenian-American treasure.**

Mshosh may be one of the oldest Armenian recipes, and it is thought to come from Van.

This mshosh recipe (also spelled “mshmosh”) is one of the latest vegan recipes featured in the new *Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook* by Lena Tashjian and Siroon Parseghian. The word “mshosh” originated from the reduction of the word “myshosh” (a variety of wild apricot). Customarily, the apricots would be left whole, but Lena prefers them chopped to ensure a sweet taste in every bite. Mshosh is typically prepared during Lent and is popular among many Western Armenians. (Variations might use pumpkin, green beans, or beets instead of apricots, but the apricot version is the most popular.)

### INGREDIENTS:

1 cup dry green lentils  
3 cups water  
1 medium onion, finely chopped  
3 to 4 tablespoons oil  
1/2 cup dried apricots, chopped  
1/2 cup prunes (dried plums), chopped  
2/3 cup walnuts, crushed (a mixture of chopped almonds and pecans may be used)  
1/4 cup parsley, chopped  
Salt and pepper, to taste

### PREPARATION:

Soak apricots and prunes in hot water. Set aside for 5 minutes. Drain completely.

Rinse and drain the dry lentils.

Place the lentils in a pot with the 3 cups water. Bring to a boil, then immediately lower the heat to medium. Cook lentils, covered, until soft and liquid is absorbed, about 20-25 minutes. Check to make sure the liquid hasn't evaporated before the cooking time is up. Add a bit more water, if necessary. However, if lentils are fully cooked and liquid remains, drain any excess liquid.

While lentils are cooking, sauté the onion in a skillet over medium heat until translucent. Add the drained, chopped apricots and prunes; cook for an additional 5 minutes. Turn off heat, add chopped nuts and stir, then add the entire fruit-nut mixture to the pot of cooked lentils. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Just before serving, garnish with chopped parsley.

Serves 4 to 6.

For this recipe, go to: <https://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/2020/02/mshosh-lenten-dish-of-lentils-and-dried.html>

The Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook is \$35.00 each. Order at: <https://veganarmeniankitchen.com/product/vegan-armenian-kitchen-cookbook/>

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## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# The easy way to start a sourdough starter from a baking expert

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oven (“Don’t forget it’s in there, and turn on the oven,” he said), or near a light bulb or a working appliance. “Something to keep the chill away,” he said. “The only way to screw it up is to get it so warm as to encourage mold. That’s about 90 degrees or higher.”

**Container:** “It doesn’t really matter, as long as it keeps the starter from drying out,” he said. “Glass, plastic, Mason jars, deli containers. It’s nice to have a clear, straight-sided container, so you can see when it’s doubling and tripling.”

**“Feeding” vs. “refreshing” the starter:** “Think about pets,” he said. “You put food in a bowl, and they eat it. That’s feeding. But here, you’re moving your culture through fresh food and water each time. Rather than continually adding water and flour to the same container, it’s the idea of taking a portion of the old culture and using it to inoculate a fresh container — you want the acids that they produce to be relatively dilute — so they can propagate in that new environment.”

**The schedule:** “Those first two to three days are to get it alive,” he said. “After that, you start refreshing it daily. After about seven days, it should be going enough so that you can do it twice a day. That’s the typical schedule of a starter at a bakery: once in the morning and once in the evening. By that point, it should grow two to three times in volume every 12 hours or so.”

His most frequently shared advice: “Just keep going,” he said. “I think I’ve said that more times than anything else. After the first three days, you’ll get a lot of activity. It’s funky and bubbly, because the initial organisms wake up quickly, but then they die off. Then other things start growing, but they’re not as obvious. That’s when everyone thinks their starter is dead. That’s when I say, ‘Keep going, it’ll come back.’ And of course, it does.”

Learning from his Instagram audience: “When I teach, it’s mostly to people who have a little experience,” he said. “I can make assumptions about what people know and don’t know. But in the world of Instagram instruction, I have to assume that people know nothing. It’s humbling, and it’s been a good teaching tool and an exercise in patience.”

**Preserving leftovers:** During the build-a-starter period, Janjigian advises against discarding the extra culture. “Save it,” he said, reserving it for a day (in the refrigerator) as backup insurance; once you’ve refreshed the following day, and the need for backup has passed, the backup can be scraped into a collective “discard” jar in the refrigerator. “There’s a whole world of cooking using sourdough discard,” he said. “You can’t use it to leaven bread, but you can use it for pancakes, waffles, quick breads, pasta dough, all kinds of things. I’m going to try some Korean-style pancakes.”

**Storage:** Once it has hit its bread-making stride, the starter can be stored in the refrigerator, untouched, for a few months. “But remember, the longer it goes without being refreshed, the longer it takes to get back to its full vigor,” he said. “Bring it to room temperature and refresh it a few times before using it. Bakeability and storeability are the two goals, so don’t put it in the refrigerator until it’s healthy. A three-week starter isn’t as vigorous as a six-month starter. Just keep refreshing it on this small

scale to keep it getting healthier and healthier. If you get to the point where you’re using it once or twice every one to two weeks, and you refresh it before you put it back in the refrigerator, it will keep going forever.”

Anyone with a passing interest in bread baking should follow this self-described “bread-head” online, and subscribe to his newsletter; sign up at [wordloaf.substack.com](http://wordloaf.substack.com). And, of course, read him in *Cook’s Illustrated*, where he’s been working for a decade.

“The first thing I learned to cook was pizza, and I became obsessed with it,” said Janjigian. “But I got the bread bug right after the no-knead recipes came out in about 2006. That’s when I realized how good homemade bread is, and what I’d been missing. That’s when I wanted to master it.”

Naturally, there’s a Minnesota connection in all of this: Janjigian’s spouse, Melissa Rivard, is a Twin Cities native. In their Cambridge, Mass., kitchen, he’s been averaging two loaves of a bread a day during this shelter-in-place period. He’s looking forward to warmer weather, when he will fire up their backyard pizza oven.

## The basic formula

Creating this sourdough starter is a simple process: In a small container, stir about 1 heaping tablespoon flour with 2 to 3 teaspoons lukewarm water (for exact measurements, it’s 10 grams flour and 10 to 15 grams water). Tightly cover, set aside in a warmish spot and wait three days.

After that, it’s “refresh” mode. Follow the same formula — mix together 1 heaping tablespoon flour with 2 to 3 teaspoons lukewarm water — but add another step: Stir in 1 teaspoon (5 grams) of the ever-developing starter (and don’t discard the rest; see story for other uses). Cover, and then repeat, daily, for about a week.

After that, double down on your efforts and follow the procedure twice a day, in the morning and the evening. By the end of another week or so, you’ll have a starter strong enough to bake bread.

## Simple No-Knead #quarantinystarter Sourdough Bread

Makes 1 loaf.

Note: This dough must be prepared in advance. Levain is the building block for leavened bread. From Andrew Janjigian of *Cook’s Illustrated* magazine and America’s Test Kitchen and adapted from King Arthur Flour. “Volume measures are approximate here,” he said. “King Arthur all-purpose flour is the ideal flour for this recipe, but other bread flours will work as well (King Arthur all-purpose flour is closer in protein content to other bread flours than it is to other all-purpose flours). If your starter is already on a large enough scale to yield 30 grams — plus extra for refreshing, don’t forget that! — then you can skip the levain hydration step and mix it into the dough directly. If your kitchen is very cold, you can increase the amount of your levain to 50 grams. In the heat of summer, you can get away with as little as 5 grams.”

