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Deaths rise In Armenia, Lockdown Extended

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Two more people in Armenia have died from coronavirus, raising to three the domestic death toll from the disease, Health Minister Arsen Torosyan said on Sunday, March 29.

Torosyan said both victims, a 55-year-old woman and a 73-year-old man, also suffered from pre-existing medical conditions.

Another victim was a 72-year-old woman. “Doctors did everything to save their lives, but unfortunately they did not succeed,” he wrote on Facebook.

Armenia reported its first coronavirus-related death on Thursday, March 26. According to Torosyan, 13 COVID-19 patients were kept in the hospital’s intensive care unit as of Saturday.

The government has extended a nationwide lockdown by at least ten days because of a continuing increase in coronavirus cases in the county, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Tuesday, March 31.

The government imposed one-week restrictions on people’s movements and ordered the closure of most businesses on March 24. Since then Armenians have only been allowed out to buy food, receive medical care or briefly exercise near their places of residence. The curfew does not apply to a limited number of public and private sector employees allowed to continue to go to work.

Despite these measures the virus has continued to spread. The Armenian Ministry of Health said on Tuesday morning that 50
see LOCKDOWN, page 2



Screen shot of a March 29 Armenian Medical International Committee meeting on Zoom

US and International Armenian Medical Associations Confront Coronavirus Crisis

NEW YORK/LOS ANGELES – Armenian medical associations in the United States and abroad have sprung into action in order to deal with the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Two of the most active in the United States

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

have been the Armenian American Medical Society (AAMS) based in Los Angeles and the Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) in New York and New Jersey and parts of Connecticut. Both organizations began to work to help Armenians in their local communities and in Armenia fairly early during the process of spread of the virus. The Armenian Medical International Committee (AMIC), a coordinating body of Armenian medical associations worldwide, to which both these American-Armenian groups belong, has been active in the same period internationally.

Armenian American Health Professionals Organization

Ophthalmologist Dr. Lawrence V. Najarian (<https://www.bedminstereye.net/lawrence-najarian/>) is president of AAHPO (<http://www.aahpo.org/>) as well as a member of AMIC’s executive committee. AAHPO represents around 500 health care providers, including physicians, pharmacists, dentists, social workers and others.

see DOCTORS, page 8



Dr. Lawrence V. Najarian

NEWS IN BRIEF

State Symphony Honors Healthcare Workers

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra (ASSO) and its Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Sergey Smbatyan show their gratitude to health care workers across the county for their commitment and self-sacrifice.

“We are supporting you staying at home, trying to prevent the spread of coronavirus, thus reducing your workload. Stay healthy. May this performance encourage all health care workers,” the Orchestra said in a statement, sharing the online performance.

Soldiers, Civilian Wounded Near Azeri Border

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Two soldiers guarding Armenia’s border with Azerbaijan and a teenage resident of an Armenian border village were reportedly wounded on the evening of Monday, March 30, in what Yerevan described as Azerbaijani ceasefire violations.

The Armenian Defense Ministry reported that the soldiers sustained light wounds as their unit repelled an Azerbaijani raid on its positions in the northern Tavush province bordering the Gazakh district in western Azerbaijan.

A ministry statement said Azerbaijani forces also shot at two Armenian villages located in the area: Baghanis and Voskevan. It said a boy in Voskevan was wounded as a result.

Tavush’s governor, Hayk Chobanyan, said the boy was shot in the chest and rushed to hospital. His life is not at risk now, said Chobanian.

“In order to stabilize the situation in the border zone and to counter the brazen actions by Azerbaijani forces ... taken amid the [coronavirus] pandemic the Armenian Armed Forces will resort to actions commensurate with the situation. Azerbaijan’s military-political leadership will be fully responsible for the consequences,” read the Defense Ministry statement.

Pashinyan Speaks with Belarussian President

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan had a telephone conversation today with President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, the Armenian PM’s Office told Armenpress.

The officials exchanged information about the situation in the two countries caused by the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and the actions of the governments in this respect.

Pashinyan and Lukashenko also discussed issues relating to the mutual cooperation within the frames of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Both highlighted the necessity to hold regular consultations and take joint actions.

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Patrick Devedjian, right, with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

Former French Minister Patrick Devedjian Dies of COVID-19

PARIS (*Deutsche Welle/Daily Mail*) – A French former cabinet minister and former president of the Parisian Haut-de-Seine administrative district has become one of the first high-profile politicians to die of COVID-19, on March 29. Patrick Devedjian was 75.

The death of Devedjian, a close adviser of former President Nicolas Sarkozy, was announced Sunday.

Devedjian was the minister in charge of dealing with French recovery from the 2008 financial crisis. He first announced he was suffering from symptoms of the coronavirus on March 25.

“I am affected by the epidemic, therefore I am able to bear

see DEVEDJIAN, page 6



Krzysztof Penderecki

Krzysztof Penderecki, Polish Composer With Cinematic Flair, Dies at 86

KRAKOW, Poland (*New York Times*) – Krzysztof Penderecki, a Polish composer and conductor whose modernist works jumped from the concert hall to popular cul-

By Daniel Lewis

ture, turning up in soundtracks for films like “The Exorcist” and “The Shining” and influencing a generation of edgy rock musicians, died on Sunday, March 29, at his home in Krakow. He was 86.

His death was confirmed by Andrzej Giza, the director of the Ludwig van Beethoven Association, which was founded by Penderecki’s wife, Elzbieta.

see PENDERECKI, page 7



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Teen Domestic Violence Victim Starts Walking

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The 13-year-old girl who was subjected to domestic violence weeks ago in Gyumri and was hospitalized in critical condition has started to walk with the help of doctors, the spokesperson of Surb Astvatsamayr medical center Gevorg Derdzian wrote on his facebook page.

Derdzian added that she remain under the supervision of the doctors and continues receiving relevant treatment.

The young girl was attacked on March 5 and was transported to a Yerevan hospital in critical condition. She underwent an emergency surgery in Gyumri before being brought to Yerevan.

The head of the hospital, Nikolay Dallakyan, said the girl has suffered multiple severe injuries. She was on assisted ventilation and unconscious.

After the child was taken to a hospital in Gyumri on March 5, police officers were dispatched to the apartment where the incident had taken place. First responders found the child's 43-year-old mother dead. Her body had traces of violence.

Gyumri police said they arrested a 28-year-old suspect.

President Sarkissian Thanks Chinese President for Help

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian sent a letter to Chinese President Xi Jinping, on March 30.

Sarkissian congratulated Xi on the great progress recorded in the fight against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Armenian President said in the latter the epidemic was possible to restrain due to the decisive measures of the Chinese government, as well as thanks to the people's selfless dedication.

Highlighting consistent strengthening and deepening of close cooperation with China, Sarkissian expressed his gratitude to China for the continuous assistance provided to Armenia to prevent and overcome the virus.

Considering China's experience in preventing and effectively fighting the spread of the virus instructive for Armenia, Sarkissian also proposed to consider further assistance to Armenia from China in providing equipment, necessary items, as well as in the form of professional support.

In late December 2019, Chinese authorities notified the World Health Organization (WHO) about an outbreak of a previously unknown pneumonia in the city of Wuhan, central China. WHO declared the outbreak of the novel coronavirus a global pandemic and named the virus COVID-19. Cases of coronavirus have been reported in over 195 countries.

First Online Educational Platform Launched

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — iUniversity, the first Armenian online educational platform, was launched by the National Polytechnic University of Armenia (NPUA) on March 23, the government told Armenpress.

iUniversity (<https://iuniversity.am/home/>) serves the NPUA, including the Gyumri, Kapan and Vanadzor branches, as well as the university's college and high school.

The online platform allows to register all beneficiaries, create a list of subjects and homework for each group and class, study materials, e-library, enables to download video lectures, as well as allows students and school-children to ask their questions to teachers and lecturers, etc.

It also allows to monitor the online study process to find shortcomings and gaps to control the process and propose new tools to improve the shortcomings.

The NPUA expressed readiness to provide all the opportunities and technical service of iUniversity to those educational facilities which need it.



A parliament debate of the relief package

Deaths Rise, Lockdown Extended

LOCKDOWN, from page 1

new confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been registered in the past 24 hours, bringing their total number to 532.

"This statistics worries us," Pashinyan said when he announced the government's decision to extend the lockdown.

The premier complained that some Armenians remain complacent about the epidemic and ignore stay-at-home orders issued by the authorities. "The situation is very risky and I want to call on all of us to take it very seriously," he said in a live Facebook broadcast.

"Dear compatriots, stay at home and protect your and your loved ones' health," he added.

"The restrictions will be tightened further," Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan told a news conference held afterwards. "We must also make the monitoring more effective. We are therefore going to beef up police forces [enforcing the lockdown] with various forces from other structures."

Torosyan also reported that ten more people have been cured of the COVID-19 virus, raising to 28 the total number of such recoveries in Armenia.

According to Armenian government data, Yerevan accounts for around half of the infections. The vast majority of the other coronavirus cases were registered in the surrounding Armavir, Ararat and Kotayk provinces.

Health authorities have quarantined at least 3,000 people in the last two weeks. Officials say around 150 of them have been released from the two-week quarantine after repeatedly testing negative for the virus.

The Armenian government declared a state of emergency and closed all schools and universities on March 16 shortly after reporting the first coronavirus cases.

Earlier this week, it also ordered the closure of most businesses and imposed stringent restrictions on people's movement in an effort to slow the spread of the disease.

Armenians are only allowed out to buy food, receive medical care and briefly exercise. When leaving their homes they must carry IDs and filled-out forms explaining their reasons for not staying indoors. The Armenian police said that in the last three days they have fined more than 1,400 people for not complying with these restrictions.

The authorities have also suspended bus services between Yerevan and the rest of the country. Deputy Minister for Local Government Armen Simonyan told reporters on Friday that public

transport links among communities located within each of the ten provinces outside the Armenian capital will also be temporarily banned.

Armenia's borders with Georgia and Iran were closed for travel earlier this month. People have since been able to enter and leave the country only by air. According to Simonyan, only one Belarusian and four Russian airlines continued to fly to and from Yerevan on Friday.

This means that Armenia will be effectively cut off from the outside world after a Russian government ban on all commercial flights abroad comes into force early on Saturday.

Stimulus Plan

The government formally approved on Thursday a multimillion-dollar stimulus package designed to cushion the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic on businesses and ordinary people.

The plan makes most Armenian firms as well as farmers eligible for financial assistance or credit subsidies.

It also calls for one-off cash hand-outs to citizens who have lost their jobs this month due to economic disruption caused by coronavirus. They will receive 100,000 drams (\$200) each if they have children under the age of 14 and are the sole breadwinners of their families.

Among them are the employees of hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, clothing stores and other businesses that were closed after March 13. Depending on their monthly wages, they will get between 68,000 and 136,000 drams in compensation.

The main focus of the wide-ranging aid is on struggling businesses. In particular, creditworthy firms and individual entrepreneurs will receive grants worth \$500 million (just over \$1 million) if they pledge to use that money to pay their workers' wages, buy equipment or raw materials or pay taxes. The scheme will not apply to Armenian banks, insurance companies and casinos.

The government will pay similar sums to small-scale individual entrepreneurs also affected by the lockdown.

Opposition politicians have expressed serious concern about the plight of people involved in the informal sector of the Armenian economy. They have urged the government to take care of

them as well.

Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan did not rule out the possibility of such assistance when he spoke at a news conference later on Monday. He stressed, though, that the government currently sees no effective mechanisms for extending the coronavirus relief package to the "unregistered jobs."

The government will also enable small firms to receive low-interest loans with subsidies to be paid to commercial banks.

The banks will also be paid to provide cheap credit to farmers across the country. The latter will be able to borrow up to 1 million drams each and avoid paying any interest for two years.

Pashinyan insisted that the coronavirus relief package will not only help the domestic economy weather the



Police check a woman's identification papers during the lockdown.

storm but also lay the groundwork for its renewed expansion during "the post-epidemic period."

The premier did not specify the total amount of the emergency funding. He said last week that the government plans to inject at least 150 billion drams (\$300 million) into the economy. Armenia's overall public spending is projected to total around \$4 billion this year.

Opposition leaders dismissed the promised aid as insufficient. During a parliament debate on Wednesday, some of them called on the government to impose a blanket freeze on all loan repayments in the country.

The government approved last week a set of other measures designed to shore up the economy. In particular, it said creditworthy firms and individual entrepreneurs will receive grants worth \$500 million (just over \$1 million) if they pledge to use that money to pay their workers' wages, buy equipment or raw materials or pay taxes. The scheme will not apply to Armenian banks, insurance companies and casinos.



INTERNATIONAL

Armenians, Autism and the Emirates

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — It was February 17 in Zvartnots airport, and two young men shared the stool at the red piano and played with energy and passion. It was before the Coronavirus pandemic had brought international travel to a halt, and they were expressing their excitement about their imminent flight.

Raphael Martirosyan and Vardan Ayyazyan were among the six students who were travelling with their mothers to Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates for a three-day stay. The students came from Armenian centers for people with disabilities: the Autism National Foundation's My Way Educational, Rehabilitation and Vocational Training Day Care Center for Children and Teenagers with Autism, and the Yerevan My Love Foundation's Louse' Center for Special Needs Children. The visit took place from February 17-20, and offered the Armenian guests the opportunity to visit facilities of the Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services (SCHS), their host.

The SCHS is an independent organization in the Emirate of Sharjah dedicated to providing care for people with disabilities in the UAE. The Director General of the SCHS is Sheikhha Jameela Al Qasimi, a person of exceptional capabilities and commitment.

The invitation came at the end of last year, on the occasion of the UAE's National Day (December 2, 2019), and in the framework of the Year of Tolerance. Upon the initiative of Mohamed Al Zaabi, UAE Ambassador to Armenia, and with the support of Emirate companies in Armenia (Fly Dubai, AirArabia airlines, Carrefour Armenia, Euromotors CJSC, Garden 5, Leaves Garden, Al Khazna Farms and Bainouna International), six students from Armenia were awarded the visit, three from each center.

Following joint preparatory work with the facilities' management and the Embassy's specialists, a program was defined to provide both guests and hosts the opportunity to engage in fruitful exchange, comparing their experiences and approaches, to the benefit of the youngsters as well as their parents. From the Louse' Center were Kristine

specialists were Suzanna Petrosyan and Narine Vardanyan, managers of the Vocational Training Program and the Early Integration Program, respectively.

The SCHS was founded in 1979 as a branch of the Arab Family Organization in the Gulf region. In 1995 it became an independent organization in Sharjah, with a vast array of facilities designed to develop and educate people with intellectual and physical disabilities. Its director is Mona Abdul Karim. The Armenian delegation had the opportunity to visit and take part in activities at the three main centers. The first was the Art for All Center, whose motto is, "Art is a global language." My Way also places great emphasis on the therapeutic power of art, so the exchange was based on shared, though different, experiences in creative endeavors. A tour and power point presentation illustrated the approach and experience in Sharjah; turning from theory to practice, the mothers and students took up brushes



Fatima Mohamed Alhanæe, SCHS International Relations Executive and Suzanna Petrosyan, My Way Vocational Training Program Manager

and painted. Working on canvases, the mothers had various flowers and an owl as subjects for their renderings. An art therapist helped out with color selection and mixing the paints. In parallel the students were working in another studio, coloring ceramic jars, while three other mothers worked with caregivers to prepare natural aromatic means to place in the jars. In addition to instruction in the plastic arts, the center offers performing arts, and the guests joined in the dancing.

The Al Wafa School for Capacity Development, which they visited on Day 2, is an affiliate of SCHS, which organizes information campaigns to raise awareness of mental disabilities and the

joined with mothers of the local students in a workshop, in which they prepared dishes from the Arab and Armenian traditional cuisines. It was described as "exemplary teamwork" which culminated in "a tasty experience." The mothers of Al Wafa students prepared a memorable surprise for the Armenian visitors — photo opportunities in national bridal dress, according to ancient Arab tradition — and handmade straw fans as souvenirs.

The third facility, visited on Day 3, is the Al Masarat Center for Development and Empowerment, which conducts music therapy classes, education in crafts and vocational training. During their visit, the students and their mothers engaged in the process of crafting decorative mosaic frames with the use of various items such as pieces of colored glass. The size of the frame and the artist's imagination were the only limiting factors determining the final product. Amazingly beautiful items produced by the center's students were on display. In fact, the Al Masarat Center has a gallery where art works done by the students during the academic year are presented in exhibitions. The visiting students received souvenirs made by the center's students, ready frames, handmade metal bracelets and unique metal bookmarks.

Then they all boarded a bus for a tour of the city, and in the evening, before sunset, enjoyed an Al Qasba Canal boat tour. The visitors from Yerevan were also treated to tours of the Rain Room and the Aquarium.

In appreciation, the My Way center presented their Sharjah hosts with certificates of appreciation; to the SCHS "for the invaluable input, ongoing efforts and competent approach in the sphere of providing services for children with intellectual disabilities and autistic spectrum disorders, for the warmest welcome and precious and useful pastime...." To the Embassy of the UAE in Armenia, My Way expressed its appreciation "for the long-term fruitful cooperation with Autism National Fund Armenia, for the pro-active support of its initiatives" and especially for making it possible for students and their mothers to visit the UAE, a "unique opportunity" to have such an informative and precious experience.

The hospitality extended to the Armenians was beyond all expectations, and the level of mutual understanding,



Students present their decorative frames at Masarat Center for development and Empowerment

Hambardzumyan and her son Gor, Maro Avetisyan and her son Sargis Nalbandyan and Gayane Melkonyan and her son David Baghramyan. From My Way, there was Board Member Mariam Ginosyan and her son Vardan Ayyazyan, Board Member Sona Petrosyan and her son Raphael Martirosyan and Marine Maleryan and her son Gagik Galustov. Two caregivers, Marine Torosyan and Teymine Balinyan, and two specialists from My Way were added to the group, thanks to the support of the ANF, the Embassy and the host organization. The

means to deal with them. The school provides education for children with intellectual disabilities between the ages of 5 and 16. At Al Wafa, the Armenians joined in everywhere, taking part in outdoor activities, including sports and games, and indoor activities. Here music played an important role, and both the local students and the visitors performed songs and instrumental pieces (piano). The center has indoor facilities for games and sports, a rest area, sensory rooms and classrooms, including one dedicated to cooking. Here the visiting mothers

despite the cultural differences, was profound, especially among the mothers. As Sona Petrosyan from My Way summed it up, "All the mothers of children with disabilities speak the same language of love, dedication, devotion, they share the same concerns and pray for the same thing—for the health and progress of their children, for a secure future for all children with special needs, for making the world a better place for them, for tolerance and acceptance, love and opportunity."

(All photos courtesy of My Way.)

International News

Armenian Doctor Dies of COVID-19 in Italy

SALSOMAGGIORE TERME, Italy (Horizon.ca) — Armenian doctor Ghevont Mouradian died of coronavirus in Northern Italy on March 29, Parmatoday.it reported. He caught the virus while working as a doctor.

More than 50 doctors in Italy have reportedly died due to complications from coronavirus as the country continues to struggle with the massive impact caused by the pandemic.

Italy's National Federation of Orders of Surgeons and Dentists (FNOMCeO) released a list of names of the dead doctors amid a blistering attack on the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) available.

Mouradian was born and raised in Qamishli, Syria, reports Yerakouyn

Artsakh Holds Elections

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On March 31, 72.7 percent of the eligible citizens of Artsakh participated in presidential and parliamentary elections of Artsakh, Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission of Artsakh Srбуhi Arzumanyan said in a press conference.

There are 14 presidential hopefuls and 12 political parties striving to be represented in the National Assembly of Artsakh.

Fourteen candidates are running for President: Kristin Balayan, Vitaly Balasanyan, Sergey Amiryan, David Babayan, Bella Lalayan, Arayik Harutyunyan, Hayk Khanumyan, Davit Ishkhanyan, Vahan Badasyan, Masis Mayilyan, Ashot Ghulian, Ruslan Israyelyan, Ashot Dadayan and Melsik Poghosyan.

The results will be published next week as they have not been tallied by press time.

Curfew Put in Place in Georgia

TBILISI (Armenpress) — Georgia has declared curfew, the Gruzia Online announced. Residents' movement will be restricted from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m., Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia announced.

"Full-scale quarantine is declared during the state of emergency. Starting from 21:00 to 06:00 people's movement on foot or by transport is forbidden," Gakharia said.

Under the regime of quarantine, people aged 70 or above are not allowed to go out. There will be exceptions only for the cases if the citizens goes to a grocery, pharmacy or medical facility nearby his house.

Russia Reassures Armenia over Border Closure

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) — Russia has assured Armenia that the coronavirus-related closure of its borders will not apply to cargo shipments between the two countries which are vital for Yerevan.

Moscow announced on Saturday, March 28, that it will close all Russian border crossings on Monday, March 30, as part of its efforts to slow the spread of coronavirus. The decision raised concerns in Armenia whose economy is heavily dependent on trade with Russia.

"I want to say that such worries are misplaced because that decision will not affect Armenian cargoes in any way," Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said after speaking with his Russian counterpart by phone later on Saturday.

"This fact was confirmed during my phone conversation with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin," added in a live Facebook broadcast. "Cargo will continue to shipped from Armenia to Russia and from Russia to Armenia just like it has until now."

A readout of the phone call released by the Russian government likewise said that Mishustin and Pashinyan "stressed the importance of maintaining the flow of goods between Armenia and Russia in full." It said the two men also discussed measures against the coronavirus pandemic taken by their governments.

Russia is Armenia's main trading partner and export market, with bilateral trade exceeding \$2.2 billion last year. Armenian exports to Russia rose by 10 percent to almost \$735 million, according official Armenian statistics.

Community News

SEC Warns of Risk Of Insider Trading During Coronavirus Market Turbulence

By Renae Merle

NEW YORK (*Washington Post*) – The Securities and Exchange Commission is warning of the risk of insider trading.

The coronavirus has affected US markets in “unprecedented” ways, Stephanie Avakian and Steven Peikin, co-directors of the SEC’s Division of Enforcement, said in a sharply worded statement released late Monday, March 23. Given those “dynamic circumstances, corporate insiders are regularly learning new material nonpublic information that may hold an even greater value than under normal circumstances,” the statement said.

In early March, the SEC temporarily lifted some requirements that publicly traded companies periodically alert shareholders to their financial health and quickly disclose significant corporate changes that could affect the stock price. Companies that can show they need extra



Steven Peikin and Stephanie Avakian

time will be granted a reprieve for documents that should have been filed from March 1 to April 30, the SEC said.

ADBUT “given these unique circumstances, a greater number of people may have access to material nonpublic information than in less challenging times,” Avakian and Peikin said.

Corporate executives, directors, employees and consultants should remember to keep confidential corporate information private, they said. The SEC is committed to ensuring “our Main Street investors are not victims of fraud or illegal practices in these unprecedented market and economic conditions,” the statement said.

The agency delivered its warning a week after stock sales by several lawmakers, including Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr (R-N.C.), raised questions about whether they were influenced by private briefings on the outbreak that later led to a historic plunge in US equity markets.

Sen. Richard Burr, head of powerful committee, sold large amount of stocks before sharp declines in market

Burr, who had publicly expressed confidence in the country’s preparedness for the pandemic, sold up to \$1.7 million in stocks last month, according to public disclosures. Burr said his trades were based solely on public news reports and asked the Senate Ethics Committee to review the transactions.

Also under scrutiny are stock sales by Sen. Kelly Loeffler (R-Ga.) and her husband, Jeffrey Sprecher, the chairman of the New York Stock Exchange. Loeffler, who sold holdings valued at between \$1.28 million and \$3.1 million in the weeks after a closed Senate briefing, said the sales were handled by her investment managers and she wasn’t involved.

Insider trading prohibitions apply to all members of Congress, congressional staff and other federal officials, under the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge (Stock) Act of 2012.



John Shegerian

Fresno-Based Company Donates Respirator Masks To Community Hospital

FRESNO (*Business Journal*) – ERI, an e-waste recycler based in Fresno with locations all over the country, donated roughly 300 N95 respirator masks to Community Regional Medical Center in Downtown Fresno Thursday, March 26.

“There could be no greater honor than to make this donation to Community hospital, the No. 1 hospital in the entire Central Valley, which serves all its people, way beyond Fresno,” Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of ERI John Shegerian said. “If these masks can protect the lives of over 300

people and potentially save some of these health care workers from becoming afflicted with COVID-19, then we’ve reached our goal.”

Shegerian said the idea for the donation came from an employee who has been with ERI for nearly 12 years. The company hopes to set an example with this donation to encourage other businesses to donate needed supplies to local health care providers.

David Revis, ERI director of environmental, health, safety and security, brought the idea to co-founders Kevin J. Dillon and Aaron Blum.

Revis said that he found the masks just sitting in a closet as excess inventory at one of the company’s locations. The company stocks up on the N95 masks for its employees who handle electronic waste.

Revis and Shegerian reached out to CRMC to set up the donation, which they said was met with excitement from the hospital staff.

A list will be published to inform the public on what the hospital needs.

According to Revis, a box of N95 masks costs anywhere from \$20-\$25 dollars, but during the ongoing health crisis, he is seeing prices online going up to \$50 for a box, or even \$20 for an individual mask.

Revis said that many of the vendors ERI works with are running out of stock, but encourages local businesses to donate to community medical centers.

“Call your local hospitals and physicians and see what kind of personal protective equipment they need,” Revis said. “From gowns, to face shields, to N95 respirators – I’ve already reached out to some of our other sites across the U.S. and asked them to donate any N95 respirators in their local communities.”



From left, Aaron Blum, David Revis, Kevin J. Dillon and John Shegerian present a donation of N95 masks to Community Regional Medical Center.

Former Colo. Prison Nurse Files Lawsuit against Private Prison Alleging Sex Discrimination

By Michael Karlik

DENVER (*Colorado Politics*) – A former employee of the private prison operator CoreCivic has filed a lawsuit alleging civil rights violations for gender-based discrimination and retaliation against her while working in a prison in Colorado.

Danette Karapetian wrote in her complaint to the US District Court for Colorado that CoreCivic hired her as a licensed practical nurse in September 2017 to provide medical care to inmates at the Bent County Correctional Facility. She described how the nurses used nicknames while at work to prevent prisoners from learning their real identities. When a coworker asked Karapetian how she chose her nickname, “DJ,” she responded that she had once competed in a bikini modeling competition and used that stage name.

After other employees heard the story, Karapetian said, “gossip and rumors” spread. She noticed that her supervisor became “extremely and irrationally angry” at Karapetian and the supervisor allegedly “began concocting a story in her head that Ms. Karapetian was engaging in sexually inappropriate flirting behavior with the inmates.”

In July 2018, Karapetian conveyed her concerns about prisoner care to her supervisor, but the supervisor purportedly became enraged at her interactions with inmates. When Karapetian sought to make a complaint about the supervisor to the assistant warden, another employee warned her, “I’m not threatening you. I’m telling you. Stay away from” the supervisor.

Karapetian went through with the complaint. Subsequently, she alleges, the supervisor canceled routine blood sugar tests for diabetic inmates. When Karapetian said that the affected inmates were complaining about low blood sugar, the supervisor allegedly countered, “Are you sure they’re here for the finger sticks, or are they here for something else?” Karapetian took that to mean that the inmates were seeking sexual relations with her rather than medical assistance.

For the rest of her employment, Karapetian wrote, the supervisor retaliated against her, “both by looking for any reason to unjustifiably criticize Ms. Karapetian’s job performance and by making Ms. Karapetian fear for her safety so she would feel compelled to quit.”

The supervisor eventually removed Karapetian from the work schedule, saying that her nursing licence had expired despite a grace period for renewal. CoreCivic allegedly told her that it would conduct an investigation, but instead, the company never returned her to the work schedule, thus ending her employment.

Karapetian claims that CoreCivic discriminated against her on the basis of sex in violation of federal civil rights law and created a hostile work environment for her.