For 100% hydration levain (see Note):

- 40 g (1/3 c.) bread flour or high-protein all-purpose flour (see Note)
- 40 g (3 tbsp.) lukewarm (75 degrees) water
- 20 g (4 tsp.) sourdough starter (see the formula below)

For dough:

- 360 g (1 2/3 c.) lukewarm water (75 degrees), divided
- 30 g (1 tbsp.) levain (from above)
- 500 g (3 1/4 c.) bread flour or high-protein all-purpose flour (see Note), plus extra for shaping dough
- 10 g (2 tsp.) salt

the dough looks right and as long as ambient temperatures aren’t much higher than 75 degrees.)

Step 5: Flour the top of the dough and a clean work surface liberally and evenly. Reach under the dough from the bottom and transfer it to the prepared counter. Pat the dough gently to form a 7-inch disc. Fold the dough’s edges over the center, turning the dough a quarter-turn at a time, to form a round ball. Leave dough on the counter and cover with an upside-down bowl or loosely with plastic wrap and let the dough sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.



Andrew Janjigian’s sourdough bread

## Directions

To prepare levain: In a small container, combine bread flour, lukewarm water and sourdough starter. Stir until uniform, then cover tightly and let proof at room temperature until between double and triple in volume, about 6 to 12 hours.

To prepare dough, step 1: Place 10 grams (2 teaspoons) water in a small bowl and set aside. In a medium bowl, whisk together remaining 350 grams water (1 2/3 cup water minus 2 teaspoons) with levain until levain is mostly broken up. Add flour and stir with your hands or a wooden spoon until no dry flour remains. Cover bowl and let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Step 2: Sprinkle salt over top of dough, then sprinkle remaining 10 grams (2 teaspoons) water over dough. Working in the bowl, knead dough gently by hand until salt is fully incorporated and dough is uniform in texture (it will remain shaggy). Cover bowl and let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Step 3: Using wet hands, reach under dough, pull it up and fold it over itself, turning a quarter-turn after each fold and folding 8 times, until dough is tight and uniform.

Step 4: Cover bowl tightly and let dough sit at a cool room temperature (68 to 75 degrees) until dough is puffy, jiggy and bubbly, about 12 to 16 hours. (You can generally move to Step 5 anytime within this window, as long as

Step 6: Line a proofing basket or a colander with a large linen or cotton dish towel and dust liberally with flour. Flour the top of dough ball and the working surface around it. Using a bench knife, carefully unstick the dough from the work surface. Repeat patting and folding as in Step 5 to form the dough into a tight round. Pinch the seam tightly to seal and transfer the dough to the floured towel, seam-side up. Flour the top surface of the dough and fold the towel’s edges over the dough to cover. Place colander in a large plastic bag and cover loosely but completely.

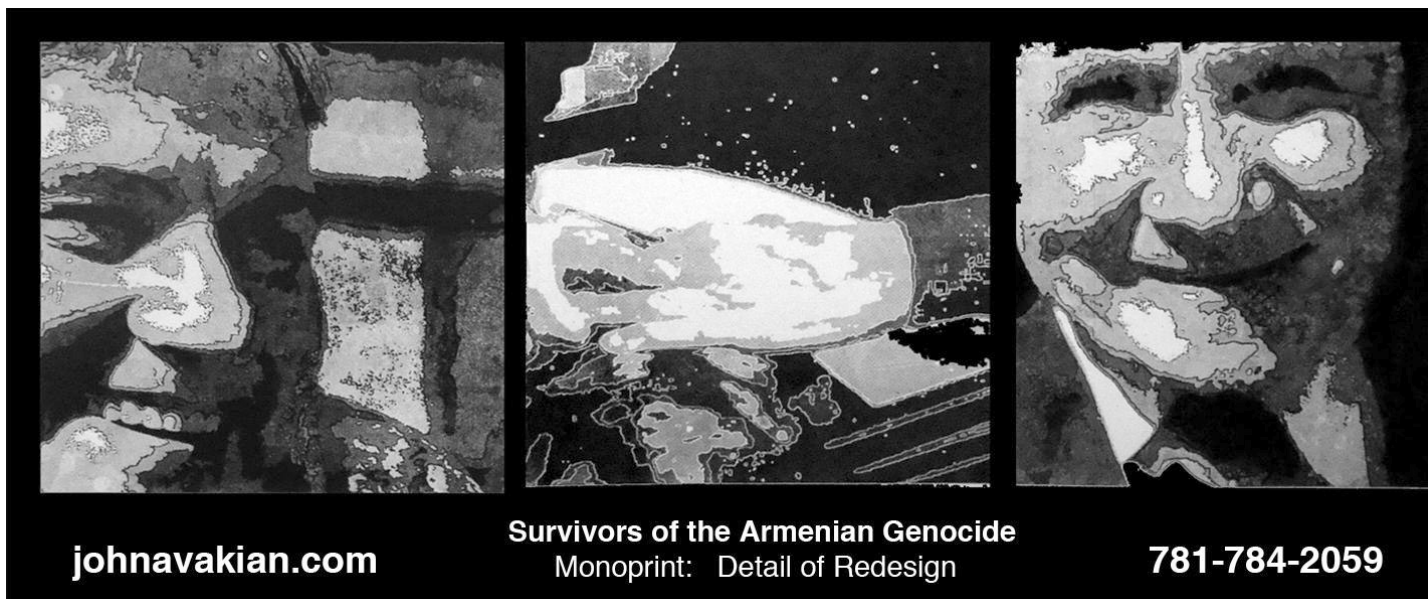
Step 7: Let dough sit at room temperature for 1 hour, then transfer to refrigerator for 8 to 24 hours, depending upon what is more convenient with your schedule. (Or proof at room temperature until the dough has about doubled in size and does not readily spring back when poked with your finger, about 2 to 4 hours. But note that retarding the dough in the refrigerator for 8 to 24 hours will result in better oven spring, easier and better scoring and less worry about when it’s ready to be baked.)

Step 8: 30 minutes before baking, place a large covered cast-iron Dutch oven on the middle rack of the oven and preheat oven to 500 degrees.

Step 9: Fold back edges of towel and dust top of loaf liberally with flour. Lay a 12- by 12-inch piece of parchment paper on a clean work surface. Gently invert loaf onto the center of the parchment paper and remove the towel. Using a sharp knife or a razor blade, make a single 1/4-inch deep slash from edge to edge across the center of the dough.

Step 10: Carefully remove the Dutch oven from the oven and remove the lid. Holding the edges of the parchment paper in both hands, carefully and gently place the dough in the Dutch oven. Cover the Dutch oven, return it to the oven and reduce the oven temperature to 450 degrees.

Step 11: Bake for 20 minutes. Carefully remove the lid and continue to bake until loaf is golden brown, 15 to 20 additional minutes. Carefully remove Dutch oven from the oven. Carefully remove the loaf from the Dutch oven. Return the loaf to the bare oven rack and continue to bake until deep golden brown, 5 to 10 additional minutes. Remove loaf from oven, transfer to a wire rack and allow to cool for at least 2 hours before serving.







## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Two New Albums In Modern Armenian Folk Music: 'O' and 'Acoustic Armenia'

MUSIC, from page 9

desires. At this point the music enters the inexplicable Medz Bazar genre – a combination of Armenian and Turkish folk music, *kef* music, jazz, and whatever else these energetic young people must be listening to. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to describe their style further, and it must simply be listened to. The Armenian lyrics and phrasing, at least, are reminiscent of folk and *kef* music, though often about different topics. The music is moody and could be described as Armenian jazz – or Turkish jazz.

*Lion & Bear*, sung by Shushan Kerovpyan in English, is a sort of philosophical song about the dual aspects of the loved one. *I Leave You*, sung by Marius Pibarat, also in English, continues with the soul searching. At this point the whole thing starts to sound like a Beatles concept album – except with an Anatolian clarinet solo. The album returns to Anatolian *kef* mode with *Sevgi Mengisi*, a Turkish song by Alevi troubadour Neset Ertas extolling love and peace. Then comes what will probably be the standout song for most Armenian-Americans, Vahan Kerovpyan's *Mi Mornar*, basically a "heavy *kef*" song with noticeable hip-hop and jazz influences. Naturally, the singer asks an ex not to forget him. *Done Yar*, a traditional Armenian folk song straight from the Moushetsi repertoire follows, impeccably sung by Sevana Tchakerian, complete with *davoul* and *zourna*.

*Blul (kaval)* music beautifully opens the next number, a song of separation sung by Vahan in authentic Armenian folk style, similar to a "maya" (think of *Dle Yaman*). The fact that Vahan or another band member appears to have composed this themselves makes it even more impressive. It is at this point in the album that Vahan and Shushan's strong influence from their parents, Aram and Virginia Kerovpyan (of the Akn Choral Group and the Kotchnak Ensemble, specialists of Armenian liturgical music as well as folk music), becomes most apparent.

After a light, authentically presented 1920s style English-language offering from Marius (who like everyone in the band, has a great voice) *Don't Know What to Do*, we return to Armenian folk music with Shushan singing the Western Armenian folk song *Ousge Gou Kas*, well-known in this country by *kef* music fans from its rendition by the Gomidas Band of Philadelphia and many others after them. The band converts the classic 10/8 number about a lovesick singer going crazy into a light-hearted 6/8, which works quite well. The tone gets heavier with *Les Memes Histoires*, a rap song in French (with ethnic influence) performed by Sevana. Translated as "The Same Stories," it's a political/social statement about the recurrence of war, invasions, lack of compassion, etc. as Tchakerian explained in an interview.

On the Dikranagertsi folk song *Khorodig (Pesan Tirash Min Enink* – lyrics by Onnik Dinkjian) a full-scale Anatolian wedding breaks out, with *davoul*, *zourna*, and clarinet. Shushan's beautifully delicate singing style on this track is reminiscent of her mother, Virginia Kerovpyan. Shushan finishes the album in the same singing style with a sad song in Ladino, the Spanish-based language of Constantinople's Jews, *Yo Era Ninya De Kaza Alta*. Shushan's command of two different singing styles, jazz and Anatolian-Armenian, and Sevana's ability to both rap and sing Armenian folk songs with authenticity are some of the amazing things about this group. In fact, all the group members comported themselves wonderfully on their many instruments and vocal pieces. This was the third but we hope it will not be the last album from that amazing, inspiring collective of French-based musicians, Medz Bazar.

#### East Coast Voices

But new voices in modern Armenian folk music are also now emerging on the US East Coast. Raffi Wartanian's "Critical Distance" has already been reviewed in this paper. (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/02/06/on-new-album-wartanians-experiment-goes-the-distance/>)

Another of the new albums in the field is "Acoustic Armenia," the product of the musical mind and soul and especially of the enthralling voice of Karinné Andonian, a young Armenian-American singer from the Philadelphia area. Unlike Medz Bazar's work, Karinné's is solo art,

for the most part. Though her repertoire consists of mostly well-known, traditional Armenian folk songs, she does not allow the familiarity of her material to restrict her to familiar interpretations.

"Avant-garde" is not a word that would be used to describe Karinné's music, but the word "vivid" immediately comes to mind, as do "authentic" and "moving."

Vivid, in the truest possible meaning of the word – alive. Authentic, because Karinné sings from the heart. Moving, because her voice moves us with emotion. Karinné's voice is that of a young mother improvising songs for her children, of a person for whom music and singing is a part of daily life, and of whom the emotions, joys and sorrows of her own real-life world are reflected in her vocalizations. But it is also the expression of a woman whose musical ideas are profound, whose emotions are palpable in her singing, and who has been endowed with a superb, beautiful singing voice. Karinné shared with me that in fact, her young children comprised one of her sources of feedback, and that the song *Kisher Pari* was in fact a lullaby written for them.

A labor of love some 10 years in the making, Karinné has taken a list of well-known and well-loved songs and created brand-new arrangements for practically all of them. Her arrangements give a fresh, living feel to these songs without losing the moods or emotions. Sometimes, the arrangements are surprising, new, and refreshing. Throughout, we hear Karinné's own inner musical voice and ideas, as well as the power of her singing.

Karinné, while accompanying herself on guitar on many of the tracks, has also enlisted the assistance of *oudist* Roger Mgrdichian, Jr., guitarist, Vahe Sarkissian, and *dumbeg* player, Haig Hovnanian (her brother). These three have also contributed in part to the arrangements, but I was surprised when Karinné told me that she even wrote some of the guitar and *oud* solos. Even more impressively, she said she had essentially come up with all the parts of the arrangements by singing to herself, recording them onto her phone, and sending them to the other musicians.

"My voice is my instrument" says Karinné, and that extends even to her arrangements for other instruments, for which sheet music was apparently superfluous.

Perhaps at this point we should add that Karinné's father and grandfather, Steve and Jirair Hovnanian, respectively, have both been featured vocalists with the Vosbikian Band (Karinné's grandmother was a Vosbikian) and that Roger's namesake father was a member of the Philadelphia Gomidas Band along with his uncle, legendary *oud* player Udi George Mgrdichian. The influence of years of Philadelphia Armenian music history is strong here, and the presence of these past and present figures is felt in the album as well.

It's important to note that Vahe Sarkissian is a first generation Armenian-American who grew up with the Armenian folk music and language and has been a highly talented guitarist on the American scene.

The genesis of this album lay in Karinné's quest to find the origin of a beautiful song her grandfather, Jirair, sang to her grandmother, she said in an interview. With no success, she decided to record the song for posterity herself (track 2, *Grandpop's Song*). With this song in mind, she crossed paths with Roger, when they both participated in a local group that performed Jewish music. Despite their family connection, they had not met previously, at least to their recollection. Karinné shared her musical vision with Roger, who was interested in recording an album of new versions of Armenian folk songs. World-famous *oudist* Ara Dinkjian also encouraged Karinné in her dream to create what became "Acoustic Armenia."