“After Plaintiff complained of discrimination and retaliation in writing in late July 2018, Defendants continued to retaliate against Plaintiff,” she wrote in her lawsuit, “including by subjecting Plaintiff to disproportionate scrutiny, holding Plaintiff to higher standards than her male peers, [and] holding Plaintiff to higher standards than female peers who conformed to sex stereotypes.” Karapetian also cited retaliation after she raised concerns over patient care.

A spokesperson for CoreCivic responded that employees have multiple options to report the types of conduct Karapetian said she experienced, including by contacting human resources. “While we can’t speak to the specifics of pending litigation, CoreCivic does not tolerate any forms of sexual harassment and takes these allegations very seriously,” the spokesperson said.

The case is Danette Karapetian v. CoreCivic, Inc.



COMMUNITY NEWS



Young Entrepreneur Will Donate to Food Bank for Each Bar Sold

CONCORD, Mass. (*Concord Journal*) – The owner of the nutrition bar company f(x) foods is making a special donation offer that will benefit the Greater Boston Food Bank. “During this challenging time amidst the COVID19 crisis, we would like to do our part in helping provide food to those in our community,” Sophie Gechijian said in a letter to her customers. “For the next few weeks as the outbreak persists, we will donate one bar for every one bar purchased on our website to the Greater Boston Food Bank.” Her company makes snacks to support personal health standards with zero artificial preservatives, flavors or dyes. The Concord-Carlisle High School 2012 graduate is asking customers to send a box of bars to family members, friends, neighbors and more to help feed “those who are food-insecure in our community.” To place an order, visit www.fx-foods.com.



Sophie Gechijian

From a Distance, New State Rep. Lipper-Garabedian Is Sworn in

By Chris Van Buskirk

BOSTON (*Boston Globe*) – State Rep. Kate Lipper-Garabedian’s swearing-in ceremony on Wednesday, March 25 was by all accounts a sign of the daily abnormalities brought on by the coronavirus. Gov. Charlie Baker administered her oath of office on the State House’s Grand Staircase, an odd sight for veteran legislators like House Speaker Robert DeLeo and state Rep. Paul Donato, D-Medford. Under normal circumstances, the ceremony would have taken place during a formal House session with a great deal of pomp and circumstance. “You have witnessed a historical moment in terms of being here as a representative and as a speaker. I thought I saw everything, but this is the first time I ever experienced anything like this,” DeLeo said. “We were talking about even doing it in the Governor’s Council chamber and



State Rep. Kate Lipper-Garabedian

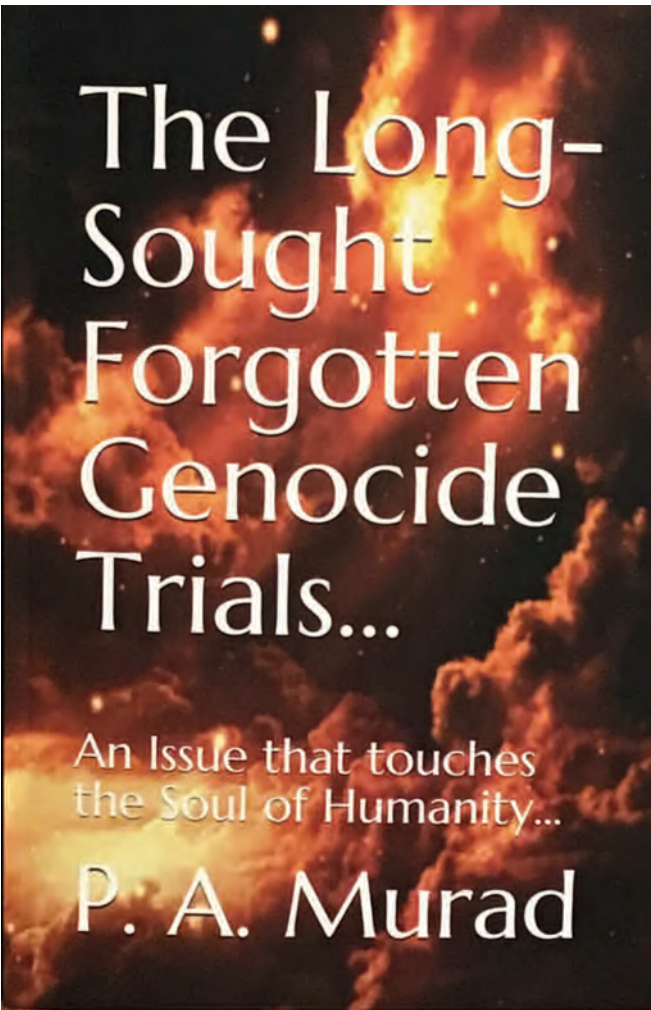
people felt that was even too close.” Lipper-Garabedian, a Democrat who had served as a Melrose city councilor, takes over

the 32nd Middlesex District seat after Rep. Paul Brodeur resigned last fall to become mayor of Melrose. She received nearly 80 percent of the vote compared to the 18 percent garnered by her Republican challenger, Brandon Reid, during a special election earlier this month. During the ceremony, Baker and Lipper-Garabedian were appropriately spaced apart by about 6 feet while Donato, DeLeo, state Sen. Jason Lewis, D-Winchester, and Councilor Terry Kennedy watched from a distance on the staircase. “I’ve never seen this before ... I’ve never seen this in 19 years,” said Donato, who has served in the Legislature since 2001. “These are odd times.” Lipper-Garabedian said she is grateful people found time to attend her ceremony during the crisis. Constituents in the district she represents have reached out over the past several weeks with a number of concerns ranging from family safety to the impact on small businesses. Confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the state

jumped to 1,838 on Wednesday, the largest daily increase to date, while deaths attributed to the virus climbed to 15. Middlesex County, which includes all of Lipper-Garabedian’s district, continues to be the leader among other counties in the state with 446 confirmed cases. “I mean, there’s a lot of people who are worried. What I’ve been able to say to many of them is every day, we’re putting in place a more robust framework to address these issues that are happening,” she told the News Service in her first public comments as a state representative. “If we don’t have an answer right now, let’s work together to see if one is coming tomorrow.”

Diocesan Cancellations And Closures

NEW YORK – In the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, and in light of current concerns regarding New York City, the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America announced earlier this month that the Diocesan Center has been closed to the public as of March 16, and will remain so at least through April 12. The majority of Diocesan staffers are currently working from home, and are available to respond to inquiries via e-mail. Voice messages left on the Diocesan phone lines will be forwarded via e-mail to the relevant party. Along with the Diocesan Center, the St. Vartan Bookstore is also closed to the public. Major gatherings have also been affected by the pandemic. The Eastern Diocese’s 118th Diocesan Assembly will not go forward as scheduled. The Women’s Guild Assembly, Clergy Conference, and social events surrounding the assembly have also been cancelled. The annual gathering had been scheduled to convene April 30-May 3, 2020, hosted by the St. Sarkis Church of Carrollton, TX. The Diocese has also announced the cancellation of the ACYOA General Assembly, formerly scheduled for May 21-25, and to have been hosted by the St. Hagop Church of St. Petersburg, Fla. Since the start of the crisis, gatherings throughout the parishes of the Eastern Diocese have been cancelled. Solitary clergy celebrate weekly services in an empty sanctuary closed to the public. Some parishes are broadcasting these services online, so worshippers can watch. Check the Eastern Diocese’s website and Facebook page for details. These decisions were made and approved by the Diocesan Council under the presidency of Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan, after deliberation and consultation with government authorities, health professionals, and senior church leaders.



The Long-Sought Forgotten Genocide Trials... Is there any justice after death? This unusual tale offers redemption for victims murdered by genocides. Genocide is an uncontrollable beast that devours all with no reverence for any religions, no respect for poverty, wealth, or the different colors of mankind’s skin. What about these evildoers from Enver Pasha, Stalin, Saddam Hussein and many others that created havoc prematurely terminating victims by no fault of their own. Was justice measured? How would these evildoers seek redemption during their judgment? These are interesting questions.... Available from Amazon.com P.A. Murad is an engineer and scientist. The author has found a star, and was part of the Apollo lunar explorations and written “The Demon’s Gate” trilogy, “A Magnificent Odyssey” and “America at Armageddon”.



OBITUARIES

Former French Minister Patrick Devedjian Dies of COVID-19

DEVEDJIAN, fro page 1

witness directly to the exceptional work of doctors and nurses,” he wrote on Twitter earlier in the week. “I’m sending them a big



Patrick Devedjian, right, with President Nicolas Sarkozy

for their constant help to all the patients.”

Devedjian, a married father of four, was in the private Antony hospital, south of Paris. He was not known to have any underlying medical condition.

“His condition deteriorated on Saturday,” said a family source. “Doctors decided to place him in an artificial coma, but he didn’t survive.”

Fellow politicians immediately paid tribute to the politician on Twitter.

Former French Prime Minister Manuel Valls praised Devedjian’s “local roots.”

“I liked Patrick Devedjian: his frank works, his humor, his local roots. He was affectionate and cultured,” he wrote on Twitter.

Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo tweeted her “great sadness.”

“I extend my condolences to his wife and family. I think of our Armenian friends who have lost a brother today.”

“Great emotion at the announcement of

the death of Patrick Devedjian, former minister, President of the Haut-de-Seine, committed republican, free spirit,” President of the National Assembly Richard Ferrand wrote. “My sincere condolences to his relatives and his family.”

Devedjian, a conservative Republican who held a number of ministerial positions under former President Nicolas Sarkozy, was one of a number of politicians across Europe who have contracted Covid-19.

They include a number in Britain, including Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

“He was the best of us,” said Philippe Juvin, head of the Republicans in the Hauts de Seine.

“He was one of those people who are believed to be invincible and eternal,” said Juvin, as he paid tribute to “this free, intelligent and very funny man – one who was an intellectual non-conformist.”

Devedjian came from a family who had escaped the Armenian Genocide.

He was born in Fontainebleau, also south of Paris, on August 26 1944, just as Nazis occupiers were being defeated during World War II.

Among his most high profile ministerial jobs was as chief of the Recovery Plan following the 2008 global financial crash.

“Great sadness at the death of Patrick Devedjian,” French Senate President Gerard Larcher wrote on Twitter. “Brave man and totally devoted to his city of Antony and to



Patrick Devedjian

Haut-de-Seine. Condolences to his family and those close to him.”

Devedjian proposed an amendment to a proposed bill penalizing denial of the Armenian Genocide on October 9, 2006 that read, “These regulations do not apply to academic and scientific researches and studies.” Devedjian added a statement to the amendment that according to media would “prevent any provocations and political demonstrations organized by a foreign country.”

Barouir ‘Apar’ Baloumian

Victim of COVIC-19

NEW YORK — Barouir “Apar” Baloumian (1930-2020) passed away on Monday, March 30, as a result of COVID-19, which exacerbated other underlying health issues.

He was admitted to New York-Presbyterian Queens hospital on March 19.

His grandnephew Raffi Wartanian left a tribute to him on Facebook. He praised the “exceptional healthcare professionals who gave him the dignity and love we could not share with him in person due to the virus.”

He added, “These healthcare workers facilitated FaceTime calls and did their best to make Apar comfortable as he continued to smile and send his love to us, even as the virus deteriorated his lungs and other vital organs.”

Baloumian and his sister Knarig spent the 1930s living in a Syrian refugee camp of Armenian Genocide survivors. Knarig was one of seven younger sisters who adored their big brother until his last breath. After their family moved to Beirut, Apar became an entrepreneur involved with retail and duty-free shops in the airport business district of a bustling Beirut that enjoyed economic prosperity until the civil war (1975-1990).



Victor Varujan Ganjian

BELMONT, Mass. — Victor Varujan Ganjian of Belmont passed away peacefully at home surrounded by his family on March 22, after a brief illness. He was 85 years old.

He was born on May 7, 1934 in Istanbul, Turkey to the late Berge and Armenouhi Genc.

He leaves his wife Elizabeth (Imirze) Ganjian; son Victor Ganjian and his wife Nancy of Belmont, and daughter Linda Ganjian and her husband Jesse Lambert of Jackson Heights, NY. He also leaves 3 grandchildren: Ani and Lori Ganjian, and Arek Ganjian Lambert. He was the brother of Asbed Genc and his family from Montreal, Canada.

Private graveside services have been held for the family. Memorial donations may be made in his memory to St. James Armenian Apostolic Church (465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472) or Tekeyan Cultural Foundation (755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472) for renovation of Tekeyan Berdzor School in Artsakh.



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OBITUARIES

Krzysztof Penderecki, Polish Composer With Cinematic Flair, Dies

PENDERECKI, from page 1

Penderecki's grandfather, Robert Berger, was a highly talented painter and director of the local bank at the time of Penderecki's birth. His grandmother was an Armenian from Isfahan, Iran.

Penderecki was regarded as Poland's pre-eminent composer for more than half a century, and in all those years he never seemed to sit still. Beginning in the 1960s with radical ideas that placed him firmly in the avant-garde, he went on to produce dozens of compositions including eight symphonies, four operas, a requiem and other choral works, and several concertos he cheerfully described as being almost impossible to play.

Among those who could were the violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter and the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, whose recordings of the concertos he wrote for them won Grammy Awards in 1999 and 1988, respectively.

Penderecki was most widely known for choral compositions evoking Poland's ardent Catholicism and history of foreign domination, and for his early experimental works, with their massive tone clusters and disregard for melody and harmony. Those ideas would reverberate for decades after he himself had pronounced them "more destructive than constructive" and changed course toward neo-Romanticism.

(His decision to move on was partly political: The Polish avant-garde movement had created an unhealthy illusion of freedom in a country living under Communism, he said. But it was also artistic: Experimentation had reached an impasse, he told a Canadian interviewer in 1998, because "we discovered everything!")

Still, it was compositions from the wild first decade of his career, including *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960), *Polymorphia* (1961) and the *St. Luke Passion* (1966) that brought him lasting international recognition while he was still a young man.