Aside from the delicate beauty and romantic aura of *Grandpop's Song*, some of the out-

standing moments of the album are the use of acoustic guitar solos by Vahe Sarkissian and *oud* solos by Roger Mgrdichian, both instruments close to her heart. Voice doubling is used to great effect on *Oror Oror* and *Anoush Karoon*. For the latter song, Karinné chose to reinterpret the melody, as she didn't care for the traditional piano accompaniment originally writ-

by Karinné in addition to her excellent arrangement and vocal interpretation of the trio of songs. *Kherovadz Er*, interpreted with only Haig's *dumbeg* for accompaniment, has a more Middle Eastern feel, which gives way to the masterpiece of the album, *Sareri Hovin Mernem*. Karinné's exquisite performance of this Armenian folk classic is delivered with her sig-



Medz Bazar

ten for this song. In her version the melody stands alone, but in a slightly different interpretation and phrasing than the original. She explained that with many of these songs, she learned them from the many Armenian song books she had access to as a child. She would take what she liked and create something new from it. The arrangement of *Sari Siroon Yar*, for example, a childhood favorite of the artist and a staple of Vosbikian Band performances, is totally new and features surprising rhythmic changes probably never envisioned by the author, Ashugh Ashot, and aided by brother Haig's *dumbeg*. Karinné's wordless vocalizations add to the charm of the song here as throughout the album.

The Gomidas Medley (*Karoun A, Gakavig*, and *Shogher Jan*) features excellent guitar accompaniment by Vahe and more vocalizations

nature breathy and enthralling vocals, in a free meter style, accompanied by Roger's *oud* obbligato, allowing her to focus on her phrasing, which eventually gives way to more open-vowel vocalization as Roger joins her in *oud* improvisations. As the song ends on a perfect note, one would think the album was over, but Karinné returns for a sort of encore, a gentle, heartfelt lullaby, *Kisher Pari*. Just as in the song, Karinné promises her children "ardoon ge desnuvink," we hope that we will soon again hear more of Karinné Andonian's immense musical talents.

Collectif Medz Bazar's album is available on all streaming platforms: Spotify, Amazon, Apple Music, etc.

Andonian's album is available on Spotify, Amazon, Apple Music, can be viewed on YouTube, purchased directly from CDBaby or from Karinné herself.

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## COMMENTARY

## COMMENTARY

## Justice for Armenian Genocide Still Elusive

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The horror that the Armenians experienced in 1915, under Ottoman rule, did not have a name nor a definition when it happened. We had to await the arrival of a Polish Jewish jurist, Raphael Lemkin, to the US, to define that monumental horror as a genocide.

Ever since, Armenians have been waiting for justice, often fighting for it.

The Armenians lost two thirds of their population along with their historic homeland; those who were not killed were exiled from their habitat.

Some historians, feigning objectivity, explain away the action as a historic necessity for the Ottoman rulers who wanted to save the empire. For the Armenians, that represents millions of corpses in the Syrian desert and in the Euphrates River. It represents poet Daniel Varoujan and writer and parliament member Krikor Zohrab being slaughtered by axes. The horror was so overwhelming that it defied human comprehension. The blow was so devastating that for 50 years, Armenians were left licking their wounds and putting their lives together. The year 1965, the 50th anniversary of the Genocide, was a watershed when Armenians began to really understand what had happened to them. A struggle began to emerge from the devastation and a fight for historic justice along was launched as well as the conscious effort to build communities around the world.

Armenia, as a member of the Soviet Union, was limited in contributing to the reconstruction of historic memory.

The challenge was three-pronged:

a) Compilation of documents and the publication of volumes on the history of Genocide; b) the fight for recognition by world bodies and states and c) formulating legal claims.

In recent years, some controversies have emerged about the primacy of those tasks. Some argue that the recognition phase is over and the focus should shift to compensation or r e t r i b u t i o n . Unfortunately, the recognition phase is not over: we need to fight for recognition and compensation at the same time, because they complement each other.

Since 1965, tremendous volumes of documentation have been compiled; scholarly volumes and memoirs have been published a good number by non-Armenians such as Yves Ternon, Yair Auron, Taner Akçam and others. Institutions to study the genocide have been set up, such as the Armenian Genocide Memorial and Monument Institute in Armenia, the Zoryan Institute in Toronto and the Armenian National Institute in Washington. However, those do not meet the magnitude that the cause warrants. Armenians do not yet have a center to preserve documents in a comprehensive way, nor do they have a sufficient numbers of scholars to collect new documents and publish regular series on the genocide.

The Tsitsernakabert Monument and Museum, though imposing in its physical stature, pales in comparison to its Jewish counterpart, the Yad Vashem in Israel, or other Holocaust museums, when it comes to its visual and scholarly documentation.

What happened to the Genocide museum project in Washington was a national disgrace. A piece of property was acquired, a stone's throw away from the White House, for a planned museum. Before discord among the Armenian factions destroyed the project, Turkey was certainly alerted. The shameful lawsuits that ensued led to the failure of the project altogether. Even worse, the silence that followed the failure showed a lot of adverse politics were involved.

Although new scholarly publications continue to be released and some 100 scholars have signed a declaration that what happened to the Armenians was indeed a genocide, documentation still remains a challenge.

As far as recognition is concerned, some 30 nations, in one form or another, have recognized the Armenian Genocide. Last year, it was a landmark victory when the two legislative bodies of the US government overwhelmingly recognized it, although that recognition is only ceremonial and without any legal or political bearing. However, it was enough to scare Turkey. It is anyone's guess how much we can attribute the success to the Armenian lobbying and political activism rather than strained Turkish-American relations.

Armenians can only hope to chance upon on such political opportunities and bank on them, since their own political clout in the US and Europe cannot bring to bear such results.

In the 1970s, a group of young Armenians, disappointed with the inaction of the political groups, took the cause of justice into their own hands and resorted to political violence. No matter what our position on terrorism may be, it is hard to deny that attempts to kill some 70 Turkish diplomats shook up the Turkish establishment and sensitized the world public opinion on the Armenian Genocide.

The recognition process is still ongoing. Pope Francis' contribution was tremendous and even Kim Kardashian played a part.

As far as compensation is concerned, the successor state to the Ottoman Empire, the present Republic of Turkey, is far from recognizing its culpability, let alone ceding any territory. The Turkish authorities are counting on the assimilation of Armenians around the world to seal the fate of historic Armenia. Indeed, assimilated Armenians gradually are losing their identity and some are even buying into the Turkish rationale asking why Armenia would need additional territory when its population is dwindling.

In the first place, lost historic territory is any Armenian's birthright. Second, it is a matter of principle and historic justice. Why should Turks disgrace Vasburagan where Grikor Narekatsi prayed and created his masterpiece? And if the Armenian population is decimated, it is because of Turkish actions.

Today, there are 25 million Kurds on Western Armenian lands. Were it not for the Genocide, 20 million Armenians could have been living within the borders of present-day Turkey.

On our way to compensation, we will be marking this year the centennial of the Treaty of Sevres on August 10, 2020. It defines the Armenian territorial claims based on President Woodrow Wilson's arbitration. Although that treaty is still the nightmare of present day Turkish leaders, no international legal venue seems to be open to its implementation.

The next milestone to address territorial claims is the centennial of the Treaty of Kars (October 25, 1921). That treaty was based on the terms of the Treaty of Moscow (March 16, 1921), signed between Bolshevik Russia and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey led by Mustafa

Kemal. Upon Stalin's insistence, much of Armenian territory was ceded to Turkey.

The moment the Moscow Treaty was being signed, the February 18 revolt had taken place in Armenia and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation had taken over the government, which cabled to Moscow that the Armenian delegates who were on their way did not represent the revolutionary government. Georgia was also in turmoil and did not participate in the proceedings and signing of the Moscow Treaty, which determined the borders between Turkey and the three Caucasian republics – Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

Although Turkey has violated the terms of the Kars Treaty, it has been trying to enforce it, as it guarantees its borders. The 2009 protocols which were supposed to have taken in Zurich was the opportunity for Ankara to trap Armenia into signing them, thereby sealing the fate of its borders with Armenia. But that signing never took place. There is talk that Russia may request its revision next year. But that would depend on the shape of the Russo-Turkish relation, as well as Armenian-Russian relations. Currently anti-Russian rhetoric from Yerevan does not inspire much hope.