The threnody, in particular, is a much-studied example of startling emotional effects created from abstract concepts. Following a score that often looks more like geometry homework than conventional notation, it forces an ensemble of

film directors picked up on Penderecki. His compositions could perfectly amplify scenes of dread, horror, murder and mayhem. His music can be heard in Martin Scorsese's "Shutter Island," Peter Weir's "Fearless," David Lynch's "Wild at Heart" and "Inland Empire" and, of course, Stanley Kubrick's "Shining" and William Friedkin's "Exorcist."

Penderecki also appealed to many a pop musician. Artists as disparate as Kele Okereke of Bloc Party and Robbie Robertson of the

Sometimes he was famous for the wrong reasons, like missing due dates, as with his commission from the Lyric Opera of Chicago to write a new work for the American Bicentennial in 1976. While American composers fumed over the choice of a foreigner to do the job, the fearless Penderecki envisioned something grand: a kind of oratorio-opera drawn from Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*, with an English libretto by Christopher Fry using much of the original text.



Band professed to have been inspired by him. But his influence is most directly evident in the music of Jonny Greenwood, the classically trained guitarist of Radiohead.

Greenwood's own score for the movie "There Will Be Blood," for example, features his *Popcorn Superhet Receiver*, a work directly inspired by the Hiroshima threnody.

According to an account in the *Guardian*, the two composers first met after a concert, when Greenwood, in his words, went to shake Penderecki's hand "like a sad fanboy." They later pursued a collaboration culminating in 2011 with a series of concerts that included

Alas, it could not be done in time for the Bicentennial: the premiere was delayed until November 1978. In the end, the critics didn't much like it.

But then, opera had been his most troublesome genre. Even "The Devils of Loudun" (1969), his first opera and the most popular, got mixed reviews and two thumbs down from the Vatican, which tried in vain to keep the composer from going ahead with his interpretation of a 17th-century scandal in the church.

On the podium, Penderecki was a powerful, bearded figure who conducted with sweeping gestures befitting his music. Consider the mighty forces required for his heavily choral *Seventh Symphony*, subtitled *Seven Gates of Jerusalem*, written to commemorate the city's third millennium in 1996. It calls for a huge orchestra, offstage brass and woodwinds, three choirs, five soloists and a narrator.

He seldom regarded his work as completely finished, adding new layers at will to old compositions. *The Polish Requiem*, for example, began with a single piece, the *Lacrimosa*, written for the unveiling of a statue at the Gdansk shipyard to honor those killed in the anti-government riots in 1970. He expanded it into a large-scale Mass, first performed in 1984; expanded it again in 1993; and in 2005 added a final Ciaccona in honor of Pope John Paul II.

Whatever the form of Penderecki's music, darkness was a constant. The *New York Times* critic Bernard Holland, writing about a Carnegie Hall concert in 1986 with Penderecki leading his Krakow Philharmonic, called the composer "our most skillful purveyor of anxiety, foreboding and depression." He found it strange that Shostakovich's gloomy *Sixth Symphony*, the only work on the program not written by Penderecki, should end up being a leavening agent.

The composer's personal circumstances, by contrast, were the opposite of dreary. Born on November 23, 1933, in Debica, in southeastern Poland, to Tadeusz, a lawyer, and Zofia

Penderecki, he became a prosperous man, living in a manor house on 20 acres in Lutoslawice, Poland, that he lovingly developed as an arboretum.

He had as many commissions as he could handle, and enjoyed a lucrative overlapping career as conductor of the Krakow Symphony and frequent guest conductor abroad.

Besides his wife of more than 50 years, Elzbieta, he is survived by their children, Lukasz and Dominika, and a daughter from his first marriage, Beata.

What troubled his imagination was the past. In an interview with a Louisiana television station in 2013, he said: "I was not living in easy times. If I would be born in New Zealand, maybe, I would never write the *Polish Requiem* or pieces which were connected with the history of war.

"But this was my childhood. War was the main subject, and also in our family. My uncles were killed by the Germans. Our house was in the middle of town; behind it was the ghetto, from which Jews were sent to concentration camps."

And after the war, he added, there were 45 years of living under a puppet government, when "no politics was possible without asking Moscow."

Still, there was a wrinkle that changed the lives of all young Polish composers. Beginning in the late 1950s, the country was allowed to hear Western music, which brought a flood of previously unheard sounds: electronic music, the work of John Cage. Penderecki worked in an electronics studio for a while, and the experience directly influenced his early compositions.

Over the years, Penderecki strove to develop a style that would synthesize many sources, going back to Bruckner and beyond but also accepting more modern influences. He was thus open-minded about trends in music generally, and not overly concerned about the future of the "classical" kinds.

"Listening to classical music is like reading philosophy books," he said in an interview posted on a Polish website in 2015. "Not everybody has to do it."

At the same time, he had a long perspective on the cyclical nature of tastes. "Music in the '50s isolated itself from popular music and then slowly, step by step, I think it might have begun in films, it started coming back," he said.

"They learn from us and, when it comes to reaching a larger audience, we learn from them. Used properly and wisely, everything is good."

The website news.am reported that Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan sent a telegram of condolence to his family.

"I was saddened by the news about the death of great Polish composer and pioneer in music Krzysztof Penderecki. He was truly one of the most outstanding representatives of classical music of the 20th century, as well as the two decades of our era. The works of Penderecki were popular in all parts of the world, and famous soloists and orchestras would perform them. Brilliant evidence of this are the several international music awards and the appreciation expressed by the state and the public.

The talented composer also maintained close ties with Armenia, the land of his ancestors, and would visit Armenia on various occasions. His contribution to world music has always been properly appreciated in Armenia as well."



Krzysztof Penderecki with Armenian President Sargysyan in 2018

52 string instruments to produce relentless, nerve-jangling sounds that can suggest nuclear annihilation. Yet it was said that Penderecki dedicated it to the victims of Hiroshima only after hearing the piece performed.

Though he wrote little expressly for movies,

both *Polymorphia* and Greenwood's work for strings, *48 Responses to Polymorphia*. Penderecki was pleased: Nine thousand young people packed the auditorium at the first performance, in Wroclaw, "and they had never heard about this old guy Penderecki's music."

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COMMUNITY NEWS

US and International Armenian Medical Associations Confront Coronavirus Crisis

DOCTORS, from page 1

Najarian said, “This is an unprecedented crisis. It is a crisis we have to deal with on a governmental level but what we each do as individuals is so critical.” Consequently, he said that one of the most important steps that AAHPO has been taking is educational. It has been attempting to distill all the information available in a way that the average person on the street, not a physician, can understand. It is reaching out to both individuals and other Armenian nonprofit organizations with email content that it is freely distributing. Now other organizations, including the churches, are distributing this information too.

AAHPO sends out biweekly emails to its own list. It also has developed YouTube content and has given interviews with the Voice of Armenians television program, available also online (<http://voiceofarmenians.com/>) and the Armenian Radio Hour of New Jersey (<https://armenianradionj.net/>) which also has a video or television component.

AAHPO provides reliable information on the coronavirus pandemic, while debunking myths and misinformation. It is stressing proper behavior such as physical or social distancing, staying in place, frequent handwashing and disinfecting of surfaces, as well as not going directly to emergency rooms if sick. Najarian said, “All the churches and all the NGOs have responded in such a professional and sophisticated way, cancelling their meetings and events and using new technology. Churches, for example, have been livestreaming services and funerals. These actions that almost all of these Armenian organizations took very early on have saved lives. There is no doubt about it. Every organization needs to be complimented. They are dealing with facts and they knew how bad it was going to be.”

AAHPO advises the Armenian community and its members to watch out for the older people, and for the youth to be careful too. The latter are just as likely as others to get it, and while they may be more likely to recover, they can spread the disease to others more vulnerable.

AAHPO has helped funnel information directly to and through these organizations in several ways. Its officials and experts have held sessions with leaders of various groups privately and are actively consulting with them, Najarian said. It provides the information but each group is free to make its own decisions about how to act.

A major form of cooperation and planning is through weekly virtual meetings which are being called “town hall meetings.” Every Thursday night for the last three weeks, the leaders of many major Armenian American organizations primarily on the East Coast, ranging from churches to philanthropic groups, have participated in conferences via the suddenly extremely popular Zoom software.

The diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh in the US, including ambassadors, also participate and provide direct information about conditions in the homeland. After this, specialists in public health and medicine like AAHPO board members Dr. Kim Hekimian of Columbia University and Dr. Tsoline Kojaghlanian of Maimonides Hospital in Brooklyn speak about strategies being used and their critiques. Physicians like Dr. Sharon Chekijian, a specialist in emergency medicine at Yale New Haven Hospital (https://www.yalemedicine.org/doctors/sharon_chekijian/), provide the current view from the trenches. AMIC also has a representative at the meeting.

The first time 16 people participated. The second week it was 35, and the last one on March 26 had more than 60 people. Even more organizations are expected to participate next week. Najarian said that it has grown into a big exchange of information

which lasts around two hours. Basically, Najarian said, “We are giving facts for the leaders to make decisions. One of the comments we get is we come to the meeting and hear about it in the news 3 days later.”

Next week the meeting will focus more on the next stage of the spread of the disease. Going forward, a lot of psychosocial issues are to be expected.

Najarian said that while they were trying to prepare people for a situation that will definitely get a lot worse, it will eventually get better. In other words, he said, “we are trying to

well as president of AMIC. AAMS has approximately 600 active members and a total of some 2,000 if one includes all its contacts and more passive ones, Sepilian said. Two-thirds are physicians and the other two biggest group of members are dentists and pharmacists. AAMS also works closely with the local Armenian American Nurses Association (<http://armeniannurse.org/>).

Sepilian said that initially AAMS was more worried about Armenia than the Southern California Armenian community concerning COVID-19. He said, “For some reason, we

well and circulated this list to Armenian community leaders (<https://aamsc.org/updated-health-resources-for-the-community/>).

AAMS works in both Eastern and Western Armenian. It does also provide materials in English.

AAMS has been in touch directly with Armenian community organizations and churches. He said, “Our role was being the conduit through which the county [of Los Angeles] can directly reach the representatives of the various churches and instruct them on the recommendations coming in



Supplies being packed to send to Armenia by the Armenia Fund

convey that this is a marathon, not a sprint. We are in the long haul and we all have to work together.”

Some glimmers of light already exist. AAHPO is, for example, trying to partner with Mount Sinai Medical Center to get Armenians to come forward as donors for blood eventually to get antibodies from those who already have overcome coronavirus and transfer them to others people who are sick to give them immunity.

AAHPO has a hotline number (908-914-5549) which people can call for information and help, as well as an email address, info@aahpo.org, for this purpose. Its Facebook page is frequently updated (<https://www.facebook.com/aahpo.org/>). AAHPO attempts to be proactive, Najarian said. He noted that at least two situations arose where AAHPO could help individuals.

Armenian American Medical Society

The needs of the Armenian-American communities in Los Angeles have been different than those in the New York metropolitan area during this crisis. The spread of the coronavirus started a few weeks earlier in the latter area, which now is considered a “hot spot” in the United States.

The Armenian American Medical Society (aamsc.org) focuses locally on the Los Angeles community and is dealing with the virus situation there. Dr. Vicken Sepilian, an infertility specialist and reproductive endocrinologist (<http://www.myfertilitymd.com/#meet>), is its past president and current board member, as

thought we would be fine. Nevertheless, we geared up to educate the community in preparedness.”

Unlike the New York area, where Sepilian said he believed the community was more engaged in its various affinity organizations, there were huge masses which really were not connected to any Armenian body. Consequently, though AAMS kept the leadership of the organizations informed of what it was doing, and these organizations have been circulating the information AAMS prepares, Sepilian said it primarily went directly to the masses.

Again, unlike the East Coast Armenian communities, it still has a large number of people who consume information primarily in Armenian, so AAMS notified Los Angeles public health departments, hospitals, and clinics of the urgency of producing such material, Sepilian said. AAMS has in general been in the forefront of requesting Armenian-language material from these entities and helped push for an Armenian-speaking spokesperson at Los Angeles County’s Department of Public Health (<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/>). Fortunately, at this point most public and elected officials and offices managing this issue have Armenian-speaking representatives in the Los Angeles area, including the offices of the Los Angeles mayor and sheriff, and especially in Glendale.

AAMS sent expert members to give interviews on all the Armenian television channels. It created a contact list of facilities and resources in the Los Angeles-Glendale-Hollywood area for those who are not feeling

from the state and the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention].” It also has participated in meetings of groups like the Pan Armenian Council of the Western United States.

AAMS is connecting citizens of the Republic of Armenia who are stranded at present in Los Angeles and cannot return home with free clinics owned or run by AAMS members. It also helps visitors.

AAMS is placing content on the coronavirus crisis on YouTube and on its website and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/137219016320628/>). Sepilian said that anybody in need locally or anywhere in the world can contact AAMS for direction concerning health care via email at info@aamsc.org and telephone (818) 980-7777.

Sepilian commented that there is no indication that the Armenian community in Los Angeles is being impacted in any way differently than other groups. He did note that there are several factors at play. Armenians tend to be more of a communal society, he said, often with multiple generations living under the same roof. This is one reason why AAMS has been particularly promoting sensitivity to the need to protect the elderly and family members with preexisting medical conditions from the coronavirus due to their additional risk factors.

Secondly, he said that there is a high prevalence of smoking in the community. There is some evidence that this may have a negative impact in this crisis and AAMS continues to ask Armenians to quit smoking. Many



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenians also congregate in hookah lounges and bars. AAMS has from day one one of the spread told Armenians not to go there.

Help for Armenia

AAMS is in touch directly with the Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles concerning aid, while AAHPO maintains direct communications with Armenia's Ministry of Health and the office of the High Commissioner of the Diaspora. However, both organizations are also member societies of AMIC, which is important in maintaining relations with Armenia.

The idea of AMIC (<http://www.amicnow.org/>), an international coordinating committee, came up in 1973 in Beirut at the first Armenian Medical World Congress but was not created until 1990, with its main office established in Montreal, Canada. Subsequently, it was incorporated in Mountain View, Calif., in 2015. It has among other things supported the Armenian world congresses bringing together around 500 Armenian health providers from around the world.