But the battle continues. It has taken Armenians 105 years of struggle and it may take as long again until justice is served.



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## COMMENTARY

# Commemorating Genocide: Recognizing the Truth, Remembering the Past, Transforming the Pain

By Matthew Ari Jendian, Ph.D.

This year, while commemorating the 105th anniversary, it is worth highlighting that both houses of the US Congress passed resolutions officially recognizing and remembering “the Armenian Genocide.”

On October 29, 2019, H. Res. 296, a resolution introduced in the US House of Representatives by Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) recognizing the Armenian Genocide passed with a vote of (405 to 11 with 3 present).

On December 12, 2019, S. Res. 150, a resolution introduced by Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and championed by Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX), was passed by Unanimous Consent.

Not only has Sen. Menendez led the call for a formal Senate Resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide in every session of Congress since 2006, he co-authored such resolutions during his time in the House.

Under Senate rules, legislation can pass without a roll call vote as long as no senator objects. However, for three consecutive weeks, Sen. Menendez brought the resolution to the Senate Floor, only to be blocked.

On November 13, having just met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a heated Oval Office meeting, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) hurried back to the Senate floor and blocked the resolution, at the behest of the White House, saying, he didn’t think it was a good idea to pass it “with the president of Turkey in town.”

Then, on November 21, Sen. David Perdue (R-GA), also upon the request of the White House, objected to the resolution “due to concerns that passage of the resolution would jeopardize the sensitive negotiations going on in the region with Turkey and other allies.”

Again, for a third time, the White House reached out and directed Sen. Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.) to block the resolution on December 5. Ironically, Sen. Cramer, who co-sponsored a similar resolution during the prior session of Congress, said on the Senate floor, “I don’t think it’s the right time” to pass it, noting that the resolution could undermine the Trump administration’s diplomatic efforts. [NOTE: Cramer’s objection came two days after he announced the Army Corps of Engineers had awarded a \$270 million contract to work on the border wall to a North Dakota company, Fisher Sand and Gravel, something he had repeatedly lobbied Trump to do.]

After being blocked three times, Sen. Menendez and Sen. Cruz said they were dedicated to keep returning every week until Armenian Genocide denialism was defeated. And, they did it with the support of thousands of citizens’ phone calls and emails to various senators.

The resolution, which did not require President Trump’s signature because it is nonbinding, states, “it is the policy of the United States to commemorate the Armenian Genocide through official recognition and remembrance” and describes the genocide as “the killing of an estimated 1,500,000 Armenians by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923.”

## Continued Denial by Turkey

Fahrettin Altun, Turkey’s communications director, condemned the resolution via Twitter. And, in a separate tweet proclaimed, “History will note [this resolution] as irresponsible and irrational. [US lawmakers] will go down in history as the responsible party for causing a long lasting damage between the two nations.”

Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu called the “null and void” decision a “shameful” and petty “revenge” for Turkey’s independent foreign policy.

This recognition has been long opposed by Turkey, and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during a joint news conference with Trump, complained that two bills approved by the House in October, one on sanctions and another on recognizing genocide, “deeply hurt the Turkish nation.”

The 20th century observed major advances in the forging of international agreements and treaties with respect to human rights, genocide, and other crimes against humanity, but it was also one of the bloodiest centuries on record. And, the bloodiness has continued into the 21st century.

Ball (1999) suggests at least 15 major genocides occurred since WWII, during which some 15 million people have been massacred. Legal agreements and international laws – which have been undermined through weak enforcement and limited application – are incapable, by themselves, of preventing genocide.

What does the anti-genocidal slogan “Never Again” mean? Does it mean, as David Rieff facetiously interprets, “Never again will Germans kill Jews in the 1940s in Europe,” or, similarly, “Never again will over a million Armenians be slaughtered in Asia Minor”? No, “Never Again” is uttered as an aspirational hope that we will take action – at the individual, national, and

international levels – to prevent crimes against humanity, particularly genocide.

In 2006, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan pondered whether the United Nations was an effective defender of human rights, while condemning the world’s failure to halt the bloodshed in the Darfur region of Sudan: “Sixty years after the liberation of the Nazi death camps and 30 years after the Cambodian killing fields, the promise of ‘never again’ is ringing hollow.”

## Progress?

Ratko Mladic, general of the Bosnian Serb Army during the Bosnian civil war in the ‘90s, was convicted of war crimes, including genocide, in November 2017 after a 5-year trial by the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague in the Netherlands and sentenced to life in prison.

More recently, on December 14, 2019, a court in Sudan convicted former President Omar al-Bashir of money laundering and corruption and sentenced him to two years in a minimum security lockup.

Al-Bashir, who also has a warrant out for his arrest by the ICC on charges of war crimes and genocide, was behind the nearly 15-year genocidal campaign carried out against the Darfur region since 2003, resulting in the deaths of nearly 500,000 and the displacement of over three million Darfuris.

In 2018, Sudanese protesters, organized in part by the Sudanese Professionals’ Association, revolted against al-Bashir’s authoritarian rule. Despite al-Bashir’s three decades in power, Sudan’s military was forced to oust him in response to the nationwide protests.

Although Sudan’s military initially said it would not extradite al-Bashir, 76, to the ICC, the country’s military-civilian transitional government agreed on February 11, 2020 to hand over the ousted autocrat to The Hague to face trial on three counts of genocide, five counts of crimes against humanity, and two counts of war crimes for his alleged role.

The indictments, issued in 2009 and 2010, mark the first time the ICC had charged a suspect with genocide.

And, as of February 4, 2020, ICC investigators were collecting evidence for a case involving alleged crimes against humanity by Myanmar government under Aung San Suu Kyi against Rohingya Muslims.

In August 2017, Myanmar security forces launched crackdown in western Rakhine state that, compelling evidence shows, involved mass rape, killings and the burning of entire villages. Consequently, over 700,000 Rohingya fled to neighboring Bangladesh as refugees.

## Bystander or Upstander?

Why do we stand idly by while tragedy unfolds? It’s NOT true that many people don’t know what’s going on. It’s NOT true that many people don’t fully appreciate the magnitude of the situation.

The real reason the US has not done what it could and should do to stop genocide throughout the 20th century and today has not been because lack of knowledge or influence, according to Samantha Power (2003), but a lack of will: “US leaders KNEW what was going on, BELIEVED it to be wrong, but were not prepared to invest the military, financial, diplomatic, and domestic political capital needed to stop genocide.”

But, in a democracy, it is not enough to say that our president and our leaders failed us, for we the people have the ability to create enough pressure for an administration to act. And, if the world does not act and remains silent, we send a clear message to current and future perpetrators of genocide.

Indeed, Hitler’s comment, eight days before invading Poland in 1939, “Who today, after all, speaks of the annihilation of the Armenians,” demonstrates his awareness of the fact that within two decades what had been the most important international human rights catastrophe of the 20th century had been forgotten.

Passive participation reassures perpetrators of the legitimacy of their actions and reveals in a breakdown of empathy. As Jane Elliot reminds us, “To remain silent is to cooperate with the oppressor.”

Samantha Power argues the US should stop genocide for two reasons: “1) We have a moral responsibility to act; and 2) It is in our enlightened self interest to act.” Allowing genocide undermines regional and international stability, creates militarized refugees, and signals dictators that hate and murder are permissible tools for state usage (Dekmejian 2007). But this burden to act must be shared. It is not enough for the US government to unilaterally intervene, as we did in Iraq since 2003.

The United States must exert whatever influence and leadership it has left in the world – and let’s be honest and recognize that the US government has lost some of its credibility in the world due to our misadventures in Iraq – but our government, and we, the people, must use our voice and our remaining influence to ensure the United Nations or some other coalition acts to prevent further atrocities in other places around the globe.

Moving from the societal to the individual level, we have a personal responsibility to think about and respond to genocide. We must not think about cases of genocide in isolation and focus on our particular group’s experience alone.

The terms “genocide” and “holocaust” are not copyrighted; they do not belong to any one group. We must recognize and learn from all genocides and join with one other, across ethnic and national boundaries, in order to prevent new genocides from occurring.

## Genocide Survivor Descendent

I am a descendant of genocide survivors. Three of my four grandparents survived the genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turkish government beginning in 1915 (some scholars say 1914), and I am working with my brother Micah and sister Megan on a sequel to my first book, *Becoming American, Remaining Ethnic*, subtitled *One Family’s Journey from Martyrdom to Good News*, memorializing the first names of my grandfathers, Mardiros (i.e., literally “Martyr”) and Avedis (i.e., “Good News,” as in *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*).

As my brother Micah Jendian recalled during his address in San Diego on the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, it’s important for us to “acknowledge the deep pain of our collective experience,” to “examine the effects of the Genocide on the survivors, those raised by survivors, and those raised by those raised by survivors,” to “not be retributive but restorative in nature,” and to “tell our stories and keep alive our memories as a means of transforming and transcending our experience.”

Indeed, our painful experiences can help us connect with the pain of others experiencing or having experienced similar forms of oppression.

## 30-Year Genocide

In 2019, two professors in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Israel, Benny Morris and Dror Ze’evi published *The Thirty-Year Genocide: Turkey’s Destruction of its Christian Minorities, 1894-1924*.

They argue that genocidal policies were implemented by three different governmental bodies in Turkey over these 30 years, including: 1) Sultan Abdul Hamid II – for the 1894-96 massacres of approximately 200,000 Armenians and the 1909 pogroms of 30,000 Armenians in Adana – 2) the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) – namely for the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1916 and the destruction of Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians 1919-1923 – and 3) The Republic of Turkey’s continued persecution of Christians during the rule of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (1923-1924).

All three entities attempted to “de-Christianize” the Anatolian plateau, resulting in a decrease in the Christian population of nearly five million, constituting 20% of the total population, in 1894 to only tens of thousands (less than 2% of Turkey’s population) in 1924.

While Armenians, estimated to number around two million, were the largest ethno-religious minority group in Turkey, Armenians were not the only group to suffer, and so it is time to recognize all of the Christian ethnic minorities targeted for elimination during this time.

The term “genocide,” coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1943-44 see RECOGNITION, page 15

## LETTERS

### Time to Unite, Armenia

To the Editor:

“A house divided against itself cannot stand,” declared President Lincoln in 1858.

That is exactly what is happening in Armenia today.

Various parties, various interests, various ideologies are competing against each other for power, position and prestige.

In today’s world, let’s forget about money and self-inter-

est, and instead focus on people’s survival and national preservation.

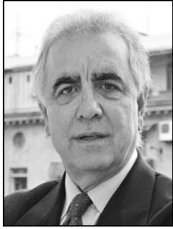
Edmond Azadian’s commentary last week, “Unity and Disunity in Armenia,” brings out the facts in a clear and cogent manner.

Sahan Arzrumi  
New York, NY





## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## It Is not Wise for Armenian Officials and Catholicos to Be in Conflict

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic which is killing hundreds of thousands of people around the world, including in Armenia, and paralyzing the economy and societal life as we know it, the biggest controversy these days in Armenia and the Armenian communities in the Diaspora has become a statement issued by His Holiness Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians, and the harsh reaction by various Armenian officials and some members of the media.

Unfortunately, such a confrontation was not unexpected. Ever since the Velvet Revolution which brought Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to power in Armenia, there has been a tense atmosphere prevailing in Armenia and the Diaspora regarding those supporting Pashinyan's government and those opposing it. While there is nothing wrong with being on the opposite sides of a political issue, the confrontation is so heated that often insults, profanities and even physical threats are exchanged, particularly on social media. In an earlier interview with the Armenian media, I had urged that Armenians should not treat those who disagree with them as enemies. I had said that "we can disagree without being disagreeable."

It is understandable that most Armenians viewed the previous leaders as oppressors under whose unjust rule the Armenian people suffered tremendously. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians emigrated to Russia, Europe and North America not just because of economic hardships, but also due to social inequalities. Therefore, to a degree, it is natural that the majority of Armenians would harbor such toxic feelings

toward the previous regimes.

However, I suggest that Armenians should focus on rebuilding Armenia's economy rather than being consumed with hatred for the rest of their lives. Those who abused their positions and enriched themselves should be tried in courts and properly punished for their misdeeds.

Turning to the latest episode of the current acrimony, Catholicos Karekin II issued a statement to News.am last week, suggesting that former President Robert Kocharyan's detention in prison be changed. Here is the translation of the statement by the Catholicos:

"Under the circumstances of this pandemic, we are seeing that in various countries of the world special attention is being paid to individuals who are detained in prisons, welcome steps are being taken toward releasing those who do not pose a danger to society or changing the terms of their detention, in order to protect them from this virus. In such issues the position of the Church is based on the divine message of love, care, and compassion, and in this context, our counsel is that the authorities of our homeland continue to take the necessary steps in this direction. Regarding Robert Kocharyan, the second President of Armenia, being informed of the expert opinions of doctors about his health, we consider it important that along with implementing justice all preventive means and measures be taken, including the changing of the method of detention, in order to protect his health from future complications during this pandemic period."

The next day, Alen Simonyan, the Deputy Speaker of the Armenian Parliament and a member of the ruling party, wrote on his Facebook page the following harsh response to the Catholicos:

"Today Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II said that he considers it important to change the terms of detention of Robert Kocharyan. Let me say that thousands of citizens of Armenia have already for a very long time considered it important the issue of changing the All Armenian Catholicos. I think citizen Ktrij Nersessian [the birth name of the Catholicos] who has been continuously silent, silent and silent for decades, today, under the new conditions, can freely be the guarantor of citizen Robert Kocharyan, and for that sufficient funds can be found."

Also reacting to the Catholicos was Mane Gevorgyan,

spokeswoman of the Prime Minister. She curtly stated that the government does not intend to comment on the "hopes and desires" of the Catholicos. The spokeswoman also recalled that Priest Vahram Melikyan, spokesman of the Mother See of Echmiadzin, had presented a guarantee that if businessman Samvel Mayrapetyan is released from jail and goes to Germany for treatment, he would return to Armenia, but has not done so since January 2019.

To make matters worse, the Deputy Primate of the Diocese of Yerevan, Archbishop Navasard Kchoyan was charged by the Armenian government last week with fraud and money laundering. The National Security Service [NSS] claimed that Archbishop Kchoyan had colluded with an Armenian businessman to defraud a third person. The NSS announced that Kchoyan owned 33-percent of an offshore company. Archbishop Kchoyan's lawyer denied the accusation.