Sepilian, its president, declared that AMIC has been having its own telephone conference meetings discussing the coronavirus crisis, with representatives of groups from places like Amsterdam, London, Paris, Lyon, Montreal, Philadelphia, Boston, New Jersey and California participating.

Sepilian noted that AAHPO is perhaps the most active organization in educating various Armenian organizational leaders. It has created a primer which AMIC is examining to see if it can be applicable to other diasporan communities, most of which are on lockdowns but still active, at least in the virtual realm. Sepilian in particular commended the efforts of Dr. Najarian as a charismatic leader who truly cares and has done an outstanding job.

Sepilian said that even a week or two before Armenia reported its first coronavirus case on February 29, AMIC was speaking about the need for preparation for prevention there. The first meetings with Armenia's Ministry of Health and the office of the High Commissioner of the Diaspora began that actual weekend of the announcement of the case.

AMIC sent out a call for medical supplies requested from Armenia through various diasporan groups. Sepilian said to avoid duplication of efforts it was done through a group with representatives from the two aforementioned Armenian state bodies. The procurement and shipping of the equipment was undertaken by the Armenia Fund (www.armeniafund.org), itself having a number of Armenian-American organizations on its board. Together with the Chevy Chase Surgery Center (Maryland), the Armenian Relief Society, and several other groups, it was able to quickly send a one-ton shipment of urgent supplies such as masks, protective



Dr. Vicken Sepilian

suits and thermometers from Los Angeles International Airport.

Since then, Sepilian said, some additional supplies or raw materials have been secured but AMIC is focusing more on providing transfer of know-how to Armenia. For example, retrofitting various types of medical equipment like anesthesia machines to work as ventilators would be very useful for Armenia.

In general, Sepilian said, "We are trying to stay on top of the science. We are all learning from each other internationally." A lot is

rapidly changing in the US and Europe. AMIC is transferring information deemed credible as soon as it comes to it from its various sources to Armenia, which then can decide whether it is applicable for use there. AMIC has regular chat groups with its far-flung members which are helpful in this regard.

Sepilian said that AMIC explored seeing what Armenia's capabilities might be to make some of the medications that are touted as medically effective. Armenia has already, for example, converted brandy factories to making hand sanitizer. The use of blood plasma with antibodies mentioned above is one of the things being explored for the Armenian bone marrow facility.

Telementoring and teleadvising is being organized to connect experts to Armenia. Regular lectures and question and answer sessions on specific cases and circumstances will be presented from all over the world, organized by the National Institute of Health in Armenia. The Armenian American Nurses Association in Los Angeles is ready to help teletrain nurses in Armenia to deal with the coronavirus. Sepilian remarked that many of these nurses were born and raised in Armenia and so are bilingual.

AMIC is also creating a pan-Armenian diaspora resource list for Armenians traveling or in medical need anywhere.

Positive Elements for Coronavirus Response Compared to 1988

Najarian said, "What is so different in this response as compared to the Armenian earthquake of 1988 is that all the medical organizations like AAHPO throughout the world are marching in lockstep, doing what is best for Armenia, and leveraging and maximizing our skills in a coordinated way." The Armenian government is coordinating diaspora relief so that ten different organizations do not deliver the same items Armenia needs.

AMIC did not exist during the Armenian earthquake. Najarian noted that not only is it good that such a coordinating organization already exists, but that the crisis is compelling it to mature as an organization. Sepilian said that it has been effectively preventing various diasporan organizations rushing to do the same thing. The silver lining in the current crisis, Najarian finds is that it has brought Armenia and its diaspora closer together than ever before.

Another difference is the wide use of telehealth, which AAHPO began pioneering in 2008-9 among Armenians. For the first time at the Armenian Medical World Congress in New York in 2009, it was used to consult with doctors in Armenia on cases in real time. Lectures were also broadcast to Armenia for the first time. It has been used now over the past 12 years by AAHPO and other groups. Now it is a good way to unite Armenian medical experts throughout the world to help Armenia.

Armenia is better prepared than in the past also on an administrative level. Najarian pointed out that the current minister of health is not only a physician but has a public health degree, while four of his associate ministers have public health degrees, and some have trained at the American University of Armenia. Najarian said, "Armenia has never been in better hands." Armenia has taken well acknowledged public health measures to protect Armenia as much as it can, he said.

Armenia is in a better situation in some ways internationally. Najarian remarked that Armenia today has direct relations with many countries throughout the world as well as with its many diaspora communities, which can allow it multiple resources and assistance. It is not just the US or traditional diasporas which can be utilized. Even Armenians in China are helping.

Keeping this optimistic tone, Najarian concluded that despite the stressful situation in many parts of the US (and the world), Armenian Americans should realize how much better off they are now themselves living through this crisis, compared to Armenians in 1988. They are sheltering in place, with electricity working, Internet, and all kinds of social media. Hopefully a vaccine and various effective remedies will be developed for COVID-19 soon.

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Arts & Living

Lorenzo Fusi to Curate Inaugural Yerevan Biennial

YEREVAN (Artforum.com) – Lorenzo Fusi has been named artistic director and chief curator of the inaugural Yerevan Biennial. The first iteration of the exhibition was scheduled to take place later this year in various venues across Armenia’s capital city. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the board of the Yerevan Biennial Art Foundation has postponed the event until next year. The new dates for the biennial are April 15–June 13, 2021.

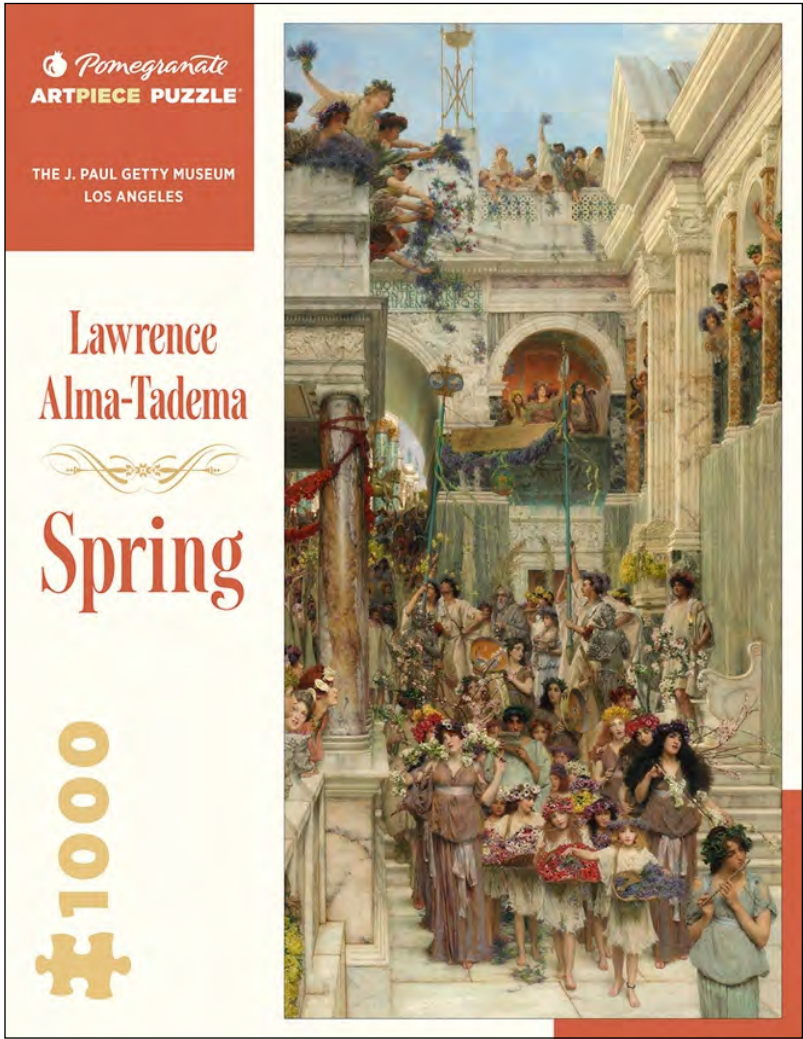
“With the Yerevan Biennial, we aim to foster a broader appreciation of contemporary culture in Yerevan and the region, complementing the existing infrastructure and its cultural offering,” said Fabio Lenzi, cofounder of the biennial foundation. “Most importantly, through our activity, we intend to empower today’s Armenian youth and create new professional paths for the future generations, particularly in the creative and cultural sector. We are planning numerous digital initiatives and projects designed to engage people of all ages, locally, nationally and internationally. We will focus on these elements until the physical experience of visiting an exhibition is safe again.”

Prior to appointment Fusi, served as the artistic director of PIAC (Prix International d’Art Contemporain) of the Fondation Prince Pierre de Monaco from 2014 to 2020; the visiting academic curator at the Alberta University of the Arts, where he directed the Illingworth Kerr Gallery between 2016 and 2018; and as director of Open Eye Gallery, one of the oldest not-for-profit photography galleries in the UK. He also previously worked as the international curator at the Liverpool Biennial, for which he curated the 2010 and 2012 editions, titled “Touched” and “The Unexpected Guest,” and as the chief curator at Palazzo delle Papesse Contemporary Art Centre and contemporary art curator of the Santa Maria della Scala museum hub in Siena, Italy.

Commenting on his new role, Fusi said: “Armenia has declared a state of emergency due to the global COVID-19 crisis. As a consequence, we have decided to postpone the inaugural exhibition. However, it is our job to create and develop platforms for cultural exchange, dialogue and interaction that operate safely and yet connect people. With the lockdown in many countries, sociability, compassion, empathy, and solidarity are now more important than ever. . . . It is difficult in these somber times to be joyful and celebratory, but I truly think this is an amazing opportunity for artists from the region to connect with their counterparts all over the world, and for the world to familiarize with this wonderful land holding significant religious and historical significance.”



Lorenzo Fusi (Courtesy of the Yerevan Biennial Art Foundation)



Pomegranate’s “Spring by Lawrence Alma-Tadema”

The Best Jigsaw Puzzles To Get You Through Quarantine

By Daniel Varghese

NEW YORK (GQ) – We’ve all got too much damn time to fill, which means that formerly puzzle-averse people are discovering the hours-killing appeal of the best jigsaw puzzles. So much so that Americans are buying jigsaws too quickly for some manufacturers to keep up.

At Reddit, the jigsaw community has been ready and waiting for its favorite pastime to get a moment in the sun. More than 20,000 hang out on r/jigsaw-puzzlers where they swap strategies for speed puzzling, watch time-lapse videos of someone completing a 5,000 piece color gradient, or gaze in awe at the absolute commitment required by this completed 40,000 piece Disney puzzle.

Michael Giragosian, who created the subreddit in 2011, argues that doing puzzles isn’t busywork, it’s actually, maybe, self-care? “It’s just challenging enough to give your hands something to do, but it lets your brain kind of relax,” he says. “It gives you time to think and relax and just, like, take your mind off the shit of the day.”

Since you need something to do besides binge-watch shows, listen to music, and cook beans, we asked Giragosian and his fellow Puzzlers to help us pick the best jigsaw puzzles (still in stock as of the day we published!) to fill your self-isolation days.

If you are both new to jigsaws but not new to say, drinking, start in the 300 to 500 piece range. “You want a puzzle that’s got distinct colors, but not too many colors,” said Giragosian. The members of the subreddit suggested conventional puzzles from Galison and Artifact, among others. They also suggested puzzles from Stave—each of the company’s puzzles are made to order, and are built to include custom details like names, dates, and special figure shapes. That said, a 100-piece puzzle costs almost \$1000, which is why most puzzlers think of them as grails.

Jigsaw Puzzles for Intermediates

If you’ve got your puzzling sea legs, you can jump to the 1000- to 2000-piece range, which tend to get more (sometimes much more complicated). Factors to look for: defined colors and clear images. Things to avoid if you want to keep calm: lots of sky. “As long as you can identify where a piece goes in a section, you’ll be able to make a lot of progress quickly,” Giragosian says. The selections include options from mega-retailers like eBay and well-respected independent producers like New York Puzzle Company and Pomegranate.

see PUZZLES, page 13

Mardiros and Mariam

Newcomers to Rhode Island from the Ottoman Empire

By Ruth Bedevian

My maternal grandparents fell in love at an early age in the village of Soorsooree in Kharpert (Ancient Armenia) under Ottoman rule in the 1800s. While picking apples in the orchard one day Mariam saw Mardiros ride by on a horse, wearing his hat jauntily. She smiled at him and he tipped his hat. She was 14 and they were destined for each other.

Mardiros Shamshoian was the son of the moneychanger, Roupen, and was orphaned in childhood. With the inheritance that Roupen had left in trust with the local church, Mardiros was taken in by an “Agunntsi” woman who had raised him and educated him well. He was proficient in reading and writing Armenian, Turkish, French and English.

Mariam was the daughter of Ohanes Ohanesian, a wise man who taught his daughter about plants, herbs and their medicinal uses. Mariam’s mother had died young and Ohanes had remarried. From his second marriage, there were four daughters – Vartouhi, Zmrroukht, Badaskhan and Berjouhi and twin sons, Garabed and Haroutune. (All four daughters perished in the Hamidian purges of 1894-96). Ohanes desired Mariam to marry whomever she wanted so he called a woman from the village to speak with her.

Mardiros earned a living by writing letters and preparing documents.

A year earlier, on March 9, 1891, Mardiros had made his first journey to America as he recorded in the Family Bible. Upon his first entry to the port of Boston, he assumed the surname Roupenian to honor his deceased father.

He returned to marry Mariam shortly thereafter in November 1882. She was 17-years-old. Maridros was 18. Mardiros was so in love with Mariam that he implored her never to marry another because he would die.

The couple was blessed with a baby girl, Surpoohy. Two other babies were born before Surpoohy who died during infancy.

During the middle of the 1800s, Kharpert had more than 350 villages, almost all Armenian. Political tensions throughout the Ottoman Empire threatened the future for Armenians, causing Mardiros to leave a beloved wife and daughter and bear the pain of separation to seek a more secure future for his family. Mardiros returned to Pawtucket, RI in 1883 and worked at Royal Weaving, a huge textile factory. (Joseph Ott founded Royal Weaving and his company employed hundreds in Central Falls and Pawtucket for nearly a century.) To earn extra money, Mardiros wrote letters for people. Sometimes they paid him with a bottle of wine.

Massacres Reach Kharpert

It is 1895 and Mariam and Surpoohy were in grave danger. News of the ruthless carnage upon Armenians in other areas of the Empire was spreading, quickly reaching the villages. In early November, violence reached the Kharpert Plain. Surpoohy remembered Mariam putting her in the tonnir, the outdoor stone oven built into the ground where lavash bread is baked. She admonished her youngster sharply to make no sounds, giving her a piece of hardtack. Desperate to save her daughter, Mariam fervently prayed to God to send good people to find Surpoohy.

see NEWCOMERS, page 11



ARTS & LIVING

Mardiros and Mariam: Newcomers to Rhode Island from the Ottoman Empire

NEWCOMERS, from page 10

Grace from a Compassionate Stranger

Like many of the married men at that time who had left their families behind in order to work and send for their loved ones, Mardiros was vulnerable to deep loneliness and went with other men to drink. His boss whose name is lost to our family history) saw goodness in Mardiros and gave him a large sum of money, introducing him to Mr. Fales, a lawyer. Money was needed not only for passage but oftentimes to bribe Turkish officials even though documents were properly prepared. With Mr. Fales' help, Mardiros prepared a Petition for Naturalization (dated December 31, 1895) for himself which enabled him to very quickly bring Mariam and Surpoohy to America.

The joy of reunion can only be imagined on February 2, 1896, when Mariam walked through the gates at Ellis Island holding 5-year-old Surpoohy's hand.

Mr. Fales owned a building that he rented to Mardiros. Having free use of the empty rooms in the building, Mardiros, with Mariam's help, opened a boarding house. It was located on Roosevelt Avenue in Central Falls. (Today trailer-trucks are stored on the site.) Rental income would cover their expenses. It was a promising livelihood requiring long hours of daily tasks, food shopping, quantity cooking, washing, and cleaning. Many Armenians from their pillaged homes found a comfortable shelter there until they settled themselves with jobs and their own households. Oftentimes, Mariam would mend clothing at boarders' requests for additional income. She also was skilled in natural remedies and helped in delivering babies if Dr. Margosian did not arrive in time!

Family Begins to Grow in 'Pawtucket, America'

Between 1899 and 1906 Mariam gave birth to Roupen (1899), Kurken (1901), Souren (1902), Vahan (1904) and the baby Almas (my mother, Alice) in 1906. (Sadly Kurken died at 3-years-old.)

Mariam kept her promise to her father to watch over her younger brothers, bringing Garabed and Haroutune to America and looking after them even after they were married men. Garabed married Yeghsah a very jovial lady who was very fertile and gave him 7 children. These are the uncles, aunts, and cousins that comprised my mother's large extended family.

Mariam helped Mardiros with the cooking, cleaning and the myriad of duties the boarding



The Roupenian family

house demands. She relied on Surpoohy to take the little one under her wing. My mother recalled, "My sister took dressmaking classes and taught me how to design and sew. She taught me to crochet and knit. I learned everything from my sister."

On December 3, 1911, in "Pawtucket, America" as Mardiros recorded in the Bible, Surpoohy married Kerop Karian (Karavagorian). The wedding took place in the boarding house (Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Church in Providence had not yet been established). This was a joyful time, but sorrow was to overshadow the Roupenians in 1914.

Mariam forbid her 10-year-old Vahan to play at the Dumps where his friends would scavenge for useable items they could repair or sell. Vahan disobeyed. Climbing over a very tall fence, he fell. Landing hard, he fainted. He didn't tell his mother nor did his friends. He was in severe pain, running a high fever and vomiting. Dr. Margosian said, "Maybe appendicitis or an intestinal blockage."

My mother was 8-years-old and remembers vividly, "Surpoohy came and wrapped my brother in a blanket. He was ashen, so pale. Vahan was rushed in a horse and buggy to the hospital." The diagnosis was a pierced intestine. The next morning, Mariam and Mardiros lost their fourth child to this imperfect world.

My mother wept, "Vahan was so handsome. He had auburn hair and hazel eyes. The entire city of Pawtucket grieved."

Mariam was 50-years-old and Vahan's death was a turning point. She wailed, "No more! Too busy working in this boarding house. No time to watch my child." The boarding house closed. World War I had begun.

New Challenges

The Roupenians moved to a second-floor apartment on High Street over a Chinese laundry in Central Falls. With a partner, Mardiros opens a variety store, selling ice cream, candy, and fruit. The variety store was located on Central Avenue not far from the apartment. The partner was aggravated with his partner and his children because Mardiros saw nothing wrong with the children eating the candy and ice cream meant for sale. "He was



Mardiros Shamshoian

so good-natured and loved his children," my mother recalled with a smile.

It was now 1916 and America was on the brink of entering World War I. The family was dependent on Roupen's income from the light bulb factory. He returned home one day telling Mariam that he dropped a case of bulbs. The boss fired him, taking his pay to compensate for the cost of the broken bulbs.

My mother recalled, "My mother took me with her to the factory to translate, asking the boss to forgive her son and rehire Roupen. The boss said to me, 'Little girl, please tell your mother that I did not fire her son. He took his full wages and gave his notice to quit.'"

"Oh, did my mother want to crawl under the floor!"

When Mariam told Mardiros, he exploded!! "Deghas chess! Tourse Yeleer!" (You are not my son. Get out!)

Having nowhere to go, Roupen joined the US Navy. That plunged Mariam into further turmoil. This time, she took Souren to plead for her son's return. The officer advised Mariam that if the family needed his earnings, he could

arrange to have Roupen's paycheck sent to her.

"No, no. My son go war. He die. Me take money? No," she cried. The recruiting officer said to Souren, "Tell your mother I am sorry, but her son now belongs to Uncle Sam." Realizing his transgression, Roupen pleaded with his mother, "Mama, let me go and become a man."

Roupen was strong and muscular and took well to wrestling. He engaged in a wrestling match between the US Navy and the US Army on the USS George Washington in the presence of President Woodrow Wilson on the way to France for the peace talks. Roupen won the medal. Since Roupen, there have been 4 generations of Roupenian men who have proudly served in the US Navy! Indeed, Roupen became a man.

The USS George Washington was originally a captured German ship used for transport. It crisscrossed the Atlantic 22 times during Roupen's tour of duty, taking supplies and troops to battle-weary Europe. The news came that the ship had been torpedoed. Stunned, Mariam joined the American Red Cross, sewing pajamas, knitting socks, and all the while, praying, "Deghas yed bidi ka." (My son will come back.)



USS Washington

Without Roupen's earnings and many customers on credit, Mardiros had a serious accounts receivable problem and sold out to the partner and started to work in Howard and Bullock's Machine Shop.

see ROUPENIAN, page 12



Mariam, the author's grandmother, and Alice, the author's mother

Mardiros and Mariam

ROUPENIAN, from page 11

Mariam, aspiring to “move up on the hill,” managed to find an apartment in Pawtucket at 510 Broadway and arranged to take care of the landlord’s baby in return for a reduction in the rent. The Roupenians – Mardiros, Mariam, Souren and Alice lived there until 1923.

It was during these years that Mardiros becomes a Bible Student. Souren also took an interest and father and son become loyal active members of the International Bible Students’ Association. Mariam said to Mardiros, “You are a man who changes colors. I am Loosavoghchagan. I will die Loosavoghchagan, but I will never refuse the word of God in my home.” Thus, Brother Mardirosian led many a gathering in the living room at 510 Broadway.

My mother said of Souren, “Papa called Souren ‘My Archangel.’ He was a Jack of all trades. He was great. He fixed everything in the house.”

Souren was the only child to complete high school. Working at Royal Weaving during the day, he finished his schooling by attending a vocational school at night, learning mechanical drawing and drafting. These were the prosperous years. Mardiros and Souren were taking home \$30-\$40 each a week as weavers. Mariam was saving every nickel and dime to put a down payment on a house of their own.

Reaching for the Dream

By 1923 the Roupenians purchased a 9-room cottage with three mortgages, costing \$6,500, at 1116 Washington Ave., South Attleboro, Mass. Mariam was 59-years-old and finally, her dream was realized – a home of their own with a large backyard with fruit trees and space for planting a garden. Mariam slaughtered a rooster at the front door, an old-world custom to shed favor upon the home.

My mother fondly remembered, “Friends and relatives came to visit frequently. My parents’ hospitality was abundant, setting their table for all with the bounty from their garden. Mama set up a roadside stand and sold her produce on the honor system. She canned the vegetables for winter. She made a tonnir and planted a grape arbor. Oh! How she made ends meet! Our home was filled with joy.”

The happy years were to end in August 1930 when Mardiros passed into his eternal rest. He had lived the whole of his life trusting and helping others and respecting the word of God. Brother Mardirosian delivered the eulogy and officiated at the funeral home and burial. My mother said, “All of Pawtucket came to pay their respects to my father. He knew so many people and had been so good to everyone.”

With Mardiros’ passing in the first year of the Great Depression, Mariam struggled to keep up the mortgage payments and taxes. Mariam was forced to sell the house and move to a cold-water flat on Turner Street in South Attleboro. It had a coal stove, toilet, and no bathtub. Soon, however, she was able to move down the street to brand new low-income housing for \$17 a month. Eventually, she went to Surpoohy’s home.

A mountain of strength and courage, loving wife and mother, Mariam surrendered her soul to her Creator and joined her beloved Mardiros in 1943. Gently they rest together in Walnut Creek Cemetery, Pawtucket, RI. May the Lord illuminate their spirits.

My mother, Alice, gave me grandparents to love who lived and died before I was born. I treasure the many hours my mother spent with me at her kitchen table sharing her memories. Together, Mardiros and Mariam triumphed over their forced exodus from their ancestral home, the struggle to carve a new life in a new world, the sorrows of loss, and World War I. Throughout their journey, they held steadfast to their faith in our Lord’s everlasting love. They have given me a precious, priceless gift.

(Ruth Bedevian is a resident of New Jersey. She received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2017. She is a longtime member of the Armenian International Women’s Association. She is compiling her family members’ histories from their lives in the Ottoman Empire to the New World.)

Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian



Homemade Assorted Pickles (Armenian Toorshi)

Some say Armenian and Middle Eastern pickled vegetables (*toorshi* or *torshi*) has been an effective way to preserve vegetables for thousands of years. Not only are homemade assorted pickles simple to make, they can easily be customized and are a perfect addition to any meal, says Lena Tashjian, a writer and vegan recipe developer, and author of *The Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook* (released in January 2020). Try this updated recipe to have a delicious jar full of crunchy goodness on hand any season of the year, and feel free to get creative. Make your own pickled vegetables with just a few minutes of preparation. Lena adds that the outcome of this recipe depends on the number of vegetables and the size of the jar you use, so use enough vegetables to completely fill up the jar of your choice.

- INGREDIENTS:**
- 1 cup or 1 handful of dried chickpeas
 - A few large cloves of garlic, peeled but left whole
 - Other optional seasonings: sprigs of parsley, dill, oregano, tarragon, thyme, etc.
 - Celery stalks, cut into wedges
 - Cauliflower, with florets separated, cut into chunks
 - Carrots, cut in half length-wise, then cut into 3 or 4-inch pieces
 - Kirby cucumbers, sliced
 - Jalapenos or chili peppers, sliced (remove seeds if you find it too spicy)
 - Cabbage, cored, cut into small chunks
 - Green peppers (Italian frying peppers preferred, seeds removed, cut into chunks)
 - Crushed red pepper flakes, optional
 - Sliced lemon (peel or remove some of the rind to avoid a bitter flavor), optional



(Also add turnips, small eggplants, green tomatoes, whole green beans, and jicama to this recipe. To give vegetables a beautiful color, add a small amount of beetroot, peeled and sliced into discs. Beetroot is often added to Armenian pickles for color, which is similar to how they are made in the Middle East. Beetroot gradually turns everything a deep pink. It should keep unopened for several months.)

- BRINE:**
- 3 cups of boiled water that has returned to room temperature
 - 1 cup white vinegar
 - 2 tablespoons pickling salt
 - 1/2 teaspoon citric acid
 - 3/4 teaspoon sugar
- PREPARATION:**
- Sterilize the jar and lid. Add chickpeas to the jar first, and then toss in the peeled garlic cloves.
 - Wash, slice or chop all vegetables and put them in a large bowl. Mix vegetables together in the bowl with your hands and transfer them into your jar.
 - In the same bowl, pour in the 3 cups of water. In a separate bowl or cup, mix vinegar and salt until the salt completely dissolves. Add this to your water, and stir. Add in the citric acid and sugar, and stir. Taste the brine to ensure the vinegar/salt ratio is ideal. Pour brine into the jar of vegetables and use a spoon or thin plastic spatula to release air bubbles by pushing down the sides all around the jar. If more brine is needed, make another batch.
 - Use leftover cabbage leaves or celery tops to keep the vegetables under the brine. Seal the jar.
 - Label the jar and set it aside at room temperature for at least 1-2 weeks (or longer), then transfer the jar to the refrigerator. Shake jar a few times for the first couple of days to distribute spices. Pickled vegetables are easy to add to salads, and make a delicious addition to vegetable platters or served as a lunch or dinner appetizer.
 - Storage: Pickled vegetables should keep in the refrigerator for about 2 months. Towards the end, the water is a lot more cloudy, but the vegetables are still crisp though not quite as good as at the beginning. To see this recipe made, go to: <https://youtu.be/gRKGPrG8bQU>.

The Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook is \$35. For more recipes or to order, visit www.veganarmeniankitchen.com.
See:
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ARTS & LIVING

Narine Abgaryan Makes it to the *Guardian's* List of Europe's Most Exciting Authors

MOSCOW (Public Radio of Armenia) — The *Guardian* newspaper has listed Russia-based Armenian writer Narine Abgaryan among Europe's most exciting authors.

Narine Abgaryan is renowned as a children's author and blogger. Her novel *Three Apples Fell from the Sky* has sold more than 160,000 copies since it was first published in 2015 and won Russia's most prestigious literary award, the Yasnaya Polyana prize (founded by the Tolstoy

estate).