Echmiadzin reacted by urging government officials and the media to respect Archbishop Kchoyan's presumption of innocence. The Church headquarters also stated that it is "bewildering" that the NSS announced the charges one day after Catholicos Karekin II called for a change in the detention terms of former President Kocharyan. Several high-ranking clergymen also criticized the officials who had attacked the Catholicos.

We hope that the mutual accusations will cease as Armenians would become more respectful of everyone's freedom of speech without insulting those who disagree with them. At a time when the pandemic is taking many innocent lives and Armenia's economy is in peril, it would be wiser to concentrate on resolving the grave issues facing our nation.

Unique Virtual March on April 24

Since public gatherings are banned in most countries, the HyeID non-profit organization is suggesting a unique way of commemorating the Armenian Genocide this year from the comfort and safety of your homes.

During the week of April 24, please visit [April24.hyeid.org](http://April24.hyeid.org) and click "join," indicating your agreement to the following statement: "We have to stay home this April 24, but we join the on-line march... We demand justice for Turkey's Genocide of 1.5 million Armenians in 1915." Your agreement will be shown on the worldwide map on screen, indicating the number of those who have joined the on-line march in each country.

## Recognizing the Truth, Remembering the Past

RECOGNITION, from page 14

and encoded into international law in 1948 through the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, narrowly defines it as "the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group."

Therefore, Kieser's (2019) conclusion that the term "genocide" does not seem to fit the 1894-96 and 1909 massacres seems appropriate, because the Sultan's goal was to bring the Armenians into submission through violence, intimidation, and fear, not eliminate them.

Although, the phrase, "in whole or in part" does suggest the extermination of a population does not have to be complete in order for it to be considered genocide.

Nonetheless, the combination of anti-Christian ideology and Turkish nationalism between 1894-1924 resulted in millions of Christians – Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians – being systematically targeted for marginalization, dehumanization, forced expulsion, removal, and migration, and massacres, leading to their nearly complete disappearance from the region.

### Ourselves and Others

The quote from Rev. Martin Niemoller (1892-1984) – a German theologian and Lutheran pastor who initially supported Hitler, then opposed him, and was arrested in 1937 and sent to a concentration camp where he stayed until the end of WWII in 1945 – reminds us all of the personal costs for not speaking up on behalf of others:

"First they came for the Communists, but I was not a Communist, so I said nothing. Then they came for the Social Democrats, but I was not a Social Democrat, so I did nothing. Then came the trade unionists, but I was not a trade unionist. And then they came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew, so I did little. Then, when they came for me, there was no one left to stand up for me."

As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminds us in his Letter from the Birmingham Jail, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are bound by an inescapable garment of mutuality, whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Therefore, our demonstrations and protests must

extend beyond ethnic boundaries to stand against all such discrimination. This means:

Each one of us must recognize and confront our ethnocentrism – our belief that our ethnic group is the best and right one;

Each one of us must recognize and confront our xenophobia – our fear of outsiders or strangers.

Each one of us must recognize others as "human, just like me," and develop empathy and identify with the circumstances and pain of others, for empathy is essential for the resolution of oppression and conflict.

Each one of us must recognize the biological fact that every human being is related to every other human being. Genetically, we are among the most similar of all species on the planet. In fact, each person is at least a 50th cousin of any other person on the globe and we have more in common than we do different.

Each one of us needs to be able to envision a world of inclusion. And while changes can develop in individuals' minds and hearts, they must also become manifest in ACTIONS if social change is to take place.

I want to emphasize the importance of action. You have heard it said that "knowledge is power." I disagree with that. Knowledge is not power, but merely POTENTIAL power. Knowledge becomes powerful when it's acted upon. You could have all the knowledge in the world, but if you don't act on it, it is useless. And, we must not let the excuse that we can't do everything prevent us from the some thing that we can do.

Together, we recognize the truth and remember the past. Together, we transform the trauma and empathize with others. Together, we stand up for each other against all forms of injustice. Together, we have the power to make a difference and to stop and prevent genocide. The journey for humanity continues anew, through our actions for a better future.

And, as anthropologist Margaret Mead reminds us, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed individuals can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

(Dr. Matthew Ari Jendian earned his doctorate from the University of Southern California and is a professor of sociology at California State University, Fresno. He is also the founding director of the Humanics Program at Fresno State, where he has taught since 1995.)

## From Prominent Turkish Philanthropist to Political Prisoner

By Carlotta Gall

ISTANBUL (*New York Times*) – During a tumultuous day in court in February, the Turkish businessman and philanthropist Osman Kavala was unexpectedly acquitted of trying to overthrow the government and then rearrested before he could walk free.

He described it as the best day of his life.

"We were acquitted," he told his lawyers, referring to the eight others tried with him.

Never mind that the two years he had already spent in solitary confinement had been extended indefinitely – this time on specious charges of supporting a 2016 coup. He was happy that at least in one case, he and 15 others had been given the chance to show that the original charges against them were baseless.

"Nothing can affect that composure and attitude," Murat Celikkan, a campaigning journalist and longtime friend and colleague, said of Kavala. "I would be furious, but in all the procedures he never raised his voice once."

Kavala has become the most prominent political prisoner in Turkey, and as he himself ruefully acknowledged after his re-arrest, his case is a prime example of the state of injustice in Turkey today under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

His case is just one of half a million prosecutions underway amid a government crackdown since an attempted coup in 2016, but it is one of the most confounding.

Best known for his good deeds, he has been variously accused of espionage, links to terrorist groups and trying to overthrow the government. Even seasoned lawyers, well used to decades of political trials in Turkey, have described the various charges against him as "ridiculous."

Kavala, 63, grew up and lives in Istanbul. He comes from a family of tobacco traders who moved from the town of Kavala in northern Greece to Istanbul in the 1920s as part of the population exchange between the two countries after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

He studied management at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara and economics at the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom. He went on to study for his doctorate at The New School for Social Research in New York, but broke off his studies when his father died in 1982.

At 26, he returned to Istanbul and took over the Kavala Group of companies. In 1988 he married Ayse Bugra, a social scientist.

see KAVALA, page 16





# Almost an Ally: Italy's New Approach To Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh

By Carlo Frappi

President Ilham Aliyev's state visit to Italy in February 2020 was unique in Azerbaijan's modern history. The trip marked a qualitative leap in the relationship between the countries – as reflected in the agreements they reached during it, as well as the size and institutional profile of the Azerbaijani delegation, which participated in a business forum hosted by the Italian Foreign Ministry. Baku's significant political investment in the relationship appears to have met with enthusiasm from the Italian business world and, most significantly, a reciprocal effort by the Italian government. Officials in Rome have described their push to deepen the relationship as a “precise political choice” and the focus of “very high expectations.”

Much of the Italian and foreign press coverage of the event has focused on the economic dimension of the agreements. Indeed – in line with the joint declaration on a “multidimensional strategic partnership” Aliyev and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte signed during the trip – the relationship moved far beyond its traditional driver, the energy sector, to embrace other strategically important areas such as defence, infrastructure, and investment. Coming shortly before the inauguration of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline, which will deepen economic interdependence between Italy and Azerbaijan, the countries have established what they call a “mutually beneficial” partnership. Within this partnership, Baku hopes to diversify the Azerbaijani economy and Rome to address Italy's bilateral balance of payments deficit.