"A magical realist story of friendship and feuds, published in English this month by Oneworld, the book is set in the remote Armenian mountain village of Maran, where the villagers pick mulberries and make *baklava*. An ancient telegraph wire and a perilous mountain path that even goats struggle to follow is their only connection to the outside world," the *Guardian* writes.

Abgaryan cites *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

by Gabriel García Márquez, set in the isolated fictional village of Macondo, as her favorite book. But she was haunted by the ending of Márquez's multi-generational saga of the Buendía family, as all traces of Macondo's existence are wiped away. In *Three Apples Fell from the Sky* (translated by Lisa C. Hayden), she resolved to write a fable that did exactly the opposite. "I wanted to write a story that ends on a note of hope," she says. "Humanity is in dire need of hope, of kind stories."

"We live such fast-paced lives, barely managing to speak to one another, to ask how things are



Narine Abgaryan

going," The *Guardian* quotes Narine Abgaryan as saying. "The thing that bothers me is how young people are leaving their elders behind."

Abgaryan, who now lives in Moscow, points to how the villagers in her novel spend their days "cultivating wine that nobody wants or needs." "Globalization has benefits, of course, but also negative side-effects, when national customs, the things which define people, are taken away."

The *Guardian* notes that Abgaryan's works have already been translated into 12 languages, and with English being the 13th, she now calls this her lucky number. "When you're published in English there's a greater chance that your work will resonate more widely," she says. "When your work is translated, you start to work with greater joy and hope. You start to believe in yourself more."

Marieke Lucas Rijneveld (The Netherlands), Andrzej Tichý (Sweden), Naoise Dolan (Ireland), Hassan Blasim (Finland), Pauline Delabroy-Allard (France) have also been included in the list.

Global Film Festival Seeks to Raise Funds To Offset Costs of Program Cancellation

WALTHAM, Mass. — This year's Global Cinema Film Festival of Boston (GCFF) had been slated to take place in March, however, now it has been cancelled.

Among the films that were slated to be shown was "Village of Women" by Tamara Stepanyan.

Organizers had originally decided to postpone the festival until May, before making the decision to cancel it altogether.

"Given the evolving situation, and per the extended federal and state guidelines, we have sadly arrived at the inevitable conclusion that we will now have to cancel this year's event. Even though we are deeply saddened that we will not have the opportunity to experience GCFF 2020 with you, protecting the health and safety of our community is the immediate priority and concern," the organizers said in a statement released this week.

"We know that we are not the only small business or event in Boston that has made this

difficult decision, however, there are still bills and expenses that will need to be paid so that we are able to continue our work of bringing quality programming to our community once this global health crisis is over. The majority of our festival's costs were spent in advance and unfortunately not recoverable. Substantial income from ticket sales has also been lost, leaving our festival in a financially vulnerable position," they added.

The organization has created a GoFundMe page to help the GCFF continue its work and support filmmakers. "Part of the funds raised here will also go towards supporting our visiting independent filmmakers and producers from around the globe who had to cancel their non-refundable travel and lodging accommodations to our festival due to travel bans and growing concerns over COVID-19," the statement added.

For more information on the group, visit www.worldwidecinemaframes.com.

CALENDAR

PENNSYLVANIA

FEBRUARY 20, 2021 — Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) 15-Year Anniversary Gala, 6PM-12AM. Rescheduled from 2020 due to the coronavirus. The venue and program remain the same. Master of Ceremonies Mark Geragos, Esq. Program will feature Mother Arousiag Sajonian and special guest. Musial performances by Lucy Yeghiazaryan Jazz Quartet and Elie Berberian. Welcoming comments by George S. Yacoubian Jr., founder and chairman. There will be auctions. For additional information, contact Sarah Selverian at sarah@soar-us.org or 215-514-0188 or Loucine Kzelian at lzelian@soar-us.org or 610-453-1857. To purchase tickets online, go to <https://soar-us.org/event/crimson-and-crystal-celebration> Black Tie optional. Springfield Country Club, Springfield, Penn. All reservations and event sponsorships will be held unless a refund is requested. www.soar-us.org.

The Best Jigsaw Puzzles to Get You Through Quarantine

PUZZLES, from page 10

If you have both a lot of time to kill and a spare table you won't need for a week, you can jump up to giant and/or complex puzzles. Just remember that fewer pieces doesn't mean easier. Over the course of three years, Giragosian was able to complete a 12,000 piece jigsaw puzzle; a 2,000-piece version of "Starry Night" eludes him to this day. "I think I put together about 300 pieces and couldn't go further. When the pieces are that small and the colors of the impressionist painting are so similar, you can't figure out where things go," he said. Know this before you devote the coffee table to, say, Clemens Habicht's color-gradient puzzles.

Knights and Daughters of Vartan

Armenian Genocide Commemoration in Times Square

Sunday April 26, 2020 at 1:30 p.m.

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Friday April 24, 2020 at Noon

New York City: March for Justice
From: St. Illuminator's Cathedral (221 E. 27th St)
To: Turkish Consulate General of NY (605 3rd Ave)
Sponsored by: Armenian Revolutionary Federation
Hovhannethan Scouts, NY-NJ
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New Jersey: Bergen County Courthouse Green
10 Main Street Hackensack, NJ
by: **Bergen County Officials**
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Armenian Flag raising in FORT LEE, NJ to honor the Armenian Martyrs of 1915

1915

Truth Justice Recognition

SUNDAY APRIL 26, 2020 at 1:30pm



COMMENTARY

Mirror Spectator

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Turkey: Pressures, Attacks, and Discrimination Against Christians

By Uzay Bulut

TURKEY'S Association of Protestant Churches has released its 2019 "Human Rights Violations Report" detailing the state of religious freedom in the country. The report sheds light on problems Protestant Christians faced in Turkey in 2019. These included barring foreign Protestants from entering Turkey for no other reason than their faith, as well as the inability of Christians to train their own religious workers.

One major difficulty for Protestant Christians in Turkey is that the Protestant community is not recognized as a legal entity.

According to the report, the Protestant community has mostly tried to solve this problem by establishing associations or becoming a representative of an already existing association. Associations and foundations, however, are not accepted as a "church" or a "place of worship." The Protestants, therefore, cannot benefit from the advantages given to officially recognized places of worship. When Protestants introduce themselves to the authorities as a church, they receive warnings that they are not legal and may be closed down. On March 21, in Bolu, for example, a house church used by Iranian refugees was sealed off by the Bolu Governorate.

The laws in Turkey also do not allow training religious leaders or opening religious schools for the Protestant community. The Protestants were solving this problem by providing training apprentices, giving seminars within Turkey, sending students abroad or using support from a foreign clergy. In 2019, however, many members of the foreign clergy, as well as church members, were deported, refused residence permits or denied entry visas into Turkey – as in previous years.

In addition, the report disclosed, at least 35 foreign Protestants – including Americans, British, and Germans – were barred from entering Turkey. When family members were counted, more than 100 people have been affected by these bans. The report continued:

"These people have been resident in our country for many years, live here with their families, many have made investments in our country and sent their children to school, and all of them have no criminal record at all. This situation represents a major humanitarian problem. These entry bans, imposed with no fore-warnings, destroy the unity of the family and create chaos for all members of the individual's family.

"In court cases opened to challenge this situation, the authorities have claimed that these people are pursuing activities to the detriment of Turkey, have taken part in missionary activities and that some of them had attended the annual Family Conference which we have held for twenty years."

In 2019, Christians across Turkey were exposed to hate crimes and hate speech, as well as to verbal and physical attacks. Examples include:

On February 13, a sign erected by the Istanbul Cankurtaran Church Association was dismantled by the Üsküdar Municipality without the knowledge of the Church authorities, on the grounds that it was too large, attracted notice and made those who passed by on the street uncomfortable when seeing it.

On July 14, in the Izmit province, two people broke a crucifix necklace worn by a young Christian. After swearing, insulting and slapping the Christian, the perpetrators ran off.

On July 19, a local court in Malatya ruled that the Malatya Governor and the Ministry of the Interior were not at fault in the April 18, 2007 murder of three Protestant Christians because of their faith, and that therefore the compensation paid to the victims' families had to be repaid to the government, along with the interest.

On September 6, in the Akçaabat district of Trabzon province, the fronts of several buildings built for tourists were demolished as a result of complaints that their design resembled a cross.

On November 19, in Diyarbakır, a South Korean citizen and Protestant Christian, Jinwook Kim, died from wounds sustained in a knife attack. Kim, a volunteer in the church, had lived in Diyarbakır for six months and had a pregnant wife.

Members of the Protestant community became more reluctant to complain to the security forces or report incidents due to hate-speech and the perpetrators going unpunished, and also due to being unable to get satisfactory results from investigations by authorities, and the perpetrators usually remaining unidentified.

During the 2019 Christmas and New Year season, various anti-Christmas and anti-New Year campaigns took place throughout Turkey. Hostile posters were hung on the streets, brochures were distributed, social media campaigns were conducted, and news was published in print and on social media. The participation in these campaigns by various public institutions created an intense atmosphere of hate. In particular, there was a significant increase in abusive and insulting comments from users of social media and newspaper websites towards Christianity and Christians.

In a photo widely shared on social media, as just one example, a bearded Muslim man punches Santa Claus. The photo was also posted in an article, "Why should the New Year not be celebrated?", and published on the news website "Haber Vakti".

Other widespread anti-Christmas messages and posters in print and social media during the New Year's celebrations, included posters that portray Santa Claus as a monster or evil. Messages on posters also included:

December 31 is not Christmas. It marks the conquest of Mecca. "Whoever imitates a people is one of them." The Prophet Mohammed.

There is a rush for Christmas everywhere. The Pope might make an announcement any time and say: "We will not celebrate Christmas in order not to look like Muslims".

We do not celebrate Christmas. "Avoid celebrating the festivals of the enemies of Allah." - Caliph Omar

What happens if a Muslim celebrates the New Year (Christmas)? Our Prophet gives the answer: "Whoever imitates a people is one of them." If a Christian celebrates the Ramadan festival or the beginning of the Mohammedan calendar, it means that they have become Muslim and entered Islam.

In a poster Santa Claus holds a sign, asking: "Isn't it a huge sin according to your religion to celebrate our festivals? Don't you have a brain at all?"

We are the ummah [nation] of Muhammad, who brought us Salah (Islamic daily prayers) from Miraj [Mohammed's alleged ascent into the heavens around the year 621], and not the nation of Santa Claus that brings gifts on the New Year.

Will we continue sacrificing our Islamic civilization for Western customs like the New Year?

Hey Muslim! Just sleep on New Year's night.

We are not celebrating the New Year because we are Muslim.

New Year celebrations are an invitation to sins.

I celebrate his New Year and then kick Santa Claus.

Such posters were not only published on social media; on January 1, an Islamist group distributed anti-Christmas leaflets to passers-by in the Galata neighborhood of Istanbul.

In the meantime, Christians in Turkey still face serious pressures, attacks and bans when they attempt to share their faith.

On November 10, a stand in front of the Malatya Church that contained the New Testament and other Christian books was overturned by youths; the Bibles and books were thrown in the trash. The youths left a threatening note saying that such publications should be removed or the books would be burned.

The Antalya Bible Church's official request in December to open a stand in a public area for Christmas was also rejected despite their often having opened a stand there. Over the last three years, the authorities have refused permission, giving "security/terrorism" as a reason. This year, the reason given for refusal was an over-concentration of tourists in the area, according to the report.

Some textbooks also target Christian communities. "Missionary Activity" continues to be a heading under the section related to "National Threats" in the eighth grade elementary school textbook entitled, Revolutionary History and Kemalism. This teaching continues to be referenced in supplementary textbooks and tests related to missionary activity being considered a "national threat".

In 21st century Turkey, whose constitution asserts that the state is officially "secular", Christians continue losing their jobs for their faith.

In the province of Aydın, for example, a Christian teacher was removed from her post because her faith was reported in the media, and news outlets claimed that the teacher had been involved in missionary activities. Despite a petition signed by the students and colleagues of the teacher declaring that nothing of this sort had taken place, an official investigation into the teacher was carried out and she was removed from her post. At the time the report was written, the teacher was transferred to a different school in Izmir. The result of the official investigation, however, is as yet unknown.

Two Protestant Christians who worked as civil servants also had their employment terminated – one from the State Theater in Ankara, and the other from the State Opera and Ballet in Antalya – although there were no negative allegations made about them.

Claire Evans, Regional Manager for the Middle East of International Christian Concern (ICC), told Gatestone: "The New Testament church was born in Asia Minor, which is now Turkey, and Christianity has deep roots there. However, the entry bans of foreign Protestants, employment discrimination, the inability of the churches to gain a legal entity, and the restrictions on churches to train their own leaders are all deepening barriers for religious freedom in Turkey."

(Uzay Bulut, a Turkish journalist, is a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Gatestone Institute. This article was originally published on the institute's website on March 29.)



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Turkey Ignores its Highest Court's Verdict on Armenian Patriarch's Election

Forum 18 News Service of Oslo, Norway, published a lengthy article by Dr. Mine Yildirim on March 25, 2020, explaining the Turkish government's interference in the election of the Armenian Patriarch of Turkey, despite the ruling of the Constitutional Court that the government's interference "was not prescribed by law and not necessary in a democratic society."

Two Armenians from Istanbul, Levon Berj Kuzukoglu and Ohannes Garbis Balmumciyan, had initially filed a lawsuit with the Administrative Court on March 27, 2012. The court rejected the lawsuit, stating that the Patriarchal election can only take place after the death or resignation of the Patriarch who was in a coma, even though the 1863 Ottoman-era regulations stated that the Armenian Patriarch's election can take place in the case of "the death of the Patriarch, resignation and other." The applicants appealed this decision, but the Court of Cassation rejected it on November 23, 2015.