This marks an important dealignment with

Italy's partners in the Minsk Group and the EU.

However, while the agreements between Italy and Azerbaijan are economically significant, it is their political dimension that could bring about the greatest qualitative leap in the relationship. The joint declaration affirms the parties' support for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict based upon the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of national borders – that is, the pillars of international law on which Azerbaijan has traditionally based its claims against Armenia. This signals a significant departure from – if not the de facto repeal of – Rome's established policy of equidistance between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The declaration's overall political scope is unaffected by its general reference to the fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act. Moreover, the joint declaration is the first Italian pronouncement on Nagorno-Karabakh to make no explicit reference to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk Group, the body that has mediated negotiations between the warring parties for almost three decades. The Azerbaijani authorities have long argued that the Minsk Group, of which Italy is a permanent member, is ineffective and biased – with a view to stimulating parallel negotiations or changing the talks' current format.

In this context, Rome has made a major concession to Baku in the joint declaration – by adopting a clear position on the issue and, accordingly, responding to Azerbaijani claims that the West has double standards in its approach to protracted conflicts in Eastern Europe. This marks an important dealignment with Italy's partners in the Minsk Group and the EU. Indeed, in 2014, the European Union's unwillingness to adopt Azerbaijan's principles



President Ilham Aliyev during his February visit to Italy.

on Nagorno-Karabakh contributed to the failure of negotiations over an Association Agreement with the country. Moreover, such principles still lie at the heart of the complex negotiations over a new EU-Azerbaijan partnership agreement, which began in February 2017.

Therefore, Italy has positioned itself as the West's main political (rather than merely economic) interlocutor with Azerbaijan – an “almost ally” in Aliyev's words. It is currently difficult to tell whether the qualitative leap in Italy-Azerbaijan relations will result in any concrete attempt to relaunch negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh, a move the Italian authorities have repeatedly advocated. It is possible

that Rome will be unable to capitalize on its newly assertive approach to the Southern Caucasus. Still, Italy's effort to strengthen its relationship with Azerbaijan is primarily a political move, one designed to address the lack of credibility that undermines EU policy. Rome has signaled its willingness to break with the past, by adopting Baku's point of view on the pivotal issue in Azerbaijani foreign policy. In this sense, the joint declaration seems to move the parties in the right direction.

(Carlo Frappi is a researcher at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice. This commentary originally appeared on the website of the European Council on Foreign Relations.)

## From Prominent Turkish Philanthropist to Political Prisoner

KAVALA, from page 15

He soon began diversifying the family business, following his own interests. He co-founded the Iletisim Publishing Company, which became an important vehicle for democratic ideas at a time, after the military coup of 1980, when there was a dearth of democratic institutions in the country.

He became increasingly interested in environmental issues and civic rights. He abandoned a hotel development in southern Turkey after watching the movie “Turtle Diary” and learning that the beach was an important nesting site for turtles.

“He did it very easily,” Bugra recounted in a recent interview. “There was no hesitation.” He co-founded an environmental organization, TEMA, among others.

The most troubling issue in Turkey from the late 1980s was the conflict in the southeastern part of the country between the Turkish army and Kurdish separatists, which degenerated into a brutal ethnic conflict against the Kurdish population. When the armed conflict ended a decade later, Kavala began the work that has become his lasting legacy.

“We started talking about the healing powers of art and culture,” Bugra said, “and he started thinking about taking culture to different parts of Turkey.”

That idea grew into the founding of Anadolu Kultur, an organization that supports arts and cultural collaboration, and takes exhibitions and performances all around the country.

He supported an arts space in Diyarbakir, the biggest Kurdish city in the southeast; cultural memory projects for Yazidis, Kurds, Armenians and other minorities; and a program to encourage a normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia.

In between came a 1999 earthquake that killed 17,000 people and had a galvanizing effect on Turkish society. Humanitarian and



Osman Kavala

civic organizations took off.

“That was an important moment for the country as a whole,” Bugra said. “That was the first time we saw a civil society mobilization. It was something spontaneous.”

Kavala began building temporary housing. And he became one of the leading philanthropists in the country, well known among embassies and international donors, and an energetic supporter of civic and human rights groups.

Among the many organizations he helped found was the Open Society Foundation in Turkey, the organization created by the Hungarian-born billionaire George Soros to support democracy and transparency around the world.

The nonprofit sector flourished during Erdogan's first decade in power from 2002, as Turkey was pursuing peace with the Kurds and instituting reforms to further its accession to the European Union.

The arrival of more than three million refugees fleeing the war in Syria from 2011 was another milestone in her husband's life, Bugra said. He was visiting the southern city of Gaziantep, working on a project for Syrian refugees in October 2017, when he was detained. Police boarded his plane in Istanbul and led him off before passengers were allowed to disembark.

What has taxed Kavala and his friends the most in the 29 months since his incarceration is the question of why he has been singled out so harshly.

The answer may be simply: everything he stands for.

He represents the leftist-leaning, secular elite, which in Turkey's polarized society is the opposite of the president and his supporters. They are from religiously conservative, Islamist circles that were long sidelined from power.

“Osman represents another culture,” said Asena Gunal, who runs his flagship organization, Anadolu Kultur. “Someone who is open, cultured, who speaks English, can talk to foreigners, active in society. Something they see as dangerous.”

As he spent 16 months in detention without knowing the charges against him, the pro-government news media and even Erdogan himself accused him of nefarious connections, including being part of a so-called Jewish conspiracy led by Soros.

Some analysts say his work with Armenians and Kurds is hated by elements in Turkey's security establishment. Others have described him as victim of an internal power struggle in Erdogan's cabinet.

“It's really hard to see people talking about him who don't know him,” Gunal said. “He is a nice person trying to be nice to people.”

The indictment, when it was finally revealed, charged him with trying to overthrow the government by financing and organizing protests

in 2013 that began as an occupy movement of Gezi Park in Istanbul's Taksim Square to prevent the construction of a shopping mall.

Erdogan, who has grown increasingly authoritarian, insists the protests were not a spontaneous social movement, as they were widely seen at the time, but an effort to oust him from power.

“This is not an innocent uprising,” he told his parliamentary group the day after Kavala's rearrest. “Behind the curtain there are those Soros-like types who meddle in some countries.”

He added that he had thwarted a “maneuver” to have Kavala released.

Interpreting the president's comment, Celikkan, Kavala's friend and colleague, said it did not bode well for Kavala. “Unless the president leaves office, dies or changes his mind, he is going to stay in prison forever,” he said.

Kavala sees his case as driven by politics – in other words, Erdogan's desire to stay in power.

In answers to questions sent to him in jail through his lawyers, he said judges and prosecutors were acting in line with the political discourse. “As a result of this, legal norms are being eroded and many people are in prison unfairly,” he wrote.

“As I am the lead actor in the fiction of the indictment and also the only arrested defendant of the case, I believe my situation is seen as a striking example of punishment for political reasons,” he wrote.

The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg found in December that the Turkish courts had held him without reasonable cause.

“His detention was intended to punish him as a critic of the Government,” the court concluded in a statement, “to reduce him to silence as an NGO activist and human-rights defender, to dissuade others from engaging in such activities and to paralyze civil society in the country.”

(This article originally appeared in the April 9 edition of the New York Times.)