The two Armenians then appealed to the Constitutional Court claiming that the state's refusal of their request for the election of a new Patriarch violated their right to freedom of religion. The court made its judgment in favor of the Armenians five years later in May 2019. However, the Turkish leaders ignored the court's decision. "While the judgment

includes important findings related to the state's unjustified interference in the internal affairs of the Armenian community, it also raises questions about whether the Constitutional Court is an effective domestic remedy or an actor that conveniently blocks applications to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, thus closing the door to international supervision," Dr. Yildirim wrote. "The state had prevented the Armenian community from electing its religious leader between 2009, when the then Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan could no longer perform his duties due to illness, and 2019, when the community finally elected Bishop Sahak Mashalyan as the new Patriarch."

It is more than a coincidence that the Constitutional Court gave its verdict on May 22, 2019, following the state's approval of the Patriarchal election after the March 8, 2019, passing away of Patriarch Mutafyan. The timing of the decision was intended to give the impression that the state was not interfering in the election of a new Patriarch and the Court was not telling the government what to do.

In its ruling, the Constitutional Court referred "to the 1863 Regulation for the Armenian Millet (ethno-religious community) and international legal provisions, including the European Court on Human Rights (ECHR) and the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty's provisions on the protection of non-Muslims in Turkey," according to Dr. Yildirim.

Throughout the existence of the Republic of Turkey, the government made some arbitrary changes during the 1950, 1961, 1990, 1998 and 2019 Patriarchal elections. "The election Directives were based on the Cabinet Decree of 18 September 1961 which had been issued only for that year's Patriarchal election and which included no provisions for future elections. Despite this, the Interior Ministry has continued to use this Decree," Dr. Yildirim wrote. The Interior Ministry's submission to the Constitutional Court stated that the measures taken by the authorities derive from "the state's positive obligation to organize the religious field."

The Constitutional Court countered that argument by ruling that its verdict is based on Article 24 of the Turkish Constitution which protected religious freedom, Article 38 of

the Lausanne Treaty which referred to the practice of religion, as well as the various rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. Furthermore, the Constitutional Court ruled that "the appointment of a Patriarchal Vicar-General (in 2010) occurred not as a result of a process that took place within the competing civilian and spiritual initiatives in the Armenian community, but as a result of 'state pressure that was unconstitutional,'" according to Dr. Yildirim. "In conclusion, the Constitutional Court found that the state has not been able to demonstrate a pressing social need that overrides the 'spirit of Armenian traditions' and the 'Armenian community's will.' Therefore the interference in the applicants' right to freedom of religion or belief by way of refusing the request to hold Patriarchal elections cannot be considered compatible with the requirements of a democratic society, and Article 24 of the Constitution had thus been violated."

However, even after the ruling of the Constitutional court, the state continued to interfere in the Patriarchal election. The Turkish Interior Ministry came up with a new restriction, ruling that only those Turkish Armenian bishops who were serving in Turkey at the time could be candidates for the Patriarchal election, thus reducing the number of eligible candidates to two. "This is 100% in contradiction to the Constitutional Court's judgment," said Sebu Aslangil, the lawyer in the case. Nevertheless, the Armenian Steering Committee for the Patriarchal election decided not to contest the Interior Ministry's ruling in order not to further delay the election of a new Patriarch.

Dr. Yildirim concluded: "The judgment raised the profile of the Constitutional Court as a high court delivering a judgment in line with ECHR jurisprudence. Yet, due to its timing, the judgment had no impact on rectifying the injustice that the Armenian community experienced. It also closed the door for an application to be made to the ECHR in Strasbourg, thus blocking international supervision of the implementation of the judgment."

In effect, as the legal axiom states, "Justice delayed is justice denied."

Moscow Now Seeking to Make the Caspian Both a North-South and an East-West Hub

By Paul Goble

SINCE the collapse of the Soviet Union, discussions of trade routes in the Caucasus have mostly been premised on the conviction that the north-south route and the east-west route, backed by Moscow and the West, respectively, are competitors. Every positive development in one is treated as a defeat for the other economically and geopolitically.

For sure, compelling reasons exist for why this view endures. If the north-south route becomes predominant, the countries in the region will arguably continue to fall within Moscow's orbit. Whereas, if the east-west route becomes more important, the Caucasus and Central Asian states will presumably have an alternative path to international markets and will become more independent of their former imperial center. The former remains true, and Moscow is pushing hard to develop this link to Iran, India and the outside world. The latter belief might now be called into question, however, because of Moscow's efforts to develop alternative east-west routes that will give it renewed influence over the other post-Soviet republics surrounding the Caspian Sea. Increasingly, these countries may find themselves forced by economics and politics to make use of the Russian east-west corridor.

The Russian government's push to develop the north-south route has, in fact, accelerated in recent weeks. Moscow committed to helping Iran expand its rail lines as part of the intermodal transport network from Russia to the Indian Ocean. And five days ago (March 19), Russia Times trumpeted the fact that "the opening of the long-awaited multi-modal transport corridor through Iran will become a big push for the development of bilateral trade between Russia and India," something that will have not only economic, but geopolitical consequences. The new route will undercut Western sanctions on Iran and pull India away from the West, while giving Russia's partners in the Eurasian Economic Union new international prospects (RT, March 19).

Use of the Caspian Sea will make shipping via this corridor cheaper than the alternative rail routes from Central Asian countries favored by the United States. For this rea-

son, its development, according to Russian analysts, will undercut US influence in the region, while simultaneously expanding Russia's (Caspian Herald, March 24). In short, the north-south corridor will – perhaps to no one's surprise, even in the West – finally begin to play the role that Russian President Vladimir Putin sketched out for it in 2012. After all, this is what Moscow hoped for and what the West mistakenly thought it could block by sanctioning Tehran.

Potentially far more important are Moscow's moves to insert itself into the east-west trade route that had historically received support from Western countries. For more than two decades, the West in general and the United States

largely ignored until Moscow began moving naval vessels from the former to the latter at the start of its military intervention in Ukraine. The canal system had, heretofore, not been in good repair: it was heavily silted in places and incapable of handling large ships or even heavily-laden barges. But now, both Moscow and regional Russian governments are working to repair the existing system and expand it in ways that will shorten the route and make it possible for far more cargo to pass through.

In the short term, this improved and expanded canal system will benefit mostly domestic trade within the Russian Federation. Analysts like Aziz Abdramov of the Rhythm of

FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES, THE WEST IN GENERAL AND THE UNITED STATES IN PARTICULAR HAVE PROMOTED TRANS-CASPIAN PIPELINES AS WELL AS BOTH PIPELINES AND RAILROADS RUNNING FROM WESTERN CASPIAN PORTS THROUGH GEORGIA TO TURKEY.

in particular have promoted trans-Caspian pipelines as well as both pipelines and railroads running from western Caspian ports through Georgia to Turkey. In so doing, Europe and the US hoped to gain access to the hydrocarbon supplies of the region as well as believed that the West could build up political influence in the Caucasus capitals.

Until now, Moscow has not been able to do more than bluster and perhaps delay these Western-backed or -encouraged projects – it could not stop them. But more recently, the Russian government has sought to steal a march on the West by developing an expanded canal system between the Caspian and Azov seas. In today's world, moving goods by water is generally less expensive than by rail or highway; and thus, many will choose to use water transit routes over land-based corridors, giving Russia a competitive advantage.

The water links between the Caspian and Black Seas were

Eurasia portal, however, are already looking forward to a time when this water route could carry cargo from east to west in ways that will compete with Western-back railroads further south and give Moscow a new role in east-west trade, not only between Central Asia and Europe but between China and Europe as well (Rhythm of Eurasia, March 20).

The turn toward this east-west Russian route will not happen anytime soon, given the difficulties Moscow will certainly face in developing it into an attractive option. Other countries in the region, as Abdramov points out, will continue to pursue alternative transit corridors. But it is an indication that for the first time, Moscow believes the Caspian can be both a north-south and an east-west corridor and that both will serve its interests.

(This analysis was originally published by Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 17 Issue: 38.)



Levon Aronian's Wife Dies Two Weeks after Crash

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Filipino-Australian chess player, FIDE WIM (World Chess Federation Women's International Master) Arianne Caoili, the wife of Armenian GM Levon Aronian, died on March 30, two weeks after sustaining serious injuries in a single-car accident.

"I have no words to express the grievance over my wife Arianne's death. She was intelligent, hardworking and joyous person that lived a beautiful life..." Aronian tweeted.

"I love you honeybun, sleep tight..." he added.

Caoili's Lexus crashed into a concrete pillar of a bridge near the intersection of Sebastia Street and Isakov Avenue in Yerevan on March 15, shortly after midnight. She was hospitalized at the Astghik Medical Center.

Aronian and Caoili got married in September 2017, having lived together for more than ten years.

Arianne came up with various initiatives. Having lived in Armenia in recent years, she was actively involved in the public, civil society and other fields.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Armen Sarkissian offered their condolences.



Arianne Caoili and Levon Aronian on their wedding day

Armenian Authorities Allowed to Use Phone Data to Fight Coronavirus

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Ignoring strong opposition objections, Armenia's parliament on Monday, March 30, allowed authorities to access personal data from people's mobile phones for the purpose of stopping the spread of coronavirus in the country.

Under a government bill passed the National Assembly in the first reading, state bodies enforcing the coronavirus-related state of emergency will be able to track movements, phone

The two parliamentary opposition parties rejected this explanation, saying that the extraordinary powers sought by the government constitute a politically dangerous violation of citizens' privacy and will not help to contain the epidemic.

"This is a regression of democracy," claimed Naira Zohrabyan of the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK). "Mr. Minister, withdraw this bill. What you want to do is meaningless."



Deputies wear face masks during a parliament session in Yerevan, March 30, 2020.

calls and text messages of Armenians infected with the virus.

Presenting the bill to lawmakers, Justice Minister Rustam Badasyan said this will make it easier for them to identify and isolate those who have been exposed to infected individuals. He stressed that the authorities will not have access to the content of phone calls.



Justice Minister Rustam Badasyan speaks in the National Assembly, Yerevan, March 30, 2020.

"We are against ceding our liberties," declared Edmon Marukyan, the leader of the Bright Armenia Party.

"This will have a zero impact in terms of stopping the spread of the epidemic," Marukian said during a heated parliament debate. He argued that many Armenians use online voice and text message systems to communicate with each other.

Parliament speaker Ararat Mirzoyan and other senior pro-government deputies also questioned the wisdom of the bill.

"People who have been in contact with virus carriers may have been infected in shops or on the street," said Narek Zeynalian, the chairman of the parliament committee on healthcare. "Phone calls are not the only indicators of people-to-people contact."

Nevertheless, the parliament approved the bill by 57 votes to 24, with one abstention. Lilit Makunts, the parliamentary leader of the ruling My Step bloc, said the bill will likely be amended before being passed in the final reading. Makunts said that she and her colleagues will seek explicit guarantees that all phone data collected by the health authorities will be destroyed after the epidemic.

As the parliament began debating the controversial measure the authorities reported that the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Armenia rose by 58 to 482 in the past day. (See related story on Page 1.)

European Commission, US Help Armenian Economy Hit Hard by Coronavirus

YEREVAN (Armenpress, RFE/RL) – As part of its global response to the coronavirus outbreak, the European Commission stands by Eastern Partner countries and has reallocated €140 million for the most immediate needs including for Armenia. In addition, the Commission will also redirect the use of existing instruments worth up to €700 million across the region to help mitigate socio-economic impact of the coronavirus crisis, the EU Delegation to Armenia told Armenpress.

Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Olivér Várhelyi said: "These are very difficult times not only for the EU, but for our partner countries, such as Armenia, as well. We have to do what we can to mitigate the impact of the Coronavirus outbreak on human lives and livelihoods. Today's package responds both to the immediate needs of the health systems, as well as a longer term needs to the most vulnerable groups in society and small and medium-sized enterprises, which are the backbone of the economies in the six countries."

Support to the Armenian health system: At the request of the partner countries, including Armenia, the commission will respond to immediate needs by supporting the supply of medical devices and personal equipment, such as ventilators, laboratory kits, masks, goggles, gowns, and safety suits. The European Commission is working with the World Health Organization (WHO), and is deploying €30 million to ensure these necessary supplies are jointly purchased and effectively distributed to the health systems of the six countries in the coming weeks. In addition, the funds will support national health administrations to train medical and laboratory staff and carry out awareness raising measures to the wider population.

The EU has made available more than €11.3 million in small grants to civil society organizations across the region. These funds are already responding to immediate needs, such as supporting local schools with distance learning. In Armenia, a project with the Red Cross will be launched in the coming days to support the elderly, vulnerable families, and people with disabilities.

The EU is working closely with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and relevant financing institutions from EU Member States as TEAM EUROPE providing a coordinated European response for the real economy, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in particular through launching of a new regional support program of €100 million to help SMEs, including self-employed and others to easily access credit and boost their businesses after the crisis. This will be complemented by a new support program targeting Armenian SMEs worth €13 million.

The EU is also exploring to mobilize over €30 million from existing programs in coordination with the Armenian government.

In addition, in the current crisis the EU has mobilized its major de-risking instrument worth €500 million, the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD). This will rapidly provide liquidity and can be urgently deployed by IFI partners to facilitate the provision of liquidity in the EU's Neighbourhood including through working capital, trade finance, or moratoria on debt service.

The EU is also reorienting ongoing support programs to address Armenia's needs to respond to the pandemic. As a result, €1.75 million has already been disbursed under a Public Finance Policy Reform budget support program to provide immediate support to the government.

The Commission also stands ready to provide assistance to Armenia through TAIEX, its peer to peer instrument, by using EU Member States expertise, experience and examples of good practice on assessing emergency preparedness response scheme and health systems.

US Aid

The United States has pledged to provide Armenia with more than \$1 million in aid designed to combat the coronavirus epidemic.

The funding will be part of a \$274 million emergency aid package announced by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo late last week. Pompeo said it will help "64 of the world's most at-risk countries" to better deal with the spread of coronavirus.

The assistance will be provided through international aid agencies, notably the World Health Organization.

"We are pleased that \$1.1 million has been authorized for Armenia," the US Embassy in Yerevan announced at the weekend.

The embassy told RFE/RL's Armenian service afterwards that the assistance has already been transferred to relevant international organizations. It is aimed at strengthening Armenian health authorities' capacity monitor infections and detect the virus.